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FARE LA LIBERTÀ, FARE LA STORIA: SICILIAN NARRATIVES OF THE  
RISORGIMENTO

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Fare la Libertà, Fare la Storia: Sicilian Narratives of the Risorgimento

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This dissertation explores the intertextuality of the literary and cinematic versions of the 1860 uprising in Bronte, Sicily, and the trial of the peasants three years later. Taking into consideration the historical approach, which has attempted to retell, justify or explain the events surrounding the uprising in Bronte, my research focuses on the literary, historical and cinematic texts by authors and artists such as Giovanni Verga (1882), Benedetto Radice (1910), Leonardo Sciascia (1960, 1963) and by Florestano Vancini (1972). By analyzing the relationships between the different versions of this story, I illustrate how these narratives have shaped the residual tensions generated by conflicting perceptions of the events. These reconstructions, which span from 1882 to 2002, reflect a compulsive tendency to narrate a moment of revolt and repression that has become an emblem of the troubled foundations of the Italian nation and, more broadly speaking, they contemplate the points of contact between historical and literary texts and the role of each in constructing our notions of the past.

## **Acknowledgment and Dedication**

I would like to thank my readers, Elizabeth Leake, Paola Gambarota, Andrea Baldi and Lucy Riall, each of whom dedicated endless amounts of time helping me develop my research and understand what this project is about. I would also like to extend a word of thanks to Simone Marchesi, with whom I worked through my initial ideas in many informal conversations. Finally, I could not have done this without the unwavering love and support of my husband, Chris, and our son, Samuel to whom this dissertation is dedicated.

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## Introduction

This dissertation explores the relationships between the literary, historical and cinematic representations of the 1860 peasant uprising in Bronte, Sicily and the trial of the peasants three years later. My analysis of the different versions of Bronte's revolt and trial, which span from 1882 to 2002, demonstrates how perceptions about historical moments are largely shaped by narratives of them. The texts I focus on reflect a compulsive tendency to reconstruct a moment of revolt and repression that occurred as the foundations for Italy's nation state were being laid and, in this way, they complicate the relationship between the national myths about Italy's movement for unification and the local heritage of Bronte. Though the historical events have been the subject of numerous analyses that seek to retell, justify or explain them, my project constitutes the first hermeneutic approach that puts these stories, which are different and yet the same, in contact with one another so as to examine their intertextuality.

Historians trace the origins of the peasant revolt in Bronte to a long history of land conflict. In 1491 Bronte's common lands, located at the foot of Mount Etna, were illegally usurped by the Grand Hospital of Palermo. In 1799 Ferdinand I, King of the Two Sicilies gifted the lands to Admiral Horatio Nelson as recompense for rescuing him and his family from Napoleon's army. In June 1860, after disembarking in Palermo, Sicily one month before, Giuseppe Garibaldi's Piedmontese government mandated the redistribution of ownership of common lands, and Bronte's town council refused to implement the legislated reform.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a thorough account of the vicissitudes in the ongoing and contentious land conflict that led up to the 1860 revolt, see Riall 1999. Riall's research contextualizes the 1860 conflict within the process of modernization, reflected by the rise of "an independent and assertive middle class which succeeded in dominating the community"(65).

In August, 1860 the peasant and working classes of Bronte, Sicily rose up against the members of the land-owning class in one of the many rebellions that occurred in southeastern Sicily as Garibaldi's troops came through the region. After seven days of conflict in Bronte, Nino Bixio, a general in Garibaldi's army, was sent to establish order. Bixio's orders for the immediate execution of five men deemed to be leaders of the rebellion and his imprisonment of many more of its participants, who were incarcerated until 1863 without being charged for a crime and who were subsequently sentenced to life in prison, remain a controversial subject for writers, artists, and historians in the local, national, international discourses. Over one hundred years later in October 1985, Bronte was the site of the posthumous trial in absentia of Bixio, which was conducted by the municipality and the students of Bronte's Collegio Capizzi.

Including the texts generated as a result of the 1985 trial, over fifteen representations of the 1860 revolt and ensuing trials have been produced throughout the course of the late nineteenth, twentieth and into the twenty first centuries. Rendered in forms as diverse as the novella, historical memoir, essay and film, many of the representations were authored by nationally recognized Italian literary and artistic figures. In their distinct versions of Bronte's nineteenth century history, the texts by Giovanni Verga, Benedetto Radice, Leonardo Sciascia, Florestano Vancini, and Vincenzo Consolo have taken part in a discourse that explores the different ways of perceiving and remembering Italy's unification.

Contemporaneous to these "national" texts, there have also been numerous representations of Bronte's history written and composed by Brontese citizens. Some of these include, but are not limited to *Storia della città di Bronte* by Gesualdo di Luca



(1883), a comprehensive history of the town dating back to antiquity; the “Difesa pronunciata d'innanti la Corte d'assise del Circolo di Catania per la causa degli eccidii avvenuti nell'agosto 1860 in Bronte” (1863), the published transcript of the lawyer’s defense of the men who were imprisoned in Catania between 1860 and ‘63 with an introduction by the historian Gino Longhitano (1989); *Ricordi e lettere ai figli*, a historical autobiography by Antonino Cimbali (1903), former mayor of Bronte in 1862, 1869, 1888, 1890; *Rapporto sui fatti di Bronte del 1860* (1985) by Emanuele Bettini, a journalist whose work focuses on the Risorgimento; *Risorgimento Perduto* (1995) by the historian Antonio Radice, which posits the Risorgimento as a lost opportunity and makes available historical documents pertaining to Garibaldi’s campaign in Sicily; and, finally, an exhibition of paintings depicting the events of 1860 by various Italian artists, organized and curated by the Bronte citizen Nunzio Sciavarello in 1988 (Associazione Bronte Insieme 21 September 2011). In addition to these texts, which focus primarily on the revolt and, in some cases, examine it within a broader history of the town, the 1985 trial in absentia of Bixio has been memorialized in two different publications. *Il processo di Bronte* by Nino Leanza (1985) is a historical account of the 1985 trial and *Il processo a Bixio* by Salvatore Scalia (1991) is a journalistic text that investigates the construction of the myths surrounding Bronte and Nino Bixio and that explores the motivations behind the twentieth century trial. Finally, since 2002 the Associazione di Bronte Insieme has maintained and updated the web site, <[www.bronteinsieme.it](http://www.bronteinsieme.it)> on which all of the “facts of Bronte” are available.

The striking quantity and diversity of texts that narrate these events demonstrates that Bronte’s is a contested history, one which continues to spur contemporary debate

about the lasting effects of the process of Italian unification and raises questions about Sicily's role in the Risorgimento. Having focused on the controversy of the circumstances leading up to and following the historical events, previous studies have overlooked the complexities within the narratives themselves. Bringing together what I refer to above as the "national" texts, my project interprets the implicit messages that emerge from their points of contact in rhetoric and form as that which drive the continued narrativization of the events. Beginning with an analysis of Verga's short story, *Libertà* (1882), moving into Radice's *Nino Bixio a Bronte* (1910), then Sciascia's essays, *I fatti di Bronte* (1960) and *Verga e la Libertà* (1963) and Vancini's film, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato* (1972), and finishing up with Consolo's *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio* (1976), I examine the ways in which the formal and rhetorical polemic in which these texts engage concomitantly edifies and shatters the notion of a collective past while also contemplating the present. The underlying critical and theoretical questions debated within and amongst these stories address the relationship between literature, film and History: focusing on the cultural patrimony of realism and historical narrative, they explore place of the author-intellectual in society in both historical and contemporary settings. By analyzing the representational accounts that narrativize, or "imposing upon" Bronte's Risorgimento history "the form of a story" (White 2), my dissertation demonstrates how the historical debate about Italy's unification takes place largely as a result of the stylistic choices of language, image, and form.

Since the 1882 publication of *Libertà* in *Novelle rusticane*, Giovanni Verga's second collection of short stories, the texts that focus specifically on reconstructing the

August 1860 rebellion claim to rectify the recorded history and perforce insert themselves into the national canon as historically relevant texts. By dwelling on the struggles of Bronte's peasants these representations question the significance *libertà* and revisit the material outcome of Garibaldi's campaign in Sicily in the summer of 1860. The contestation of the term, *libertà* also brings forth questions about the short and long term effects of the formation of the Italian nation state. Collectively, these texts make contradicting claims to the "historical truth" of Bronte, exposing the inherent problem in pursuing a single comprehensive and accurate historical account. Bringing together the different narrative versions that re-present the peasant revolt allows for an exploration of the myth-making that takes place in the entirety of these texts, which transforms the specific historical events of Bronte into a universal notion of lower class rebellion. The duplicitous mechanism, which is explicated in Roland Barthes' essay, *Myth Today*, unfolds in *i fatti di Bronte*, a phrase that refers simultaneously to the historical events which occurred in 1860 as well as to the way in which these same events have been narrativized or rather, ordered in a way that also moralizes, by Verga, Radice, Sciascia, Vancini and Consolo. As each respective text explores the presuppositions that shape the truth claims of its forebears, it also returns to myth through a process of universal signification. In other words, by utilizing rhetoric and forms as signifiers that convey a different version the texts implant different memories of Bronte's peasants onto the historical record.

My understanding of the collective memory that is constituted by the body of texts about the Bronte uprising draws upon Michael Rothberg's idea of multi-directional memory. Expanding upon the philosopher, Avishai Margalit's notion of shared memory

as that which “may have been initiated by individuals but that has been mediated through networks of communication, institutions of the state, and social groups,” Rothberg further observes that “collective memory does not converge into one version, but instead is constituted by displacements and contingencies that mark all remembrance” (15-16). The continuous reshaping of the Bronte story that takes place in the myriad texts which narrativize this single historical moment offers an example of how the shared memory of these events has been renegotiated at each nodal moment in the collective remembrance of the Italian nation. “Bronte” gets revisited especially on anniversaries of the unification – Radice and Sciascia’s texts appeared on the fiftieth and hundredth anniversaries, respectively, and, in July 2010, the Sesquicentennial of Garibaldi’s campaign in Sicily and of the revolt, *Corriere della Sera* and in *La Repubblica* published articles that focused specifically on the town and the story of its 1860 uprising and, in the former periodical, included a republication of part of Sciascia’s essay, *Verga e la Libertà*.<sup>2</sup> Rothberg posits multidirectional memory as analogous in collective memory to the idea of screen memory, that which “fills in” for a more personalized trauma (12). The revisitations of the Bronte story speak to the ongoing process of identity construction within the local, national and global (with the web site) contexts and my reading, which puts these texts in contact with one another seeks to elicit the discursive ways in which they continue to shape the public sphere.

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<sup>2</sup> Salvatore Lupo also comments on the emblematic aspect of Bronte, “Bronte rappresenta il luogo emblematico del conflitto, dove la dura quotidianità del rapporto di classe si accende per un attimo, ma in modo da confermare l’ineludibile destino di tutti i protagonisti, che infatti subito dopo si ritrovano ancora nell’identico insieme di relazioni diseguali e funzionali, come nell’antico apologo di Menenio Agrippa; fino (chissà) alla prossima esplosione” (15).

## Verga and the Risorgimento

While 1860 marks the year of Garibaldi's Piedmontese campaign in Sicily and the defeat of Bourbon rule in the south, Italy's unification was far from complete. The peninsula would only become politically unified with the incorporation of the Veneto in 1866 and then Rome in 1870. After 1870 the intellectual elite began to focus on constructing a culturally unified state, which entailed not only bridging socio-economic differences between the regions (especially north-central vs. south) but also finding some way to work with and through, maintaining but somehow also mainstreaming the diverse linguistic and cultural differences throughout the peninsula (Moe 188).<sup>3</sup> The following section explores the way in which intellectual debates on realism, which began with late nineteenth century realism but took place throughout the twentieth century, shaped the process of cultural unification.

During the immediate post-unification period, Giovanni Verga was one of the first authors, and certainly amongst the most widely read by the northern-bourgeois elite, whose works addressed one way of bridging the cultural and linguistic gaps of the newly unified Italy. Born in 1840 and raised in Catania, beginning in 1872 he moved to Milan. Verga profited from and greatly contributed to the expansion of the publishing industry that took place during the same decade. The exposure that his works received while Verga was in Milan makes them "the first massive critique of the nation-building process" (Moe 194). Equally massive still today is his influence on narratives of the Italian nation, for his works established the representational – narrative norms not only for Sicily, as Nelson Moe has argued, but, in adopting a form of realism, *Verismo*, that

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<sup>3</sup> Beginning from the xiii century Sicilian School, Francesco De Sanctis' *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1870) constructed the first Italian national canon and showed how Italian literature had long evoked a unified peninsula before the political manifestation of the nation state in 1870.

declared its foundation in “real” material, his was also a literature that reflected and interacted with the social realities of contemporary Italians. Verga’s literature is socially engaged in that it adopts and adapts historical events into a literary form, but needs to be distinguished from the nuanced debates about social engagement that emerged throughout Europe in the 1930’s and 40’s.

A primary point of reference for understanding the type of realism to which Verga subscribed and that constitutes the founding statement of *Verismo* is the letter to Salvatore Farina, printed as the preface to the short story *L’Amante di Gramigna*. The author pledges to represent his subject matter in a language that is “così come l’ho raccolto pei viottoli dei campi , press’a poco colle medesime parole semplici e pittoresche della narrazione popolare,” and to “disappear” so that the true art, which comes from the “human document” can emerge without mediation. The privilege of content over form or subject matter over authorial intervention implied by the notion of *l’eclissarsi dell’autore* proposes to put forth the “semplice fatto umano” and finds its source material in the events of the past. The product, which Verga likens to the short journalistic form of chronicles called *fatti diversi*, thus possesses “l’efficacia dell’esser stato, delle lagrime vere, delle febbri e dell sensazioni che sono passate per la carne” (1990 212-213). Drawing upon historical events, *Verismo* subscribed to the methods of “impersonal observation and artistic nonintervention” proposed by Èmile Zola’s school of Naturalism, but it also claimed to give “la rappresentazione della realtà com’è stata, o come avrebbe dovuto essere”(my emphasis, Verga 1997 7) and, differently from Zola’s model,

maintained the classical realist notion of the ideal in art, that “art presented a clarified image of nature”(Marcus 13).<sup>4</sup>

### Verismo in the Twentieth Century: Socially “Committed” Literature

As early as the 1930s, *Verismo* was a model for neorealist literature and, after the fall of Fascism Verga’s literary realism ever more strongly shaped the representational modes of the postwar period (Marcus 18; Forgacs 1989 52-53). The return to realism largely resulted from what was perceived to have been its absence from the cultural practices of the pre-Fascist and Fascist periods. It was exalted as a form of art that was socially engaged by virtue of its chosen subject matter, the oppressed and under-represented in society (Marcus 14-17, 19).<sup>5</sup> Verga’s works also constituted a literary past through which the *letterati* could “riallacciarsi ad una tradizione nazionale, ad una rappresentazione capace di identificare in Verga e nella letteratura verista di fine Ottocento gli antecedenti più autorevoli e significativi,” and so, Gian Piero Brunetta continues,

Verga diventa, sia per la letteratura che per il cinema, un punto di riferimento obbligato: rifarsi alla sua opera vuole dire rifarsi alla rappresentazione di un mondo proletario che il fascismo aveva ignorato. Registi e letterati sembrano spinti dalla comune esigenza di riportare a zero i procedimenti espressivi e di riscoprire i mezzi più semplici ed autentici di comunicazione, che consentano l’apertura di un dialogo con nuovi pubblici, con pubblici autenticamente popolari. (4-5)

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<sup>4</sup> See also Cirese 10-11; Debenedetti 1976; Musumarra 1981 92; Tellini 232.

<sup>5</sup> As David Ward has put it, Francesco De Sanctis saw that the nation needed the figure of a *poeta vate*, “the solitary genius, unchained poet whose single-handed achievements would give Italy back the dignity and sense of purpose that was proper to it, but which it had lost” (Ward 298). Categorizing *Verismo* as “science” and not “art” in his *Aesthetics*, Benedetto Croce canonized decadentism as true literature and therefore endorsed the anti-realist school of D’Annunzio.

At a point when the *intelligentsia* were looking back upon the cultural products of Italy's unified past and debating what would become of their nation, Verga's narratives provided an ideal point of departure. Having been written after the Unification they belonged to the modernized State but, as a form of realism they were considered in opposition to modes of representation that had dominated the intellectual culture in the first part of the twentieth century – Decadentism, Formalism, Avanti-gardism – and they could therefore be placed outside of a genealogy that had led to Fascism. In a process of politicization of neorealism, first as a model promoted by the Fascist opposition and then adopted as part of the cultural platform of the PCI, *Verismo* was placed against the anti-realisms of the earlier part of the century, so much so that its modernist world-view was temporarily forgotten, or in the very least undervalued (Gundle 2000 49-50; Ward 307).<sup>6</sup>

The positing of *Verismo* as the forebear of a revived, “engaged” realism in the postwar period led to a refashioning of Verga's stories in a neorealist vein, though the differences between these distinct modes of representation remained so significant that no amount of re-reading of Verga's texts could have reconciled them.<sup>7</sup> The theoretical conflicts between *Verismo* and neorealism lay in their differing approaches to the uses of history: while neorealist texts employed stories of social injustice to provoke change, the central message of *Verismo* focused on the bourgeois desire for social change (mainly in the form of increased individual wealth and prosperity) and thus produced texts that

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<sup>6</sup> In the early 1950's, the debates in the Communist periodical *L'Unità* centered around neorealism as fulfilling Gramsci's idea of national-popular, as it had been promoted through Togliatti's thematic and selective publications of *The Prison Notebooks* in 1949. By the mid-1950's neorealism, having been politicized and clearly a model of the left, was caught in the midst of the Cold War, and so an economic crisis ensued (as a result of robust competition from Hollywood, brought on by American involvement and funding of the reconstruction).

<sup>7</sup> As Forgacs has noted, in 1949, *L'Unità* began publishing once again serialized novels (*romanzo d'appendice*) and, in the February 15 issue, Verga's narratives are listed amongst the preferred works (Forgacs 1990 100). Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948), which is an adaptation of Verga's novel *I Malavoglia*, offers one example of the type of re-reading of *Verismo* that took place during this time.



urged the reader not to aspire to change but to instead accept the world as it was and always had been (Bàrberi-Squarotti 24). The social aspects of art were central to the context in which neorealism emerged, and these elements in Verga's work – the historical basis for its subject matter, its “authentic” setting and its focus on the downtrodden –were celebrated by the left as positive examples of engagement. For Verga, however, the socio-historical events of the past had offered a model of dis-engagement, so that the moral implications of the stories' outcomes were pinned on “history” and not on the author himself (Bàrberi-Squarotti 20-22). The social elements of *Verismo*, which were so important to the privileged position granted to *veristic* works throughout the postwar period, for Verga provided an artifice of authenticity and non-intervention that masked “una forma di collaborazione all'ordine della società com'è: non che essere una forma di letteratura di tipo «progressivo» ovvero rivoluzionario, il romanzo realista e verista propone una fruizione di sé come lezione sui mali inevitabili che comporta ogni attentato alla norma” (24, 28-29). Notwithstanding these differences, *Verismo* was promoted as “being associated with engagement as against detachment” (Forgacs 1989 52) and the image of Sicily put forth by Verga's works were held up, in the words of Mario Alicata and Giuseppe De Santis writing specifically about film, as the “strongest, most humane, most amazingly virginal and authentic setting that would inspire a cinema tradition founded in events and facts in real space and time” (Debreczeni 29).<sup>8</sup>

As neorealism had been “made” by a process of reflection upon and rejection of the genres immediately preceding it, the “unmaking” or “expansion” of neorealism,

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<sup>8</sup> François Debreczeni translates Alicata and De Santis' article, “Ancora del Verga e del cinema italiano,” published in *Cinema* 130 (25.11), 1941 into the French: “l'ambiance la plus forte et la plus humaine, la plus merveilleusement vierge et authentique qui puisse inspirer la fantaisie d'un cinéma qui chercherait des choses et des faits dans un temps et un espace dominés par la réalité pour se détacher des suggestions faciles et du goût bourgeois décadent.” I have not been able to locate the original article in the US.

generally understood to have begun in the 1950's, was also constituted by the unraveling of the premises upon which it had been based.<sup>9</sup> The moral imperative for change that had characterized the initial postwar texts was replaced by stories that offered a more complex understanding of change – noting both the way in which, historically, Italian society had not changed and, in some cases, suggesting that perhaps change was not possible. The shifts in perspective were due, in large part, to the way in which events in the social and political spheres in the republic, formed in 1948 with a Christian Democrat majority, had unfolded. In the South, government responses to the peasant land occupations in 1949-50 served as a harbinger of the way in which, despite their campaign promises, neither the DC nor the PCI would effectively bring about change. The participants in the 1949-50 occupations, which spread throughout the South after open shots were fired by police on the peasant occupiers of the Fragalà estate in Melissa, Calabria, turned to Article 42 of the newly composed Constitution, which guaranteed the right to private property, and also drew upon a the long-awaited for and yet unrealized promises, made during the Napoleonic era, to restore domain land to public use (Ginsborg 123). In the beginning of 1950 the lower classes of Bronte participated in the mass-form of protest adopted by their cohorts throughout the South, organized by the southern leaders of the PCI (who were mostly peasants), and they staged a “strike in reverse” occupying the Nelson estate (Ginsborg 128). As Riall observes, the 1860 revolt began to receive more critical attention from historians during this time as well and,

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<sup>9</sup> The periodization of neorealism is problematic: there was never a manifesto, but attempts to define the “movement” (as Calvino later calls it, in 1963) instead came as afterthoughts several years following the height of the genre. The term *neorealism* also came into use as a way of naming the phenomenon and locating it within a genealogy. While Marcus notes the “expansion” of the parameters of the genre after 1950 in the film industry, Forgacs identifies the “unmaking” as having largely taken place beginning in 1960. See also Wagstaff p. 38.

During the late 1940's and early 1950's, and especially after Sicily's abandonment by the Communist Party and the consolidation of the Christian Democrats' grip on power, the blood-curdling events of 1860 made Bronte into a historical symbol of the contemporary Sicilian tragedy, a poignant example of the betrayal of popular aspirations by an uncaring national leadership. (1999 42)

Following the cultural patrimony of *Verismo* as it had been taken up by neorealism and the protests and occupations that took place in the socio-political realm described above, national and international attention was focused on the plight of southern peasants. The party in power, the DC was under added pressure to implement the progressive platform of social justice based on which it had won the majority in the '48 elections. The agrarian reform and the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* were the two proposed solutions to the problem of the "backwardness" of the South. While the agrarian reforms were slow in coming and produced ineffective results throughout the South – Ginsborg notes that changes were successfully realized in the Maremma region in southern Tuscany but that the worst area of non-change occurred in Sicily – the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno had a stagnating rather than stimulating effect on the southern economy (135-36; 162). On a national scale, the DC was poorly equipped to confront the immense matrix of dysfunctional parts that had been handed down through the State apparatus, and many of the pre-existing practices, such as clientelism, were perpetuated and even became more rampant under the governance of the DC (167).

Despite the PCI's project of mass culture, through which it set out to become a "party of the people," by the late 1950's it had also emerged as a conservative-leaning party which, despite its claims to implement reform or provoke revolution, ultimately continued the ideals of the ruling elite. To begin with, the northern leadership did not support the land-occupations of 1949-50 and Togliatti, who had taken an anti-

insurrectionist stance after the assassination attempt on his life in 1948, issued the same order in this case (Ginsborg 123-24). The distance and disassociation with which the northern leadership handled what were felt amongst its southern peasant members to be grave social injustices that merited protest offers one example of the way in which, despite its adoption of neorealism and its claims to provoke change, the leadership of the PCI was a conservative force that, perhaps even more so than the DC, encouraged a “cultural aristocracy” of intellectual elite (Forgacs 1990 105-106; Gundle 2000 21; O’Rawe 185-186).

One more example of the way in which the PCI looked to the past and not to the future in its cultural enterprise had to do with its promotion of the patrimony of Antonio Gramsci and his works, *The Prison Notebooks* as a particular line of “Italian” Communist heritage. As Gundle observes, in the early part of the decade, when the PCI was more or less entirely aligned with the USSR, the figure of Gramsci allowed Togliatti to “keep his own strategy alive.” After the death of Stalin in 1953, followed by Khrushchev’s “secret speech” given at the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist party in 1956 and, later that year, the Soviet military suppression of the Hungarian revolution, Togliatti emphasized once again the Italian heritage of Gramsci’s works and initiated an annual conference on Gramsci in 1958. All along, however, intellectuals had struggled with Gramsci’s texts, which were received as theoretical analyses of the past and not as practical ways of addressing the present or future (Gundle 52-54; 83-92).

In the critical-theoretical debates, the lack of social reform during the years following the formation of the republic resulted in the exploration of nuanced terms such

as change, commitment, history and authenticity, and truth.<sup>10</sup> As promises of change had led nowhere, the historical record too was viewed as a device with which the ruling elite wielded power and, more specifically, the PCI leadership was revealed to have perpetuated a “political lie.” As Ginsborg writes,

The hallmark of Stalinism in the Third International (1928) had been the falsification of history and the propagation of bald-faced lies to justify changes in line or the liquidation of opponents. This too found its place in PCI praxis. While Gramsci and Togliatti became the official founding fathers of the party, Amadeo Bordiga’s role was either minimized or vilified. (198-199)

The “lies” of Stalinist Russia, which were exposed at the Twentieth International (1956), had also constituted a large part of the PCI’s educational enterprise, “Some of what was taught was itself a form of diseducation. The rank and file were reassured with a distorted version of historical reality: capitalism was doomed and incapable of self-regeneration, the Revolution would resolve all contradictions, the Soviet Union was a terrestrial paradise” (198-199). With the exposure of these practices, the PCI thus emerged as having condoned and, even worse, promulgated a praxis that was characteristic of an authoritarian regime. Furthermore, while the revolutionary premises of the PCI and its adoption of an open party policy during the immediate postwar period had invited the participation of many already left-leaning, anti-Fascist intellectuals, some of whom joined the party but many others of whom were welcomed to collaborate without actually becoming card-holding members, the ensuing events of the 1950’s coupled with the party leadership’s handling of them disappointed and alienated many of these same members of the intelligentsia (Gundle 2000 20; 84-85). In the years

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<sup>10</sup> JP Sartre *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?* and the ensuing polemic with Adorno (in essays such as *Commitment* and *Lyric Poetry*) are part of the larger, European context in which this debate took place about literature. André Bazin published *Qu’est-ce que le cinéma?* which treated film aesthetics, in 1947.

following, the cultural project of the PCI, which had promoted realism with Verga as its model, was further dismantled.<sup>11</sup>

The *veristic* and neorealist models had made claims to conveying history, investing in content and downplaying form, and the ensuing debates primarily focused on the implicit messages conveyed by the forms adopted in these texts. Having been put forth as a pure, “virginal and authentic” method for recounting history, Verga’s texts came under close examination in numerous studies that investigated the author’s ideological position, especially with regards to the working and peasant classes.<sup>12</sup> While the full-length novel was largely theorized in the xx century as the form *par excellence* of realism in the nineteenth century, the *novella* had offered Verga a more economical and pragmatic way of rendering the stories of individuals, which were widely read in the illustrated journals to which Verga so often contributed during this period. The novella *Libertà*, however, poses problematic obstacles for its otherwise wide reception as an authentic, chronologically faithful representation of the events in Bronte, 1860 (DeMeijer 788). As a brief narrative form it is omissive, lyrical and, in a sense, incomplete (or

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<sup>11</sup> In his analysis of the PCI’s propagation of the Soviet myth, Ginsborg notes how Mario Alicata wrote from Russia, in 1952 “this is the first country in the history of the world in which all men are finally free” (198). You may recall that ten years previous, Alicata had praised Verga’s image of Sicily and, with De Santis, promoted this as the model of historical authenticity.

<sup>12</sup> There have been numerous studies of the representation of Sicilian peasant culture in Verga’s opus. On the connections between Verga’s use of proverbs and Giuseppe Pitre’s work, see Cirese, *Il mondo popolare*; S. Pappalardo, *IL proverbio nei ‘Malavoglia’ del Verga*,” *Lares* 33.3-4 (1967): 139-153 and 34.1-2 (1968): 19-32; G.B. Bronzini, *Componente siciliana e popolare in Verga*. In addition to the subject matter of the works published between 1878 and 1883, in which the author reconstructs customs, stories and experiences of Sicilian peasants, Verga’s works produced in this period also employ linguistic, narrative and formal techniques that come from the popular (oral) tradition. What has been described as the author’s “tentativo di avvicinare il più possibile il codice della lingua scritta a quello del parlato” (Melis 93) emerges from his use of proverbs, a “collective” or “choral” narrative voice, and the short form of the novella in the narratives from this period. While many of these studies have focused especially on *Vita dei campi*, the author’s first collection of short stories, and *I Malavoglia*, his first novel, the title of his second collection, *Novelle rusticane*, also foregrounds the elements of folklore that inform each of the short stories belonging to it. De Meijer offers a comprehensive overview of the interest that emerged between 1860 and 1880 in the oral tradition, and of Verga’s literary techniques for arriving at a direct, unframed representation of the popular narrator (778). See also Baldi, “L’artificio della regressione.”

“symbolic”) in its purported chronological reconstruction of the uprising and ensuing trials. Beyond the significances of the lacunae in the narrative, when compared to the more comprehensible history authored by Radice in 1910, the brevity of *Libertà* also draws upon folklore and the oral tradition (De Meijer 787-789).<sup>13</sup> DeMeijer further notes the interchangeability of the terms *fiabe* and *novelle* in the nineteenth century, “La raccolta e la trascrizione delle fiabe popolari acquista il significato di un recupero scritto della narrazione orale nella sua forma più elementare, di un contatto scritto con un’istanza narrativa della durata lunga. A questo recupero contribuirono studiosi come Pitre per le fiabe siciliane e Visentini per le fiabe mantovane...,” (De Meijer 775) a point that underscores the way in which Verga’s story had imbued the particular historical moment with a more universal signification. As the critical debates acknowledged the implicit messages in all texts, the question of form in Verga’s novella also served as an indicator of his “ideology” and subsequently resulted in a formal polemic in the Bronte narrative.

#### Leonardo Sciascia and the inheritance of *Verismo*

Leonardo Sciascia began publishing both as a critic and as an author during the postwar period, and so the above theoretical debates are essential to situating his participation in the Bronte macro-narrative. Sciascia’s essays bring together *Nino Bixio*, and *Libertà*, and in so doing they juxtapose the similarities and differences in the literary and historical traditions, drawing attention especially to language and to approaches for writing history. Radice, who published *Nino Bixio* in *L’Archivio storico per la Sicilia Orientale* in 1910, the year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the revolt, does not

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<sup>13</sup> Moravia connects lyric and short narrative form in an essay from 1958 (De Meijer 788).

directly recall Verga's novella, but instead situates his work amongst (and against) the other "eye-witness" accounts, such as Abba's *Noterelle di uno dei Mille* which, Radice claims, were written with no critical distance. As Riall notes, coupled with a renewed awareness of the plight of peasants in Sicily following the land occupations of the late 1940's and 1950's, historians writing in the postwar period drew upon Radice's interpretation of the events for their own work (1999 42). So while Radice's text was published in the first part of the twentieth century, it was not until after the second world war that its relevance, as a type of "counter-history" of the success of the Risorgimento, comes into use. For his part, Sciascia took an active role in the dissemination of *Nino Bixio*, republishing it in 1963 with *Verga e la Libertà*, his second essay as the foreword.

As works of criticism, Sciascia's essays examine the contemporary relevance of intellectual practice in society by focusing on language and form. Sciascia excavates key terms such as "facts," subverting their universally accepted meaning and exploring the presuppositions upon which they are based, and he also pursues an exploration of new forms.<sup>14</sup> The same summer in which Sciascia wrote *I fatti di Bronte* (1860), which he would publish the following year in the collection *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, he also wrote *Il Giorno della civetta*, a novel that blends historical documents with fictional invention (Barbella 116-17). The hybrid form that emerged in *Il Giorno della civetta* sheds light on the myriad styles that appear throughout Sciascia's essays, which also possess a "tendenza alla narrazione," as well as critical reflections (Dalmas 88). With this mix of

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<sup>14</sup> Formal experimentalism took place in the works of a number of other noted authors from this same period – Gruppo 63 formed in '63 whereas Pasolini's work in *Officina*, dating from 1958, reconciled literary forms that were previously thought to be incompatible with realism, such as hermetism – and has been connected to the demise of neorealism and the left (Barbella 13). As Sebastiano Addamo noted in his 1962 article, the "rottura del neorealismo" avrebbe aperto una fase interlocutoria e avrebbe consentito una certa «libertà di forme» (Barbella 116).



narrative and critical reflection, the Bronte essays come into focus in their critical-theoretical enterprise, putting different models for writing history – fiction, memoir, archive to give a few examples – into contact with one another and ultimately contemplating history as primarily dependent on textuality.

