Leonardo Sciascia and Elio Petri's "Todo Modo". Intersemiotic Uses of Dante during the Anni di Piombo

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Introduction

In his seminal *Opera aperta*, Umberto Eco stated that "un'opera d'arte […] è altresì aperta, possibilità di essere interpretata in mille modi diversi senza che la sua irriproducibile singolarità ne risulti alterata"[1]. Arguing against the usual attempts of reducing every work of art into some fixed interpretation or meaning, Eco paved the way for an understanding of the *opera d'arte* as *opera in movimento*[2], impossible to reduce to a single point of view and open to a kaleidoscope of readings. If we look at the canon of texts belonging to the Italian literary tradition, surely Dante's *Commedia* shows itself to be the epitome of Eco's assumptions. As a matter of fact, the tradition of Dante's reception is filled with adaptations and re-interpretations that trascend any medium; the visual arts offer a rich pool of materials (from Botticelli, to Blake, to Doré[3], to contemporary Dantean comics books[4]), but it is also possible to find Dante's pervasive presence in films, television and theatre[5]. There is no need to mention the array of studies that have covered such a widespread Dantean presence in our contemporary culture; this contribution, however, seeks to navigate Dante's uses in a particularly dense decade of the Italian 20th century, that is the so-called *anni di piombo* (years of lead)[6]. The period, that conventionally begins on December 12th 1969 with the Piazza Fontana bombing and ends with the Bologna station terrorist attack on August 2nd 1980[7], casts a dark light on Italy's *dopoguerra*: after a relatively prosperous period of time, accompanied by impressive economic growth, the 70s were marked by increasing social and political discontent and an alarming amount of terrorist attacks – caused both by extreme left

and extreme right movements – which contributed to create the so called strategy of tension[8], opening a continuing fracture between the State and the many extra-parliamentary groups[9]. As Falciola points out, over the course of the decade several contingences contributed to an economic and social crisis, such as the 1973 oil shortage, inflation and growing unemployment[10]. It is no place here to delve into the historical and political complexities of such a period; it suffices to say that the profound impact of this decade continues to be a significant source of inspiration in contemporary Italian literature, films and TV shows[11]. Given the previous overview it should not come as a surprise that a vast array of authors, filmmakers, playwrights and intellectuals at large used Dante and his authority as a tool to express their own particular view of the circumstances surrounding the *anni di piombo*[12]. The focus here will be on Leonardo Sciascia's novel *Todo modo*, published in 1974, and its cinematic adaptation by Elio Petri, which came out two years later. Although Dante's presence in both works may seem circumstantial at a first glance (neither of them is a traditional adaptation of the *Commedia*), it will be shown how both Sciascia and Petri used the authority of the *sommo poeta* to enhance the political themes and commentary in the aforementioned novel and film. Drawing from Jakobson's notion of intersemiotic translation, the current analysis will shed light not only on the novel and the film as separate entities, but also on the way in which the movie adaptation of *Todo modo* is tangled with the novel as far as the Dantean references and uses are concerned[13].

Leonardo Sciascia's "Todo modo"

If we are to search particular authors that have associated themselves with Dante and his *oeuvre*, Leonardo Sciascia would not necessarily be one of them[14]. Politician as well as renowned writer (he served as both member of the Italian and the European Parliament from 1979 to 1984), Sciascia often imbued his literary works with political themes and commentary, and the Italian 1970s proved to be fertile ground[15]: as it happens, one of his most famous works, *L'affaire Moro*, was published in 1978 right after the infamous kidnapping and mur-

der of the DC (Democrazia Cristiana) party president Aldo Moro by the terrorist group "Brigate Rosse"[16]. Such a political undertone is to be found in *Todo modo* as well; published a few years before the Moro crime, it tells