The “osmosis” of the *documento-racconto* in Sciascia’s work on Bronte also emerges in the film, entitled *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*. A reconstruction of the historical events of the August 1860 uprising that was the result of a collaborative effort of Florestano Vancini (also its director), Fabio Carpi, Sciascia and Nicola Badalucco, the screenplay draws primarily upon archival documents, personal testimonies, and epistolaries (in particular that of Bixio). Having “gone beyond” the histories, straight to the “original” sources such as those listed above, the writers claim to have, in a sense, become historians themselves in producing an “authentic” text that, for example, uses the same dialogue as that which had been reproduced by the eye witnesses of the events (Iaccio 12). While critics and writers claim a non-ideological position for the film (much like that which has been said of Verga’s intended position in *Libertà*), as Sciascia recognizes in his author’s note to *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, every text is inevitably tendentious (1989 1203). So, while the film remains “faithful” to its historical sources, the subjective elements of reconstruction – in film language the length, angles and types of shots – unavoidably convey an underlying message. The hybridity of the *documento-racconto*, which has also been called “cronaca/letteratura” and, with regards to Sciascia’s novels “romanzo-saggistico,” emerges here: drawing primarily upon historical documents for its source material, the film reconstructs a linear narrative of the events as a *racconto*, and in doing so it presents

a different way of remembering and understanding this history (Barbella 116-17). The contemporaneousness of *I fatti di Bronte*, *Verga e la Libertà*, and *Bronte* - both essays and the screenplay were composed between 1960 and '63 though the film was not made until 1970 and released in '72 – thus bring into focus *Bronte*'s implementation of the theoretical-critical discourse, on language and form and on narrative models of history in the essays. Furthermore, as a chronicle, the film privileges the importance of the sequence of events and offers a “provision of fullness (in detail),” as if to say that the versions handed down by the historiographical tradition have been incorrectly ordered and are somehow incomplete (White 16-17). The greater comprehensiveness claimed by the film also responds to the omissions necessitated by the formal choices in Verga's short story and, as I argue, although *Libertà* does not appear amongst the versions of this history listed in the film's closing credits, it nonetheless emerges as a silent source text. Further underscoring the weight of the symbolism of *Libertà* Vancini, the director of *Bronte*, recalls how Verga's mysterious short story informed his experience leading up to the making of the film,

*Libertà* era per me una novella misteriosa, parlava di un paese delle montagne dove dei contadini si sarebbero scagliati contro i padroni, non si capiva quando, non si capiva dove. La vicenda, stranamente, non era collocata in un luogo preciso. Ad un certo momento arrivava un generale misterioso che faceva dormire i suoi uomini nella chiesa, poi c'era una specie di rappresaglia. Ma dove? Come? Perché?(3)

In the same interview, Vancini places Verga in a list of the neorealist filmmakers De Santis, Lizzani, Pietrangeli, Visconti, and Antonioni, and describes the technique with which he shot the scenes of the uprising, “È un film che, praticamente, ho girato senza carrello, non ho mai cercato l'inquadratura perfettamente ricostruita, elegante, equilibrata. Diciamo meglio: le inquadrature sono tutte costruite, ma con l'aria di fare

*una ripresa da cineattualità, di rappresentare gli avvenimenti mentre accadono*” (my emphasis, 14). The film was even categorized as neorealist by critics such as Alberto Moravia and Mino Argentieri.

How, then, are these texts informed by the different forms of realism that precede them? As I noted above, Verga’s project took material from historical events, recognizing and representing the “discrepancy between the way things were and the way things should have been,” while the neorealist moral imperative demanded “an end to that discrepancy, or in Sandro Petraglia’s words, ‘cambiare le cose da come sono a come dovrebbero e potrebbero essere’”(Marcus 24). Put differently, Verga’s work proposed observations about the historical circumstances of the Sicilian peasants whereas the post-war texts employed stories of social injustice that were, for the most part, about present day Italy and that promoted change. Clearly rendered in the critical enterprise of Sciascia’s essays and also in Vancini’s interview, the essays and film engage both forms of realism by claiming not only to change things back to the way they were (suggesting that this is how they should have been), but also to change the memory of the events to how it should or could be. Like their forebears, the texts claim a zero degree approach, through which they realize, in a different version of the historical events, the form of the *documento-racconto* (Barthes 1977).

#### Content continuity and formal change

If the claims to historical truth of Sciascia and Vancini’s texts are based on their access to the archival, “original” documents upon which their stories are based, then Consolo’s novel *Il sorriso dell’ignoto marinaio*, which combines narrative chapters with archival appendices, could be read as an inversion of the *documento-racconto* form implemented

by Sciascia and Vancini. Structurally privileging the narrative content over the marginalized appendices, *Il sorriso* also plays with sameness and difference. Consolo's text is heavily informed by Sciascia's work, but the novel's inversion, and subsequent subversion of forms is further underscored in its resemblance to Radice's 1910 "historical" and authoritative-because-testimonial article, *Nino Bixio a Bronte*.<sup>15</sup> The message conveyed by making one's fictional novel look like the historical-authoritative text that precedes it suggests that there is no distinction between history and fiction, the constitution of both of which always comes back to the author, the "myth-maker," who has the "master hand" that guides every aspect of composition in his or her text. Unlike its forebears *Il sorriso* does not claim historical truth; while it espouses a zero-degree model in its reproduction of archival documents and synthesis of the narrative voice with that of Mandralisca in the last half of the book, its stratified structure, along with the ultimate gesture of the Baron's absence at the revolt, reflects upon the way in which history and "reality" are inevitably mediated by memory and text.

My reading of the postmodern narratives by Sciascia, Vancini, and Consolo in chapters two and three shows how they are simultaneously bound by and yet attempt to circumvent their textual ontology. Citing from diverse sources that disrupt their narrative threads and, blending poetry and prose, they contest the boundaries of genre through a mechanism of sameness and difference that is characteristic of parodic practice. As Linda Hutcheon writes,

The collective weight of parodic *practice* suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the

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<sup>15</sup> A passage from Sciascia's essay, *L'ordine delle somiglianza* serves as one of the inscriptions for the opening of the novel. Daragh O'Connell has also pointed out how the main character, the Baron of Mandralisca, strongly recalls Sciascia (123).

very heart of similarity. In historiographic metafiction, in film, in painting, in music, and in architecture, this parody paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity. (26)

While Sciascia's essays, Vancini's film and Consolo's novel repeat the story of peasant revolts in Sicily during the Risorgimento, their hybrid forms concomitantly explore the limits of text – narrative-critical essays, a full-length film that calls itself a chronicle, and a poetic-documentary novel. The parodic practice that unfolds innovates hybrid forms that breach the boundaries between “history” and fiction,” and acknowledges the impossibility of breaking free from textuality.

The disruptive components and the truth claims of the texts by Sciascia, Vancini, and Consolo also engage and mimic a socio-political reality. Continuity and change and, inversely, change and continuity recall the socio-political phenomenon of *trasformismo*, which expresses the idea that everything has to change in order to stay the same. A political practice that has accompanied the Italian nation since its Unification, Francesco Crispi first used the term to describe the negotiations and compromises made during the government of Agostino De Pretis, Prime Minister in the late xix century, but it has also been used to generally characterize the way that Italian politics and, by extension, high culture has operated since unification (Celli, Cottino-Jones 4). Initially, the term connoted the process by which the “historic Left and Right parties which emerged from the Risorgimento tended to converge in terms of programme during the years that followed, until there ceased to be any substantive difference between them” (Hoare, Nowell-Smith 58). In the example of De Pretis' government, historical records reflect a change in the ruling party upon his election in 1876, from *destra storica* to the left-leaning moderate-liberal party, but the same individuals were in office as before and, more importantly, they pursued the same policies. In other words, the form – or ruling

political party – had changed while the content – their political policies – remained the same. The way in which the practice infiltrated Italian politics from the Risorgimento through to Fascism was also taken up by Gramsci in his historical-theoretical analysis of the Italian nation, and in Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel, *Il Gattopardo*, which offered a narrative of how the phenomenon, particular to the Italian ruling elite, played out in the social sphere during the Risorgimento. Furthermore, addressing the present by means of the past, *Il Gattopardo* suggested that the concept still operated in the 1950's. In *I fatti di Bronte*, Sciascia more explicitly juxtaposed the *trasformismo* of the unification to that which took place at the end of Fascism,

Chi ha letto *I Viceré* e *Il Gattopardo* sa quanto il cruccio e l'inquietudine dei contadini di Bronte fossero, verso la 'classe civile' che *era passata o si preparava a passare* a Garibaldi, legittimi e motivati. E con uguale cruccio e inquietudine noi abbiamo visto nel 1943 altri Comitati, i C.L.N., i Comitati dell'antifascismo cadere in mano della 'classe civile' che *dal fascismo era tranquillamente passata all'antifascismo*. (my emphasis, 1989 1195)

Elucidating the process of *trasformismo*, the representational examples note how, at each “revolutionary” juncture, the ruling elite shifted loyalties from one side to the other with the outcome that the prevailing social hierarchy remained in place. Moreover, the passage from Sciascia's essay illuminates the role of literature in the social and historical discourses: it offers a medium through which readers can empathize with the victims of *trasformismo* and it is therefore a valuable device that guides collective memory.

This dissertation contains three chapters. Chapter one explores how inherent contradictions between content and form perpetuate the narratives that refashion Bronte's history. It gauges the centrality of Verga's short story, *Libertà*, to the polemic and posits the formal parameters of this text, an elliptical short story whose historical referents connect it to the Bronte uprising, as a catalyst for the historical-representational debate.

By elucidating the religious and moralistic dimensions of the carnivalesque and Providential tropes, this chapter explores the signification of the rhetoric and iconography deployed in *Libertà* as a basis for the compulsive narrations of Bronte's uprising.<sup>16</sup> Verga's carnivalesque, cyclical narrative structure – with the uprising characterized as a degradation that temporarily upends the social hierarchy that then returns to the normative state – removes the moment of revolt and the events that ensue from unilateral identification with the particularity of Bronte, which has been emphasized by means of the novella's historical referents. The Providential, and therefore teleological iconography, which evokes the story Christ's Passion, sets up a 'revolutionary' event in that it gestures at the Crucifixion and Resurrection, which are then omitted from the narrative chronology. While the tropes of the carnivalesque and Providence present different notions of time and space, the former connoting a cyclical and ritualistic practice but the latter calling to mind a redemptive *grande evento*, both emphasize that the uprising was an empty gesture because it did not actually bring about change. I also explore the literary referents in Radice's text which, conversely to the historical referents in Verga's text, elucidate the points of contact between *Nino Bixio* and literary works of Verga, Alessandro Manzoni and Dante. The literary devices for the historical narrative upon which Radice draws function as signifying elements in his text. For example, like Manzoni in Chapter XII of *I Promessi Sposi*, Radice characterizes the crowd with imagery of the unchangeable forces of nature and narrates the most intense moments of violence in the present tense. Most interestingly, like Verga Radice also deploys images and rhetoric that shape the revolt in terms of the carnivalesque and Christian Easter

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<sup>16</sup> Consolo discusses the literary origins of the term "Risorgimento" and notes that it also "probably refers to the religious archetype of the resurrection of Christ." (2003 151).

practices and that thus complicate his contextualization of the revolt amongst the long history of land conflict in the region. Both *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio* posit that the revolt took place impulsively and remove the possibility that the rebels had organized and acted of their own will. The lack of historical agency granted to the memory of the revolt, then provides a point of departure for subsequent narratives.

Chapter two brings together the critical enterprise of Sciascia's essays, *I fatti di Bronte* and *Verga e la Libertà*, with the historiographical and didactic reception of Florestano Vancini's film on which Sciascia also collaborated, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*. The essays pose theoretical questions that explore the role of the intellectual and of text, juxtaposing myriad models of writing history. Sciascia cites Manzoni's approach as articulated in the introductory essay to *La Storia della colonna infame* (1842), as well as Verga's model of realism and finally, heavily relies upon *Nino Bixio a Bronte* to situate the Bronte uprising within a broader historical context. He exposes the textual nature of History and the way in which collective memory depends on it, determining how both are constructed by intellectuals, those who write history but who experience it differently from the middle and lower classes. Taking the critical reflections of the essays as a point of departure for my reading of the film, *Bronte* emerges as a reconstruction that narrativizes the history differently from its forebears and that, without recognizing its literary foundations, engages and contests primarily the version that has been handed down by Verga's novella.

Chapter three looks at the way in which Vincenzo Consolo's novel, *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio* (1976), engages and shatters the myth of Bronte that is put forth by



the texts that precede it. Like the narratives examined in chapters one and two, *Il sorriso* draws upon archival, “authentic” documents to reconstruct the story of the revolt in a town in the northeast of Sicily, Alcara Li Fusi, which took place during the same summer of Garibaldi’s campaign and of the Bronte uprising. My analysis focuses on how the narrativity of Bronte or rather, the tendency to narrativize this history and therefore constitute the events as “real not because they occurred, but because, first, they were remembered and, second, they are capable of finding a place in a chronologically ordered sequence” (White 20), informs the structural design of the novel, noting in its transition from third to first person the concomitant transformation from “open” to “closed” text. Consolo’s novel also engages the discourse of intellectual engagement, ultimately reflecting upon the process of meaning-making in History.

The mechanism of sameness and difference in the literary-filmic representations that I explore throughout my dissertation is also a sort of cultural *trasformismo*: all the while criticizing the socio-political practice, the texts nonetheless espouse a parodic practice that “signals continuity at the heart of change” and that thus acknowledges their own, inevitable process of myth-making. The texts I analyze self-reflexively look at the historical and contemporary role of the intellectual in society and engage the broader theoretical-critical discourses that took place in Italy in the context of the “unmaking” of neorealism and the weakening of the PCI in the late 1950’s, and in Europe in the polemic between Jean-Paul Sartre and Theodor Adorno on the role of art in society.<sup>17</sup> Having accepted that all texts are tendentious and having understood the impossibility of

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<sup>17</sup> Here again, I am thinking of Adorno’s essays *Lyric Poetry and Society* (1958), in which he suggests that lyric poetry, which has traditionally been thought of as isolated from and having nothing to do with society, is in fact indelibly bound to the historical circumstances from which it has emerged and is recast as a rejection of this society.

adopting a zero-degree point of view in his essays, Sciascia's contemporaneous collaboration on the film sheds light on the way in which he resolves these aporias of praxis: despite its proclaimed non-ideological position, the film uses overt and explicit codes in its revision of History. Placing itself on the same plane as Verga's short story, the film thus continues and yet changes the portrayal of Bronte's story. Similarly, Consolo's novel, which has been received as an example *par excellence* of a postmodern, open work, enacts change and at once mimics Radice's text. Examining these works as a whole while also considering their specific and universal signifiers informs a broader understanding of the process by which literature and film have participated in and continue to contribute to acts of remembrance, which not only shape national-cultural identity but also reflect upon how memories are made and maintained.

## Chapter I: Carnavalesque and Easter imagery in *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio a Bronte*

In this chapter I examine Giovanni Verga's fictional short story, *Libertà* (1882) and Benedetto Radice's historical account of the 1860 peasant uprising in Bronte, *Nino Bixio a Bronte* (1910). Bringing these narratives together allows for a full exposition of their intertextuality, as well as of the ways in which they employ an iconography and rhetoric evocative of both the carnivalesque and Easter traditions. As a result, the intertextual relationship that emerges between Verga's novella and Radice's account dissolves the distinction between fictional and historical texts. Cited as the primary "historical" source by subsequent versions of Bronte's history, *Nino Bixio's* evocation of the literary models of the Italian canon problematizes the foundation of historical origins that this text claims to provide, and subsequently raises doubts about which came first, fiction or history. The setting of *Libertà* evokes a specific historical moment that correlates to the events of Bronte's peasant uprising of 1860. By narrating a violent revolt during which members of the ruling elite are massacred by a mass of angry rebels, Verga's story recalls the struggles particular to the historical moment of the Sicilian Risorgimento. This element, along with the narrative presence of the "camice rosse," of Garibaldi's men, the view of the "boschi cupi sui fianchi dell'Etna," and the temporal setting of late summer, "e in quel carnevale furibondo del mese di luglio..."(358) facilitate the historical-geographical placement of Verga's novella in southeastern Sicily during the summer of 1860.

The strong resemblance between the content of *Libertà* and Bronte's history has led to a universal reading of Verga's text as a version of Bronte's 1860 peasant uprising and ensuing trials. Readers of Verga's text, including many critics, authors and

historians, have conflated fiction and history by oversimplifying the possibilities of meaning which are attributable to Verga's representation (Sciascia 1991, 2002; Russo; Verga 1980, 2002). In response to the problems posed by the canonical reading of *Libertà*, which posits the novella as an elliptical and tendentious account of the historical events, the critical discourse has often attempted to correct, and in some cases rectify the version of the historical truth that resulted from the canonization of Verga's text, and in doing so it has often reduced the complex relationship between *Libertà* and the history of Bronte to a comparison of truths.

The tendency to connect Verga's fictional work to the infamous history of the uprising in Bronte situates my reading of *Libertà* in the well established critical discussion of the relationship between the author's later fictional works and the "truth," a term associated with *Verismo*, the literary school of realism to which Verga subscribed. The project articulated by *Verismo* places history at the center of creative production. As I point out in my introduction, *Verismo* called for the scientific observation and delivery, through fiction, of "real" human events but, at the same time, it gave equal importance to the "aesthetic dimension" of the human struggle claiming to represent historical events how they "should have been" and therefore espousing the realization of an ideal nature in art (Dombrowski 25, Marcus 13).<sup>18</sup> In other words, the project of *Verismo*, which Verga articulates in the opening letter to *L'Amante di Gramigna*, stated that art would be only a matter of history (content) and not form (authorial intervention).

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<sup>18</sup> The manifesto, which is found in the introduction to the short story, *L'Amante di Gramigna* calls for the "disappearance of the author" so that the "human document" can emerge in a scientifically objective rendering, which should be free of the influence of the authorial hand (1999 212-213). See also my introduction, pp. 8, 16.

Understanding and then defining the notion of “truth” in Verga’s opus has thus become centrally important to the twentieth century critical discourse. Specifically focused on *I Malavoglia*, many of the studies that emerged during the 1960’s, the decade that marked the Centenary of Italy’s Unification, exhibit an anxiety over knowing Verga’s ideology, especially with regards to the lower classes and, in particular, Sicilian peasants (Lupo 1988; Sciascia 1991 2002; Asor Rosa 1965 30, 1972; Masiello; Bigazzi; Marchese 50). In Italy, this was a result of the adoption of Verga as the literary model for neorealism and the eventual politicization and valuation of realism by the left, in particular the PCI, as the “good” form of social engagement. As I have outlined in my introduction, the differing approaches of *Verismo* and neorealism to “reality” posed irreconcilable contradictions: whereas *Verismo* narrativized events from the past in order to show the danger of the bourgeois desire for social change and to de-motivate the reader from aspiring to anything different than the way society already was, the neorealist model adopted a moral imperative that demanded “an end to that discrepancy, or in Sandro Petraglia’s words, ‘cambiare le cose da come sono a come dovrebbero e potrebbero essere’”(Marcus 24). Leading up to the 1960’s, the re-readings of Verga that took place in a neorealist vein had inscribed the “moral imperative” of neorealism upon Verga’s works and had, as a result, imbued them with political and moral significations pertinent to the immediate postwar period.

In addition to the adoption of Verga as a literary model of the left, the PCI’s project of cultural renewal, which made the party especially appealing to many members of the intelligentsia, also weighs on the later re-interpretations of veristic texts. As part of this endeavor, beginning in 1949, the same year in which Verga’s works were cited by

*L'Unità* as being the most popular, Palmiro Togliatti oversaw the thematic publication of Antonio Gramsci's works, *The Prison Notebooks*. Along with the elevation of Gramsci's role in the early leadership of the PCI, the theoretical-historical analyses put forth in Gramsci's work and held up as ideals in the 1950's was one facet of a larger undertaking by the PCI that, despite its claims for a new culture, indicated the party's conservatism (Forgacs 1990 105-106; Gundle 2000 21). The events, and the party leadership's reaction to them, of the political watershed of 1956, during which the Stalinist purges of the 1930's became public knowledge and the Soviets invaded Hungary, shattered the myth that the Russian model of Communism was for the people and caused a wider crisis in the political left (Ginsborg 204-205).

The 1960's also saw the emergence of the second generation of writers and artists of the Italian Republic, formed in 1948, and Italian society as a whole began to confront its Fascist heritage. This second generation differed from their predecessors, who immediately after World War II and the fall of Fascism had sought social commitment in neorealism. The authors, critics, and artists of the 1960's felt the necessity of engaging with the masses called for in Gramsci's work, but also lived with the consciousness that reproducing reality with "no strings attached" was impossible. Exhibiting this anxiety in their work, these artists, critics, readers often explored the implicit messages in the claims to history, commitment, authenticity and truth in the works of their literary forebears.

The studies of Verga's work that emerged during and after the centenary decade of unification seek to determine the stance of the (implied and real) author(s) toward the political and social dynamics of post-unification Italy. To this end, studies that specifically consider *Libertà* display repeated, self-conscious reminders that Verga "ha

scritto un'opera artistica,” as if to justify the transgressions made by Verga's text with regards to the recorded history of Bronte's uprising. While I agree that the socio-historical context of the movement to unify Italy informs Verga's artistic process, in the following study I examine the latent meaning that emerges from *Libertà* which, as I then explore in chapter two, complicates and propels the anxious search for an understanding of his “truth.” My analysis of *Libertà* begins by exploring how Verga's short story plays with elements of the 1860 history of Bronte, weaving together historical “facts,” rhetoric, and iconography and thus producing a lyrical and realist text that points beyond the specific history of Bronte. I show how the subtexts of carnival and Easter emerge as the cultural codes with which Verga represents this story of revolt and repression. Finally, engaging the seminal work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the carnivalesque, *Rabelais and His World*, I focus on Verga's use and implementation of the carnival and Easter customs in *Libertà*.

My approach takes its cue from Fredric Jameson's reformulation of the concept of “interpretation” in *The Political Unconscious* (1981; Dombrowski 1994). In this work Jameson reclaims interpretation as a means of conceptualizing the unconscious impulses that guide readings of canonical texts. He thus destigmatizes “interpretation.” No longer a rigid, totalitarian exercise, Jameson's understanding of interpretation describes an act of reading which is always and already mediated and informed by previous readings of a given text. He writes,

Interpretation proper – what we have called “strong” rewriting, in distinction from the weak rewriting of ethical codes, which all in one way or another project various notions of the unity and the coherence of consciousness – always presupposes, if not a conception of the unconscious itself, then at least some mechanism of mystification or repression in terms of which it would make sense to seek a latent meaning behind a manifest one, or to rewrite the surface

categories of a text in the stronger language of a more fundamental interpretive code. (60)

Drawing upon Jameson's notion of interpretation, and given the importance of Verga in the Italian literary and historical canons, it is worth considering the latter's work in the light of the inheritance that accompanies any reading of it. In this case, the "baggage" of *Libertà* necessitates a consideration of the historical authority that the text has been granted. Critical readings of *Libertà* have "rigidified" its meaning, and have thus extinguished the potential of this text. From my analysis emerges one of the latent meanings that has not been explored up to this point, but that demonstrates how *Libertà* has shaped the place of Sicilian subalterns in the history of the Italian nation.

Beginning with a discussion of the historicizing aspects of *Libertà*, I discuss how these elements have largely driven the unilateral reading which unwaveringly posits the novella as a literary version of Bronte's history. Though the time-place referents are important signifiers that should not be overlooked, the primacy granted to them by the critical discourse has obfuscated other, equally pertinent signifiers in the text. Opening the novella up to other interpretations, my analysis moves into the rhetoric and iconography of the carnivalesque and Easter Triduum in which the terms of Verga's text are couched, and explicates the ahistorical significations of degradation and crucifixion that these codes suggest. I then look at how these components problematize the historicizing reading of *Libertà*: they raise the stakes of the Easter imagery by pointing to an absent (and therefore repressed) crucifixion. Further complicating the issue of fictional historicization, the inclusion of Radice's text in my analysis shows how this allegedly "historical" account of the uprising draws upon the signifying elements of Verga's novella. I find that, as an authoritative history, *Nino Bixio a Bronte* corroborates



the historicizing elements of Verga's narrative, while also echoing a rhetoric and iconography which evoke Easter imagery. The problem of causality that emerges from the material correlation between these texts dismantles the fictional apparatus behind which the ideological message of *Libertà* has been veiled and shows that the novella, in fact, accentuates elements already present in the chronology.

Several details of the revolt depicted in *Libertà* resemble the historical elements characteristic of Bronte's story. This has, in turn, resulted in a canonical reading that looks for historical referents in Verga's text to corroborate his version and further explicate the truths that emerge from the author's work. First published in the journal, *La fanfulla della domenica* in 1881, *Libertà* is the penultimate text in Verga's second collection of short stories, *Novelle rusticane* (1882). Beginning in the midst of a violent revolt, this six-page novella recounts the immediate aftermath of repression and execution, and concludes, three years later, in Catania with the trial and life-imprisonment of the rebels. The opening lines of *Libertà* depict the revolt of the angry throng of rebels, called *un mare di berrette bianche*, whose victims are the ruling elite, called the *cappelli* or *galantuomini*. While the notion of *galantuomini* is defined and developed throughout *Novelle rusticane* (e.g. the story that immediately precedes *Libertà* is entitled *I Galantuomini*) as the educated, bourgeois, land-owning class who exploit the poor and working classes, the millinery terms used to describe the characters of *Libertà* are specific to the historical setting of the Risorgimento in Sicily.

Another primary point by which critical readings connect *Libertà* to Bronte's history is the narrative presence of a Garibaldi general largely identified as the historical figure of Nino Bixio which, in turn, has led to a common reading of Nino Bixio into the

text (Sciascia 2007, Verga 1999, 1980). Historically, Bixio was dispatched by Garibaldi to Bronte in August 1860 to restore order to the town. He has largely been blamed for the injustices of the hasty trial, summary judgment and execution of the five men found guilty of leading the “Bourbon” revolt.<sup>19</sup> By calling his character “il generale,” and omitting a historicizing name which may link the novella exclusively to Bronte’s uprising, the text makes space for the ambiguity that the narrative form permits. Bixio is not explicitly named by the text, however, the critical tradition has unilaterally postulated his presence there.<sup>20</sup> For example, the editorial note that often accompanies the naming of “il generale” obviates the connection with Bixio (so as to avoid any confusion), and thus contextualizes the story within the history. By identifying Bixio in “il generale”, the reading minimizes the possible significances of Verga’s representation to a singular meaning and also furthers the tendency to hold up *Libertà* as historical truth.

The canonical reading of *Libertà* that interprets Bixio in Verga’s text often takes issue with the concomitant omission of Niccolò Lombardo, the lawyer who, historically, was executed by the Garibaldi soldiers under Bixio’s command as the leader of the

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<sup>19</sup> The summary judgment has been a point of contention throughout this polemic. Sciascia takes it up again in his essays, which I analyze in chapter 2. The comment offered by the implied author of Verga’s story, “E subito glie ne fucilassero cinque o sei, Pippo, il nano, Pizzanello, i primi che capitarono...,”(360) expresses the popular opinion that Bixio acted hastily.

<sup>20</sup> It is useful to look at the deferred meaning of “il generale” and of Bixio, who overtakes “il generale” as the referent for militant oppression. In *Processo a Bixio*, Salvatore Scalia describes the contemporary relevance of Bixio for students of the Collegio Capizzi at the 1985 trial, “I discendenti dei quei contadini, che per secoli erano stati oppressi dalla Ducea di Nelson, avevano trasferito la loro angoscia per la catastrofe nucleare al Risorgimento e consideravano anche Bixio una vittima della mentalità militare [...] Alfio Capizzi: “Era come i generali di Hitler che al processo di Norimberga si difendevano affermando di avere eseguito gli ordini del Führer. Roberto Favatello: “Il processo sommario (...) somiglia alle esecuzioni sommarie delle dittature militari sudamericane. (...)” (Scalia, 12). Emanuele Bettini also makes this connection in *Rapporto sui fatti di Bronte del 1860*, “L’autodeterminazione dei popoli mediterranei è costellata di colpi di stato, di guerre civili, di regimi la cui legge è il plotone di esecuzione. Solo negli ultimi quindici anni abbiamo avuto il caso dei colonnelli in Grecia, il generale De Spinola in Portogallo, il colonnello Tequero in Spagna, per non parlare dell’Egitto e della Turchia. Attualmente viviamo lo spinoso problema palestinese, che angustia il mondo occidentale diviso tra la presenza ebraica, sempre più potente, ed il fronte dell’O.L.P.” (Bettini 9).

peasant uprising. As the history goes, Lombardo and four other men were tried and immediately executed on August 9, 1860, four days after Bixio and his soldiers repressed the peasant revolt. The mention, in Verga's narrative, of a hasty execution immediately following the uprising, further provokes the widespread notion that Verga intentionally omitted Lombardo from *Libertà*. The critical discourse has grappled with this omission, reading it as part of a covert ideological strategy veiled by historical authority. A close reading of this passage from Verga's text, however, reveals the destabilizing factors which work to broaden the nexus of ambiguity that lies between fiction and history. Recounting the general's order of the fictional execution, the text reads, "E subito ordinò che glie ne fucilassero cinque o sei, Pippo, il nano, Pizzanello, i primi che capitarono" (1999 360). This passage, in its brevity, has been read as an indication that the narrator of Verga's text is an inside observer of the events, but the assessment of how many men were executed by *il generale* is approximate.<sup>21</sup> First there are five men, then six, and then the text names only three. Of those whom the narrative voice mentions, *Pippo* is a common nickname for Giuseppe and therefore functions to underscore the narrator as insider, *il nano* fails to indicate a specific individual but instead and according to Sciascia capitalizes on a cultural code in which a dwarf embodies evil, and *Pizzanello* does not correspond to any specific historical subject.<sup>22</sup> Though this passage has been read as an omission of Niccolò Lombardo, my reading sees it as a mechanism that increases ambiguity in the link between *Libertà* and the singular events of Bronte 1860. If it is possible that *il generale* is not Bixio, that those executed are not the same individuals

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<sup>21</sup> Marchese, "il narratore, senza commenti, quasi a ostentare la sua neutralità di cronista, descrive in poche parole la dura, spietata repressione" ( 57).

<sup>22</sup> Radice gives a list of family names and political associations during the time of the uprising, but there is no mention of anyone, bourgeois or peasant, by the name of Pizzanello.

whose obituaries we hypothetically read in the newspaper, then how do we know unilaterally that *Libertà* is staged in Bronte? Keeping in mind the interpretations that have, until now, shed light on the historical referents in *Libertà* against its signifying elements, my analysis now focuses on the ways in universality of the latter problematize the historical particularity with which the novella has been received.

### Carnavalesque and Easter Imagery in *Libertà*

In the following section I analyze the subtexts of the carnivalesque and the Easter Triduum as the cultural codes through which Verga narrates this story of revolt and its aftermath. Drawing upon Bakhtin's observations about the carnivalesque, my analysis of the rebellion as a carnivalesque degradation, defined in Bakhtin's terms as, "the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract...to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (1984 19-20), offers an alternative understanding to the impulse which guides the debate about the historical truth of this text. The opening narrative of the revolt emerges as a classic scene of degradation in which the social hierarchy is inverted for a determined period of time, while the concluding pages offer a complement to the initial scene of violence and degradation during which time the official world, characterized by the orthodoxy and dogmatism of the church and the courts, reasserts itself and ultimately prevails.<sup>23</sup>

Verga's narrative demarcates the space dedicated to the carnivalesque moment of *Libertà* with images and tones of bells that ring at the beginning and end of the revolt.

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<sup>23</sup> Bakhtin posits that this public ritual of 'symbolic inversion' disappeared at the onset of modern, bourgeois culture and therefore disallows associations of carnival and the *carnavalesque* which are not rooted in a humorous, joyful celebration. His work in my analysis serves as a key to unraveling the cultural code with which Verga embeds his text and serves to more broadly address my overarching concern with the way in which Verga's text has been received by readers of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

The story begins from the bell tower, from which the rebels hang the tri-color handkerchief, “Sciorinarono dal campanile il fazzoletto a tre colori, suonarono le campane a stormo, e cominciarono a gridare in piazza, «Viva la libertà!»” (1999 355), and once the revolt ends, a couple of days (and pages) later, the image of belfry and the makeshift flag still hanging from it reappears, “Dal campanile penzolava sempre il fazzoletto tricolore, floscio nella caldura gialla di luglio” (1999 359). In his comments on the medieval French drama, *The Play in the Bower*, Bakhtin observes that the beginning and end of carnival is often marked by bells. He writes, “The end of festive freedom is clearly heralded by the ringing of the morning church bells; while earlier in the play the bells of the marching harlequins begin to tinkle as soon as the monk has made his exit” (1984 259). In *Libertà*, the initial ringing of bells *a stormo*, also called *a martello* – striking the bell repeatedly and allowing it to resonate throughout the municipality – historically signals an impending danger.<sup>24</sup> The ringing of the bells in this way continues throughout the uprising, and the narrative voice underscores the “otherness” of the moment in the following passage, “continuava a suonare a stormo la campana di Dio, fino a sera, senza mezzogiorno, senza avemaria, come in paese di turchi”(1999 358). In contrast, the end of the uprising is marked by the gathering of the crowd in a corner, un *canto*, “E come l'ombra s'impiccioliva lentamente sul sagrato, la folla si ammassava tutta in un canto” (1999 359). Taken as the markers of the transitions between the official and

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<sup>24</sup> The following *Curiosità*, published in *Corriere della Sera*, explains the cultural effect and usage of the strike *a storme*, “Campane a martello, come in guerra suonano «a stormo» o «a martello», ma il significato è lo stesso. Le campane delle chiese e delle torri civiche dei piccoli comuni, dalla Valle d' Aosta al Polesine, hanno ripreso a suonare con i rintocchi rapidi e secchi che, secondo un' antica consuetudine, annunciano l' avvicinarsi di un pericolo. Succede dal IX secolo, quando l' uso delle campane per informare la comunità di avvenimenti di interesse generale (dall' ora, alla situazione meteorologica, allo scoppio di incendi, alla nascita o alla morte di qualcuno) divenne una pratica comune. Durante la guerra, le campane a martello erano il segnale di un' incursione aerea. In questi giorni, invece, hanno messo in guardia dall' arrivo della piena dei fiumi, come accadde durante l' alluvione del ' 51.”

unofficial worlds, the ceremonial images and spaces that frame the revolt locate it in a moment in which the social hierarchy is temporarily inverted and therefore make a place for carnivalesque ritual.<sup>25</sup>

The narrative not only focuses on the image of the bells and on the way in which the sounds of the uprising change from beginning to end, but it also directs the gaze to the *fazzoletto tricolore* that hangs from the belfry and appears at the beginning and end of the revolt. The lasting image of the “fazzoletto tricolore, foscio nella caldura gialla di luglio,” serves the rebels as an impromptu substitute for the Italian national flag and, more importantly, frames the narrative perspective through which we witness the revolt.<sup>26</sup> Characterized as a handkerchief that is hung from the bell tower “out to dry” like a piece of laundry and is then left to hang flaccid in the heat of summer, the narrator’s description suggests that for the rebels, the make-shift flag is not really a flag but is instead an object, as any, that they do not and cannot understand how to imbue with revolutionary signification and it therefore serves as a visual device that prefigures the inevitable failure of their attempt.

The parameters set by the bells elicit an exploration of the images and rhetoric that appear within this designated narrative space-time. It is my contention that the actions and spaces of the rebels are constituted by a nonofficial world similar to that which occurs during carnival, and which is described by Bakhtin. During the revolt the crowd descends upon the town, moving from the central areas – the bell tower, the

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<sup>25</sup> See Sipala and Marchese (52) for other interpretations of the narrative structure.

<sup>26</sup> As I will later develop, allusions to types of cloth recur throughout *Libertà*, beginning and ending with the bourgeois handkerchief, the “fazzoletto a tre colori” that is hung from the bell tower, and the “fazzoletto bianco,” with which the gentlemen of the jury wipe their brows at the end of the story. The *fazzoletto* is a bourgeois item of clothing that perhaps indicates the bourgeois origins of the revolution. See also Mack Smith (192-194).

gentlemen's clubhouse, the town hall, the steps of the church – into the marginal spaces of the *stradicciuole* and *viuzze*. These terms, diminutives of the words *strada* and *via*, indicate side streets where the crowd acts out the violence. Its victims are also pushed into these marginal spaces as they try to escape. For example the first named victim, Don Antonio, slips away and attempts to return home safely by using shortcuts, “Don Antonio sgattaiolava a casa per le scorciatoie” (1999 355), but he instead encounters the throng of angry rebels. The revolt thus departs from the official spaces of the town and takes place in the marginal areas. These marginal spaces constitute a type of “nonofficial realm” as is described by Bakhtin, and demonstrate a prototypical setting for carnivalesque representations.

The description of the crowd's centrifugal movement also adopts the topographical high/low duality of the carnivalesque. The rebels strike down their victims with blows from the tools of the harvest: sickles, axes, hatchets and hammers. The act of striking down one's victims evokes degradation, a fundamental principle of grotesque realism (Morris 205). As the crowd moves through the town, it cries out, “Abbasso ai capelli!” (1999 355). The text also emphasizes the downward motion by which the victims are executed using verbs such as *sfondare* [to break down], *calpestare* [to trample], *cascare* [to tumble], and *cadere* [to fall]. Through these transitive and intransitive actions, the narrative makes clear the subordinate position, and vulnerability of the victims in the face of the angry rebels. Other verbs that narrate the crowd's action, such as *rovesciare* [to overturn] and *versare* [to spill] express the rebels' overturning of the authority figures and thus serve to underscore the dominance the nonofficial realm in this section of the text.

The different types of language that constitute the narrative of the revolt –cries that erupt from amongst the crowd and descriptions of the lower bodily stratum – offer a grotesque imagery also consonant with the carnivalesque.<sup>27</sup> The cry of the crowd emerges, through free indirect speech, at different moments throughout the revolt.<sup>28</sup> This univocal outburst adds another, choral perspective to Verga's polyphonic narrative and expresses the collective will of the throng of rebels. Also, the voice is not attributable to one character and therefore provides an opportunity for autonomous expression of popular opinion. Addressing its victims in an informal tone, the voice shouts, "A te prima, barone! Che hai fatto nerbare la gente dai tuoi campieri! ... A te, prete del diavolo! Che ci hai succhiato l'anima!..." (1999 355). An univocal embodiment of the group, the collective voice also portrays the acts of violence as a unifying moment for the rebels. Bakhtin offers the view that the paradigmatic moments of carnival are unifying for the masses,

The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity. (...) The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people's mass body. (...) At the same time, the

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<sup>27</sup> Proverbs offer another potential example of grotesque language. Verga's deployment of proverbs has been widely studied, and is generally seen as a vehicle through which he achieves a common language, along with a seemingly more authentic representation of the "vinti." This last point has led to the categorization of his work as folkloric. Giuseppe Pitre's book, *Proverbi Siciliani*, does not however offer any explanation of what seems to be the only proverb in *Libertà*, "all'aria ci vanno i cenci" (361). My research led me to consult Battaglia's *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, which translates this proverb as, "i poveri e i deboli hanno sempre la peggio" and is listed as having Tuscan origins. From here, I discovered that it also appears in don Abbondio's thoughts in chapter XXIV of *I Promessi Sposi*, "Come finiscono queste faccende? I colpi cascano sempre all'ingiù; i cenci vanno all'aria"(line 229). In this case, Verga's use of proverbs does not provide an example of grotesque language and is not in the service of folkloric representation, but instead it seems to fulfill the opposite role, establishing intertextuality with its literary predecessors.

<sup>28</sup> Angelo Marchese differentiates between this voice, as that of the peasants, and that of the customary popular narrator and of the narrator-author. He observes that in this case the word is given to the rebels (1995 53).



people become aware of their sensual, material bodily unity and community.  
(1984 255)

By granting the masses a collective voice, albeit drenched in blood and violence, the text portrays a sense of solidarity amongst the mass of rebels.

The positive potential for the group's unity is undermined by the violence that it enacts and by the commentary given by the narrative voice in the midst of the action. During these gory moments, the gaze focuses on the lower body, understood as bowels, stomach, or genitalia, while the omniscient narrative voice offers anecdotes and information that would otherwise not be available to the reader. The crowd's first victim is the reverend. He is accosted, we are told, with the consecrated host still in his stomach as he returns from having just said mass.<sup>29</sup> In a comment that follows the gruesome murder, the narrative voice informs the reader of the reverend's illicit affair with Lucia, a young girl whose father sold her when she was fourteen and who now fills the streets with "hungry rascals." Another victim, don Paolo, arrives home from working in the vineyards only to be disemboweled while his wife watches from inside their home but, in the narrator's view, the worst of it occurs when the notary ends up in the trash pile, where he ultimately meets his violent death, "Ma il peggio avvenne appena cadde il figliolo del notaio (...) Suo padre si era rialzato due o tre volte prima di strascinarsi a finire nel mondezzaio, gridandogli: 'Neddu!, Neddu!'" (1999 356). The accounts of the deaths of don Paolo and the notary also mention the young children who witness their fathers' deaths.

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<sup>29</sup> With regards to the lower bodily stratum, Bakhtin remarks, "The grotesque image [of tripe] was a favorite expression of the ambivalence of the material bodily lower stratum, which destroys and generates, swallows and is swallowed" (162).

As in the image of the *fazzoletto tricolore*, which is both a flag and a meaningless piece of cloth, the narrative emphasis on the crowd's violence against the lower bodily strata of the *cappelli* and insertion of anecdotes about the victims offer information about the perspective from which the story is being told. The background "facts" suggest that the narrative voice is somehow part of this society and a witness to the uprising while the commentary, which sympathizes heavily with the crowd's victims, establishes a critical distance from the crowd and suggests the narrator's position amongst the class of victims. The place of the narrator is further complicated in the second half of the novella, beyond the second image of the bell tower, during which the inverse perspective is deployed in victimizing the former rebels and exalting the ruling elite. These changes of position balance the narrative, but also render more difficult an understanding of the judgment that the text passes on its characters. The ambivalence of the text towards its characters, at times vilifying and victimizing opposing social groups, conforms to the ambivalent nature of the carnivalesque, which posits degradation and exaltation as two sides to the same act. Additionally, though ambivalence does not necessarily connote "objectivity," the apparent lack of sympathy with one group or the other on the part of Verga's narrator also adheres to the literary practices of *Verismo*. In contrast to the perplexity that the textual ambivalence provokes in writers and artists of the left in the 1960's, who look to literary models that have sought to represent the plight of the lower classes, my reading of it as a component of the carnivalesque does not seek to reduce the value of this ambivalence to mere conformity, but offers an alternative motive which responds to the form necessitated by the carnivalesque model and the paradigms set forth by *Verismo*.

The narrative space that constitutes the latter half of the novella is filled with the doctrinal and ecclesiastical paradigms of the official world, and therefore balances out the marginal places that dominate descriptions of the revolt. The transition back to the normative state occurs as the angry mob morphs into a chanting procession during which the gaze moves from the *casucce* and *stradiccole* back into the main square, the church, and eventually the courthouse. This return to the central spaces also functions to underscore that the rebellion represented a temporary suspension of normative order. The narrator adds how things eventually returned to the way they had been before the uprising, saying, “Tutti gli altri in paese erano tornati a fare quello che facevano prima. I *galantuomini* non potevano lavorare le loro terre colle proprie mani, e la povera gente non poteva vivere senza i *galantuomini*” (1999 361). The text remarks upon the temporary, cyclical nature of the social upheaval and therefore locates it within the circumscribed limits of representation.

The second half of the novella no longer exhibits spontaneous interjections of the collective voice, but instead disperses along with the throng of rebels and takes on a monophonic narrative style when the official, logical order returns to a normative configuration. While the text still employs free indirect speech for a transitional paragraph, it is noted differently (with a long dash instead of quotations, «») and implicates the lumberjack as one of the speakers (1999 359).<sup>30</sup> Formerly amassed as the group of rebels, the cry of the uprising is now identified as individual voices that suffer execution or life in prison. Previously the subjects of the verbs, these characters are now the direct and indirect objects of an impersonal verb. They thus return to their

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<sup>30</sup> This in contrast to the identified speaker in the opening of the short story, who remains unnamed but is instead called, “una strega, coi vecchi capelli irti sul capo, armata soltanto delle unghie” (1999 355).

subordinate position in the social (and grammatical) hierarchy. Most importantly, the text demonstrates that in the normative state of this society the collective voice of the populous remains silent.

Whereas carnivals are popular rituals characteristic of folklore, the body of literature that represents them often intersects with sacred signifiers. Bakhtin remarks that in medieval culture, carnivals occurred at different points throughout the year – on the occasion of the harvest, and often in conjunction with a Church feast (1984, 196). One such celebration marks the period just before the season of Lent, the Christian commemoration of the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness which immediately precedes Easter. Easter is a Christian feast, but many of its elements recall the principle themes of carnival as outlined above: the degradation of Jesus as the King who is crucified, the emphases on the low-strata and the grotesque body.<sup>31</sup> I further argue that the rhetoric and iconography of *Libertà* also exhibits a hybridity between its carnivalesque elements and the sacred imagery specific to the Easter Triduum. Though Easter is often categorized as a Christian rendering of the carnivalesque ritual, the distinction between the folk and sacred traditions is essential to my reading of *Libertà*. As I have demonstrated, the carnivalesque elements of *Libertà* inform the narrative structure and necessitate its textual ambivalence, but while this literary trope predetermines the cyclical nature of the revolt, the Easter imagery gives a Providential, and therefore teleological direction to the narrative that gestures at, but ultimately omits the Crucifixion.

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<sup>31</sup> Bakhtin notes that Rabelais was probably influenced by the ancient and Biblical traditions of the uncrowning of kings, and yet distinguishes between the carnival and the ancient-Biblical threads, “It is obvious that [Rabelais] also knew the Gospel story of the mock crowning, uncrowning, and scourging of the ‘king of the Jews’ [...] He presents these degradations in a purely carnivalesque spirit but is also influenced by antique and Gospel traditions” (Bakhtin 1984 198).

I have previously established that the connection between *Libertà* and Bronte's history occurs primarily over the time-place setting of the events. My analysis, which now turns to the sacred elements in the text, demonstrates how the sequence of the revolt corresponds, by means of an Easter iconography, to the chronology recorded for the historical events of the 1860 uprising in Bronte. Couched in the rhetoric of Easter, Verga's text builds up to but ultimately omits the *grande evento*, such as the crucifixion/resurrection, and plays with the pre-unificatory notion that the revolt and, by extension, the unification were acts of Providence.

The providentiality set up by Verga's formulation of the revolt in *Libertà* also brings to mind the justifications for the formation of the Italian nation that had been put forth primarily by Vincenzo Gioberti, in *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani* (1843) and by Giuseppe Mazzini, in *Della Giovine Italia* (1832) (Gentile 43, Banti 2000 128). These "founding fathers" argued that unified Italy was predestined for greatness. They supported the notion of Divine intervention by recalling the other ways in which the peninsula had been "chosen" by God: having been given a geographical location in the center of the Mediterranean, as the privileged place of origination of the Church, and having been endowed with the vast cultural patrimony left by its artists, poets and philosophers throughout the centuries. Given these historical examples, "l'Italia non faceva altro che adempiere al dovere che Dio le aveva assegnato" (Gentile 43), and unification was the next step in which the peninsula would realize its predestined glory.

Published during the immediate post-unification period, *Libertà* ironizes the idea of "L'Italia l'eletta da Dio." The notion of Providence in the course of the formation of the Italian nation suggested that this one event, unification, would bring about historical

change, but the views articulated in *Verismo* indicate that human beings cannot change the course of history and, as I noted in the introduction, warn against *l'ideale dell'ostrica*. In other words, as Sciascia notes in the same collection of essays examined in the next chapter, Verga “sunk” Providence, the boat of the Malavoglia. While it is different from the carnivalesque in its teleological implications, Providence nonetheless offers another trope for conveying the nineteenth century historicist notion that human beings cannot (and should not) try to change the course of history.<sup>32</sup>

According to the historical sources of Bronte’s history, the revolt began on Thursday and lasted through Sunday morning.<sup>33</sup> This sequence happens to coincide with the Paschal Triduum, which in the Christian tradition begins on Holy Thursday with the Lord’s Supper, and ends on the evening of the following Sunday, Easter, with the celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. At the start the connection between the 1860 uprising and the Easter celebration is arbitrary; however certain iconographic elements in the language of *Libertà* play upon the serendipitous coincidence of the historical events and the Biblical tradition. Keeping in mind the parallels between the formal models of degradation, in the following pages I explore how Verga’s narrative privileges the Easter imagery over the carnivalesque by bringing to mind The Last Supper through the tropes of sacrifice and betrayal, the death of Jesus on the cross and the tearing of the temple curtain at 3 p.m. on Good Friday, the omission of Saturday (the

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<sup>32</sup> The comment appears in the essay, *Verga e il Risorgimento*, which is also a part of Sciascia’s first collection, *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, “Mandando a picco, in una burrasca di mare, sotto i segni della fatalità, la Provvidenza manzoniana, cioè la barca dei Malavoglia denominata *Provvidenza*, Giovanni Verga faceva in effetti più rivoluzione di Mario Rapisardi. Nella *Provvidenza* che va a fondo c’è più Risorgimento che nelle esaltazioni di Lucifero e di Satana”(1989 1145).

<sup>33</sup> Radice’s account builds up to the explosion of the revolt, which escalates with continuous demonstrations from July 29 through August 1. On Thursday, August 2, Radice writes that the town was under siege in a revolt that, he writes, lasted through Sunday, August 5. Denis Mack Smith recounts that the uprising happens August 1 through August 4 but doesn’t give the days of the week (213-214).

Sabbath) from Verga's narrative, and finally the crowd's transformation on Sunday morning from a rebellious and violent throng into a singing procession. Considering the canonical reading of Verga's text as a historicizing version of Bronte's uprising, Verga's codification of the events in terms of Christ's suffering and death sheds light on the controversial aspects which propel the compulsive tendency to refashion Bronte's history.

The syntagmatic relationship between blood and wine in *Libertà* demonstrates the concomitance of carnivalesque and Paschal signifiers in the text. In *Libertà* blood is wine; the blood of the fallen intoxicates the rebels and further provokes them, ("E il sangue che fumava ed ubbriacava" (1999 359), and is poured out as is the wine during the biblical meal, ("Ora che si avevano le mani rosse di quel sangue, bisognava versare tutto il resto" (1999 357). Blood oozes out of the victims as a sign of the carnivalesque body which the rebels "collect" using the very tools of the harvest - sickles, axes, hatchets and hammers (Bakhtin 1984 208-210). The imagery, however, concomitantly evokes the transubstantiation of wine into Jesus' blood during The Last Supper.<sup>34</sup> Though the syntagmatic relationship of blood to wine suggests imagery that is both carnivalesque and Paschal, the sequential order, which corresponds to the Easter Triduum, strongly posits the transformation of blood into wine in *Libertà* as belonging to the sacred subtext. The iconography of *Libertà* characterizes as sacrificial the blood and flesh consumed by the "hungry" crowd during the revolt. The crowd's impulse to satisfy

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<sup>34</sup>According to the New Testament, The Last Supper was shared by Jesus and his disciples on the first night of Passover, the night before his death. Together with the bread, which turns into Jesus' body, wine is a Christian symbol of sacrifice: Jesus, the Son of God was sacrificed (through his death on the cross) for the sins of humankind. In the Roman Catholic rite of the Eucharist, the faithful eat of the consecrated Body and Blood as a reminder of this sacrifice. From Luke 22: 19-20: And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Oxford RB 117).

its rage, satiating its hunger and quenching its thirst with the flesh and blood of its victims evokes Christian Eucharistic imagery. These elements factor explicitly into the scene of the reverend's death. The narrator indicates that the rebels could have their hunger by the singular sacrifice of the reverend, had his blood and body been worth something, "Se quella carne di cane fosse valsa a qualche cosa, ora avrebbero potuto satollarsi" (1999 356). As he is accosted in the street, the reverend is on his way back from having just said mass and still has the consecrated host in his belly. By recalling the Eucharist just before the reverend's death, the narrator links his sacrificial flesh and blood with that of Jesus, and therefore privileges the Paschal over the carnivalesque in this passage. The above commentary also suggests the lack of redemptive capacity of the sacrificed flesh and blood offered by the reverend's death. Unlike the Christian story of Eucharistic sacrifice, which universally leads to redemption, the sacrificial lambs of Verga's story offer no salvific gesture, and thus represent an empty sacrifice which points nowhere.

The trope of sacrifice in *Libertà* is underscored by strong Passover imagery. In the passage of the attack on the reverend, Verga's narrator emphasizes the blood that adorns the entryways of the houses in the town, "Al reverendo che predicava l'inferno per chi rubava il pane. (...) Se quella carne di cane fosse valsa a qualche cosa, ora avrebbero potuto satollarsi, mentre la sbrandellavano sugli usci delle case e sui ciottoli della strada a colpi di scure" (1999 356).<sup>35</sup> The image of blood on the doorways evokes

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<sup>35</sup>The cultural context for the reverend, as an ecclesiastic who has exploited his vocation to acquire land and who is thus both priest and proprietor, comes from the first short story in *Novelle rusticane*, entitled *Il Reverendo*.<sup>35</sup> In this story the narrator refers proleptically to the death (and sacrifice?) of the reverend in *Libertà*, remarking "Su questa storia del Governo egli aveva dovuto inghiottir della bile assai, fin dal 1860, quando avevano fatto la rivoluzione, e gli era toccato nascondersi in una grotta come un topo, perché i villani, tutti quelli che avevano avuto quistioni con lui, volevano fargli la pelle"(248).



the biblical passage from Exodus, in which the Israelites spread the blood of a lamb over their doorway on the night of Passover and are thus eventually freed from slavery in Egypt.<sup>36</sup> For the Israelites in the Biblical passage, the sacrificial blood leads to freedom from Egyptian oppression, while in Verga's text the sacrifice of only his blood effects no change. *Libertà* instead portrays an empty gesture of sacrifice that, once the designated moment of inversion expires, offers no redemption for the oppressed and only allows for the return to their previous role. By unilaterally focusing the text on the past, therefore, Verga's text offers no sense of the future.

The depiction of the entryways weaves together *Libertà*'s sacred and signifying aspects with the historicizing element of class struggle. Immediately after the revolt quiets down, the narrator describes the fear and anticipation that permeate the town as a result of the scene of death and destruction. In the following passage, the closed door (*uscio*) acts as a protective barrier for those who reside behind them, in the small houses of the non-wealthy rebels (Jews), while the open entryway (*portone*), ominously signifies the invaded and extinguished spaces in the big houses of the wealthy victims (Egyptians),

Prima di notte tutti gli usci erano chiusi, paurosi, e in ogni casa vegliava il lume. Per le stradicciuole non si udivano altro che i cani, frugando per i canti, con un rosicchiare secco di ossa, nel chiaro di luna che lavava ogni cosa, e mostrava spalancati i portoni e le finestre delle case deserte. (1999 358)

The text describes two types of doors. *Uscio* indicates the front door of a house while *portone* signifies a larger door, or perhaps also a gate to an estate. The latter term is used to describe the entryways of the victims of the revolt, whose social status allow for

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<sup>36</sup> Passover and the killing of the first born sons is a theme crucial both for the Judaic roots of the Christian story and for *Libertà*. One kind of future, reproductive, needs to be killed in order for another, different and unpredictable future to arise. In the Old Testament, the book of Exodus tells the story of the Jews' captivity, oppression, and eventual liberation from Egypt. As the Biblical tradition goes, during the Passover the Lord spared the Israelites from suffering the plague that he otherwise inflicted upon the Egyptians. He passed over the houses of these chosen people, who had indicated their identity to him by covering their doors with the blood from a sacrificed lamb.

domiciles worthy of gates. In this way, the text distinguishes the houses of the rebels from those of the *cappelli* (1999 357).<sup>37</sup> The sense of desolation that emerges from the above description resembles the moment following the first Passover as it is told in Exodus, “Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his officials and all the Egyptians; and there was a loud cry in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead” (Oxford RB 84). Having mentioned that the doorways of the rebels, *usci*, are covered with the sacrificial blood of the reverend, Verga’s narrative therefore likens the protected spaces of the rebels to those of God’s chosen people. At the same time, however, the closed doors behind which the individual members of the *folla digiuna* and their families take refuge after the revolt remind the reader of the socio-historical context of the novella by also prefiguring the closed door, at the end, behind which the *galantuomini* deliberate and ultimately sentence the surviving rebels to a term of life in prison (1999 362). The entryways in *Libertà* function as both historicizing and signifying elements: by describing the material events with a rhetoric that gestures at the Passover feast they characterize the rebels as God’s chosen people and further perpetuate the teleological implications also put forth by the Easter imagery, suggesting that the revolt was building up to one great event that would change everything.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The son of the baroness hides behind the *uscio*, which underscores the idea that this term indicates the entrance to a house.

<sup>38</sup> Like sacrifice, betrayal is another element that functions within the economy of Verga’s text to evoke the signifying sequence of the Paschal Triduum. A general atmosphere of this trope permeates the whole of *Libertà*, but my reading of the Christian subtext focuses primarily on the initial cries of the crowd at the onset of the revolt. The narrative renders the betrayal expressed by the rebels towards their fellow countrymen in terms of the exchange of flesh for money. The foresters (*guardaboschi*) are named in the list of professions against which the collective voice inveighs, “A te, guardaboschi! Che hai venduto la tua carne e la carne del prossimo per due tarì al giorno!” (1999 355). Cohorts of the rebels, the collective voice exclusively singles out the foresters, describing their act of betrayal in terms of the monetary exchange which is evocative of Judas’ betrayal of Jesus after The Last Supper.<sup>38</sup> In the biblical sequence, together with the sacrifice offered during The Last Supper, Judas’ act moves the narrative forward and is thus an

Through the evocation of the Passover, Verga's text posits the rebels, who are emblematic of his *vinti*, as the "chosen" few and thus implies (as the title also does) that, as the Israelites were freed from slavery the rebels, too, will be "freed" from their "state of exile" in the homeland. Because this "freedom" takes place within the parameters of a carnivalesque moment, however, theirs is a false liberation that lasts only as long as the text permits. Verga's representation therefore sets the hopes and expectations of pre-unificatory fervor, expressed as predestination and Providence, against the disappointments of a post-unificatory reality.

A crucial point for my analysis of the sequential correspondence between the story of Christ's Passion and Verga's short story is the rhetoric of cloth, which, like the entryways, evokes both the historical referents that reveal the socio-economic differences between the rebels and their victims and the signifying elements of Jesus' death. Acting out their rage on material possessions, the women of *Libertà* storm the domestic spaces of the landowning class, "Le donne più feroci ancora, agitando le braccia scarne, strillando d'ira in falsetto, colle carni tenere sotto i brindelli delle vesti. [...] Nelle case, su per le scale, dentro le alcove, lacerando la seta e la tela fine" (1999 357). The tearing of the fine cloth brings to mind the analogous tearing of the temple curtain that goes hand in hand with the biblical tale of Jesus' death, which is celebrated at three o'clock on Good Friday. The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke recount the moment of Jesus' death with the tearing of the temple curtain in two.<sup>39</sup> Underscoring the text's depiction of

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essential component to the progression towards the Crucifixion. By this logic, the presence of sacrifice and betrayal in *Libertà* underscores the text's emphasis on the sequence of the Paschal Triduum.

<sup>39</sup> Luke writes, "It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two" (120). In the Gospel of Matthew the tearing of the curtain occurs after Jesus' death, 27: 50-51, "Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the

the “class struggle” by juxtaposing the rags of the rebels (*cenci, brandelli*) to the fine cloths of the *cappelli* (*la seta, la tela fine*), the passage also provides an avenue of meaning that points to the moment of Jesus’ death.

Just as *Libertà* presents a balanced narrative that dedicates equal amounts of space and time to the moment of the uprising and to the ensuing processes, the narrative perspective vilifies the peasants during the revolt, when they “fanno la libertà,” and subsequently depicts them as the victims of the *galantuomini* and the courts in the latter half of the text. This balanced and “non-ideological” point of view, which creates pathos for the victims even as they change, has complicated the critical reception in the postwar that identified in Verga’s art a form socially committed to the lower-classes. Those sacrificed for change in *Libertà* are the men ordered executed by *il generale*, who are not specifically named or numbered and are mentioned only this once throughout the text. After the description of the execution, ordered immediately upon the arrival of *il generale*, the narrator comments, “Da lontano, nelle viuzze più remote del paesetto, dietro gli usci, si udivano quelle schiopettate in fila come mortaletti della festa” (360). The martyrs of the uprising, or rather the desire to bring about change, however are not directly implicated as the historical figures (Lombardo et al.) who are thought to have prompted the lower classes to “fare la libertà” and then to have lost control in Bronte 1860. While the sacrifice is a consequence of the uprising, as is demonstrated through the text’s recall of the *viuzze* and *usci* of the marginal spaces in which the revolt took place, the hastiness and superficiality with which the narrative treats the deaths, as the carnivalesque *mortaletti della festa*, renders them empty and non-redemptive.

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rocks were split,” and in Mark 15: 37-38, “Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.”

The teleological iconography and rhetoric of *Libertà*, which characterize the rebels as God's chosen people (the subjects of his providential plan), utilize the signifying codes of the carnivalesque to posit the narrative of revolt and repression in terms that complicate the concomitantly present historical referents. The canonical reading has privileged the historical referents in the text and has thus unilaterally designated *Libertà* as a version of Bronte's history and of the Sicilian Risorgimento. The need to control the reception of Verga's story reveals anxiety about the ambiguities that emerge from its pagan and sacred signifiers, elements that nullify the rebels' subjectivity (or historical agency) and, in turn, problematize the claims of *Verismo*, to "rendere la scena nettamente, coi colori adatti, tale da dare la rappresentazione della realtà com'è stata, o come avrebbe dovuto essere (1958 179). Both the ritualistic imagery of the carnivalesque, which suggests that the revolt is a temporary subversion of the social hierarchy and thus that the old order will eventually return, and the teleology set up by the presence of the Paschal Triduum, which gestures towards but then omits a grand event that promises to revolutionize the world order, signal that paradigmatic "change" did not take place in the Risorgimento but that, instead, things only changed in order to remain the same.

#### *Nino Bixio a Bronte: A Literary History*

My examination of the carnivalesque and Easter elements in Verga's novella turns to an analysis of Benedetto Radice's account, *Nino Bixio a Bronte* (1910), since this comprehensive contextualization and rendering of the Bronte uprising is often cited as the primary source of "historical" information on the 1860 revolt (Riall 1999 42). My analysis of *Nino Bixio* shows how this "historical" account of the uprising employs the

rhetoric and iconography of its literary predecessors. Though its stated scope is to render “the bloody facts of Bronte,” as Radice writes in the opening phrases, the text reads like a postmodern novel, and I contend that it prefigures Vincenzo Consolo’s book, *Il sorriso dell’ignoto marinaio* (1976), which I will analyze in chapter three. My analysis of *Nino Bixio a Bronte* flies in the face of the text’s self-proclaimed neutrality, focusing on those aspects that qualify it as a self-conscious version of Bronte’s history that foretell of the postmodern texts to come. Recalling Jameson’s reformulation of interpretation as the unconscious incorporation of inherited knowledge that informs reading, I examine the impulses that guide the underlying message of Radice’s narrative. I find that rhetorically, *Nino Bixio a Bronte* evokes the canonized Italian models for describing popular revolt and thus aligns itself, ideologically, with its literary forebears. While Radice cites from Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, the rhetorical devices that are incorporated into the body of his text reveal Verga’s influence. My analysis thus shows how Radice’s account corroborates Verga’s narrative, and concludes by further exploring the subsequent problem of causality that results from the intertextuality between fictional and historical texts.<sup>40</sup>

Though the primary narrative of *Nino Bixio* recounts the prehistory and history of the Bronte uprising, its incorporation of several different texts, authored by various members of Bronte’s ruling elite, displays formal disjunctions. The account comprises personal anecdotes by Radice, a native of Bronte who was six years old when the revolt took place, and by other members of the community whom Radice interviewed. With two “chapters,” respectively entitled “La vendetta” and “La repressione,” the work

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<sup>40</sup> This sets up my analysis, in chapters 2 and 3, of the texts by Sciascia, Vancini and Consolo. These later fictions openly grapple with their literary forebears, while also claiming historical truth.

comprises archival documents, letters from Nino Bixio and other government officials, and excerpts from Bixio's personal diary. *Nino Bixio* also has an epilogue that provides a number of documents about the historical events, including another personal narrative in the form of a letter from Placido De Luca, a citizen of Bronte who recounts the revolt and ensuing trial just weeks after the matter had come to an end, a record from the criminal trial of August 1860, Folder 83, which reproduces the history according to the archival records and the decision by the court, a record from the November 23, 1860 meeting of Bronte's town council, which concerns the former rebels who remained in jail in Catania (and would not be tried until 1863), and, lastly, a list of houses that were looted and burned during the revolt.

The formally disjointed *Nino Bixio* also demonstrates its self-awareness as a part of the historical record. This self-consciousness is most explicit in the text's inscription of one Antonino Cairone onto the prehistory of land conflict in Bronte. After discussing the collective struggle to gain back land usage rights, Radice writes, "Fra tante miserie però, a conforto di chi coltiva i più nobili sentimenti di patria, è degno di memoria il nome del notaio giureconsulto Antonino Cairone" (262). In this narrative aside, directed at the reader of his text, Radice acknowledges the benefits of the materiality of his cultural product: he can remember and inscribe names of the "good" citizens of Bronte in the face of the town's national notoriety as a place of the 1860 massacre.

Disjunction is characteristic of *Nino Bixio* not only in the formal sense, but also in the narrative perspective of the revolt, which switches between the present and past tenses. Outside of the sequence of the uprising, the rest of Radice's narrative locates the events in the distant past, using the *passato remoto*. The present tense of the revolt

conveys the notion that narrator (and reader) relive the atrocities of 1860 and gestures at the contemporaneity of the personal memories that are synthesized by this text. The effect of oscillating between present and past further reflects the postmodern condition of Radice's narrative. Rendering the past present suggests that the experience of the present (i.e. 1907) is not available and so the narrative instead offers a "glossy mirage" of the past which replaces the present and offers no place for the future (Jameson 2000 205).

I contend that the literary rhetoric of Radice's account is one of the most important, and yet until now unrecognized elements determining the canonization of Bronte's history. The direct quotations taken from Dante's *Divina Commedia* and the rhetorical terms of Verga and Manzoni, which are infused into the text, convey the idea that this uprising was part of God's Providential plan. As a short story, *Libertà* offers an elliptical narrative that picks up *in medias res* as the revolt escalates while *Nino Bixio* contextualizes the peasant rebellion in Bronte in terms of the prehistory of land conflict, dating as far back as 1491. The latter thus responds to a need to explain the uprising, all the while conforming through its literary foundations, to the characterization of the revolt as fulfilling Divine Will. During his narrative of the uprising, Radice quotes from *Purgatory VI, verses 125-126*. He writes,

L'assalto ed il saccheggio procedono quasi militarmente. E come nelle sommosse:

«un Marcel diventa  
Ogni villan che parteggiando viene»,  
così fra quella turba alcuni plebei, creatisi da sè stessi generali, presero il nome di Garibaldi e di Medici, e, cinta in segno di comando, una sciarpa formata di stracci fazzoletti tricolori, e un altro fazzoletto sciorinato alla puna di una canna, che andavano sventolando... (278)

Beginning with the quotation from Dante's poem, Radice recalls the political-religious canto of *Purgatory*, and cites from the concluding verses of the poet's apostrophe and



lament to Italy which begins, “Ahi serva Italia” (verse 76). According to Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio’s paraphrase, the specific verses used by Radice allude to God’s plan for Italy. They write that the poet, “rivolge poi la sua parola a Dio chiedendo se tutto ciò non sia forse un segreto piano della Provvidenza per il bene futuro” (115). By explicitly recalling Dante’s apostrophe, Radice thus casts the historical circumstances of Bronte in 1860 in the medieval terms of the Destiny and Providence of the Italian nation.

The description following Radice’s quotation from Dante reveals how the rhetoric of this text recalls *Libertà* and, in a broader sense, describes the revolt in a canonical rhetoric of the Risorgimento. Radice characterizes the throng of angry rebels as self-appointed generals who march around flailing tricolor rags and handkerchiefs that have been fashioned to look like capes and waving handkerchiefs, hung like laundry from the end of a stick, all the while proclaiming liberty (*una sciarpa formata di stracci fazzoletti tricolori, e un altro fazzoletto sciorinato alla punta di una canna*), utilizing the same terms that open Verga’s novella, *fazzoletto*, *stracci*, and *sciorinare*.<sup>41</sup> With its testimonial claims to the particular story of Bronte, *Nino Bixio*’s use of the terms echoes their signification in *Libertà*: they are both meaningless objects and symbols, used by the rebels, to represent the change brought on as they “fanno la libertà.”

*Nino Bixio* also describes the crowd with metaphors that recall the literary models of Verga and Manzoni and that further underscore the providentiality of the revolt.<sup>42</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> The terms also appear in *I Malavoglia*. When ‘Ntoni is called to the draft and Padron ‘Ntoni goes to the ruling elite of the town to get him excused, the narrative voice replicates Don Giammaria’s reaction. Through indirect discourse the text thus explains why ‘Ntoni will not be excused from the draft, “Ma don Giammaria, il vicario, gli avea risposto che gli stava bene, e questo era il frutto di quella rivoluzione di stanasso che avevano fatto collo sciorinare il fazzoletto tricolore dal campanile” (Verga 1995, 11).

<sup>42</sup> Angelo Marchese’s observation about Verga’s text, “Le immagini del «mare in tempesta», della folla che «spumeggiava e ondeggiava» e, poco dopo, della «piena di un fiume» e del «torrente» formano un’isotopia ideologicamente rilevante – quella della rivolta come un evento naturale ingovernabile e pauroso alla

description of the crowd's movement through the town, "come un mare in tempesta," (287) recalls verbatim the opening lines of *Libertà* (1999 355), which also evokes the *assalto ai forni* in Chapter XII of Manzoni's novel, *I Promessi sposi* (Marchese 53-54). Manzoni's chapter focuses on the story of the riotous, hungry crowd that loots the bakeries in Milan 1628, after the cost of bread increases significantly as a result of the scarcity of grain produced during the harvest that year. Deploying descriptive phrases and epithets that bring to mind natural phenomena, such as "flutti e flutti" and "il torrente penetrò per tutti i varchi" (296), Manzoni's scene offers rhetoric and imagery that portrays the crowd, a collectivity comprised of women, men and children in the lower and working classes, as an unstoppable and irrational force. By means of the description of the crowd, Radice's text aligns itself with these literary precursors and concomitantly reveals the unconscious impulses that codify the popular revolt in providential terms. His rhetorical strategy, in turn, belies Radice's contextualization of the revolt within the long history of land struggle and implicitly suggests that the event was impulsive and guided by forces beyond human control.

Also evocative of uncontrollable natural phenomena, *fiumana* is another term which stands in for the rebellious crowd in *Nino Bixio*. Taking on the view of Dr. Cimbali, a member of Bronte's ruling elite, he describes the violent scene from the balcony, "Mirava inorridito dal suo balcone il Dott. Cimbali ardere sotto un cumulo di

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stregua di una bufera," also points out that Radice's formulation of the revolt suggests its inevitability. He draws upon his previous explanation of the ideology manifest in Manzoni's text:

Parole come 'acqua',... indicano che il Manzoni considera la sommossa come un evento atmosferico, irrazionale e quindi amorale; non che egli giustifichi la violenza, si badi; essa e' comunque l'inevitabile conseguenza di un comportamento collettivo che sfugge alla norma etica individuale, laddove predomini il senso comune (sempre alienato) sul buon senso dei singoli. Il narratore considera il tumulto, quindi, un fatto spontaneo, non organizzato, nel quale le passioni prevalgono sulla logica; di qui l'incontrastato dominio degli slogan, delle parole d'ordine, delle frasi ripetute."

paglia, i due infelici uccisi, Mauro e Zappia, quando una fiumana di popolo scendeva verso la sua casa”(284). Beyond the character development that is part and parcel of this narrative (*inorridito*), the description of the crowd as a *fiumana* recalls both Verga and Dante. Though not present in *Libertà*, Verga uses *fiumana* in the preface to *I Malavoglia* to convey his notion of the juggernaut of progress. Referring to social mobility Verga writes, “Il movente dell’attività umana che produce la fiumana del progresso è preso qui alle sue sorgenti, nelle proporzioni più modeste e materiali”(1995; 3). As Ferruccio Cecco’s note explains, the term has a negative and violent connotation which implies that progress turns a blind eye on the lowly and ultimately leaves them behind.

Dante’s use of *fiumana* in *Inferno II* broadens the scope of the significations of Verga’s socio-historical use of the term in *I Malavoglia*. In this case, *Nino Bixio* allows the connection to Dante’s text by directly quoting *Purgatorio VI*, discussed above. In Dante’s poem, the word is uttered by Beatrice, who has descended to Hell to meet Dante and Vergil as they prepare to enter the gates of Hell. In the passage, Beatrice quotes Saint Lucia’s explanation for letting her descend, saying

Non odi tu la pieta del suo pianto,  
non vedi tu la morte che ‘l combatte  
su la fiumana ove ‘l mar non ha vanto? (106-108)

Dante’s term *fiumana* connotes the inevitable moral decline towards sin that is characteristic of human nature.<sup>43</sup> Read through the lens of Radice’s description of the crowd’s movement throughout Bronte, Dante’s *fiumana* makes apparent the moralistic tone of *Nino Bixio*. The term evokes both Verga’s socio-historical phenomenon of Italy’s process of modernization, rooted in human action but beyond individual control, and Dante’s philosophical-moralistic dimension of sin, which transcends the socio-historical

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<sup>43</sup> See Umberto Bosco’s comment. “Inferno,” *La Divina Commedia* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1992):32.

context but nonetheless indicates that an external force drives the throng of rebels. Despite Radice's contextualization and explanation of the uprising in terms of Bronte's prehistory of land struggle, the perspective of the historical events that Radice offers therefore also gestures at the providentiality of Bronte's popular revolt. The term *fiumana* appears again as the crowd of angry rebels morphs into a holy procession, led by a priest, as it re-enters the town after the revolt (292). A procession of this sort also takes place in *Libertà*, and it is no coincidence (or maybe it is!) that both narratives depict the transition on the dawning of Sunday morning, which corresponds sequentially to the biblical moment of Christ's Resurrection. Unlike Radice, who gives a full account of the Saturday events pertaining to the revolt, Verga's text omits Saturday. This tactic underscores the importance of the Easter sequence in Verga's novella, but it is also perhaps a result of the brevity necessitated by the elliptical form of the short story. The biblical version also elides Saturday because it is the Sabbath, the day of rest. Thus where Radice's Saturday serves to provide a fully contextualized account of Bronte's history, Verga's sequential omission functions in the service of stylistic choices, and in so doing it underscores the already strong presence of the sacred subtext in *Libertà*.

Radice's narrative of the revolt marks the definitive dates of the historical events, beginning on Wednesday, August 1 and ending on Sunday, August 5. As an authoritative historical text, *Nino Bixio* demonstrates that the uprising did, in fact, take place Thursday through Sunday and that Verga's narrative sequence is historically accurate. As a result, this historical text corroborates Verga's story, endows *Libertà* with historical authority, and blurs the lines between fiction and history.

The strong resemblance between the content of *Libertà* and the history of Bronte recounted by *Nino Bixio* not only works to assert the historical authority of Verga's novella, but also sheds light on the signifying aspects of Radice's text. In other words, certain elements of Radice's text are both historically accurate and fictitiously problematic, because they adhere to the historical chronology while evoking the religious connotation of Easter. For example, Radice mentions that death of the notary, Cannata, occurred at 3:00 p.m. on Friday, "Verso le tre dopo mezzogiorno fu ucciso prima il notaio Cannata"(280). This formulation, "three hours after noon," recalls the exact time and day of the *Via Crucis*, or Way of the Cross. This image of Christ bearing his cross on the way to his death is the strongest emblem of Good Friday and perhaps of the entire Easter sequence. Given the sacred subtext of *Libertà* and the inheritance of the moralistic and religious codes at work in *Nino Bixio a Bronte*, the presence of the Easter Triduum in Radice's representation demonstrates how the historiography of the 1860 revolt has been shaped by a trans-historical rhetoric which implies that a whole people, the subaltern classes of Sicily are "guilty" of having crucified a king.

A few more examples of the points of contact between these texts will serve to further explicate the way in which the intertextuality exhibited in Radice and Verga's texts undermines the convention of historical origin. Verga uses several epithets for the crowd, including the drunken crowd (*la folla 'briaca*), which Radice also deploys explaining how the rebels became drunk because the owners opened the bars for fear of having their homes ransacked.<sup>44</sup> Drawing upon Bakhtin's understanding of the

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<sup>44</sup> Radice explains, "Stanchi irrompono nelle cantine, aperte dai proprietari per evitare il sacco alle loro case. Mangiano, bevono, rinfrescano le arse gole, *ed ebbri alla fine di vino e di furore*, al comando degl'improvvisati generali, come torrenti di lava, dagli squarciati fianchi d'un vulcano, corrono

carnavalesque form, which defines a determined space-time configuration, in which the social hierarchy is inverted and that takes shape in the narrative as the degradation through language and imagery, my analysis of the carnivalesque in *Libertà* began by focusing on the use of bells to demarcate the temporary and parenthetical time frame dedicated to the revolt. Bells are also a part Radice's memorial of the event, and he mentions them several times throughout the narrative. At the onset of the revolt on August 1, Radice writes, "Si sentirono tocchi di campana," (275) and juxtaposes the sound of church bells ringing on Thursday evening, August 2, to that of the bells *a martello* that the rebels sound," "Erano le ore 23 e alla chiesa dell'Annunziata si suonava la benedizione, quando nello stesso tempo si sentì una campana a martello" (277). The bells also ring on Sunday at the end of the violence, and the change in their tone is remarked upon by Radice, "le campane, cambiato il loro funebre rintocco, suonavano a doppio festosamente..." (293). As in *Libertà*, in which bells signal the start and end of the revolt, Radice's text demarcates the uprising with the different meanings conveyed by the different types of rings *a martello* and *festosamente*. While the sounds of bells in the texts draw upon a literary code to indicate (to the reader) a carnivalesque moment, in the cultural codes of the societies about which Radice and Verga write they also signify a "real" impending danger to the town's citizens.

Apart from the serendipitous occasion of the uprising, having taken place (give or take a day or two) in the same days during which Easter is traditionally celebrated

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qua e là nuovi saccheggi, a nuovi incendi" (279). Taking its cue from the drunken scene, *Libertà* posits blood and wine in a syntagmatic relationship, while the narrative voice of *Nino Bixio a Bronte* makes a paradigmatic connection between blood and wine, "E da molte finestre penzolano bandiere e lampioncini e rificolone di carta colorata a illuminare per tutta la notte, come in una sera di festa, i saturnali della nascente libertà fra intronar di campane, squillare di trombe, rullar di tamburi e gli urli selvaggi della folla gavazzante nel sangue e nel vino" (286).

(Thursday through Sunday), a consultation of Denis Mack Smith's essay, "The Peasants' Revolt in Sicily, 1860," reveals that Easter weekend of 1860 (April 5-8) was, in fact, characterized by popular unrest throughout Sicily. Demonstrations took place in Catania and Girgenti (Agrigento), and were decisive in convincing Garibaldi to invade the island (198-199). Put this way, Mack Smith places Eastertide as a pivotal moment in the national and regional (Sicilian) memory of Garibaldi's presence on the island. As a result of Mack Smith's insight, the artifice so strongly identified in Verga's text melts away, and we are left wondering about the allegorical implications of historical events. In other words, *Libertà* respects the history of Bronte's uprising while at the same time capitalizing on those elements that lend themselves to allegorical signification, but this is no less true of *Nino Bixio a Bronte*. While *Libertà* plays with, at times stretching and altogether omitting, the historical elements of Bronte's uprising, Radice's account corroborates Verga's story. It would be difficult to underestimate to what extent Verga's narrative influenced Radice's. Given the latter's self-reflexivity and the rhetorical choices that point to its literary forebears, outlined above, it is clear that even Radice's account, hailed as the authoritative version of the 1860 uprising in Bronte, pays its due to the authority that Verga commands. The heirs of these texts, readers/writers who look to them as a way of constructing a collective identity, therefore become lost in questions of causality, and are left to grapple with this ambiguous, canonized heritage of the Italian nation.

Drawing upon the ordering outlined in the Bible, which begins on Thursday with The Last Supper and ends on Sunday with the Resurrection, both texts gesture at, but ultimately omit the Crucifixion, which is the a pivotal point of a teleology that leads to

universal redemption. Noting also the popularity in the xix century of the xv century book by Thomas Kempis, entitled *L'imitazione di Cristo*, of which 90 editions were published during the 60 year span between 1800 and 1860, Alberto Mario Banti observes the importance of Catholic rituals in Italian culture and the centrality of the Crucifixion to these rituals,

In forme rituali diverse, le principali pratiche culturali dell'Italia di inizio Ottocento – la messa e la recita del rosario – rinnovavano ogni volta la storia del Cristo, con una particolare enfasi mistica sul suo momento culminante, ovvero il sacrificio compiuto da Lui sulla croce per la riconciliazione di Dio con l'intera umanità. (Banti 2000 124)

While they strongly evoke thus said rituals, Verga and Radice's fall silent on the most important, because redemptive, moment in the Christian story. Since the redemption of this moment exists in its symbolic-testimonial value, according to Banti's interpretation of Robert Hertz's analysis, then "i fedeli hanno il compito sia di rievocarlo in forma rituale attraverso la messa, sia di replicarne le gesta, sacrificando se stessi in un'incessante catena esemplare"(2000 123-124). In structuring the absence of the Crucifixion from their representations of the revolt, Verga and Radice instead leave void the space that would otherwise have been occupied by a Messianic figure, the representation of whose sacrifice could have been offered for the greater good. The critical discourse, which has drawn a direct line between *Libertà* and the historical events of Bronte's 1860 uprising, has attempted to compensate for Verga's alleged omission of Niccolo Lombardo, the bourgeois lawyer who sought to mobilize the peasant classes of Bronte, by rewriting this history in many forms which depict him as a Communist Christ. Radice includes Lombardo in his account, and yet *Nino Bixio a Bronte* also does not posit Lombardo as a Messianic figure despite its allusions to, and omission of the Crucifixion.



The gesture towards and ellipsis of this element in both Radice and Verga's texts reveals ambiguities about the memory preserved by these representations, which provocatively and perhaps dangerously suggest its continued existence in the repressed recesses of the collective unconscious.

The absence of a Messianic figure that Verga and Radice construct refuses to resolve, and thus does not redeem this problematic moment of the Unification. As Banti also demonstrates in his explication of the "canon" of the Risorgimento, which he defines as the body of texts that precede and determine its iconography, the martyrs for the national cause were celebrated as Christological figures (125). The silent omission of a Christological figure by Verga and Radice's texts, therefore gestures at the national heroes celebrated in the texts of Banti's canon without directly implicating them. Perhaps they suggest a parallel between the *galantuomini* who were killed during the revolt and the Christological figures or, perhaps, as is the case more strongly made by the conclusion of Verga's novella, in which the former rebels are buried alive, the crucified martyrs crucified themselves.

Mack Smith's discussion of the ever-changing political loyalties of the Sicilian peasants during the course of Garibaldi's campaign offers historical insight into why a text that lacks a counter-hero as a crucified Messiah is problematic for the particular case of Bronte. Bronte's communal lands had been a grand duchy since 1491, and were thus considered royal property, belonging to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Mack Smith recalls that Garibaldi, whose army consisted mostly of middle class men, was not initially favored by the peasants. Historically, Sicilian peasants tended to back their oppressive Bourbon rulers in order to stand against the landowning classes, to the extent that they

even provided the manpower behind the bloody Bourbon counter-revolutions of 1799 and 1849 (193-194). With the decree of June 2, which abolished the grist tax and restored communal lands for public use throughout Sicily, the peasants became supportive of Garibaldi's regime because they believed that he would bring about change (212).

Bronte's land conflict differed in an important way from the rest of Sicily: the latter was plagued with the residual paradigm of the *latifondi*, large private estates held by individual owners who exploited peasant sharecroppers. As a grand duchy, the communal lands of Bronte were not run by exploitative owners of *latifondi*, but they were instead run by Ducalists, classes loyal to the Bourbon King who managed the land on behalf of its absentee owners. The ruling elites of Bronte were in favor of continued Bourbon rule and opposed to the changes brought about by Garibaldi's dictatorship.

When the new government issued the reforms that summer, as Mack Smith explains, "With the victory of Garibaldi, the villagers (of Bronte) claimed that the fall of the Bourbon king should also mean the fall of his creature, the duchy of Bronte, and division of its lands among the inhabitants"(212). The sequencing of both Verga and Radice's stories gestures at the Crucifixion, and in the Christian ideal the death of Jesus, King of the Jews and the Messiah, was universally redemptive. Mack Smith's explanation that the peasants showed loyalty towards their oppressive king hints that, by alluding to the Crucifixion (but omitting it), Verga and Radice's texts insinuate that the Bourbon king was the Messiah. In this sense, the uprising *did* lead to the fall of the (Bourbon) king, but for the interpretations which have until now dominated the reception of these texts, he was the wrong king. The omission of the Crucifixion therefore suggests that the Bourbon king was the Messiah. The mere possibility of this reading works against the

ideal of liberty, which was a promised result of the Unification.<sup>45</sup> To further support my point, the trial documents of August, 1860 ambiguously reflect that Lombardo led the peasants in a pro-Bourbon (thus anti-Garibaldi ) revolution. Mack Smith, in fact, explains that with Garibaldi's rise to power and with the arrival of Nino Bixio in Bronte, the ruling elites of the town (who had always been pro-Bourbon) posed as pro-Garibaldi and accused Lombardo of being a "Bourbonist" (213). The documents from Lombardo's trial declare that he was found guilty and sentenced to death by execution for having led a pro-Bourbon revolt. They wrongly reflect that the uprising was pro-Bourbon, and thus confirm the possibility that it was also a crucifixion.

Verga and Radice's narratives depict the uprising as guided by Providence and downplay the socio-historical explanations for the revolt. By portraying the revolt as an anti-Garibaldi, carnivalesque period during which the degradation, or crucifixion of a king also took place, these texts perpetuate the notion that it was not revolutionary, but instead took place within the parameters set aside for ritual inversions. While *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio* fall silent on the Messianic figure, which nonetheless exists as a structuring absence, they posit the revolt as a factor of Providence. The uprising does not come across as a spontaneous explosion of subaltern patriotism but instead as part of a universally circumscribed formula; not an organized effort of men, but instead a providential onslaught(er). Most importantly, the formulas with which Verga and Radice codify the revolt negate the importance of agency, or subjectivity which, as I demonstrate

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<sup>45</sup> Sciascia points out that Verga was a monarchist in his second essay, *Verga e la Libertà*. He writes, "Non sarebbe per noi una sorpresa, anzi, se dalle sue carte venisse fuori qualche redazione della novella di data più remota; o degli appunti, delle note, che in qualche modo dessero conferma a questo nostro sospetto: che in *Libertà* le ragioni dell' arte, cioè di una superiore mistificazione che è poi superiore verità, abbiano coinciso con le ragioni di una mistificazione risorgimentale cui *il Verga, monarchico e crispino*, si sentiva tenuto"(my emphasis, 98).

in chapter 2, poses a problem for the self image of twentieth century Sicily. Further complicating the inheritance of this story, the empty gestures portrayed in *Libertà* along with the pre-postmodern elements of *Nino Bixio* destabilize a foundational story of the Italian nation, and offer no alternative for the future but the past.

## Chapter II: Re-writing History: Inscribing Peasant Agency onto Bronte's History

In this chapter I examine the essays by Leonardo Sciascia, *I fatti di Bronte* (1960) and *Verga e la Libertà* (1963), and the film, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato* (1972), whose screenplay was co-authored by Sciascia, Fabio Carpi, Nicola Badalucco, and the film's director, Florestano Vancini. As representations of Bronte's 1860 peasant uprising, the essays and film examined here participated in the national centenary commemoration of Giuseppe Garibaldi's campaign in Sicily in 1860, which marked the beginning of the Italian Unification. All three texts engage the Italian canon, and although they respond specifically to *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio* they incorporate a broader heritage that includes both the works of Alessandro Manzoni and Antonio Gramsci. In the following pages, I show how the cultural patrimony that precedes all three texts has largely served to shape Sciascia and Vancini's refashioning of the Bronte narrative.

My discussion of the rewriting of the Bronte narrative follows my findings from chapter one, in which I examined the representation of the 1860 uprising in *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio*. I showed how these texts have omitted the notion that the peasants acted autonomously, that is for and by themselves, a conclusion that comes from their evocations of the Christian myths, which suggest that the revolt was on the path to fulfilling God's providential plan, and their description of the revolt as a carnivalesque and ritualistic inversion deeply rooted in peasant culture. In addition to exploring the intertextual relationships with the canonical depictions of Bronte's peasants from the late xix and early xx centuries, in this chapter I also examine the way in which Gramsci's postwar work weighs on these texts. I show how the theories put forth in *The Prison*

*Notebooks*, published posthumously in 1949, both perpetuated the absence of autonomy from the peasant character and also denied this class (and this class only) intellectual representation, thus also taking away its voice. My reading demonstrates how the essays and film both rely upon and, at the same time, contest the heritage that has resulted from the canonical versions of the Bronte narrative and, more broadly in Gramsci's work on the postwar conceptions of class struggle. The essays and film explore ways of representing the peasants by looking back at historical examples and by writing about the present, embracing contemporary models through which peasant voices speak. I find that these texts offer examples of peasant agency from within the Bronte story and thus promote the idea that the peasants acted for and by themselves. Sciascia's essays are informed by the myriad readings and experiences of their author; instead of coherent stories they offer fragments of critical thought and reflection on history and the historiographical tradition. In the author's note to *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, the collection of essays in which *I fatti di Bronte* was first published, Sciascia reflects on the process of writing, saying

Il saggio su Pirandello, qui pubblicato insieme con pochi altri su scrittori e cose della Sicilia, avrebbe dovuto essere un Pirandello *par lui-même*: e destinato ad una colonna divulgativa, di altro editore, e quindi a un diverso pubblico. Da ciò l'abbondanza, che qui può apparire sproporzionata, di citazioni. Ma risultò infine come una interpretazione dei rapporti fra Pirandello e la Sicilia, forse alquanto tendenziosa, certamente non valida a dare a quel pubblico una piana informazione sull'opera e la vita dello scrittore.

Non sono un critico di professione: e questo libro vuole essere una "notizia" della Sicilia attraverso particolari letture ed esperienze. Una "notizia", soltanto nella forma diversa da quelle che, in altri libri, ho tentato di comunicare ai lettori. (2002 1203)

Formulating the act of writing as the convergence of reading and experience, Sciascia also remarks on the inevitable tendentiousness of it. The author states that the essays

were initially supposed to provide an objective view of Pirandello and of Sicily, but he also recognizes the underlying, and inevitable ideology that has emerged from these texts. Sciascia's statement brings to mind Fredric Jameson's notion of "interpretation," defined as a "strong rewriting" that "presupposes" a mystifying process inherent to all texts. Jameson's conceptualization also goes hand in hand with the act of writing, so much so that, he adds, "it would make sense to seek a latent meaning behind a manifest one, or to rewrite the surface categories of a text in the stronger language of a more fundamental interpretive code"(1984 60). Whereas in Chapter 1, Jameson's idea offered a way of understanding the critical reception of Verga and Radice's texts as truths, the "strong rewritings" to which he refers here characterize the works analyzed below. Though the essays, *I fatti di Bronte* and *Libertà* constitute fragmented narratives, the film offers a coherent story that reconstructs, from beginning to end, the 1860 revolt in Bronte. In these texts, Sciascia and his colleagues focus primarily on the history of the 1860 uprising, while also blending in the Partisan Resistance and the Spanish Civil War. *I fatti di Bronte* and *Verga e la Libertà* offer a platform through which Sciascia contemplates the process of textualization, writing historical events, and by which he establishes the primacy of the material, textual record as the only means by which we can access, and attempt to know or understand the past (Hutcheon 16). In my analysis, all three texts, *I fatti di Bronte*, *Verga e la Libertà*, and *Bronte* emerge as meta-narratives that grapple with the historicized, circumscribed vision of Sicilians that has been handed down through, and by the textual tradition. My reading borrows from Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction, which she defines in the following passage,

Historiographic metafiction incorporates [literature, history, and theory]: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs

(*historiographic metafiction*) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (5)

The reworking of the historical and literary traditions that takes place in *I fatti di Bronte*, *Verga e la Libertà*, and *Bronte* is shaped by a dependence on them – any and all knowledge of the events derives from other texts – as well as a contention of the ways in which they have presented the case of Bronte. Sciascia uses the texts to demonstrate his knowledge of them (needing to know good work in order to do good work) – but also as a way of creating a place for himself in the (Sicilian-dominated Italian) canon. This gesture, of situating his work within the tradition so as to reshape it, is further underscored by the editorial activity that he actively pursued throughout his career. Sciascia conducted numerous republications of *I fatti di Bronte*. Initially published in the collection *Pirandello e la Sicilia* in 1960 the essay also served as the foreword to the reissuing of *Nino Bixio a Bronte* by Salvatore Sciascia editore, in 1963 and later in 1984. The same essay also appeared, under the subtitle “I fatti dell’estate 1860 e i precedenti del ‘20” as part of a collaborative contribution, co-authored by Sciascia, Carpi and Vancini, to the summer 1965 printing of the bimonthly journal, *Cinema Nuovo*. Sciascia’s misprision, or strong misreading of Verga and Radice’s work suggests oedipal impulse at work in his remediation of their texts.<sup>46</sup> The self-conscious critique of the works of his historical and literary predecessors reveals an awareness of the limitations posed by the text. He works from within these parameters, composing his essays and collaborating on the film in such a way that he subverts and refigures the preconceived

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<sup>46</sup> Bloom describes misprision in the following passage, “Poetic Influence – when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, wilful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist”(30).



notions about the uprising that have, until this point, been perpetuated by the textual tradition (Hutcheon 13).

In their subversive imitation, the texts examined here play with the limits that they must also obey, and they thus parody the works of their forebears. Hutcheon introduces parody as a device of historiographic metafiction, she writes,

What I mean by parody here – as elsewhere in this study – is *not* the ridiculing imitation of the standard theories and definitions that are rooted in eighteenth-century theories of wit. The collective weight of parodic *practice* suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity. In historiographic metafiction, in film, in painting, in music, and in architecture, this parody paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity. (26)

The parodic practices of *I fatti di Bronte*, *Verga e la Libertà*, and *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato* are also evident in their titles. While these titles evoke narrative types such as the *faits divers*, a form of journalism that briefly recounts sundry events, and the chronicle, traditionally understood as an account of historical events written in chronological order, the content of each text undermines the given label. As a result, in *I fatti di Bronte* Sciascia destabilizes the traditional notion of facts while in *Verga e la Libertà* he explores the weight of artistic license, and finally, in *Bronte* the filmmakers offer a coherent narrative of the uprising that makes claims to the historical truth despite its self-evident tendentiousness.

After discussing the complications that emerge from Gramsci's depiction of the southern peasantry as lacking in revolutionary potential, my analysis explores the rewriting of previous Bronte texts that took place in Italian intellectual circles in the 1960's, beginning with Sciascia's essays *I fatti di Bronte* (1960) and *Verga e la Libertà* (1963) and concluding with the film, *Bronte* (1972). While I contend that Sciascia's

essays are meta-narratives that grapple with traditional forms of writing, I find that the film offers a coherent, visual realization of another version of the Bronte narrative. My analysis of the intertextuality exhibited in the film examines its relationship with both the acknowledged historical sources, mentioned above, and the literary foundations which, although they have been silenced by the closing credits, are nonetheless present within the diegesis.

### Historical context and Cultural Patrimony of Gramsci

Gramsci's deprivation of autonomy to the peasantry in *The Prison Notebooks* (1949), both in his northern alternative to the Unification and exclusionary view of the peasantry as the only class that did not elaborate intellectuals, constitutes one component of the cultural patrimony with which Sciascia and contemporary authors struggled (Segre 2005, 133-134).<sup>47</sup> In his critique of the Risorgimento, Gramsci criticized its leaders for having failed to execute agrarian reform which, he then argued, resulted in the marginalization of Southern peasants from the process of Unification. In response to this historical analysis, from which he concluded that the Unification took place without the masses, Gramsci offered a solution that endorsed the revolutionary potential of the northern urban work force, thus presenting the mobilization of the factory workers as the organic path to Unification. In addition to his northern solution, in another passage from his work, commonly referred to as "The Intellectuals," Gramsci differentiated between the differing potentials of the lower classes, depending on whether they lived in cities or

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<sup>47</sup> Salvatore Francesco Romano's book, *Momenti del Risorgimento in Sicilia* was published in 1953 and Renzo Del Carria published his study, *Proletari senza rivoluzione* in 1966. Del Carria specifically addresses the uprising in Bronte, and the following citation demonstrates how he adopts terms used also by Gramsci, such as *dirigente*, to argue on behalf of southern autonomy, "Ora è sempre il vecchio muratore che dirige la difesa, mentre i 'capi' (il Lombardo, il Saitta, e il clero) cercano di frenare ogni volontà di lotta delle masse, recandosi in processione col Cristo ai vari posti di blocco per far tornare i ribelli alle case" (54).

the countryside. While he underscored the capacity of the northern urban masses for cultivating and maintaining intellectuals as integral members of their social class, he concomitantly denied intellectual representation to the peasant class. In the following, I explore the contradictions that emerge from Gramsci's argumentation, looking first at his proposed models of intellectual engagement, and then focusing on the marginalization of the peasantry that emerges from his interpretations of the Southern Question and of the Risorgimento as a failed bourgeois revolution. Though his critique of the Risorgimento focused on the movement's exclusion of the peasantry, Gramsci also left out this group from his proposed solution by shifting their dependence from the bourgeoisie to the northern urban masses.

In *The Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci identified the intellectuals as the organizers of the productive world who mediated the relationships between the masses and the state or private superstructures. Their integration into society occurred in either a "traditional" or "organic" capacity and, for the most part, was subject to social and geographical constraints. The intellectuals of the traditional type often functioned in a rural setting, and for this reason they were mostly found in southern Italy where they acted as mediators between the peasants and the State. Organic intellectuals emerged from the lower classes in urban settings, which, in Italy, were mostly found in the north. Doctors, lawyers, notaries, teachers and priests represented typical professions of traditional intellectuals, while the industrial entrepreneur was an example of the organic ideal (1971, 14 & 93). Although Gramsci offered a new approach to praxis through his organic model, his exclusive denial of intellectuals to the peasantry provided no outlet for representation to this group,

Thus it is to be noted that the mass of the peasantry, although it performs an essential function in the world of production, does not elaborate its own “organic” intellectuals, nor does it “assimilate” any stratum of “traditional” intellectuals, although it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals and a high proportion of traditional intellectuals are of peasant origin. (1971 6)

Subsequently noting that peasants often became traditional intellectuals who then assimilated into the dominant class, Gramsci did not refuse them the possibility of upward social movement. In other words, peasants could become intellectuals, however if this was the case they did not remain amongst the peasantry but they instead became part of the ruling elite. Gramsci’s theory singled out the peasantry as the group that did not (and could not) have intellectual representation.<sup>48</sup> By depriving only the peasants of intellectuals, he not only took away their autonomy, or the ability to act for themselves, but barring them from autonomous representation he also denied them a voice, and thus undermined their capacity to organize a revolution.

The exclusive stance on Southern peasants described above is further complicated by Gramsci’s critique of the movement for Unification, which also denied the existence of the peasants’ autonomy.<sup>49</sup> According to his analysis of this historical event, the root of the problem existed in the failure of the political parties leading the Risorgimento to bring together the disparate masses of the Italian peninsula, which consequently left urban working and lower classes in the North no way of identifying with the conditions of the Southern peasants, and vice versa. In his estimation, the political leaders fell short of

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<sup>48</sup> The brief discussion of feudal structures which precedes this statement indicates that, for Gramsci, the peasants still adhere to the residual feudal structures and have yet to go through the process of modernization.

<sup>49</sup> Del Carria responds specifically to Gramsci’s analysis of the Unification, “Mai però si sono valutate le classi subordinate di quell’epoca come *personaggi autonomi del dramma*. La storiografia della sinistra operaia non fa eccezione, limitandosi a rivalutare l’apporto quantitativo delle masse popolari come alleato necessario dei democratici garibaldini e la ‘insufficienza’ di questi ultimi nei confronti delle masse popolari”(31).

realizing an essential social aspect of unification, that of the collective consciousness of the masses (45, 99). He wrote (with regards to Crispi's unitary politics looking at the history of the relationship since 1870),

The poverty of the Mezzogiorno was historically 'inexplicable' for the popular masses in the North; they did not understand that unity had not taken place on a basis of equality, but as hegemony of the North over the Mezzogiorno in a territorial version of the town-country relationship – in other words, that the North concretely was an 'octopus' which enriched itself at the expense of the South, and that its economic-industrial increment was in direct proportion to the South. (71)

In his description of the relationship between the masses of the North and South, Gramsci argued that the Unification was not organically elaborated, as he elsewhere proposed it should have been, and argued that it was instead constituted by the imposition of the already dominant forces over the subalterns.<sup>50</sup> His critique offered an alternative path to Unification, which said that the northern urban forces were powerful enough (he calls them the "locomotive" in a train analogy) to spark the collective identity of the rest of the "motor forces" of Italy – comprised of the Southern rural, Northern-Central rural, Sicilian rural and Sardinian rural –and to effect social unification through an organic process (98-100).

Gramsci's understanding of the direction that political influence flowed when a strong *organicità* was present further underscored his already problematic proscription of peasant agency. While in a traditional role the intellectual mediated from the dominant forms of power to the peasants and thus subjugated the peasants to his direction, the influence of power in an organic situation traveled in the opposite sense. The organic intellectual was first influenced by the masses, his cohorts, and then exerted a directive

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<sup>50</sup>In geographical terms, Gramsci describes it as the dominance of the North over the South. John Davis observes how the geographical equivalence isn't entirely accurate in Gramsci's historical analysis (Davis 68). Nadia Urbinati later responds to Davis' and others' historical critiques of Gramsci, pointing out that Gramsci was not a historian, but a political theorist (Schneideri 153).

capacity over the hegemonic superstructures. Gramsci explained, “Factory technicians do not exercise any political function over the instrumental masses, or at least this is a phase that has been superseded. Sometimes, rather, the contrary takes place, and the instrumental masses, at least in the person of their own organic intellectuals, exercise a political influence on the technicians”(1971 15). The passage demonstrates that, in Gramsci’s estimation the intellectual is the vehicle through which the (urban) masses spoke. Given the concentration of organic potential in the north, with this statement Gramsci suggested that organic intellectuals could *only* come from the northern urban setting.

Gramsci’s characterization of the South as embedded in tradition and lacking in *organicità* were further complicated by his subsequent portrayal of the traditional intellectual as an outmoded form of engagement. In the same section on the intellectuals in *The Prison Notebooks*, he called for a renovation of praxis in which he problematized the relevance of traditional intellectuals. This role had historically been characterized and, as Gramsci pointed out “vulgarized” by the “man of letters, the philosopher, the artist”(1971 9). He observed that, in a capitalist society, this figure no longer fulfilled a relevant social role and, more importantly, he criticized Italian intellectuals for not having integrated with society,

The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as a constructor, organiser, “permanent persuader” and not just a simple orator. (1971 10)

The passage describes eloquence as an antiquated characteristic of intellectual function. While it reflects Gramsci’s reaction to intellectual practices of the earlier part of the xx century, in this statement Gramsci simultaneously suggested that the act of writing

occurred outside of the social realm and he thus also questioned the role of the professional writer. In addition, a brief look at the layout of *The Prison Notebooks* also sheds light on Gramsci's ambiguous position with regards to the professional author. Though he comments extensively on the Italian canon, his project examines these authors as products of "popular literary tastes." He thus categorized the writers he considers, such as Manzoni, into a group that is qualitatively different from his forward-looking conceptualization of the intellectual (1971 15). The subtle undermining of this figure, the categorical application of traditional engagement to the South, and lastly, the singling out of the peasantry as the class that does not possess intellectual representation left no venue for writing about the South. Though differently from pre-war texts such as *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio*, which portrayed the peasants as executors of carnivalesque ritual or Divine Will, Gramsci's work nonetheless perpetuated the notion that the peasants did not (and could not) speak or act for themselves.

Until 1956, the leadership of the PCI was closely aligned the Soviet based, international alliance that was modeled after Stalin's regime. In the latter part of the 1950's, after Nikita Krushchev's "secret speech" of February of 1956, in which he revealed the atrocities of the Great Purges that had taken place during Stalin's rule and, later that same year, the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the PCI further pushed an ongoing agenda that sought to establish an "Italian line" of Communism, having erected Gramsci and his works as the foundations for this patrimony. In 1958, in pursuance to Togliatti's project the *Istituto Gramsci*, which was, according to Marco Cupolo, the "think tank" of the party, started a new journal, called *Studi Storici*, whose task was to "revisit the Marxist interpretation of history from the lenses of Gramsci's work" (Cupolo 66). As

Gundle points out, however, intellectuals who had been associated with the left in the postwar period struggled with the theories put forth in Gramsci's texts, which were received as analyses of the past and not as practical ways of addressing the present or future (52-54; 83-92).

Another key component of *Studi Storici's* agenda included establishing and supporting continuity between Risorgimento and the Resistance (Cupolo 66). During the late 1950's and early 1960's the Partisan Resistance began to be perceived and represented in more complex ways, and not simply as "anti-Fascist" (and therefore "good"), as had been the case in the 1940's. Together with the thematic publication of Gramsci's works, the directions issued by the *Istituto Gramsci* imposed a significant patrimony on writers of Sciascia's generation who had been, by virtue of the PCI's project of cultural renewal, affiliated with the party and who wrote about the South.

In addition to the focus that Gramsci's works brought to the ways in which intellectuals emerged from and remained engaged with the working and lower classes in both northern and southern Italy, the peasant land occupations of 1949-1950 had brought renewed interest in the plight of southern lower classes. In 1955 Carlo Levi published the *Le parole sono pietre*, a novel in which the narrator-traveler visits Bronte during a three day stay in Italy. The novel reflects the impoverished and feudal state in which the peasants lived because of the Duchy's denial of land-use rights and they become emblems of them the misery that plagued their cohorts throughout Sicily. As they work through the inheritance of the historiography of the 1860 Bronte revolt, the texts examined below also confront the more recent historical context from which they emerged, which saw the peasant land occupations in the South and the subsequent failure



of agrarian reform executed by DC, and the *Istituto Gramsci*'s renewed cultural projects after the Communist watershed of 1956.

What are facts: *I fatti di Bronte*

Let us examine how Sciascia positions himself within the historical and literary discourses. In *I fatti di Bronte* he tackles the canonical proscription of peasant agency that has taken place both in the specific historiography of the revolt as it has been portrayed by *Libertà*, *Nino Bixio*, and the archival documents included in the latter, and also in Gramsci's universalized notions about the South and its peasants. While Verga and Radice provide an important foundation without which Sciascia could not have composed either essay, their depictions of the uprising as a ritualistic event guided by Providence rob the Sicilian peasants of their historical agency. My reading explores how Sciascia's work depends on the textual tradition and, at the same time, grapples with the circumscribed notions with which the textual interpretations, and in some cases inaccuracies, have characterized Bronte's peasantry. Hutcheon here articulates the mechanism on which I focus in Sciascia's essay, "The formal and thematic contradictions of postmodern art and theory call attention to both what is being contested and what is being offered as a critical response, and do so in a self-aware way that admits its own provisionality" (13). Sciascia works from within the boundaries of text, subverting canonical versions, inverting key terms and, most importantly inscribing a contemporary notion of peasant agency onto his version of the Bronte narrative.

In *I fatti di Bronte* Sciascia works through the previous accounts of Bronte's 1860 revolt, drawing primarily upon Benedetto Radice's history in order to reconstruct a

different perspective on the circumstances surrounding the event.<sup>51</sup> With the publication of *Nino Bixio*, Radice provided the first comprehensive history that sought to retell the story of revolt and repression in the contexts of the centuries-old dispute over the common land and the internal political vendettas of the town's bourgeoisie. Radice, a citizen of Bronte, not only recorded a firsthand account of the uprising that claimed, as its scope, to narrate the "bloody facts of Bronte" (252), but he also furnished additional content, including letters and court records that appear both in the appendix and within his narrative. He therefore rendered many historical documents easily accessible to future writers and readers. Sciascia draws significantly upon the resources provided in Radice's text, to the extent that much of what he borrows is taken verbatim from *Nino Bixio*. Furthermore, while Radice's expansive text furnishes background information in about a hundred pages, Sciascia manages to condense his essay into about twelve. Coupled with Sciascia's significant condensation of *Nino Bixio*, the extent to which his essay borrows from Radice's renders the slight and often unannounced or unnoticeable modifications all the more interesting.

Moving between Radice's longer narrative and Verga's short story, Sciascia's consolidation of *i fatti di Bronte* into a more brief form offers an alternative, shortened text that also emerges as a formal response to Verga's novella. The adoption of Verga as a literary model by neorealism had posited him as perhaps the author who most "authentically" represented the southern lower classes, and, although Sciascia more

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<sup>51</sup> Sciascia's contestation of the heritage passed down through Radice's history and Verga's novella occurs intertextually, though he also explicitly criticizes the *pathos* with which Giulio Cesare Abba and Cantoni, a soldier from Pavia, remember Nino Bixio as they recall the tears in his eyes at Lombardo's execution. (I have not been able to locate Cantoni's text.) Sciascia writes, "Un garibaldino, il pavese Cantoni, raccontò poi, e l'Abba ne riferisce in *Da Quarto al Volturno*, che nel momento della fucilazione vide gli occhi di Bixio pieni di lacrime: ma forse velati di lacrime erano gli occhi del giovane studente di Pavia; è difficile pensare Bixio commosso, dopo aver letto questo suo biglietto in cui pare dia un appuntamento per dopo lo spettacolo" (1191).

directly addresses the complexities of *Libertà* in his second essay, *Verga e la Libertà*, his awareness of the heritage of Verga's work also weighs in *I fatti di Bronte*. In *Libertà*, Verga privileges the revolt by beginning, as some have noted, *in medias res* as the peasants hang the tricolor flag from the belltower. In contrast, Sciascia's essay practically omits the revolt altogether (Sipala 151). *I fatti di Bronte* leads up to the moment just before the 1860 revolt, which began on August 2, but he condenses the moment of uprising into a one paragraph paraphrase,

La novella di Verga che s'intitola *Libertà* è la più alta e tragica testimonianza che di questi avvenimenti ci resta. Noi vogliamo soltanto dare qualche particolare notizia: che il notaro Cannata fu atrocemente ucciso; che uccidere un uomo era diventato, soddisfatta metafora, "farsi una lepre" (far fuori una lepre); che i contadini andavano dai proprietari e li obbligavano a scrivere cessioni di proprietà; che un contadino obbligò un civile a dichiarare per iscritto "sono un cornuto"; che la proprietà Nelson fu rispettata; che il paese fu imbandierato e illuminato a festa; che qualche vita fu risparmiata per riconoscenza particolare o pietà. (2002 1198)

In the narrative space that should be dedicated to the moment of revolt, Sciascia focuses instead on the events as they have been told by the historical and literary traditions, and in so doing he responds to the primacy that previous accounts, beginning with Verga's, have granted the revolt. Also an important gesture to the heritage that plagues Bronte's history, Sciascia's evaluation and partial paraphrase of *Libertà* both rewrites and pays tribute to Verga. In addition, recalling the terminology of Bronte's town council in their deliberation dated November, 1860 Sciascia calls the novella a *testimonianza* and thus recognizes the truthfulness that has been attributed to Verga's fictional account. These stories, fictional or historical, become truths through a process of textualization, which renders them materially and indefinitely available to future readers.

My understanding of this work as a response to Verga's novella also derives from Sciascia's method, which he articulates in the opening lines of *I fatti di Bronte*. Invoking Manzoni's approach to the historical record of the trial of the plague-spreaders as written in his introduction to *La Storia della colonna infame*, Sciascia writes, "Ora noi non abbiamo il problema della Provvidenza, e senza il dilemma di accusarla o di negarla ci chiniamo sui fatti di Bronte soltanto come su *un'ingiustizia che poteva esser veduta da quelli stessi che la commettevano*" (1190). Drawing upon Manzoni's model, Sciascia declares the need for a closer look at the facts. The title of his essay has already indicated the subject of inquiry, but the recommendation that *ci chiniamo sui fatti di Bronte* also suggests a canonical bowing down of the Sicilian narrator, who looks down, as if through a lens, at his object of narration. The approach evokes the perspective of Giovanni Verga's bourgeois narrator and his lady-friend as they travel through Sicily by train in *Fantasticheria*, the short story that opens Verga's first collection, *Vita dei Campi* (1880). The opening passage of Verga's novella demonstrates the point of view adopted by his text, "Una volta, mentre il treno passava vicino ad Aci-Trezza, voi, affacciandovi allo sportello del vagone, esclamaste: 'Vorrei starci un mese laggiù!'" (Verga, 1999 133). Recalling the journey, Verga's narrator remembers his view, from high above and far away, of the Sicilian town of Aci-Trezza. Although he espouses a different approach, Sciascia's proposed act of bowing down recalls the perspective adopted by Verga and therefore calls to mind this weighty figure of Sicilian literary culture. Whereas Verga's text expresses the momentary adoption of the perspective of its subjects, Sciascia's focuses on the role of the textual tradition in shaping the *fatti di Bronte*.

My analysis now turns towards a more extensive exploration of the presence of *Nino Bixio* in *I fatti di Bronte*.<sup>52</sup> Acknowledging that *Nino Bixio* serves as the primary source of historical information on Bronte, Sciascia incorporates Radice's text into his own, at times using long quotations but mostly paraphrasing, and in a few cases incorporating and renovating terms that initially appear in his source text.<sup>53</sup> Although he draws upon the textual tradition, Sciascia weaves a very different tale with the omissions and modifications in this brief and elliptical essay. The longest citations in *I fatti di Bronte* constitute full paragraphs, borrowed from Radice, to which he has made slight modifications. In one case he inserts ellipses (...) and acknowledges the changes to Radice's text, while in another he omits full sentences without making note of it. The first example, which appears further along in Sciascia's essay, discusses the peasant expectations for land reform based on the Garibaldi decrees of June 1860 (Sciascia, 1990 1194-95; Radice, 1910 260).<sup>54</sup> Sciascia signals his omission by three dots (...) and so structures the absence. In the first long quotation that he takes from *Nino Bixio*, however, Sciascia does nothing to indicate his slight modifications to the passage (Sciascia, *I fatti* 1193-94; Radice, *Nino Bixio* 263-64). In light of the notation in the former case, discussed above, the silent omission in the latter complicates Sciascia's appropriation of this text. A brief look at the passage as it is situated in Radice's work reveals that

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<sup>52</sup> As I have noted before, *Nino Bixio* was published separately in the *Archivio per la Sicilia Orientale* (1910), but it is also part of the incomplete and more broadly aimed work, *Memorie storiche di Bronte*, published online by the Associazione di Bronte Insieme: [http://www.bronteinsieme.it/3pe/Memorie%20storiche/flor\\_01.htm](http://www.bronteinsieme.it/3pe/Memorie%20storiche/flor_01.htm). Sciascia seems to have read both, his second essay, *Verga e la Libertà* appears as the foreword to Radice's text in subsequent replications (1963, 1984, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> After the second lengthy citation from *Nino Bixio* Sciascia writes, "Poiché su questo (*Nino Bixio*) , e su altri scritti del Radice, prevalentemente si basa la nostra rievocazione è giusto tener conto del fatto che la famiglia Radice 'fu in quel tumulto daneggiata negli averi', che il padre dello storico scampò miracolosamente al furore dei contadini (evidentemente teneva per il partito ducale) e che lui stesso ha della rivolta un terribile ricordo..." (Sciascia, 1990 1194).

<sup>54</sup> With the decree of June 2, Garibaldi's government abolished the grist tax and restored communal lands for public use throughout Sicily (Mack Smith 212).

Sciascia has left out the conclusive sentence to Radice's original paragraph, in which the historian gestures at the lack of peasant agency by portraying the peasant classes as dependent on the *civili*.<sup>55</sup> Sciascia's use and, at times, covert modification of the lengthy quotations from *Nino Bixio* shows that his essay concomitantly acknowledges and, at the same time, rewrites *Nino Bixio*.

Sciascia's misprision of *Nino Bixio* also emerges from his paraphrase of Radice's version of the events. The tribute to Radice's text takes shape as Sciascia also mentions Antonino Cairone, whose name first appeared in *Nino Bixio* (Sciascia, 2002 1193; Radice 262).<sup>56</sup> He writes, "e degno di ricordo è tra loro il giureconsulto, Antonino Cairone che, per difendere i diritti del comune contro l'Ospedale Grande e Nuovo di Palermo, fu destituito dall'ufficio, incarcerato ed esiliato." The inclusion of Cairone's memory in this brief essay both respects and repeats Radice's similar statement, which reads "Fra tante miserie però, a conforto di chi coltiva i più nobili sentimenti di patria, è degno di memoria il nome del notaio giureconsulto Antonino Cairone." By perpetuating Radice's mention of this name, Sciascia endorses the idea that certain people deserve to be remembered throughout history (and also suggests that others do not). He also underscores the privileged role that texts play in the process of constructing and remembering the past. His preservation of the telling of Cairone's part in the land struggle therefore not only represents his obeisance of this paternal figure, the historian, but also evinces the importance of the materiality of text.

While Sciascia's refashioning of the Bronte narrative occurs by means of the edits and comments discussed above, it also takes place as he adopts terms from *Nino Bixio*

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<sup>55</sup> Così si calunniavano a vicenda, e nel loro disaccordo, brontolavano i contadini." (Radice 264)

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 1, p. 18.

and then adapts them to his essay. While a term such as *comunisti* repeatedly appears in quotations, so as not to be confused with its xx century political connotation, others, like *trescava* are borrowed from Radice's text but, like the non-parenthetical comments, are woven into the content of *I Fatti di Bronte*. *Trescava*, which in modern usage connotes "scheming" and also evokes the Biblical scene of the sacred dance performed by King David in front of the Ark of the Covenant, provides an example in which Sciascia incorporates the rhetoric of *Nino Bixio* into his contemporary account of *i fatti*, since both authors employ it to attribute the conspiring of the ruling elite with the government authorities. Sciascia writes,

Mentre i notabili trespavano fra il principe di Villafranca, che presiedeva la Giunta provvisoria a Palermo, dove l'indipendenza dell'Isola era stata proclamata, e il principe della Catena, che comandava l'esercito regio mossosi ad annientare i moti indipendentisti, il popolo di Bronte e di altri comuni vicini si schierava con entusiasmo nella lotta per l'indipendenza. (1191; Radice 271)

*Trespavano* also evokes, however, the antiquated sense, which recalls Dante's description of the bas-relief of David dancing (*trespando*) in front of the Ark of the Covenant in *Purgatory X*.<sup>57</sup> The second meaning emerges in light of Radice's use of terms and quotations from Dante's *Divina Commedia*. The tenth canto of the second book of Dante's epic poem marks the first circle of *Purgatory*, in which Dante places repented sinners guilty of pride. In this canto, the poet provides three artistic examples of humility, and the image of David dancing in front of the ark is the second,

Lì precedeva al benedetto vaso,  
trespando alzato, l'umile salmista,  
e più e men che re era in quel caso.  
Di contra, effigiata ad una vista d'un gran palazzo,  
Micòl ammirava sì come donna dispettosa e trista. (174-175)

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<sup>57</sup> Battaglia indicates the first definition as "brigare" and lists this quote from Sciascia as the last of the literary examples in which this use of the term appears, Croce is also listed in this group and the quote reads "trespavano con i fascisti," which further suggests that Sciascia could have come across it in literature about the fascist era.

As Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio point out in the note accompanying Dante's passage, David's dance, *il trescone*, is a popular form and, as a king, his performance of it was unusual. In order to execute the leaps required in this humble form of dance, David has to lift his cloth up to his belt and he thus exposes himself to onlookers of the procession. As a king, David demonstrates humility in dancing this non-noble dance, but as his wife, Michal, looks on the procession in embarrassed disgust from her high position in the palace she provides a counterpoint of pride to David's example of humility. Sciascia's use of the verb *trescava* recalls, through Radice's text, David's "humble" dance. The essay evokes the image of a noble king acting in a non-noble way, and thus suggests the same for Bronte's ruling elite. As I demonstrate in Chapter 1, Radice's quotes from Dante take on a moralistic tone, in which the term *fiumana* and the notion of Providence, evoked by Radice's use of a passage from the poet's apostrophe that begins *Ahi serva Italia* in *Purgatorio VI* depict the 1860 revolt as guided by an uncontrollable and inexplicable (divine) phenomenon. The moralistic tone, which Sciascia adopts through his quotation of Dante by means of Radice, offers here another example of Sciascia's misprision of Verga and Radice's texts, and thus posits *I fatti di Bronte* as a counter-historical reconstruction.

His appropriation of the Bronte narrative for the peasants continues as he takes the term *comunisti*, which is already present in *Nino Bixio*, one step further and introduces contemporary Communist rhetoric into his paraphrase. Radice's explanation of the *fazione comunista* appears in one of the long passages appropriate by Sciascia in *I Fatti di Bronte* (Sciascia, 1990 1194; Radice 260). Radice explains that the *fazione comunista* was made up of peasants whose leader was the lawyer Nicolò Lombardo.



Although *comunista* always appears in quotes, Sciascia nonetheless notes the term's evolution from the xix century connotation to his xx century political understanding. He writes, "Ed è da notare come nella fazione 'comunista' si realizzasse in termini moderni l'alleanza fra gli intellettuali e i contadini"(1194). Sciascia further projects the contemporary Communist ideal of lower class autonomy onto the Bronte narrative by describing the uprising in terms that evoke a workers' strike. Recalling the moments before the violence erupts, he writes, "Dimostrazioni popolari continuarono disordinatamente fino al primo di agosto, senza rilevanti episodi di violenza. Ma nella notte fra il primo e il 2 agosto, il paese venne bloccato da picchetti di popolani" (1197-1198). Although Radice also characterizes the initial gatherings of the crowd as popular demonstrations, Sciascia inserts the image of picket lines and thus not only portrays an image of autonomy and solidarity, but also updates the connotation of *comunista* (Radice 275).

Along with the inscription of "new" meanings of "old" terms, Sciascia's paraphrase often includes insertions that serve to reshape the narrative at hand. Recounting the excitement of the populace after the news of Garibaldi's victory in Calatafimi reached Bronte on May 16 1860, Sciascia narrates the disdainful reaction of the royal notary, Ignazio Cannata,

Forse in quella stessa giornata, il notaro Ignazio Cannata (notaro della Ducea), alla vista della bandiera tricolore disse: 'Perché non levate questa pezza lorda?', parole che colpirono il sentimento popolare e accrebbero l'odio di cui il notaro, per il suo carattere prepotente e violento, godeva già. (1194)

He borrows the episode directly from Radice, whose text reads,

Se non che quell'allegrezza si abbuiò un giorno per un istante alle parole imprudenti del notaio Ignazio Cannata, che alla vista della bandiera si era lasciato uscir di bocca: *Pirchi non si leva sta pezza lorda?* Il popolo, che l'aveva in odio,

non come borbonico, ma come notaio della Ducea, raccolse quelle parole sconsiderate e se ne ricordò truccemente più tardi, e pazzo di gioia si abbandonò a frequenti dimostrazioni”(258).

A comparison of the two passages reveals that Sciascia paraphrases Radice’s account of this episode, adding the *forse* at the beginning of his sentence. Whereas Radice’s description directly conveys the notary’s utterance, Sciascia’s comment slightly and discreetly mediates the version of the story offered by *Nino Bixio*.

After paraphrasing the events of the revolt, Sciascia resumes a detailed chronological narrative from the day after the uprising, recounting Bixio’s actions in the days immediately following, from August 4-9, 1860. The essay’s structure privileges the *antefatti* and *postfatti* over the *fatti* and provides a narrative “in the negative.” As we saw above, Sciascia offers an essay, a brief form, that not only inverts the previous privilege granted to the moment of revolt but also provides an alternative version of *i fatti*, and thus dismantles the idea that there is one set of historical facts.

Sciascia’s paraphrase includes and excludes parts of *Nino Bixio*, but also and most importantly allows space for weaving his own voice into the Bronte narrative. Sciascia at once reworks Radice’s text to reflect agency with which the rebels acted, and he also interjects his own voice by means of the authorial comments. These occur between parentheses, as well as from intratextual comments, which flow along with the syntax of the essay. The following passage gives an example of both types of comment,

I fatti dell’estate 1860, a Bronte e nei paesi etnei trovano un precedente negli accadimenti del 1820 (anche allora di estate): e pare che l’estate sia una dimensione psicologico-climatica dei fatti rivoluzionari siciliani e spagnoli; ci sono pagine sanguinose ed atroci, delle due rivolte di Bronte che corrispondono anche nei particolari a quelle della guerra civile spagnola in Hemingway e Malraux. (1191)

In the comments shown above, the first in parentheses and the second as a subsequent clause that elaborates the first half of the sentence, Sciascia emphasizes that rebellions often happen during summer. While the parenthetical comment brings together the two noteworthy rebellions of Bronte's xix century history, the clause that follows functions to connect these uprisings to literary examples of the Spanish Civil War as they have been rendered from the lived experiences of authors such as Hemingway and Malraux. The second comment not only blurs the boundary between fiction and history, but it also allows room for Sciascia's voice, which then sets up the parallels between Sicilian history and contemporary literature. Furthermore, though he posits summer as a precondition for revolution, by declaring it a common characteristic of Spain and Sicily Sciascia excludes the xix century example *par excellence* of summer revolt, the French Revolution. He steers the Bronte narrative away from the circumscribed image that has been attributed to it by Verga and Radice's texts, the former by calling it a *carnevale furibondo del mese di luglio* (Verga 358), and he inscribes a more contemporary ideal of revolution onto the Bronte narrative.

Sciascia's refashioning of the Bronte narrative in *I fatti di Bronte* is not exclusively prompted by the historical and literary accounts examined above, for the essay also remediates the image of peasant agency through its close examination of archival documents. He sets the tone for this inquiry in the opening lines, declaring

è giusto ricordare la prima pagina di nera ingiustizia scritta da *questa* Italia contro *l'altra* Italia. Ingiustizia non soltanto perché una rivolta di popolo mossa da giuste e ancora vive cause, è stata sanguinosamente repressa, ma anche e soprattutto perché uomini sono stati giudicati e condannati per colpe che non avevano commesso e per idee e sentimenti da cui erano lontani e addirittura nemici. (2002 1190-91)

Proclaiming the power of text, Sciascia evinces the power of the written word. He recounts the events surrounding the uprising all the while addressing the textual tradition, but he does not reveal the specific, singular case of the *prima pagina di nera ingiustizia* against which he inveighs until the end of the essay. The *ingiustizia* to which Sciascia repeatedly refers was caused by the incorrect conclusion, reflected in the court record of Lombardo's trial, that the uprising was pro-Bourbon. According to the historical record, Lombardo was executed because he was found guilty of having led the peasant revolt that was judged to be, ideologically speaking, pro-Bourbon and anti-Garibaldi.<sup>58</sup> The problem, for Sciascia, results from the chain of events (and texts) that follow this faulty documentation: Bronte's town council supported its November, 1860 argument for life-term convictions of the peasants, who had remained incarcerated since the August revolt, with incorrect trial documents and testimonies recorded in August, 1860. Citing from the Governor's response to the town council's request, which seeks to set the record straight, Sciascia writes

A spiegare questa enorme ingiustizia abbiamo un prezioso documento: una delibera del Consiglio Civico di Bronte del 23 novembre 1860. Da essa risulta chiaro che il Lombardo ed i suoi compagni erano stati denunciati a Bixio come capi della reazione borbonica, e denunciati proprio da color che ora sedevano tranquilli nel Consiglio Civico. E poiché il governatore di Catania, alla richiesta di processare altri sediziosi che ancora si trovavano in carcere, aveva fatto notare che 'i fatti di Bronte non furono per effetto di una reazione, ma l'effetto di essersi negata al popolo la divisione delle terre di demanio comunale e *rientrando nell'interesse privato meritano i detenuti grazia e amnistia*,' il Consiglio Civico protestava in questi termini: 'Considerando che il Generale Bixio, quell'uomo vero italiano, ha nel suo manifesto del 12 agosto ultimo, parlando con diversi comuni testificato che i misfatti ed eccidi in Bronte sono l'effetto di una reazione, come pure viene giustificato da innumerevoli atti processuali raccolti da diversi incaricati dal governo e quindi chiaro si vede che il Governatore è caduto in scandaloso errore indegno dell'onesto sentire italiano. (2002 1201-1202)

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<sup>58</sup> As pointed out in Chapter 1, p. 24. Mack Smith states that with Garibaldi's rise to power and with the arrival of Nino Bixio in Bronte, the ruling elites of the town (who had always been pro-Bourbon) posed as pro-Garibaldi and accused Lombardo of being a Bourbon (213).

Sciascia's investigation of *i fatti* reveals the inconsistencies in the records of history and highlights the blind spot in the records of the judicial system, while also evincing the primacy of the textual record in institutional memory. His process of discovery has been constituted by archival historical inquiry and arrives, through the same texts, at the opposite conclusion. By means of the "original," archival documents, Sciascia's essay destabilizes *i fatti*.

Responding to previous accounts of the history of Bronte's 1860 uprising, Sciascia demonstrates how each of the texts examined above, including the archival documents upon which other histories are based, espouses a different interpretation of *i fatti*. The multiple interpretations of *i fatti* made evident in Sciascia's first essay serve to demonstrate the diverse range of texts that have constructed this history and, more importantly, to dismantle the conventional idea of historical facts. Having produced an alternative version and, more broadly speaking, having destabilized the rhetoric of history, especially with regards to historical facts, Sciascia depicts a newly historicized image of peasant agency for his contemporary readers.

#### Verga e la Libertà and Artistic License

In *Verga e la Libertà*, Sciascia enacts an explicit misprision of Verga's fictional text and contests the means by which Verga and other predecessors have attempted to access peasant experiences and adopt a peasant voice. The role of the author comes to the forefront of *Verga e la Libertà* in a noticeable shift of Sciascia's position towards Radice and Manzoni. Whereas in *I fatti di Bronte*, Sciascia sets the tone for his methodological analysis of the facts in terms that evoke the bowing down of the Sicilian

literary tradition, in *Verga e la Libertà*, with the same terms Sciascia distances himself from his textual forebears, writing

Sui fatti di Bronte, pur non tacendo a carico di Bixio anche i più rivoltanti dettagli [...], il Radice insomma si china come su «un'ingiustizia che poteva essere veduta da quelli stessi che la commettevano»: così come il Manzoni, cui questa frase appartiene, sul processo degli untori. (2007 98)

Sciascia's usage of *chinarsi su* in the first person plural conjugation in *I fatti di Bronte* served to establish his authority and suggested a certain endorsement of Verga, Radice and Manzoni's techniques (2002 1190), while the third person singular conjugation of *chinarsi su* in the above passage reflects a distinct shift in Sciascia's perspective. In *I fatti di Bronte*, the first person plural usage describes Sciascia's methodological approach to the *fatti*, through which he dismantles the traditional notion of historical facts. The different use of *chinarsi su* reflected in *Verga e la Libertà* indicates a paradigm shift in Sciascia's approach to text and to history and, with this subtle change, the author dissociates himself from the tradition he previously evoked.

One of the possible explanations for this shift in Sciascia's perspective on praxis emerges from his knowledge of a broader body of texts beyond those provided by Radice. These include the lawyer's statement of defense, made on behalf of the peasants who were incarcerated in Catania until 1863, Francesco Grandi's *Memorie di uno dei Mille*, and documents from the archive of Renato Radice, a descendent of the historian, Benedetto, and author of *Nino Bixio a Bronte*. Given this additional knowledge, Sciascia embarks upon a demystification of the keys to what he terms the "superiore mistificazione che è poi superiore verità"(98) of Verga's story. He posits *Libertà* as the narrativization of the historical events of Bronte's uprising and ensuing trials, in part, by projecting Verga's presence at the trials. He writes, "Il Radice aveva sei anni nel 1860;

Giovanni Verga ne aveva venti: e i suoi ricordi della rivolta di Bronte e del circondario etneo, della repressione garibaldina, del *processone* che poi si tenne a Catania, dovevano essere ben vivi quando, nel 1882, scrisse la novella *Libertà*,”(98) emphasizing that Verga wrote from memory and subsequently positing the existence of an earlier version of the novella. Postulating Verga’s presence at the trial, Sciascia then identifies the passages from *Libertà* that draw precisely upon the trial documents, drawing upon his authority from having explored these documents. He writes, “Noi che abbiamo familiarità con le carte del processo, siamo portati a credere che lo scrittore lo abbia seguito da spettatore, e ne abbia conservato in appunti o indelebilmente nella memoria un intenso ricordo,”(101) and then lists the examples from *Libertà* that correspond to the history, including the lumberjack’s merciful killing of the notary’s son, the exclamation of one of the rebels, “Bah! Egli sarebbe stato notaio anche lui!”, and the notary’s death in the pigsty. In Sciascia’s estimation, Verga’s ability to “remember” these episodes complicate other modifications made in his novella for the purposes of art and renders Verga’s purported infidelities all the more tendentious.

As Sciascia outlines key differences between *Libertà* and his newly devised understanding of Bronte’s history, he remarks on Verga’s transformation of the figure of Bronte’s resident madman, Nunzio Ciraldo Fraiunco, into a dwarf. Explaining the cultural implications that this change brings for Sicilian folklore, according to which a madman is a sacred category of citizen while a dwarf has a malicious connotation, Sciascia focuses on the episode of Nunzio Ciraldo Fraiunco’s death. According to Radice’s text, Fraiunco was considered crazy by all, and he especially took to the

excitement of the revolt. Radice offers the collective wisdom about Fraiunco's character and describes his particular fervor for the uprising,

Un contadino, Nunzio Ciraldo Fraiunco, ritenuto matto, cinta la testa di pezzuole tricolori, intrecciate a foggia di corona, con una ferla in mano, andava annunciando per le vie: *Cappelli, guardatevi, l'ora del giudizio si avvicina, popolo, non mancare all'appello*. Saliva anche sul Casino dei civili e lì, malaugurata Cassandra, ripeteva il suo rozzo, minaccioso e fatidico sermone, condito di sali e infarcito di scempiaggini. I galantuomini, veri dementi, ridevano del matto. (272)

As a result of his menacing display, Fraiunco was tried alongside Lombardo on August 9, 1860 and was amongst the five men who were found guilty of a pro-Bourbon revolt and sentenced to execution. After the shots rang out on the morning of August 10, however, Fraiunco was still alive. He had not been shot in the head as his sentence had dictated. As Fraiunco rejoiced in his salvation, Bixio ordered one of his soldiers to shoot again, from a closer range, and this time Fraiunco was not so lucky. In his essay, Sciascia reproduces Francesco Grandi's account of Fraiunco's sentencing and death as printed in *Le Memorie di uno dei Mille*,

per tutto il percorso della prigione al luogo della fucilazione il Fraiunco non fece che baciare uno scapolare che portava al collo e dire al garibaldino che gli stava vicino 'La Madonna mi salverà'; e non fu colpito dalla scarica, per cui si gettò ai piedi di Bixio gridando 'La Madonna mi ha fatto la grazie, ora fatemela voi' e Bixio, al sergente Niutti: 'Ammazzate questa canaglia.' (100)

Sciascia draws upon the episode of Fraiunco's chance survival and then unavoidable death in order to expose the hermeneutic paradox of the notion of history as a force beyond human control in Verga and Radice's texts. If they had sincerely attributed the uprising and repression to "what was meant to be," both narratives would have depicted as such Fraiunco's survival of the firing squad, which, by their own logic was truly a providential occurrence. In other words, if Providence had, in fact, played a role in the



uprising it was never more present than in the fulfillment of Fraiunco's prayers to the Virgin for survival. The paradox made evident by Sciascia is that Verga and Radice (for different reasons) glossed over what could have been the truly providential moment of this story, omitting the socio-historical motives for the revolt and replacing them with Providence. This suggests that Verga and Radice deployed the teleological implications of the Easter imagery and the primitive impulses connoted in the representation of the revolt as carnivalesque degradation as a means for portraying the events according to their own preconceived notions about History.

Sciascia's dissociation from his forebears, evidenced by the different conjugations of the verb *chinarsi su*, is accompanied by an exploration of different models for representing, as an intellectual, the peasantry. Gramsci's theories, which, as I demonstrated above, offered no outlet for a contemporary, "organic," intellectual who would write and speak for the southern peasants, also inform Sciascia's work. Sciascia recognizes that his experience will never be equivalent to that of the peasants, but in *Verga e la Libertà* he nonetheless explores alternatives to representing this underprivileged, and yet overrepresented class. Working through the limitations of the historical models provided by Manzoni, Radice and Verga, Sciascia explores three nineteenth century examples of intellectual practice. The first is also part of his remediation of the changes to Bronte's history made by Verga in *Libertà*. Having established the direct connection between Verga's novella and the history of Bronte, Sciascia discusses at length Verga's omission of the lawyer, Nicolò Lombardo. As a lawyer who mediated the relationship between the peasants and the State, Lombardo conformed to what would eventually be defined by Gramsci as a traditional intellectual. Sciascia admittedly

conjectures (*congetturare* 103) about why Lombardo did not make the cut in Verga's story, suggesting that Verga somehow forgot him perhaps because Lombardo was a troubling figure for the author. Whatever the reason for Verga's omission, Sciasca's re-inscription of Lombardo onto the Bronte narrative brings him back into the collective memory through the textual record.<sup>59</sup>

The other two examples of xix century intellectual engagement provided in *Verga e la Libertà* stand as bookends in the structure of the essay. He opens the essay with a long quotation from *Canti popolari del circondario di Modica*, assembled and published by the aristocrat, Serafino Amabile Guastella in 1876. The citation begins with Guastella's depiction of the peasant during the moment of the harvest,

Il paragone del serpe che depone la spoglia è omai vecchio arnese retorico, e pure non ne trovo di meglio a significare il villano che, durante la messe, dà un calcio alla mitezza dell'indole, alla tranquillità abituale, al rispetto verso le classi più rispettate, e assume il ghigno feroce, il linguaggio a fil di rasoio, gli atti provocatori di un demagogo.(89)

The above passage places Guastella's analysis among other xix century texts that we have seen, which code peasant culture in terms of carnival ambivalence.<sup>60</sup> Beyond Guastella's aristocratic, circumscribed interpretation quoted above, Sciasca further notes his contribution to the historiography of popular culture by reproducing one of the peasant songs in Sicilian dialect, which also appears in *Canti popolari*. For Sciasca, the value of Guastella's contribution lies in Guastella's textualization of the song, more or

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<sup>59</sup> Additionally, Sciasca includes the full texts of letters about Lombardo, which he recognizes from Radice's papers but were not included in the published works – also an indication that Lombardo's memory was somehow repressed in the collective unconscious. As I will later demonstrate the full realization of Lombardo's return happens in the narrative of the film.

<sup>60</sup> In my analysis I noticed a similar description of peasant ambivalence from Gramsci, who substitutes the term *intellectual* for *padrone*, used by Guastella. Gramsci writes, "The peasant's attitude towards the intellectual is double and appears contradictory. He respects the social position of the intellectuals and in general that of state employees, but sometimes affects contempt for it, which means that his admiration is mingled with instinctive elements of envy and impassioned anger" (1971 14)

less as it would have been recited in the oral tradition. With the reproduction of the entire song in his essay, Sciascia comments on the perspective that Guastella's transcription achieves,

E allo stesso Guastella dobbiamo la trascrizione di un *canto della messe*, cioè della mietitura, che è il più straordinario documento, il più diretto, in cui ci si possa imbattere relativamente al contadino siciliano qual era nel secolo scorso e fino alla seconda guerra mondiale: qual era effettivamente, sotto le apparenze di una religiosa rassegnazione all'immutabile destino.(90)

In Sciascia's estimation, Guastella gets as close as possible to peasant experiences by recording the text to this popular song. Though Guastella also provides an interpretation, his printing of the song gives other readers direct access to peasant culture and it therefore finds a way to allow the peasant voice to speak. In other words, Guastella offers an example of engagement by delivering a glimpse of peasant subjectivity. The comment also reflects Sciascia's realization that, though he is interested in representing the peasants and has advocated for their political autonomy in the historiography of Bronte, he can never fully identify with, nor can he speak on behalf of this class. Guastella's transcription thus offers one example of how to incorporate peasant voices into the textual tradition.<sup>61</sup>

The final example of xix century engagement that Sciascia offers as the conclusion to his second essay is the defense of the peasants in the Catania trial of 1863, argued by Michele Tenerelli –Contessa and reproduced in *Verga e la Libertà* by virtue of Radice's private papers. The author himself remarks on the complex argumentation in which Tenerelli-Contessa sought to demonstrate that the rebels fiercely obeyed a law which called for a revolution against the common enemy, the Bourbons (104). In his

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<sup>61</sup> As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, Consolo employs transcription to convey the peasant writings in *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio*.

statement Tenerelli-Contessa also indicated that since Garibaldi's government had passed the land reform laws on June 2, the peasants' also revolted in August in defense of their newly acquired legal rights, and the argument thus serves to further evince the historical agency with which the peasants acted by pursuing the revolt. Tenerelli-Contessa offered another form of intellectual praxis, both by representing the accused peasants as they stood trial and by providing a record that asserted the presence of peasant agency during the revolt.

The examples provided by the figures of Lombardo, Guastella and Tenerelli-Contessa offer historicized notions of intellectual praxis and thus also beg the question about the availability of their methods of engagement to contemporary intellectuals. Sciascia's exploration of ways to convey the peasant voice and to reinstate peasant agency in the historiography of the revolt points to his collaboration on the film, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*.

*Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*

Sciascia's exploration of meaningful forms of engagement brings our examination of his work with the Bronte narrative to the film, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*. Whereas the disjointedness of the essays renders them, at times, indecipherable to the uninitiated reader, the film offers a coherent narrative of the Bronte revolt.<sup>62</sup> In this medium, the film already offers broader accessibility - in order to view it no reading ability is needed, only eyes and ears. In addition to an expanded public, the coherence of *Bronte* also means that its story can be

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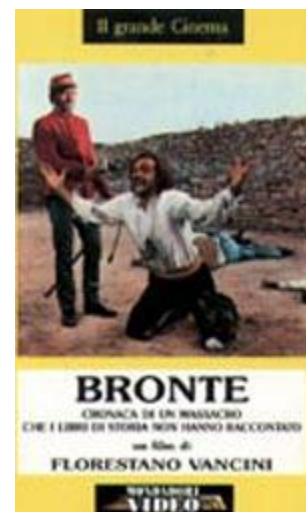
<sup>62</sup> See also the author's note to *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, examined at the beginning of this chapter, in which Sciascia recognizes that his essays were initially intended for a broader public, but for their lack of accessibility (p.72).

widely understood by different types of audiences. Often categorized as a historical film, this element of added accessibility gives *Bronte* a didactic dimension, which others have also noted (Iaccio 12). By the same token, however, the film's coherence masks its *meta*-qualities: by involving the viewer in the story of peasant struggle the film disarms the critical eye and veils the underlying meta-narrative at work. In the following I examine this "historiographic metafiction" by analyzing the intertextual relationships, acknowledged and not, that emerge from the formal and content-based aspects of *Bronte*.

Like the essays considered above, *Bronte* also draws upon the textual tradition. In addition to the film's full title, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*, which claims to tell the facts that the history books did not, the closing credits reveal many of the film's sources. These comprise mainly historical documents from the archives of the 1860 and 1863 trials as well as versions written in both the xix and xx centuries. The latter include Radice's *Nino Bixio* (1910), Abba's *Noterelle di uno dei mille* (1882), Napoleone Colajanni's *La Sicilia dai Borboni ai Sabaudi* (1951), Denis Mack Smith's "The Peasants Revolt of Sicily in 1860" (1949), Sergio Romano's "I contadini nella rivoluzione del 1860" (1952), Giorgio Candeloro's "Storia dell'Italia Moderna," (1960) and finally Francesco Grandi's "Memorie di un Garibaldino." The texts listed above are historical: though some are called memoirs and others histories, they all reconstruct the events of the 1860 Bronte uprising. By recognizing its dependence on these texts for information about the revolt, the filmic version asserts its authenticity (Iaccio 13).

The act of citing the above texts as historical sources suggests that they only provide one type of information (historical) about the events of the summer, 1860, but the

film also elaborates the metaphors with which its forebears have depicted this history. In the final scene, *Bronte* portrays the execution of Nunzio Ciraldo Fraiunco who, according to the historical accounts, survived the firing squad to then be shot in the head at close range per Bixio's orders. The film slightly modifies the history as told by Radice, putting the gun directly in Bixio's hand and therefore implicating him in the lasting image (below left) of Fraiunco's innocent (and arguably anti-Providential) death. This image, which was later chosen as the cover for the VHS version, evokes Francisco de Goya's painting, below right, *El 3 de mayo de 1808 en Madrid: los fusilamientos en la montaña del Príncipe Pío*, held at the Museo del Prado in Madrid. Goya's work celebrates the Spanish resistance to Napoleon during the uprising which occurred in Madrid on May 2, 1808 (Muller). Using background and lighting, both images direct the eye to the figure who is about to be shot as he gives up to his fate. He kneels at the mercy of his executioner(s), surrounded by the already dead bodies of his cohorts.



The correspondence of Goya's text and Vancini's film also recalls Denis Mack Smith's description of the Bronte uprising in his essay, "The Peasants' Revolt in Sicily, 1860." Mack Smith depicts the night of August 2 in terms of a "Goya-like scene of a wild,

frenzied dance lit up by the burning of municipal buildings with all their papers and property registers”(213-214). As one of the source texts cited in the closing credits, the film’s evocation of Goya’s painting suggests that the film borrows not only historical information from its sources, but that it also draws upon the metaphors with which they have characterized the revolt. Furthermore, while Mack Smith’s text compares the mayhem of the initial scene of peasant revolt in Bronte to the imagery of Goya, the final scene of the the film, Bixio’s execution of Fraiunco, recalls the painter’s specific depiction of the Spanish resistance to Napoleon’s troops. The different placement of the Goya reference in the film suggests that the film also appropriates the metaphors with which the textual tradition has characterized the Bronte revolt. While Mack Smith employs the imagery to conjure the atrocities committed by the rebels, the film’s collaborators respond in kind with imagery that evokes the atrocities committed by the State.

Although the disclosure of the film’s sources is, as others have noted, an innovation in the Italian tradition of historical film, this alleged transparency also begs the question about texts that are absent from the credits but nonetheless present within the diegesis.<sup>63</sup> The titles listed in the closing credits do not include *Libertà* even though this was also one of the working titles during the film’s production process in the 1960’s. In an interview, published in 2002, Vancini acknowledges the possible titles that preceded the final version. He says, “Durante l’elaborazione della sceneggiatura (avvenuta in più momenti fra il 1960 e il 1970), le riprese e le lavorazioni successive, il film ebbe titoli

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<sup>63</sup> In his introduction to the 2002 reprint of the screenplay of the film, Pasquale Iaccio writes, “La sottolineatura delle fonti, (un fatto che si può considerare un’eccezione anche nel panorama dei film storici), è, da una parte, una più o meno velata polemica nei riguardi dell’accademia, ma anche la migliore prova, nei riguardi degli spettatori, della “storicità” dell’opera cinematografica” (13)

diversi: *La libertà*, *La rivolta di Bronte*, *I fatti di Bronte*” (Iaccio 103 ).<sup>64</sup> The working titles listed by Vancini evince not only the historical but also the literary bases from which the film emerged, and suggest an important intertextuality with both Verga’s work and Sciascia’s essays.<sup>65</sup>

While many of the scenes from the film are adaptations from the recognized histories, its literary foundations emerge from the evocation of Verga’s work. During the revolt, the character of the bourgeois lawyer, Nunzio Cesare defends himself from the mutinous crowd by recalling his lifelong hard work. Speaking from the balcony of the *casino dei galantuomini*, Cesare remarks, “la roba la feci con il mio sangue.”<sup>66</sup> While the statement serves to recall his humble origins and identify him as one of the peasants, it also evokes the character of Mazzarò, who is the protagonist of another novella by Verga, entitled *La roba*. In this short story, which is also published in the collection *Novelle rusticane*, Mazzarò embodies the self-made man who acquires material wealth as a result of his relentless work ethic. Several times throughout Verga’s novella the narrative voice emphasizes the self-made aspect of Mazzarò’s success, with statements such as, “tutta quella roba se l’era fatta lui, colle sue mani e colla sua testa.”(295). Different from his aristocratic cohort, the baron, whom Verga’s novella depicts as an inept dilettante, Mazzarò works day and night with only regard for his possessions. In fact, he does not even enjoy the bounties of his wealth as he sleeps on the ground next to the lands over which he has gained ownership. In the film, Cesare’s exclamation and emphasis on *la*

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<sup>64</sup> The article, entitled, “La libertà a Bronte non è diventata un film,” jointly published by Carpi, Sciascia and Vancini in *Cinema nuovo* in 1965 calls the film by one of its working titles, *La libertà* (247).

<sup>65</sup> In his article, “Unification in Postwar Italian Cinema: 1954-1974”, Fulvio Orsitto also points out that the film is largely based in *Libertà*, however Orsitto makes no distinction between the text’s cited sources and the fact that Verga’s novella is not included in this list (Bouchard 248).

<sup>66</sup> Nunzio Cesare says it in the film, but the screenplay attributes the line to a character named Calanna (Iaccio 180).



*roba* therefore also accesses the cultural code with which Verga's novella characterizes the bourgeoisie of the late xix century, which portrayed the *galantuomini* as unmerciful and exploitative masters with only their own self-interests at hand.

Further underscoring the way that Verga's text informs the film, the narrative structure also emerges as a formal response to *Libertà*. A full length feature that opens with a depiction of the tensions between peasants and *civili* and moves quickly into the narration of the uprising, the film concludes with Bixio's presence in Bronte after the August trial and execution of Lombardo, Fraiunco et al. In contrast, Verga's short story privileges the moment of revolt, beginning from the peasants' initial movement from bell tower ("sciorinarono dal campanile un fazzoletto a tre colori"(355), continues through the general's order of a hasty execution("subito ordinò che glie ne fucilassero cinque o sei,"(360) and ends with the trial of the peasants, which according to Verga's text lasted "tre anni, nientemeno!"(361). Sciascia's first essay, *I fatti di Bronte*, responds to Verga's privileging of the revolt by filling in the historical details of the land dispute and personal vendettas between the members of the ruling elite, elaborating on the events before and after the uprising and paraphrasing and thus condensing its version of the history of the revolt into one paragraph. Given Sciascia's previous inversion of Verga's narrative structure, the film's focus on the uprising and Bixio's presence in Bronte emerges as a strong rewriting of the first half of Verga's novella.

While the working titles and the narrative structure offer an insight into the presence of Verga's novella in the film, the appropriation of the canonical versions of this story also occurs by means of the film's implementation of peasant voices. During the sequence of the revolt, after gruesomely beating and killing the notary's adolescent son,

the coal burner, Calogero Gasparazzo, shouts, “Egli sarebbe stato notaio anche lui!” (Iaccio 186). Though differently from the film, the lumberjack utters the same line after he commits the same act in *Libertà*. At first glance, the film seems to be citing directly from Verga’s text, however further exploration, and knowledge from the archives shared by Sciascia in his second essay reveals that the statement was originally uttered during the 1863 trial by one of the accused. As I have pointed out, in *Verga e la Libertà* Sciascia postulates Verga’s presence at the trial, offering a quote from *Libertà* as proof. He writes,

Ed esattamente Verga ricorda come il notaio morì - «si era rialzato due o tre volte prima di strascinarsi a finire nel mondezzaio» - come esattamente ricorda l’esclamazione di uno dei rivoltosi, a scrollarsi del rimorso di avere ucciso il ragazzo incolpevole: « Bah! Egli sarebbe stato notaio, anche lui! » (2007 101)

According to Sciascia’s essay, the archival documents reflect that the speaker of this quote was a former rebel (*rivoltoso*) without specifying a role or name. Verga’s novella further identifies him as the lumberjack while the film incorporates the exclamation into the dialogue of Gasparazzo, the coal burner. The reallocation of this statement to Gasparazzo’s character further demonstrates the film’s rewriting of Verga’s story. In the film, the different voices of Verga’s rebels are subsumed into Gasparazzo; he not only takes over the quote uttered above but, as a coal burner, he is given the same privilege as the last character to speak in *Libertà*. Although Verga does not give a name to the coal burner in his short story, the author singles out this character by giving him one of the only individual voices in the narrative and, significantly, the coal burner utters the last word of Verga’s story. As the novella draws to a close the coal burner exclaims, “Dove mi conducete? In galera – o perché? Non mi è toccata neppure un palmo di terra! Se avevano detto che c’era la libertà!” (Verga, 362). Gasparazzo does not repeat the acts

attributed to the coal burner in Verga's story however he nonetheless stands out in as one of the prominent voices of the peasant rebellion.

Gasparazzo's voice offers one example of the film's re-inscription of peasant agency onto the Bronte narrative. While Verga's text only identifies the rebels in terms of their professional roles, Radice's presents specific names and professions, mentioning Gasparazzo amongst the coal burners without granting particular importance to his historical character. In contrast, the film both singles him out as a leader and then codes him as the sinister force of the rebellion. The screenplay's introductory description of Gasparazzo depicts him as a malevolent figure, "Neri, torvi, sporchi, li guida uno più nero e più torvo di tutti. Un uomo possente. È CALOGERO GASPARAZZO" (Iaccio 166). In addition, his hasty shooting of Mauro and Zappia Mariani, two *cappelli* who are identified as liberals and on the side of the peasants in the struggle for land reform, underscores the film's characterization of him as a nefarious force. Even though a fellow peasant defends the men, exclaiming, "Questi no, non hanno fatto niente!" Gasparazzo shoots them anyway, shouting, "Tutti devono morire! Tutti!" (Iaccio 176-177). The power of individual speech qualifies Gasparazzo with a capacity for organic leadership amongst his cohorts, but this potential is undermined by his character's readiness to commit violence. The violence that Gasparazzo pursues in the film, which is specifically aimed at unexpected members of the upper class, recalls that of the *malfattori* described in the following passage by Radice,

Erano ritornati in Bronte alquanti malfattori, noti per uccisioni e per furti: Arcangelo Attinà, Citarrella-Francesco Gorgone, Nunzio Franco Cesarotano. Andavano costoro per le vie con berretti e fiocchi tricolori, fieri della ricuperata libertà, sobillando per le campagne e per le case il popolo minuto alla sommossa, prendendo a pretesto la mancata divisione, fraintendendo e interpretando secondo

il loro malvagio animo le parole del Dittatore contro i Borboni, che era cioè dovere dare la caccia ai realisti per rendersi benemeriti della patria. (269-270)

According to Radice, these men were ex-convicts who had been released from the jails on account of the amnesty issued on June 2 by Garibaldi's government, and who were then left free to roam the Sicilian countryside. In *Nino Bixio* these *malfattori* are characterized as non-partisan ne'er-do-wells who used the lack of land reforms as an excuse to bring violence about the region, and Radice thus largely holds them responsible for the violence of the revolt. In the film, though Gasparazzo provides a strong example of peasant agency, though his subjectivity is complicated by the violence promoted by his character.

*Bronte's* portrayal of Gasparazzo as the violent head of the peasant rebels provides an unprecedented notion of leadership within the Bronte narrative, one which resonates with Renzo Del Carria's 1966 study of popular autonomy in *Proletari senza rivoluzione: storia delle classi subalterne italiane dal 1860 al 1950*. Throughout the first chapter of this text Del Carria insisted on distinguishing and defining the struggle of the subaltern classes, constituted by peasants, artisans and commoners (*popolani*). Taking note of the Risorgimento historiography's omission of these "actors from its tale" of the Garibaldi campaign in Sicily, Del Carria stated "mai [però] si sono valutate le classi subordinate di quell'epoca come *personaggi autonomi del dramma*" (31). In his estimation, the bourgeois and peasant struggles had been conflated into a singular movement for Unification because of their common enemy, the Bourbons (31). After May 17, the date on which Garibaldi issued a decree at Alcamo affirming the independence of Sicily, the peasant struggle was increasingly shaped by violence, and also focused more on land reform than on unification. Describing the violence with

which the populace attacked the Bourbon forces on May 17, Del Carria wrote, “Qui il popolo insorge; (...) e la popolazione che [li] attacca dalle finestre con i sassi e con ogni mezzo. (...) la popolazione vinta, ma non doma, che squarta e brucia una quarantina di soldati (più delle perdite di Calatafimi) e ne fa tredici prigionieri.” His text, which more or less listed the numerous uprisings that occurred throughout all of Sicily during the summer 1860, offered a strong argument for the case of popular autonomy. Del Carria further distinguished the May revolts on the eastern part of the island, in Biancavilla and Alcara Li Fusi for example, noting, “la lotta si radicalizza e la insurrezione nel nome d’Italia si identifica con la rivendicazione dell’abolizione dei dazi e soprattutto della divisione delle terre” (43). The populace revolted in the name of a unified Italy but only for as long as this also meant that the long-awaited land reforms would be put into place. Focusing specifically on the August revolt in Bronte, Del Carria evinced the autonomous aspects of this particular struggle. Like Sciascia’s essay, *I fatti di Bronte*, Del Carria also put the revolt in terms of a modern day protest, *una grande manifestazione popolare*, and furthermore, he called the peasants’ seizure of the town “strategic,” in the description of the first moments of the revolt,

Il 31 luglio tutta la città è per le strade in una grande manifestazione popolare per la divisione delle terre. I contadini da massa inerte divengono classe «autonoma»: lo avvertono con sensibilità classista «i dirigenti» popolari fratelli Minissale che scappano, abbandonando il paese. I capi contadini decidono l’insurrezione in «prima persona», concertando di cingere il paese per impedire che le masse contadine si rechino in campagna a trebbiare. Particolare significativo: il centro insurrezionale si sposta e le riunioni per decidere la rivoluzione non avvengono più in casa del Lombardo, ma in casa del popolano Signorino Spezzacatene. (53)

As a contemporary text of the essays and film about Bronte, Del Carria’s rhetoric posited historical agency in the masses of Bronte and granted them an organizing capacity that they had previously been denied, both by the specific historiography of Bronte, the

Risorgimento and finally, by the theorizations of revolutionary change put forth in Gramsci's work. More importantly, Del Carria's text offered that violence, though unacceptable and thus seen as "other" in the bourgeois setting, was the way in which the popular revolts of the summer 1860 took shape. The terms of these revolts could therefore not be represented by bourgeois authors because, as Del Carria pointed out in his discussion of the *garibaldini*'s view of the populace, the violent manifestations were repugnant, and alienating to bourgeois individuals.

My reading of Del Carria's text sheds light on *Bronte*'s ambivalent representation of Gasparazzo's character. On one hand, Gasparazzo embodies the autonomy called for in Sciascia's essays, but on the other, he embraces a *modus operandi* that is not accepted by the film. This alienation recalls the self-reflexivity of Sciascia's essays, explored above, which grappled with and ultimately recognized the impossibility of direct representation of the peasant experience, as reflected upon in the author's evolving use of the phrase *chinarsi sui fatti di Bronte*. By rendering Gasparazzo as the Other, the film recognizes its own elitist, intellectual perspective. In addition, even though its title and opening credits make claims to truth, the film's conflicted portrayal of Gasparazzo disallows its full identification with and direct representation of the peasants. In this way, Gasparazzo's voice offers an example of the same type of unmediated peasant voice exhibited, according to Sciascia, in Sergio Amabile Guastella's 1876 transcription of the peasant song, *canto delle messe*.

The portrayal of Gasparazzo as the Other also takes place in the film's coding of him and his group of rebels as Fascists. Dressed in black shirts, the images of his clan conform to the filmic models of depicting Fascists in black. In addition to the Fascist

party's historical adoption of this color in its political campaigns and rallies, much has been said of its use as a way of coding Fascists in postwar cinema.<sup>67</sup> The essays' inscriptions of the color black onto the story of Bronte further underscore my reading of the film's problematic portrayal of Gasparazzo. In *I fatti di Bronte* Sciascia proposes a revaluation of the "prima pagina di nera ingiustizia scritta" (1190) and thus also suggests that Fascism was embedded in the tradition that co-opted the foundational stories of the modern Italian nation. Moreover, in *Verga e la Libertà*, the author partly explains Verga's omission of Lombardo, reasoning that Lombardo's persona threatened the integrity of the history of the Unification because it suggested the presence of a *leggenda nera* (103). The presence of this concept, which translates idiomatically as "conspiracy theory," interprets Lombardo's death a result of the longstanding personal vendettas between the different sides of the ruling elite in Bronte, and not an outcome of the liberty and justice claimed by the new State.

The film's chromatic opposition of Gasparazzo's clan, Black Shirts, to Garibaldi's



soldiers, dressed in red, evokes the historical opposition, during World War II, of Fascists to Partisans. With this representation, *Bronte* encouraged continuity between the Risorgimento and Resistance and thus conformed to the guidelines issued by the *Istituto Gramsci* in 1956, which emphasized the historical foundations of the left in response to the disclosure of the

atrocities committed in the Soviet Union during Stalin's rule (Bouchard 64-66). At the same time, however, the film grapples with the cultural patrimony imposed by the *Istituto*

<sup>67</sup> The scene of Fascist father and son, dressed in black shirts, in the Tuscan countryside from the Fratelli Taviani's film, *La notte di San Lorenzo* (1982), particularly comes to mind.

*Gramsci*. While General Poulet, a Sicilian leader of Garibaldi's army who interfaces with the rebels emerges as a positive representation of the Red Shirts, Nino Bixio is portrayed as a tyrant who impatiently and hastily acts in the false name of justice and the Italian nation. Given the parallels of the Risorgimento and the Resistance, the film's ambivalence towards the Red Shirts suggests a similar attitude towards the Partisans. In the inaugural film of the neorealist tradition, Rossellini's *Roma Città Aperta* (1945), Resistance fighters like Manfredi are coded absolutely as wartime heroes and martyrs of the anti-fascist movement. Though the claims to truth suggested by the label *cronaca* led to the Alberto Moravia's categorization of the film as neorealist, the ambivalence towards the Red Shirts nonetheless demonstrates that *Bronte* also delivered a conflicted representation of the Resistance (Iaccio 11).<sup>68</sup>

In *I fatti di Bronte*, Sciascia suggests a similar ambivalence towards the Resistance, once again by condensing the distinct historical moments of the Risorgimento and Resistance. Drawing from two Sicilian models of the historical novel, *I Viceré* (1894) by Federico De Roberto and *Il gattopardo* (1958) by Giuseppe Tomasi de Lampedusa, Sciascia emphasizes the importance of the literary tradition in shaping readers' abilities to relate to the past,

Chi ha letto *I viceré* e *Il gattopardo* sa quanto il cruccio e l'inquietudine dei contadini di Bronte fossero, verso la "classe civile" che era passata o si preparava a passare a Garibaldi, legittimi e motivati. E con uguale cruccio e inquietudine noi abbiamo visto nel 1943 altri Comitati, i C.L.N., i Comitati dell'antifascismo cadere in mano della "classe civile" che dal fascismo era tranquillamente passata all'antifascismo. (*Opere*, 1195)

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<sup>68</sup> Another example of the conflation of Risorgimento and Resistance occurred in the poster for the film, shown above left. The image under the title of the film recalls the name of the anti-fascist movement, *Giustizia e Libertà*, which took on different forms of resistance both outside of and within Italy from 1929-1945. Although the film obeys the mandate of the *Istituto Gramsci* by encouraging the continuity between Risorgimento and Resistance, both within the diegesis and in its promotional materials, the image of a hand scratching away (and partly covering) the key terms, *Giustizia* and *Libertà*, also suggests a form of parodic practice.



In a statement that is evocative of Hutcheon's idea of parodic practice, which "allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity"(26) Sciascia uses the act of reading (*chi ha letto sa*) to connect the xix century peasant sentiments to his own postwar experience. Both historical events were shaped by the ruling elite's sudden shift in ideology, from anti-Garibaldi to pro-Garibaldi and, in the latter case, from fascist to antifascist. Also, and most importantly, Sciascia's memory recalls the ruling elite's assimilation of members of the Partisan Resistance, the *Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale*, which lead to the synthesis of the wartime oppositions into the postwar dominant class. Sciascia's comment complicates the heritage that he should be promoting, according to the *Istituto Gramsci*'s guidelines, and evinces the difference between "noi," who remained antifascist, antibourgeois and amongst the reading elite, and the *altri Comitati*, who were taken over by fascists, and then recast as the newly emerged ruling elite.

The ambivalence towards the Red Shirts and the Partisans that emerges from both the film, *Bronte*, and the essay, *I fatti di Bronte*, discussed above, resonates with Del Carria's problematization of the purported historical alliance of the populace and Garibaldi's Red Shirts in *Proletari senza rivoluzione*. Del Carria evinced the fundamental differences in class as a barrier to a true partnership between the masses and the *civili*. Noting the type of individuals who chose to participate in *i Mille*, Del Carria wrote, "Erano i Mille, che sbarcarono l'11 maggio 1860, il fior fiore della borghesia intellettuale italiana, quasi tutti studenti, professionisti od impiegati, molti dei quali ritroveremo tra gli esponenti della politica e della cultura umanistica e scientifica dell'Italia unificata della seconda metà dell'800"(38). Having painted the *garibaldini* as revolutionary romantics

who were leading a movement against the “ancien regime” and not in the name of the proletariat, Del Carria further pointed out the lack of common ground between them and the Sicilian lower classes. Though the Bourbons were the common enemy of both, the latter were disgusted at the acts committed by the former during the revolt in Palermo on May 17. Del Carria noted that the violent and primitive characteristics of the rebellion carried out by the populace were repugnant to the soldiers of the Mille, “Sarà qui che il 18 maggio entreranno accolti, con bandiere al vento, scampanio e applausi, da questa disgraziata e meravigliosa popolazione i Mille, i quali saranno disgustati – ci dicono tutti i memorialisti – per queste scene di ferocia di una guerra da loro non compresa perché non «loro»” (41).

The only figures remembered positively by the film are the five men executed at the end, who act as martyrs for the uncoopted cause to which the film’s full title, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato* also lays claim. After having deconstructed the *grande mistificazione artistica* of Verga’s text in *Verga e la Libertà*, which included the omission of Niccolò Lombardo and the characterization of Nunzio Ciraldo Fraiunco as a dwarf instead of a madman, the film constructs another mystification of Lombardo’s persona. His character takes center stage as the intellectual who mediates the relationship between the angry peasants and the government, but who fails in his efforts and pays the ultimate price of death. In the following, I examine the film’s reinsertion of Lombardo into the Bronte narrative with a particular focus on the artistic license its writers assume in recasting Lombardo as a contemporary image of a Communist *figura christi*.

Although the film claims that it did not invent the events (opening credits), its portrayal and reinsertion of Lombardo into Bronte's history accounts for his private existence as well as his public life.<sup>69</sup> With regards to the representation of Lombardo's involvement in the public sphere, the film adheres to the historical records and depicts him as a liberal bourgeois who saw the changes implemented by Garibaldi's government as an opportunity to resolve the issues of land conflict on behalf of the peasants. Like Radice's text, the film incorporates a personal story into Lombardo's character development. In the film, Lombardo is a non-religious individual who does not practice the sacraments of the Catholic Church. He lives with his partner, Maria, because he does not believe in the institution of marriage and, at his execution he refuses the Cross, whereas the others fall to their knees upon being offered it by the priest issuing them their last rites. At the end of the film and before his execution, however, Lombardo marries Maria so that she will be properly respected as his widow. After the sentencing, Lombardo explains his reasons for marrying Maria to Father Zappia Biusio, saying, "vi prego, padre...è questa la sola cosa che mi rimane da fare...Non è per sentirmi in regola, tranquillo...Io mi sento già in regola, in pace con tutti, anche se non nel senso che intendete voi..."(Iaccio 235), and thus confirms his non-religious, anti-establishment ideals.

The film's portrayal of Lombardo is rendered more complex by the contradictions that arise when it is compared with one of its cited historical sources, Radice's version.

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<sup>69</sup> In a similar vein, many of the texts that have followed the film take its claim of non-invention at face value. Iaccio's statement that the screenwriters of the film, "non hanno inventato nulla," offers one example of the blanket acceptance of the film's truth. While Iaccio recognizes the impossibility of narrating one truth, he nonetheless allows the claim made by the filmmakers, who had assigned themselves the impossible task of not inventing anything while reconstructing historical events (12-14). On the other hand, Orsitto sees the reinsertion of Lombardo and Fraiunco into the historiography as an "overt gesture of revision" of Verga's story (Bouchard 248).

The latter narrates the lawyer's reaction to the sentencing in *Nino Bixio a Bronte* by emphasizing Lombardo's particular devotion and belief in the saintliness of one of his older sisters, Sister Serafina, who was a nun of the order of Benedictine (429). In addition, in the moments leading up to the execution and the procession towards the piazza, Lombardo shouted, "Sono innocente come Cristo!" and requested that the onlookers read him the Credo, referring to the Nicene Creed (431). In contrast to the film's version of Lombardo's rejection of institutional faith, Radice calls attention to Lombardo's devout religious, Catholic beliefs and practices. Regardless of which depiction is more in line with Lombardo's true spiritual beliefs (it is not my intention to uphold Radice's account and discard the film's), the contradictions that result from examining the private anecdotes included in both texts reveal how the film recasts Lombardo as a Communist, Christian martyr.

Lombardo embodies the Communist ideal of an intellectual who does not subscribe to the teachings of the Church. The sequence leading up to the execution depicts Lombardo and the men executed beside him as martyrs. The medium of film offers these characters a unique opportunity for exculpation from the acts for which they were historically found guilty. The scene of sentencing gives each of the five men an individual voice, a moment in which they defend themselves and declare their own innocence. Further augmenting the *pathos* that it extends to their characters by using a close-up shot during each individual's speech, the film allows for the viewer's maximal identification with these five men. The longest close-up is reserved for Lombardo, who does not simply declare his innocence but launches into a speech about Sicily as it was, during the rule of the Viceroy, and as it should be after the arrival of Garibaldi. The

camera cuts immediately to the scene of Lombardo's marriage to Maria in a small chapel. After the marriage Maria departs from the chapel alone, at once a newlywed and a widow, and Lombardo proceeds directly from the altar to the firing line.<sup>70</sup>

The overt Christian codification of Lombardo's heroism serves to redirect the textual tradition's juxtaposition of the uprising with the Crucifixion. In Chapter 1 I explored how Verga and Radice's texts gesture at the Crucifixion but fall silent on the messianic figure in their characterizations of the revolt. With the help of Mack Smith's analysis of the changing loyalties of the peasants from May to July 1860 (they had historically been pro-Bourbon, but after June 2 they were pro-Garibaldi), and after considering Sciascia's exposure of the historical documents from the August 1860 trial, which wrongly reflect that the uprising was pro-Bourbon, in Chapter 1 I also showed how these texts' omission of the messianic figure leaves open the possibility that the Bourbon king was the Messiah. Evoking the religious iconography of the *via Crucis*, the recasting of Lombardo as a Communist Christ emerges as an overt gesture that fills the interpretive gap left by Verga and Radice's texts.

The film's parodic practice emerges from the disclosure of its historical sources, a gesture that performs the dual function of authoritative measure and self-reflexivity and breaks the boundary between the historical and the literary (Hutcheon 224). By listing its

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<sup>70</sup> Although omitted from the final version of the film, the screenplay of the third episode to be aired on television in 1970 demonstrates a more direct characterization of the five men as martyrs. According to the script, between scenes 30, the execution of the five men, and 32, the shooting of Nunzio Cirialdo Fraiunco, an extradiegetic narrator recites statistics from struggles that occurred in other parts of Italy at different points in history, including Resistance fighters in Liguria. In this version, the narrator would have read, "Si continuò a chiedere pane e terra. Si continuò a sparare e ad uccidere. Soffocato nel 1860, il movimento contadino siciliano dovette fronteggiare per altri cento anni, gli antichi "cappelli" e i loro nuovi alleati. Fu così nei primi del '900 fu così nel primo dopoguerra, fu così con l'avvento del fascismo." This example confirms the film's inscription of Lombardo and the other men who died before the firing squad as martyrs for the proletarian cause.

“historical” forebears, *Bronte* guides the viewer to these texts and these texts only (and only to their historical components). Thus excluding Verga’s short story from the official list, the film also excludes *Libertà* from the canon. In addition, the Christian iconography with which the film depicts Lombardo’s life and death places him in the role of the Messianic figure, whose presence/absence is suggested by the carnivalesque and Easter imagery evoked in *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio a Bronte*. With this gesture, the film determines the identity of this “Messiah” as Lombardo, and it thus also reveals a need for control over the reception of the story it tells. By depicting Lombardo as a Messianic character, the film affixes this label onto his historical persona for the rest of the textual tradition. In drawing attention to the list of historical sources and thus also to the material nature of textuality, however, the film also nods at any unrecognized texts that are nonetheless present in the narrative. In other words, by designating “official” sources, *Bronte* distinguishes between the official and unofficial scripts that inform this story. The means by which *Bronte* tacitly recognizes its unofficial heritage offers a mechanism for understanding the way in which the film’s impulse to control the ambiguities left by previous texts, seen in its inscription of Christian iconography onto Lombardo, equally reflects an acknowledgment of the lack of control over the readerly reception of its messages.

In conclusion, the textual medium through which the essays and film establish their place amongst the canon also serves as the means by which they contest the cultural patrimony that has shaped the narrative tradition of the Italian nation. By calling itself a *chronicle*, the film, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato* both asserts its historical authenticity and, more importantly, draws attention

to its textual nature. As I have demonstrated, Sciascia's first essay, *I fatti di Bronte* performs a similar function; while Sciascia focuses on establishing the *fatti* he simultaneously undermines the notion that one set of historical facts exists. Included with *Verga e la Libertà*, these works are bound by the indelible link between textuality and collective memory; recognizing their own material nature, they reshape this foundational story of the Italian nation, inscribing on it images of peasant agency and conveying records of peasant voices. In my analysis of Sciascia's essays and the film, I have focused on the importance that these works place on the materiality of text or rather, on the physical permanence of published works and the way that they shape our notions of the past. Despite the self-awareness of their material existence, however, there also emerges the (tacit) recognition of their provisionality (Hutcheon 13). While these texts destabilize the inherited wisdom of their cultural patrimony, their refashioning of the Bronte narrative is symptomatic of a latent compulsion to reshape and, ultimately to control the national story. Though the provisionality in these works goes part and parcel with their parodic practice, the concomitant appropriation and reconstruction of the canonical versions of the Bronte narrative suggest an underlying uneasiness about what has been left unsaid, and what is thus open to interpretation. In this way, these texts emerge as totalizing texts whose versions of the Bronte uprising account for (and overdetermine) the structured absences of the canon.

### Chapter III: Refractions of Bronte 1860 in *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio*

This chapter examines the Bronte narrative as it emerges from Vincenzo Consolo's novel, *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio* (1976). In contrast to Sciascia and Vancini's works, which focus primarily on the revolt in Bronte, Consolo's novel recalls Bronte amongst several uprisings that occurred in Sicily during the summer of 1860 and thus displaces this singular event from the privileged position that the critical discourse previously granted it. Although the micro-narrative of the Bronte revolt fades into the background of Consolo's story, I demonstrate here how it nonetheless informs the structural and stylistic disjointedness of *Il sorriso* which, as a result, anchors this Open Work in the canonized narrative polemic of Verga, Radice, Sciascia and Vancini.<sup>71</sup>

As I demonstrated in chapter two, both Sciascia and Vancini's texts refashion the versions of Bronte's story that emerged from Verga and Radice, signaling anxiety not only about *how* to characterize and explain the horrible acts of violence that were committed by both the group of rebels and the liberal State, but also about *where* to place the revolt within their respective narratives. The questions of *how* and *where* to represent the violence that was a part of the nation-making process elicit both formal and stylistic responses in these texts. Contesting the providential characterizations by Verga and Radice, Sciascia's brief essay, *I fatti di Bronte* re-contextualizes the 1860 uprising within the particular history of land conflict in the region, granting less narrative space to the

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<sup>71</sup> While Consolo has written that the narratives of Bronte informed his novel, mine is the first examination of the ways in which the textuality of Bronte permeates *Il sorriso* (Consolo 2003 158-159). Umberto Eco's analysis of the open work offers a useful way of beginning to understand Consolo's work. For Eco, voice is the stylistic element that measures the ambiguity (*ie openness*) in a given work, and more and different types of voices broaden the space between the text and its meaning(s), which in turn also increasing its ambiguity. Eco writes, "If, as I have shown, the openness of a work of art is the very condition of aesthetic pleasure, then each form whose aesthetic value is capable of producing such pleasure is, by definition, open – even though its author may have aimed at a univocal, unambiguous communication"(39).



violent moment of revolt, while Vancini's full length feature isolates and reconstructs the moment of the August revolt and ensuing trial. In addition, the film's representation of Lombardo's death evokes the Biblical story of Christ's death and, in this way *Bronte* further accounts for the structuring absences of Verga and Radice's texts which, as my analysis in chapter one showed, gesture at but ultimately omit the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Finally, in keeping with the revisionist historiographies that characterized the Centenary of Italian Unification during the 1960's, the texts explored in chapter two recast the peasant violence of the Bronte revolt in terms of autonomy and, at the same time, inscribed it as an emblematic moment of class struggle onto the troubled story of the Risorgimento.

In *Il sorriso*, the story of Enrico Pirajno, Baron of Mandralisca, takes place in Sicily during the Risorgimento between 1852 and 1860. An idea of the Baron's personal and professional interests emerges from the contents of chapter one and from the appendices that follow, which comprise letters written by the historical figure in 1840 and 1842. The book initially presents the image of a Sicilian aristocrat who spends his time collecting valuable works of Sicilian art and whose intellectual interests lie in the taxonomy of the fluvial and terrestrial species of mollusks of the region of the *Madonie* mountains in northeastern Sicily. As the story unfolds, Mandralisca undergoes a number of transformational experiences that bring him in touch with the political and social realities of Sicily during the Risorgimento and that ultimately provoke in him a sense of social commitment. His initial meetings with Giovanni Interdonato, a revolutionary activist, serve as starting points for his call to consciousness. The pivotal moment of change and, interestingly enough, one that is omitted from the work comes after the

Baron experiences the revolt in Alcàra Li Fusi. The fictional (and absent) moment is based on the historical uprising that took place in the town of the same name in May and June, 1860 (Bouchard 2001 122; Farrell 64-70; Segre 1991 129). While Mandralisca's intellectual formation constitutes the main thread of *Il sorriso*, the text also incorporates references to and narratives of several historical uprisings that occurred throughout Sicily during the years in which the novel takes place. In the backdrop of Mandralisca's character development linger the stories of the Sicilian mass movements and rebellions that erupted throughout the island during the Risorgimento (Bouchard 2001).

Bronte 1860 is referred to only twice throughout *Il sorriso*, and while the uprising of Alcàra Li Fusi, which took place in May and June of that summer, is the central event of the story, the novel also explicitly recalls, in the first appendix following chapter two, the historian Francesco Guardione's 1906 account of the 1856 revolt in Cefalù. The first reference to Bronte's revolt is in chapter six, when it is mentioned by the main character, the Baron of Mandralisca, along with those of Alcàra, Biancavilla, and "altri paesi" that occurred in Sicily during the summer of 1860 as a result of land conflicts in the region (100). Again in the ninth chapter, in the twelfth and final inscription written on the prison walls by the incarcerated rebels, Bronte appears amongst those of Alcàra, Tusa, and Caronia, "*U populu `ncazzatu ri Laccara/ri Bronti Tusa o puru Carunia*" (132). Conforming to the poetics of Consolo's opus, which has a stylistic tendency to list words that represent similar images or events in succession, the appearance of Bronte's name amongst those of other towns that also experienced revolt during the summer of 1860

displaces its story from the central position that it has previously occupied in the discourse about the Italian nation.<sup>72</sup>

As a result of the novel's integration of references to and stories of multiple uprisings, *Il sorriso* de-centralizes the discourse, delivering a comprehensive and organic vision of the complex history that shaped the Sicilian revolts of the Risorgimento. The presence of Bronte throughout the novel, however, also serves to connote the textual tradition that has shaped its story throughout much of the twentieth century.

Beyond the specific episodes that mention Bronte's uprising, the name of the town appears in three other places in the first part of novel. The hermit who prophecies the Alcàra revolt in chapter three is rumored to be from Bronte, and the town's name is once again listed with those of a few other towns, "Di dov'è? 'Chi lo dice di Bronte, chi di Galati, chi di Tortorici. Chi uomo di lettere e chi del popolaccio. Ma tutti s'è nascosto all'eremo per una vecchia storia che riguarda donne" (67). In chapter four the son of Prince Galvano, whom Mandralisca visits before his journey to Alcàra, studies at the Collegio Capizzi in Bronte (69, 75). Finally, Bronte is listed as the endpoint of the road on which Mandralisca travels back to Alcàra after the revolt, "Sulla strada Vignazza, al pizzo di Pietrami, che per Serra di Re e Maniàce arriva fino a Bronte, i primi cristiani ch'incontrammo furono due guardie campestri" (105). While the first of these examples conforms stylistically to Consolo's technique of elenication, the latter two establish a site-specific connection to the town (and its history), literally drawing a road map of how to get from Alcàra to Bronte.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> O'Connell explores Consolo's "predilection for elenication," especially as it concerns toponyms throughout his opus (129-130).

<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the above description of the hermit priest, which is further developed by Mandralisca's *Memoria*, evokes the similar image of the priest in Verga's short story, *Libertà*. As Verga writes, "Egli

Using *Il sorriso*'s references to Bronte as a point of departure, in this chapter I show how the textual tradition of Bronte informs the structural and stylistic disjointedness of Consolo's novel. Noting the disjointedness that emerges from the texts by Radice and Sciascia and recalling the structuring absences that the previous works on Bronte convey, my analysis demonstrates how this same characteristic of *Il sorriso*, perhaps the most commented element of the novel, paradoxically produces a highly-structuring, highly-referential work. While Verga and Radice's narratives leave ambiguities that Sciascia and Vancini's texts compulsively rewrite, *Il sorriso* confronts the above-mentioned representational quandary of *how* and *where* by locating the structuring absence of the Alcàra revolt at the center of its story. I explicate how Consolo's text foreshadows the revolt in chapters one through five and then, in chapters six through nine, looks back upon it with the letter written by Mandralisca, whose stated scope is to narrate "que' fatti per come sono andati"(96). The narrative design, I argue, therefore emphasizes the importance of the revolt through the opposite processes of anticipation and recall, without ever directly telling the story of the revolt proper. *Il sorriso* does not simply omit the moment of revolt, however, but the opposite forces imposed by the chapter sequences (1-5 and then 6-9) structure the story around the absence of the revolt and thus place this "hole" at the center of the narrative. The presence of absence leaves the revolt unuttered in the text: by not bringing the revolt into consciousness the novel prevents it from ever being fully known (Caruth 61-62).

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tornava dal dir messa, coll'ostia consacrata nel pancione. – Non mi ammazzate, che sono in peccato mortale! – La gnà Lucia, il peccato mortale! La gnà Lucia che il padre gli aveva venduto l'inverno della fame, e riempiva la ruota e le strade di monelli affamati!" (Verga 1980 411, 520). Both texts portray a paradoxical figure of the virile priest who has been assimilated into and who protects the class of ruling elite.

My point is underscored by the Baron's absence from the revolt altogether. He instead spends the forty days during the uprising in the rectory of San Fratello, only to return to the town of Alcàra to witness the immediate aftermath of the revolt. His absence *in text* of the Baron's experience can be more broadly applied to my reading of the ambiguities that emerge from the novel's disjointedness.<sup>74</sup> As both a structural and stylistic element, the disjointedness of this work emerges from its integration of many types of texts written by several different authors. Through these components, which occur both intra-diegetically and also in appendices and inscriptions that are printed at the margins of certain chapters, the novel achieves a level of plurivocality and openness that is common to many postmodern works. More specifically, the narrative contents of the chapters proper are framed by inscriptions, two of which appear at the beginning of the novel and one of which opens chapter three, and several appendices that come at the end of chapters one, two and nine.<sup>75</sup> Many of these marginalized texts, by which I mean those published outside of the narrative content of the chapters proper, offer some points of contact with the chapters while others do not explicitly convey a direct connection, but all of them disrupt the reading experience creating lacunae in the novel's meaning. The ambiguities between the different micro-sequences that unfold throughout this complex and multi-layered narrative thus leave us up to our own devices to connect the novel's disparate parts (Bouchard 120).

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<sup>74</sup>The exclusion of the revolt from the Baron's realm of experience also evokes Radice's absence from the Bronte uprising from which, as you may recall, in *Nino Bixio*, Radice (a boy at the time) and his family had escaped moments before, and thus demonstrates another way in which the Bronte narrative informs the formulation of Consolo's novel (Radice 253).

<sup>75</sup> The three appendices that come after chapter nine also conclude the book and in this sense they also serve as appendices to the entire novel.

Understood as gaps in signification for which the novel offers no explanation, the leaps from text to text that *Il sorriso* imposes upon its reader represent latency periods that, according to Freud, not only follow all violent acts of separation but that stand for, through their inexplicable silences, our missed experiences of them (Caruth 71). The pluri-textuality of *Il sorriso* disrupts our experience of reading the novel, and we find ourselves adjusting, regrouping and trying to make sense of the dynamic changes of voice, register, style and subject matter that we encounter throughout the work. More importantly, however, the type of reading imposed by these disruptions reenacts the process of memory and its work in “grasping the paradoxical relation between survival and consciousness.” Caruth develops Freud’s observation on trauma, noting that consciousness functions to, “protect the organism by placing stimulation within an ordered experience of time,” and that, “what causes trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind’s experience of time”(Caruth 61). So while we, the reader, access our consciousness and attempt to make sense of the ambiguities factored into *Il sorriso*, Consolo’s text repeatedly calls attention to the disruptions and challenges the very process by which we make meaning. Moreover, the lacunae in Consolo’s text take the form of a disjointedness whose disruptive effects function to obscure the novel’s highly structuring absence of the central narrative moment, the revolt. The centripetal mechanism of *Il sorriso*, which I explicate below, further implicates the processes of memory and meaning-making by also exploring their other side, forgetting.

Returning then to the notion of the revolt as an absent experience not only of Mandralisca, but also of Radice and, ultimately, of the reader, the broader implications of

the individual trauma that emerges from the realization of having missed but survived the life-threatening experience of the revolt lies in the understanding that “the peculiar and paradoxical complexity of survival [of] the theory of individual trauma contains within it the core of the trauma of a larger history”(Caruth 71). As I have noted throughout my dissertation, structuring absences have largely driven and determined subsequent narrations of Bronte’s story. As *Il sorriso* bases its centripetal mechanism on the structuring absence of the revolt, Verga and Radice’s texts also center their narratives around the absence of the Crucifixion. As I demonstrated in chapter one, *Libertà* and *Nino Bixio a Bronte* formulate their stories in terms that evoke the Easter Triduum, the Christian commemoration of Christ’s death and resurrection, which begins on Holy Thursday and ends on Easter Sunday. As Consolo’s novel does not narrativize the central moment of revolt, so do these texts construct and yet leave out the pivotal event in the Christian story of the Crucifixion of Christ. The structuring absences in these works evoke the moment of violent separation from the mother that, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud identifies in the *fort* of the *fort* (“gone”)- *da* (“here”) complex as it is repeated during the child’s play and that Caruth connects to the “non-experiencing” of the separation of the Jews from their father figure, Moses, in Freud’s later work, *Moses and Monotheism*. Formulating Freud’s understanding of the monotheistic Jewish religion as a manifestation of the return of the repressed, Caruth writes, “I would propose that what returns in monotheism – the monotheistic idea that comes back after the latency of the Jewish people – is not simply the missed event of the violent separation but the incomprehensible sense, precisely, of having violently separated from Moses *and survived*” (71). The structuring absences in Verga, Radice and Consolo’s texts similarly

suggest a collective trauma that emerges from having missed the moment of violent separation and survived. The characterization of the Italian nation state as Divinely willed and the consequential representation of Italians as *chosen people* in the iconography of the Risorgimento thus finds its negative expression in these texts, which point out that the glory of the realization of the destiny of an Italian nation or, in Freud's terminology, the *da* must also and inevitably be coupled with a latent expression of the *fort* (Banti; Gentile).

### Structuring Absence in *Il sorriso*

Comprised of nine chapters, the novel includes several appendices following chapters one, two, and nine, and also inscriptions, which precede chapters one and three. Together with these additional elements, all of which are printed in the margins of the chapters proper, there are several intertexts, at times indicated and at others subsumed into the narrative itself, that appear within the chapters' contents. This multi-faceted display of diverse intra- and extra-diegetic intertexts emerges as a disjointed synthesis of many different stories and has led to the novel's categorization as a Work in Progress. This reception of Consolo's novel is due, in part, to the process by which it was composed. Daragh O'Connell's thorough research on the manuscripts suggests that Consolo initially wrote the chapters at different moments between 1965 and 1976, the year listed in the copyright of the first edition. *Il sorriso*'s gradual publication, first as separate parts and then as an organic whole, underscores the novel's discontinuity and, as I have pointed out, is an element that also often leads to a characterization of the work as



“open” and therefore unfinished (O’Connell 123-125).<sup>76</sup> Even if we know nothing about the genesis of *Il sorriso*, however, a sense of openness emerges from its juxtaposition of components written in varying registers and by different authors. Producing an effect that has been characterized as “kaleidoscopic,” the disparate intertexts that shape the narrative content in the chapters weave a multiplicity of perspectives and voices into the fabric of *Il sorriso* and thus render it more ambiguous and “open” (Bouchard 119).

Consolo’s novel achieves a measure of structural fragmentation in its implementation of additional texts, taken from various sources that reappear as appendices and inscriptions. These additional texts, which are placed outside of the narrative content of the chapters, diverge in both content and chronology from the first narrative. The novel’s explicit location of them outside of the first narrative structures their incongruities, but the transition to and from the chapters proper requires that the reader bridge the structural and stylistic gaps brought on by their presence. Given their diverse range of publication dates and authors, the placement of the appendices imposes analeptic shifts in *Il sorriso* (Bouchard 129). They emerge as marginalized texts, both because of their physical differences – set apart from the chapters and published in a smaller font – but also because they introduce incongruities in dates, authorship and content that differ from those provided within the chapters. In the opening of the novel, these lacunae make for a more “open” structure and thus invite infinite readings and interpretations of them.

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<sup>76</sup> Calling it a “mutable text,” Daragh O’Connell traces the different versions of *Il sorriso*, the genesis of which “can be located in the mid-1960s, and whose most recent manifestation, for want of a better term, can be dated to 1997; and there is no reason to believe that there will not be further manifestations in the coming years. In short, we are still awaiting a definitive edition of the novel and also, perhaps most importantly, a critical edition” (120).

The novel's construction of these latent moments is underscored by the anachronies that result from the appendices following the first two chapters, which also display inverse mechanisms of temporal direction that provide structure in the work. For example, Mandralisca's letters, dated 1840 and 1842 respectively, force a shift back in time from the setting of the story, noted within chapter one as 1852. At the same time, however, in the second letter Pirajno promises to his readers a more comprehensive volume of his *Catalogo* to come, writing "Per isdebitarmi col pubblico io dovrei intanto percorrere il rimanente dell'Isola, ricercarne i molluschi, studiarli, descriverli, il che abbisogna ancora di molto tempo e di molta fatica"(25). This mechanism, shifting back while gesturing forward, is inverted in chapter two and its appendices. The appendices for chapter two, which is set in 1856, include texts written and published respectively in 1907 and 1881. The first reproduces, in part, the account of the November 25, 1856 uprising in Cefalù, a speech by the historian Francesco Guardione delivered in 1906 on the revolt's fiftieth anniversary and published a year later, whereas the second gives excerpts from Giuseppe Cesare Abba's 1880 memoir *Noterelle di uno dei Mille*. While the shift imposed in chapter one requires a jump back in time to texts that gesture forward, the mechanism that emerges from the analeptic shift between the chapter contents and the appendices of chapter two require a jump forward in order to look back. In other words, both appendices for chapter two, but especially Guardione's, commemorate the historical uprising that Interdonato reveals in his plans in chapter two (39; Bouchard 2001 130). While *Il sorriso*'s articulation of these anachronies is disruptive, the balanced mechanisms displayed here offer some stability for this disjointed text. Interestingly enough, the documents in the appendices at the close of the

novel (9.1, 9.2, & 9.3) are dated 1860, the year also indicated in chapters three through nine of the novel. As archival documents these appendices constitute the “voices” from the official historical record, or public transcript that have written and recorded the historical events which are fictionally revisited within the chapters proper.

Chronologically, or diachronically speaking however, the final appendices do not impose an analeptic shift, but rather effect the closure of the lacunae constructed at the beginning of the novel. Though the final appendices still constitute formal differences, the “union” of the chronology and the diachrony offers a structural example of the way in which *Il sorriso* plays with history and fiction, and ultimately by the novel’s end, presents a “closed” work.

Any exploration of the spaces created by the analeptic shifts between the chapters and their respective appendices begs a hermeneutics, albeit highly subjective and mutable, that focuses on the connections that possibly link the texts. This process of meaning making, wholly dependent upon the reader, leads to interpretations of the points of contact and responds to the impulse to fill, bridge, or simply understand the gap. Broadly speaking, the appendices present aspects retold by the narrative of *Il sorriso* that have already been textualized (Bouchard 2001 127-129). Similar to the texts considered in chapter two of my dissertation, *Il sorriso* overtly confronts the written tradition, conspicuously though marginally, through these texts. They corroborate or authenticate the stories put forth by the first narrative while also providing alternative perspectives to the stories at hand. For example, the appendices that follow the first chapter, which has the same title as the book, are republications of correspondences written by the hand of Enrico Pirajno, Baron of Mandralisca. Appendix 1.1 includes a letter by Mandralisca

written to his cohort, Baron Andrea Bivona that originally served as a preface to the former's impending 1840 publication, *Catalogo dei molluschi terrestri e fluviatili delle Madonie e luoghi adiacenti*. Appendix 1.2 is a short excerpt from his literary journal, dated 1842 that Mandralisca published as a follow up to his *Catalogo dei Molluschi delle Madonie*. The documents that follow chapter one thus offer a glimpse of the historical figure upon which Consolo has constructed his fictional protagonist. They also give more depth to Mandralisca's character by introducing his personal interests and intellectual pursuits, which mostly lie in the preservation of Sicilian natural history through his work cataloguing mollusks of the Madonie region. Similarly, the minor characters of Giovanni Palamara, the youth who accompanies Interdonato on his journey in chapter two, along with the two customs officials Bajona and Chinnici, the [comical/clown-like] customs officers whom Interdonato and Palamara encounter at the port, also appear as historical figures in Guardione's account of the Cefalù uprising. Plucking these characters out of the histories and developing them further in the fictional setting not only blurs the lines between history and fiction, but, more importantly it reveals the apparatus by which history becomes fiction and vice versa.

While the mechanisms analyzed above offer one aspect of the way in which this novel tends towards order, a more important, similar dynamic is at play in the overarching structure of the novel. In the first five chapters, the diachrony gestures towards the uprising in Alcàra Li Fusi, the central moment of the work, whereas chapters six through nine retrospectively view this important event. As prefigurations of the uprising to come in the first half of the novel, the disquieted peasants' menacing chants invade the space of the Baron's salon from the streets of Cefalù in chapter one (19),

Interdonato foretells the *Evento Grande* during his meeting with Mandralisca in chapter two(39), the epileptic hermit's premonition prophesies the impending revolt in chapter three, chapter four offers several signals of the looming revolt, including Maniforti's statement, "Questi son tempi infidi, d'anarchia...Non ci son leggi, condanne, pene capaci di fermare questa massa crescente di ladroni!"(76), and the prisoner's crime and subsequent threats, uttered in the dialect of San Fratello (80-81), and finally, chapter five, entitled *Il Vespero*, narrates the events on the eve of the revolt, focusing on Giuseppe Sirna Papa's personal readying for the violence to come and the gathering of the group of rebels and their leaders. Beginning in chapter six, instead of gesturing forward towards the impending revolt the novel turns back to look at the uprising. Chapter six marks the beginning of Mandralisca's letter and serves as the preamble to chapter seven, which is the memoir of the Baron's experience of the revolt's aftermath. Chapter eight describes the layout of the prison in which the rebels are now incarcerated and chapter nine offers inscriptions about the uprising written on the walls by the prisoners. Taking advantage of different ways of foreshadowing, chapters one through five offer glimpses of the coming revolt while, gesturing in the opposite direction, chapters six through nine utilize narrative forms and techniques (flashback, memoir) that look back upon an event which has already occurred. Diachronically speaking the uprising could be located in narrative time between chapters five and six and yet the text is reticent on this, the main event. Given the mechanism described above, in which the two halves of the novel exert force in opposite directions, the unuttered event of the uprising emerges thus as the stabilizing absence that holds the novel together.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Bouchard has formulated the relationship between appendices and chapters in Emanuel Lévinas terms of the "saying" and the "said,"

The structuring absence that results from the dynamic of linear forces at work in the complex of *Il sorriso*, is further underscored by the way in which the appendices for chapters one and two prefigure the final form of the novel and thus set *Il sorriso* in motion along a circular path.<sup>78</sup> Together with the narrative content of the chapter, which brings to mind several of the Baron's publications and their notoriety (7, 16), both appendices for chapter one also establish Mandralisca's role as author and demonstrate that no matter the subject (mollusks or peasant revolts), writing is the act through which he engages in society. As unilateral epistolaries that offer no written response, these texts also foreshadow the form that the novel adopts from the sixth chapter forward. Similarly, the appendices following chapter two, which are memoirs of the revolutionary moment, evoke the form through which the fictional protagonist-turned-narrator Mandralisca will record his experiences of the aftermath of the revolt in Alcàra Li Fusi at the close of the

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It could be argued that, since any appearance of the "saying" would result in its betrayal, or better yet, in a thematized, re-presented Being belonging to the order of the "said," the ethical moment is fated to remain outside representation, forever confined to silence and oblivion by the totalizing system with which it is interwoven." Yet, Levinas indicates that this is not the case. Through an often employed metaphor of a thread whose continuity is interrupted by knots, he repeatedly suggests that "amphibiology" implies two orders of meaning. These orders are the order of the "saying," which becomes readable as the nonthematizable, as the ethical supplement that prevents the order of the "said" to achieve the totalizing closure of ontological language:

The correlation of the saying and the said, that is, the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic system and to ontology, is the price that manifestation demands, in language quasaidd everything is conveyed before us, be it at the price of a betrayal [...]. Language permits us to utter, be it by betrayal, this outside of being, this ex-ception to being, as though being's other were an event of being. {Otherwise than Being 6} [127-128]. Bouchard further explicates that the "said" in *Il sorriso* is constituted by the texts that occur in the appendices and the "saying" takes place in the narrative content of the chapters,

As I have previously indicated, although the nine chapters of *Il sorriso* extend from September 12, 1852, to December 18, 1860, neither the treatment of temporality, nor that of voice, provide the reader with a stable, linear representation. While chronological frameworks are violated by conspicuous anachronies, major events are narrated through different perspectives and points of view. Yet, it is precisely in the interruptions of a continuous flow of narration and in the dialogic patterns of representation that readers can locate an ethical moment of "saying." (129)

While I agree that the act of writing, which is foregrounded throughout the novel, signals the moment in which the "saying" becomes the "said," I contend that the "saying" moment of *Il sorriso* does not lie in the stabilizing disjointedness of the text but instead is locatable in the unuttered yet ubiquitous event of the uprising.

<sup>78</sup> In his linguistic analysis, Segre has also pointed out the helicoidal elements of the text (Segre 80-81).

novel. The formal correspondence between the marginal texts at the beginning of the novel and the chapters at the end thus constitute another stabilizing and yet motile component of this novel's dynamic structure. Finally, the linear mechanism that the chapters effect and the circular motion explicated above make for a centripetal force that stabilizes the text around the absent moment of the revolt.

As the form of Consolo's novel evolves and revolves, chapters three through seven, which are not accompanied by appendices, begin to resemble the appendices with their inscriptive openings. While chapters one and two reveal their respective temporal and geographical settings intra-diegetically, chapters three through seven display the initial dates and locations prior to beginning their narratives. Pushing this information to the forefront of the chapter contents marks the text's increased efforts at situating its diverse components within the broader context of the work and thus mimics processes of consciousness and memory described in the beginning of my analysis. From these indications, we readers easily notice that the diachrony of the narrative proceeds in a linear manner and thus corresponds to and evokes a historical chronology of "real" time.

In addition to this privilege granted to the time-place settings, in the latter chapters that constitute structuring moments in which *Il sorriso* offers the reader a map for navigating its pages, the inscriptions that precede the novel and chapter three offer additional examples of disruptions that concomitantly serve as structuring moments in *Il sorriso*. While the citations from Gismondo Santi and Leonardo Sciasica at the opening of the novel render its textual stratification more complex, there is nothing disruptive about their presence. These passages are instead located where we readers would expect them to be – at the beginning of the work, just under the title. Featuring quotes from

Santi, a Sicilian writer whose work dates to the XVI century, and Sciascia, the passages discuss Antonello da Messina, a Sicilian xv century artist (Messina, c. 1430-1479).

Taken from his *Cronica rimata*, the brief quotation from Santi offers a glimpse of the XVI century reception of the artist's work, "Antonel di Sicilia, uom così chiaro..." while the longer statement, taken from Sciascia's essay *L'ordine delle somiglianze*, categorizes the play of *somiglianze* as Sicilian, broadly discusses the portraiture of Antonello, saying that his works "sono l'idea stessa, l'arché della somiglianza," and finally refers specifically to his painting commonly called *The Unknown Man* (c. 1465, Museo Mandralisca). Both epigraphs, which have been edited down and contain ellipses [...], fulfill their descriptive and dedicatory tasks. They recall the cultural patrimony of Antonello da Messina's portraiture and thus inform our reading of Consolo's novel. The *antefatto*'s narration of the sale of the painting and its journey from Lipari to Cefalù in the beginning of chapter one follows the logic that these inscriptions have carefully set up. Furthermore, the emphasis on *il gioco delle somiglianze* in the passage by Sciascia brings to mind mimesis or, simply put, the imitation of reality by art and literature, at the beginning of a work that draws significantly upon historical events and their corresponding documents. Positing itself as a historical novel, *Il sorriso* plays with this Sicilian artistic heritage and its evolving relationship with "reality" (Consolo 2003 161).

In contrast to the traditional location of the Santi and Sciascia epigraphs, the title of a drawing by Francesco de Goya, *Tristes Presentimientos de lo que acontecer* [*Sad Forebodings of What Will Come*] is more disruptive as the inscription for chapter three. Placed as is, not at the beginning but in the midst of the novel, Goya's title nonetheless conforms to *Il sorriso*'s practice of disruption and trauma. The passage from Goya



follows through with the disruption that is set up by the second appendix of chapter two (2.2), which is labeled both *Appendice seconda* and *Intermezzo*. The latter term, *Intermezzo*, allows for a pause from the narrative style of the first two chapters and also necessitates a redirection after this point. This nodal shift, which can be characterized as a move from historical-fictional narrative to lyrical prose, only lasts for the duration of *Morti Sacrata*, but it marks a change in the formal beginning of the chapters. Whereas in chapters one and two, respectively entitled *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio* and *L'albero delle quattro arance*, the geographical and historical points of reference are revealed within the narrative content, from chapter three through chapter six this same information is revealed before the narrative begins. In chapter one we move from a boat on the Tyrrhenian Sea, between the island of Lipari and the northeastern coast of Sicily, through the town of Cefalù, to end in Mandralisca's home located on top of the hill, and in chapter two we begin again in a boat on the same sea and then move up into Mandralisca's private quarters. In addition to parallel movements – sea to land, low to high – the historical points of reference for both chapters one and two are also revealed by means of the text-within-a-text format. In chapter one, the date, 27 October 1852, is printed on the invitation to Mandralisca's party and in chapter two, the year 1856 appears at the top of the customs document that serves as a catalogue of the ship's goods (32). These clues offer specific historical, political and social settings, but the novel's subsequent location of place and date in front of the narrative content for chapters three through six offers a point of reflection on the way in which the second third of the novel emphasizes the historicity of the narrative events.

By evoking Goya's prescient war imagery, the epigraph, *Tristes presentimientos de lo que hay acontecer* [Sad Forebodings of What Will Come, c. 1810] marks a change in the novel and thus prepares the stylistic shift that takes place in chapter three, *Morti sacrata*. Whereas the initial epigraphs situate the work in terms of Antonello da Messina's painting, *The Unknown Man*, this inscription incorporates another work of art into the discourse. *Tristes presentimientos* serves as the title to the frontispiece for the series of drawings, *Los desastres de la guerra* [*The Disasters of War*, 1810-1820]. Taken directly from the Spanish text, the inscription not only expands the visual objects of trauma that inform *Il sorriso* but it also adds to the work's plurivocality and polyglossia (Vizmuller-Zocco).

In contrast to the opening inscriptions by Santi and Sciascia, both of which draw upon the "myth" of Antonello da Messina's work, Consolo's placement of this title in front of his third chapter evokes Goya's drawing directly and also offers a point of contact with the Bronte narrative. The final frames of *Bronte*, as noted, also recall Goya's war imagery. In the film, the scene in which Fraiunco kneels at the mercy of his executioner brings to mind, through the colors and the positioning of its figures, Goya's 1814 painting, *The Third of May 1808*. In chapter two, I examined the correspondence between the filmic imagery and Denis Mack Smith's 1949 essay, which was the first to describe the uprising in terms of a "Goya-like scene of a wild, frenzied dance lit up by the burning of municipal buildings with all their papers and property registers" (213-214) and demonstrated how the film's imagery interpreted and codified the metaphors employed by its recognized source texts. While the painting *The Third of May 1808* was a royal commission that celebrated the Spanish insurrection against the French, the series *The*

*Disasters of War*, which was published posthumously in 1863 on account of Goya's reluctance to reveal its satirical and critical stance towards the Spanish Empire, is seen as a more introspective work that has a universal focus on the horrors of war (Muller). Furthermore, *The Third of May 1808* looks back upon a glorious moment in Spanish national history, whereas *Sad Foreboding of What Will Come* emphasizes, quite dismally, a sense of apprehension and even anxiety about the future. By inscribing the title from Goya's drawing onto his work, Consolo reflects on the sameness and difference within the chain of Bronte narratives and, more specifically through his intertextual reference omits another moment of violent separation, this time in Spanish history that has been characteristic of his narrative. Like the makers of the film, he too draws upon the imagery suggested by Mack Smith's metaphor and chooses from Goya's depictions of the Peninsular War, but he differentiates his novel from the film by selecting a work that, eliding the war itself, ponders the inevitable and repulsive outcomes of its violence and how these play out in the national consciousness.<sup>79</sup>

### The Bronte narrative behind *Il sorriso*

The Bronte texts of Verga, Radice, Sciascia and Vancini have also played with how to talk about the revolt, which I have termed the violent act of separation, as well as where to place it or rather, how to privilege it within their respective narratives. The constructed absence of the moment of revolt at the center of *Il sorriso* engages and

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<sup>79</sup> Elsewhere Consolo recognizes that Mack Smith's essay informed his research for *Il sorriso*. After outlining the critical revisitation of the Risorgimento that took place for the centennial of the unification, Consolo writes, "In was in the climate of the celebrations of the centenary of Unification and the revisionist rereading of the Risorgimento that I conceived the idea of my // *Sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio*(...)above all, I also revisited the literarywritings on the Risorgimento of which I have spoken above" (2003 160). Here the focus on Goya's text circumvents the cultural patrimony of the artist's work, particularly in regards to its presence throughout the Bronte narrative.

comments upon the process of memory-making that these texts take on, noting the parallel and silent act of “forgetting” as it is represented in Consolo’s text in the omission of the revolt. While above I have explored how the disjointedness of *Il sorriso* functions for its ulterior gesture of unutterability, below I examine how the disjointedness of this text also serves as a the primary vehicle through which Consolo’s novel engages intertextually the earlier works on Bronte. As I demonstrate, while the pluri-textuality of *Il sorriso* strongly evokes Radice’s text, the process of reconstruction as evident in the process of Sciascia’s works, which began in 1960 initially as disjointed and pluri-textual texts and lead ultimately to the production and release of the linear reconstruction of the uprising in Vancini’s film, *Bronte* (1972).

*Nino Bixio a Bronte* includes personal accounts of the revolt, based on the “unclaimed experience” of Radice, its author, who interviewed his fellow citizens of Bronte who had witnessed and were asked to recall (in 1906) the events. The text also comprises archival materials that supplement Radice’s reconstruction of the events. These additional documents, which are at times integrated into the narrative content and, at others, included as appendices, make for a formal disjointedness in *Nino Bixio* (also see my chapter one, 17-18). Radice’s story displays stylistic incongruities, such as the oscillation between present and past verb tenses, similar to those which are also present in *Il sorriso*.

While *Nino Bixio* synthesizes several versions of the Sicilian and, more specifically Brontese story within the Italian unification, it also produces a fragmented and disruptive narrative that requires agility in negotiating the myriad intertexts it presents. The first half of *Nino Bixio*, subtitled “La vendetta” privileges the recollections

of the author and his fellow Brontesi. In this section, the narrative presents a singular and linear account of the uprising, contextualizing the event within the lingering vendetta between warring factions of Bronte's social elite and the increasing threat of social unrest over the rancorous and age-old efforts to re-acquire usage rights of the municipality's common lands. By contrast, the narrative in "La repressione," the second and final section, places the archival sources in the foreground. The text is presented in two layers with one set of footnotes for both. The top layer, published in a larger font, constitutes the continuation of Radice's narrative from "La vendetta" and thus allows ample space for the author to recount, explain and interpret the story of Bixio's stay in Bronte. The bottom layer, published in a smaller font, is comprised solely of entries from Bixio's personal diary that date to this particular moment. The footnotes, which respond to both layers, provide further comments, sources and sometimes, where Radice sees fit, modifications to the information in Bixio's diary.<sup>80</sup> In a significant editorial choice, Radice admittedly reprinted certain entries from the diary within his narrative in "La repressione." The author thus allowed himself more narrative space to engage these particular entries. Beyond the subjectivity with which Radice made his selection of entries that, in his estimation, necessitated elaboration, the visual effect of these parallel texts disrupts the structural continuity of *Nino Bixio*. While the journal entries incorporate Bixio's private papers and thus provide an important "other side" of the story to Radice's account, the visual discontinuity that results from the juxtaposition of these texts confuses their points of contact. Further complicating and disrupting the story, the

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<sup>80</sup> In the second layer, at the opening of "La repressione," Radice remarks, "Pubblico integralmente il diario di Nino Bixio, parte intercalato nel testo e parte a pie' di pagina, colla correzione di nomi di persone, di luoghi e di alcune date omesse o sbagliate a me noti per essere io del luogo e per confronto con altri documenti. [...] Ho segnato con numero progressivo tutti i documenti del diario in modo da renderne facile la ricostruzione" (413).

footnotes for “La repressione” comment on both Radice’s and Bixio’s narratives and also provide additional source documents, such as the not-guilty plea of Niccolò Lombardo et al. and the *Ordinanza di rigetto* issued by the court rendering the defense of the accused invalid because it was submitted one hour past the established deadline of 1:00 p.m.

Adding yet another layer to *Nino Bixio*, Radice makes available five different types of documents at the close of his work. In their order of publication, these include: a letter dated August 24 [1860] from the Brontese citizen, Placido De Luca to his brother, Antonino Saveria, cardinal of Vienna in which he recounts the horrors that have just taken place; a record from volume I, folder 83 from the criminal trial of Bronte of Lombardo et al. that sentences them to death by firing squad; the minutes from the meeting of the town council later that year, on November 23, in which the council officially declares the revolt a “reazione borbonica” (Radice adds a footnote negating this “fact”); the death certificate of Lombardo et al. signed by their lawyer Michele Tenerelli-Contessa; a list of houses that were ransacked and burned down during the revolt and, finally a list of those whose testimony and memory Radice relied upon to reconstruct his account. Moving from the year in which Radice writes, 1907 to the years in which all of the texts in the documents section were produced imposes an analeptic shift similar to those which take place in chapters one and two of Consolo’s text. Whereas these documents serve as “original” source texts for Radice, in Consolo the notion of “original” is only possible for the absent moment that holds his novel together.

As supplemental components to Radice’s story, the documents provided at the end of his account offer some points of contact with *Il sorriso*. Letters, death certificates, trial and other “official” documents exemplify the formal parallels between Radice and

Consolo's equally disjointed texts. While they diverge in their geographical and chronological milieu in that they address different revolts in different regions of Sicily, the supplemental documents included as part of *Il sorriso* function not only to recall the Bronte narrative vis-a-vis the fragmented structure of *Nino Bixio* but, in providing parallel documents that concern a different and yet similar revolt, they also refract the story of injustice and peasant struggle that has until now been emblemized in Bronte.<sup>81</sup> *Il sorriso* offers thus a fictional account of a less polemicized history than Bronte's and breaks open the historiographical discourse about Sicilian peasant revolts during the Risorgimento.

The dynamic of sameness and difference or parodic practice in *Il sorriso* plays with the chaos, or order with which the narration of historical events connote archetypal moments in the collective unconscious. For example, as I demonstrated in chapter one, both Verga and Radice's texts depict the peasant uprising in terms that evoke a ritual degradation. Utilizing to their advantage the correspondence of the chronology of the revolt, which began on a Thursday night and ended on a Sunday morning, these stories strongly recall the Easter Triduum, the Christian ritual of degradation *par excellence*. *Il sorriso* also plays with the serendipitous chronology of the historical revolt in which it is based by connoting a different moment in the Christian calendar. The Alcàra Li Fusi uprising began, according to Mandralisca's memoir in chapter seven of *Il sorriso*, on May 17, which was also the date of the Feast of the Ascension, as noted in the text, "...il diciassette dunque, l'Ascensione, successe in quella piazza il quarantotto..." The passage

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<sup>81</sup> Radice also mentions the other uprisings which occurred in the surrounding towns of Bronte, "Si leggevano, si commentavano le notizie, i decreti del Garibaldi a favore del popolo. Gli esempi di Adernò, Biancavilla, Regalbuto, che avevano diviso ai proletarii le terre del Comune, erano incitamento a maggiori odii contro il partito signoreggiante" (266).

from his memoir, goes on to recount his experience during this time, which is not a testimonial of the revolt proper but instead, having been forewarned, of the forty days he spent in a hermitage of San Nicolò in the mountains above the town,

*... ma subito avvertiti da un emissario di un tal Saccone, prete del Rosario, scappammo alla dirotta su per le rocche alte fino alle falde del Calanna per rifugiarci dentro al romitorio di Santo Nicolò, a guardiano un eremita pazzo che nel cuor della notte ci svegliava, donne e bambini tremuli e piangenti, nero caprigno allucinato, in aria il bordone minaccioso, obbligandoci prostrati ad espiare, baciare nel canestro una mantella, uno scarpino, una treccia recisa di capelli, reliquie appartenenti, per suo farneticare, a una santa vergine, morta, risorta e poi rimorta per grazia della croce, implorare gridando l'aiuto ora di dèmoni ora di celesti, così che dopo quaranta giorni circa di questa vita tremenda che per poco non ci menò alla morte o alla follia (il mio servo Sasà si era ridotto a schiavo e succubo del frate, e l'adorava e vaneggiando, il babbalè, lasciavasi legnare, vestire di cilicio, cosparger la testa di terra e d'escrementi), cessata la rivolta, fummo liberi. (104)*

The Baron's description of the hermit priest's crazy antics evokes the Biblical story of Jesus' time in the wilderness during which, according to Scripture, Christ was tempted by Satan (*Mark* 4: 1-8; *Luke* 4: 1-13). In the Christian tradition, Jesus' time in the wilderness is commemorated during the season of Lent, which marks the forty days (excluding Sunday) between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. Noting also that his re-entry into the town occurred on the Feast of San Giovanni, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June that same year, Mandralisca's memoir foregrounds duration and location (*su per le rocche*) and thus underscores the similarities between the fictional/historical Alcàra Li Fusi uprising and the story of Lent. Moreover, while Lent marks the period leading up to Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday that precedes Easter Sunday, the Feast of the Ascension occurs in the Christian calendar forty days after Easter Sunday. Commencing on the fortieth day following Easter Sunday and lasting for forty days, the novel connotes both of the forty day periods that surround Holy Week and yet does not recall this central,



pivotal moment in the Christian tradition. Similar to the omission of the uprising, the central moment of *Il sorriso*, the connections that link the Alcàra uprising to the Christian calendar “pass over” the central and redemptive moment of degradation and exaltation that takes place during the Easter Triduum and thus “negatively” engages the diachrony of Verga’s novella.

The disjointedness that connects *Nino Bixio* to *Il sorriso* is further underscored by the former’s stylistic discontinuity. Throughout the work, the narrative voice inexplicably and spontaneously switches from past to present tense. Often occurring at the most intense moments of the narrative, this movement between past and present emphasizes the testimonial aspect of *Nino Bixio* by reviving the vivid memories of several witnesses and then compiling them in his work, but it also destabilizes and works against the distance that Radice claims in the opening paragraphs(253).<sup>82</sup> The present tense with which the narrative voice recounts the revolt conveys the import of the 1860 event in the memorial offered by *Nino Bixio* and also suggests its troubling milieu in the town’s collective unconscious. Stylistic elements that further contribute to the discontinuity of Radice’s narrative reflect a literary rhetoric that engages, through quotations and specific rhetorical terms, the works of “canonical” authors such as Dante, Manzoni and Verga.<sup>83</sup> The overt literary register that permeates the narrative of *Nino Bixio* thus further complicates, rendering more ambiguous and open, this self-proclaimed “objective” text.

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<sup>82</sup> Narrating almost fifty years after the revolt, in 1910, Radice’s work presupposes that emotional distance goes hand in hand with temporal distance (253).

<sup>83</sup> With less frequency, Radice also recalls non-Italian authors such as Shakespeare, “L’improvvisa apparizione della bandiera tricolore fu ai vecchi reggitori come l’ombra di Banquo innanzi a Macbet” (257).

While the movement between tenses by Radice's narrative voice functions to underscore the ever-present consciousness of the Bronte uprising almost fifty years after the fact, Consolo's switching between past and present further renders the event, based on the 1860 uprising in Alcàra Li Fusi, a non-event in the diachrony of *Il sorriso*. The Baron recounts his experience following the fictional Alcàra revolt in the seventh chapter of the book, entitled *Memoria*, which is also the second component of his letter to Interdonato and which, like Radice's text, serves as a personal memoir and testimony of the events. The episode in *Il sorriso* altogether omits the possibility of the story of the revolt by placing the Baron there immediately afterwards. As I have noted above, his memoir of the revolt's aftermath constitutes an added degree of separation from the main event and, though the oscillation between present and past tenses takes the place of the pluperfect, the memoir effectively and indirectly places the uprising in the past of the past. In both Radice's text and Mandralisca's memoir, the present functions to conjure the past, whereas in chapter three of *Il sorriso*, entitled *Morti Sacrata*, the present tense connotes a sense of the future. In this chapter, the premonition of the epileptic hermit predicts the uprising to come and thus further complicates the diachronous location of the revolt. As in Radice's text, which employs the present tense to bring the violent moments of the Bronte uprising into consciousness, the anachronistic characterization of the revolt of *Il sorriso* concomitantly render it ubiquitous. The revolt is at once everywhere and nowhere: structurally speaking its absence holds the text together, but stylistically speaking it permeates the narrative in the most ephemeral way.

In both *Nino Bixio* and *Il sorriso*, the supplemental materials provide a glimpse of the official transcript that has thus far constituted the stories retold and been synthesized

in each text. Whereas in *Nino Bixio* these have served to mitigate the affective inflections of Radice's personal narrative and, at the same time, to corroborate the version of "facts" offered by his story, the presence of varying texts by varying authors in Consolo's novel has led to the interpretation of *Il sorriso* as an inconclusive and pluralized Work in Progress. If both *Nino Bixio* and *Il sorriso* present structural and stylistic discontinuities, what accounts for the differences in the critical reception of each? In *Nino Bixio*, the inclusion of texts by different authors written at different periods of time is accompanied by an ongoing meta-commentary. Both within the narrative content and in the footnotes the (implicit) author reflects on the process by which he composes his text. In other words, by dispersing authorial comments and justifications of certain editorial choices throughout all of the layers of *Nino Bixio*, Radice carefully contextualizes his inclusion of the archival documents and constructs his text. This "guidance" conveys a strong presence of a singular narrative voice that both recounts the story and explicates the editorial choices exhibited in *Nino Bixio*. Consolo's novel affords itself the opportunity for meta-commentary only in the Baron's address to Giovanni Interdonato, which imposes a *structure en abyme* within the novel and is comprised of the last four chapters of the book: his letter (chapter six), his memoir (chapter seven), the account of his visit to and a description of the prison (chapter eight), and his transcription of the prisoners' inscriptions on the walls (chapter nine). The Baron's explanations for his inclusion of the supplemental documents are woven throughout these chapters but the comments that guide his reader through the changing content occur at the transitions between chapters. Thus, at the beginning of his memoir in chapter seven, "Parlai nel preambolo di sopra di una memoria mia sopra i fatti..."(2010 119); at the end of seven and moving into eight,

“Rappresentar vi devo dunque questo carcere” (2010 132); and at the end of eight and moving into nine, “Ma ora noi *leggiamo questa chiocciola* per doveroso compito, con amarezza e insieme con speranza, nel senso d’interpretare questi segni loquenti sopra il muro d’antica pena e quindi di riurto”(2010 139) after which the author provides a map of the prison, laid out in the shape of a helix, and the exact location of each of the inscriptions that follow. Outside of chapters six through nine, *Il sorriso* juxtaposes different texts without explaining or connecting them in an explicit way to their respective chapters, but the opportunity for explanation offered by the metaleptic shift in chapter six to a unilateral epistolary novel affords the work a brief though final parenthesis in which to “map out” the rest of the text (Genette 231-237). The recurrence of appendices at the end of the work, following chapter nine, then works to situate the novel’s practice of plurivocality within the Baron’s explanations and comments offered in his letter.

Furthermore, the formal transition of *Il sorriso* from a multi-faceted and seemingly disjointed text to the overtly controlled and highly referential form of the epistolary novel recalls a similar process in the complex of Sciascia’s works on Bronte. The essays *I fatti di Bronte* and *Verga e La Libertà* play with disjointedness and experiment with ways of achieving *plurivocality* while the final version of the full-length film, *Bronte: Cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*, offers a seamless and linear story of peasant autonomy during the Unification. As with the formal changes that take effect during the course of *Il sorriso*, the collectivity of Sciascia’s works tends towards the totalizing version of the Bronte story exhibited by the

film, which can be read as a co-opted text that has attempted to determine the reception of its message.

By way of example, the disjointedness of the first essay, *I fatti di Bronte* comes from its opening, which exhibits several starts, and from its omissiveness which, as Sciascia recognizes in the postscript to the collection of essays of which this is a part, necessitates an *a priori* knowledge of the discourse. The “first” beginning moves from a broadly theoretical consideration of Alessandro Manzoni’s literary-historiographical approach in *La Storia della Colonna Infame*, discusses the contemporary Centenary of Italian unification and, finally, hones in on the various accounts of Nino Bixio’s presence in Bronte during the summer of 1860. After a paragraph break, Sciascia’s text resumes the topic of Bronte, this time focusing less on the accounts of Bixio’s actions but instead privileging “I fatti dell’estate 1860, a Bronte e nei paesi etnei...”(1191) and then providing background historical information about the pre-existing circumstances from 1491, 1799 and leading up to the particular uprising of 1860. After another paragraph break, Sciascia backs up in the historical chronology that precedes the events of the summer 1860 to discuss Garibaldi’s arrival in Palermo and its effect throughout the Sicilian countryside, leading right up to but then only paraphrasing the revolt. Finally, after a third and final paragraph break, the essay picks up on Saturday, August 4 and recounts the aftermath of the revolt, including a brief narrative of the hasty executions of Lombardo et al. and a commentary that corrects the reflection that the revolt was pro-Bourbon in the historical record. The multiple starts and analepses in *I fatti di Bronte* make for a non-linear narrative whose disjunctive effect renders the text dense and inaccessible. Moreover, *I fatti di Bronte*’s discontinuity is further underscored by the

essay's fragmentation and partial republication, beginning with the second section, which starts, "I fatti dell'estate 1860, a Bronte e nei paesi etnei..."(1191), five years later in the July-August 1965 issue of the journal, *Cinema Nuovo*.<sup>84</sup>

The parallels between Consolo and Sciascia's texts are further explicated in the treatment of the writer figure by each. As I have noted, the appendices following chapter one of Consolo's novel include letters written by Enrico Pirajno and thus establish writing as the act through which he (historically) engaged. His character's role and position as author in the diegesis of *Il sorriso* are further underscored by the mention of several of his publications, the titles of which also appear in the appendices. The initial emphasis on the Baron as writer prefigures his ultimate gesture of social engagement, which is manifested as the letter that comprises the final chapters and through which he retells his experiences of the revolt and, afterwards, his visit to the prison. While Mandralisca's awareness of his chance nobility is expressed through his thoughts conveyed by the third person omniscient narrator in chapter four of the novel (72-73), the act of engagement initiates with the preamble to his memoir (chapter six, 96). In this passage, Mandralisca recognizes that his voice will always remain different from those whom he seeks to represent, the "imputati," and that even though he can attempt to tell their story he can never speak on behalf of the peasants. He thus abandons himself to the impossible,

E narrar li vorrei siccome narrati li avería un di quei rivoltosi protagonisti moschettati in Patti (...) d'uno zappatore analfabeta come Peppe Sirna inteso Papa, come il più giovine e meno malizioso, ché troppe sono, e saranno, le arringhe, le memorie, le scritte su gazzette e libelli che pendono dalla parte contraria agli imputati: Sarà possibile, amico, sarà possibile questo scarto di voce e di persona? No, no! Ché per quanto l'intenzione e il cuore sian disposti, troppi

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<sup>84</sup> Subsequent republications of Sciascia's essay include those in *Il Corriere della Sera* (July 2010) and in *La Repubblica* (July 2010) for the sesquicentennial of the uprising.

vizi ci nutriamo dentro, storture, magagne, per nascita, cultura e per il censo. Ed è impostura mai sempre la scrittura di noi cosiddetti illuminati, maggiore forse di quella degli ottusi e oscurati da' privilegi loro e passion di casta. Osserverete: ci son le istruzioni, le dichiarazioni agli atti, le testimonianze...E bene: chi verga quelle scritte chi piega quelle voci e le raggela dentro i codici, le leggi della lingua? Uno scriba, un trascrittore, un cancelliere. Quando un immaginario meccanico strumento tornerebbe al caso, che fermasse que' discorsi al naturale, siccome il dagherrotipo fissa di noi le sembianze. Se pure, siffatta operazione sarebbe ancora ingiusta. Poi che noi non possediamo la chiave, il cifrario atto a interpretare que' discorsi. (96-97)

Mandralisca's fulfillment of a social praxis, for which he also pledges objectivity, is accompanied by the acknowledgment of the limitations of his position as writer and intellectual. The impasse that he faces evokes the discourse on social engagement and on the ways of representing the southern peasantry in all three of Sciascia's texts. The author's note to *Pirandello e la Sicilia*, suggests a similar position on the part of Sciascia,

Il saggio su Pirandello, qui pubblicato insieme con pochi altri su scrittori e cose della Sicilia, avrebbe dovuto essere un Pirandello *par lui-même*(...)Ma risultò infine come una interpretazione dei rapporti fra Pirandello e la Sicilia, forse alquanto tendenziosa, certamente non valida a dare a quel pubblico una piana informazione sull'opera e la vita dello scrittore. (2002 1203)

While Sciascia expresses intentions of objectivity, he also recognizes the impossibility of breaking free from the "codes" of the ideological discourse. In addition to this meta-commentary on the process of writing, the change within both *I fatti di Bronte* and *Verga e la Libertà* reflected in the phrase "chinarsi sui fatti di Bronte" also suggests his acknowledgment of the impossibility of speaking on behalf of the peasants (p. 20, chapter two).

The parallel discourses between Sciascia and Consolo's texts culminate in the appropriation of the peasant voices. Sciascia presents Sergio Amabile Guastella's transcription of the peasant song, reproduced in *Verga e la Libertà* as one way of directly

and “purely” conveying these otherwise unrepresentable voices.<sup>85</sup> In the film, the characters of the peasants speak because of the expanded parameters of voice that the filmic form permits, but their rhetoric either recalls that of the canonical versions of the story or inscribes terms that depict contemporary ways of protesting. Notwithstanding the reflections on the impossibility of representing the peasants offered by Sciascia’s essays, the film *Bronte*, which is directed and written by members of the intellectual elite, renders the illusion of direct representation of peasant voices and thus embraces the artifice of plurivocality. Similarly, in *Il sorriso*, Mandralisca takes up the pen to write on behalf of the prisoners finishing with his transcription of writings from the walls of the prison. While Guastella’s model is reflected in Mandralisca’s gesture, the appearance of the inscriptions in the same narrative level as the rest of the letter suggests that like the letter the inscriptions are also part of the fictional construct. Moreover, their juxtaposition with and differentiation from two of the appendices that follow, the death certificate for Sirna and the proclamation of Mordini that were originally pasted on the walls throughout the towns, further underscores and draws attention to their fictional status.<sup>86</sup> The inscriptions offered in chapter nine, entitled *Le scritte*, therefore provide an example in which the implicit author, though indirectly because through the Mandralisca’s voice, appropriates the voices of the peasants. By utilizing direct discourse and thus making claims similar to those made by the film, *Il sorriso* also embraces the artifice of plurivocality. Written by the prisoners in their respective

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<sup>85</sup> O’Connell also suggests the parallels between Sciascia’s figure and Mandralisca’s character that are at work in Consolo’s text (2008 123).

<sup>86</sup> Appendix two after chapter nine reproduces the death certificate, posted around the municipality of Patti (Province of Messina), for Giuseppe Sirna Papa, who was found guilty of having led the massacre (*strage*) that ensued from the political uprising in Alcàra, in August, 1860 and who was executed in that same month, while the third appendix following chapter nine is the proclamation, issued and distributed throughout Sicily by the Prodictator Mordini on October 15, 1860, urging a vote for the unification that calls Sicilians to show their nationalist fervor to their peninsular compatriots (Wambaugh 637).



dialects, the writings on the prison wall presuppose a certain level of literacy and offer a counterpoint to the official scripts included in the appendices.

Inscribed upon the final pages of the novel in the same way that they were once posted to the town walls of Sicily, the final chapter and the appendices that follow also reflect upon the practice of inscribing, both in narrative and architectural structures. As the map of the prison, the helicoidal shape and movement of Consolo's novel that I have explicated in this chapter offer a structure for the disruptive and disjunctive elements that also link it indelibly to the national narrative tradition. Whereas the omission of the uprising from Sciascia's essays can be read as a polemical move against Verga's version, which privileged the moment of revolt, the structuring absence of the analogous event from Consolo's text serves as the element around which the novel revolves.

By examining the way in which the Bronte narrative informs the interstices of Consolo's work, we can perceive how the changing structure and style of *Il sorriso* offers a meditation on the process of remembering, re-constructing and, most importantly, of forgetting. Together with the text's increasing tendency towards order, as it shifts between the different parts, the disjointedness that initially destabilizes the story assumes a dominant role in shaping how we view it. In other words, the dynamicity with which Consolo endows *Il sorriso* becomes the text's normative practice and therefore loses its disruptive effect and obscures the novel's omission of its *Grande Evento*. While this new norm continues to challenge the process of meaning making by juxtaposing disparate texts, its commodification in *Il sorriso* mitigates the so-called shock value of discontinuity. As *Il sorriso* contemplates the survival of consciousness, or to use a term from Hutcheon its "provisionality," it also ultimately implicates the reader's complicity

in this process, as the recipient of the Baron's letter. The novel's ultimate gesture addresses, identifies and therefore coerces the reader's participation in this act of national forgetting.

## Conclusion: Facts and Fictions

This dissertation has brought together the narratives of Bronte and explored the intertextual connections that emerge from their points of contact in rhetoric, image, style and form. Having examined the historical claims of many different types of texts, I have sought to elucidate how their descriptive measures have also informed and shaped what continues to be a productive interplay that crosses the boundaries of genre between fiction and history. My project has focused on the selected and well-known works of Giovanni Verga, Benedetto Radice, Leonardo Sciascia, Florestano Vancini and Vincenzo Consolo whose treatment of historical material addresses regional Sicilian and national Italian heritage while also weighing in on universal questions such as the relationship between literature and reality, content and form, narrative modes and their reception and signifying systems and their interrelations.

I have chosen to focus on the texts listed above, but it would also be fruitful to investigate how those authored by local Brontese citizens participate in the ongoing polemic. While *Nino Bixio* continues to be an important source for contextualizing the Bronte 1860 conflict, the most recent and perhaps more interesting forms of remembrance have come from the citizens of Bronte, who conducted a trial of Nino Bixio at the Collegio Capizzi in 1985 in order to re-evaluate his role in their town's history. Following the trial, an exercise conducted by the students of the Collegio Capizzi whose outcome declared Bixio a "tyrant," the town hosted painting and sculpture exhibits, in 1988 and 1990, in which the events were interpreted by artists from all over Italy. The artistic, theatrical re-enactments of the local history seemed to have fulfilled a cathartic purpose, in that they demonstrate an effort to reconcile Bronte's heritage with Italian

national heritage. Most recently, the web site, [www.bronteinsieme.it](http://www.bronteinsieme.it), which was published in 2003 and is regularly updated, features a section that reconstructs the “facts of Bronte” based on the diverse array of publications on the events, including the most recent newspaper articles, published in 2010 for the Sesquicentennial, in *Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica* and *Il Tempo*. An exploration of the compulsive re-examinations of Bronte’s history on this level would allow for an analysis of the even more diverse vehicles that refashion the national rhetoric and would inform a broader understanding about the ongoing contemporary issue of how local and regional memory grapples with national identity.

The narrative hyperactivity that surrounds Bronte’s history is indicative of the residual tensions generated by conflicting perceptions of the events. These narratives are emblematic of the need to reconcile past with present: they expose a conflict involving a national hero of the Italian unification, Nino Bixio, and the incompatibility of local myth in Bronte with national myth in Italy. Together with the web site, which was published in 2001 and is maintained by the Associazione Bronte Insieme, the texts originating from the 1985 trial demonstrate cases of regional self-preservation. These texts preserve and promulgate the cultural heritage of Bronte’s history; as the charter for the Association Bronte Insieme states, “L’Associazione non ha scopo di lucro e persegue esclusivamente finalità di solidarietà sociale nel campo della tutela e valorizzazione della natura e dell’ambiente e nella divulgazione dell’arte e della cultura brontesi.” In addition to the texts by Verga, Radice, Sciascia and Vancini, [www.bronteinsieme.it](http://www.bronteinsieme.it), the 1985 trial, and the texts that resulted from the latter have had substantial national exposure. In the case of the web site, this microhistory has acquired further international exposure by being

available in Italian and partly in English (though certain texts reproduced on the Italian web site are noted as untranslatable) on the World Wide Web; the web site itself notes that in 2007 it surpassed one and half million hits since its inception. Finally, together with the re-issue of Vancini's film in 2002 by the Cineteca Nazionale, these recently produced texts amplify the regional discourse by introducing it into a global context.

Taken together, *Libertà*, *Nino Bixio a Bronte*, *I fatti di Bronte*, *Verga e la Libertà*, *Bronte: cronaca di un massacro che i libri di storia non hanno raccontato*, and *Il sorriso dell'ignoto marinaio* reflect the changing notion of history based on the historical contexts in which they were composed. Departing from *verismo*'s idea that the course of history is both inexplicable (beyond reason) and unchangeable (beyond human control), *Libertà* couches the narrative action in terms that connote natural forces, such as flowing water, or in codes that evoke cycles produced from the primitive impulses of a people, such as the *carnavalesque*. In *Nino Bixio a Bronte*, which Radice writes from the "inside," the opposite perspective of the memoirs written by the *garibaldini*, personal, collective and documented or archival history converge to present a multi-faceted memorial. While Verga draws upon historical material precisely because the outcome has already been determined, Sciascia instead perceives that changes in history are as possible as changes in text. Because of the way in which our knowledge and experiences of the past are indelibly tied to text, Sciascia and Vancini's works offer versions of the historical events in Bronte that challenge the canonized interpretations of the historical revolt. For these works, whether the "revolution" has or has not taken place is entirely dependent on the rhetoric, imagery and form with which it is characterized. Like Radice, Consolo weaves different registers and voices into his work, which function as constant

reminders that the many avenues for remembrance are constituted by individual experience. Over the course of these narratives, the notion of history as a single authoritative, linear and determined macro-text is deconstructed into a subjective and prismatic concept that is primarily informed by the textual record.

The juxtaposition of literary narratives with those that make ‘historical’ claims elucidates differences in the reception of signifying factors (rhetoric, image and form) in each type of narrative mode. As shown in the extensive debates about Verga’s purported “version” of Bronte, the complexities that arise from the way in which the locatable historical referents are coded in the lyrical aesthetics of the novella produce a string of subsequent re-tellings that seek to “round out” the history.

The “realistic,” because “historical” imperatives of *Verismo* in *Libertà* interconnect its referentiality with the aesthetic and descriptive constraints of a fictional short story and, in so doing, the “pure and simple ‘representation’ of the ‘real,’ the naked relation of ‘what is’ thus appears as a resistance to meaning,” though Verga’s text nonetheless conforms to the “cultural rules of representation in literature” (Barthes 1986 146). By contrast, the literary expedients of *Nino Bixio*, published by Radice, a historian from Bronte, in the journal *Archivio storico per la Sicilia Orientale*, have not complicated its historical authenticity. In fact, *Nino Bixio* continues to be referred to as an authoritative account of the Bronte uprising. While Radice’s narrative functions to reconstruct the chronology of the land conflict and personal vendettas that led up to and, in his view, caused the 1860 revolt, the deployment of literary devices and tropes do not serve the function of his narrative structure, but form part of the descriptive techniques with which he renders the “real.” As also demonstrated by Mack Smith’s analogy to

Goya, the “structurally superfluous notations” in the historical texts provide the platform through which the representational-historical debate takes place. The film’s claims to the “real” and the reception of it as a model for “filming history” is, in the least, problematic in that it embraces a “commonsense” approach to accepting as truth any text that declares itself “historical” and, furthermore, is uncritical and unquestioning of the ideologies put forth by the overt revision of the Bronte story, and so

The truth of the [referential illusion] is this: eliminated from the realist speech-act as a signified of denotation, the ‘real’ returns to it as a signified of connotation; for just as when these details are reputed to *denote* the real directly, all that they do – without saying so – is *signify* it. It is the category of the ‘real’ which is then signified; in other words, the very absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard forms of modernity. (1986 148)

History thus emerges as knowledge of the past that is constituted by both individual experience (empirical reality) and collective acts of remembrance, which take place mostly on the level of reading whether through fiction, newspaper articles, archives, monuments, street names, or any other material object. A complex network of different kinds of texts that convey information which is always and often contradictory, history is productive, fluid and always subject to a re-telling. As demonstrated by the texts analyzed in this dissertation, history is also crucial to the way in which we relate to the present. In some cases, the relationship takes the form of rewriting the past in the terms of the present, and in others, historical accounts that were written in a present different from our own reorders our perception and experience of contemporary life, so that we individually and collectively come together with and distinguish ourselves from others in a multiplex of identity that crosses communities, regions, countries, religious faiths and practices, and gender.

**Pending publications**

“Bronte e la Libertà: Fonti letterarie del film storico.” *Cinema e Risorgimento: Visioni e re-visioni*. Ed. Fulvio Orsitto. Roma: Vecchiarelli Editore, 2012.



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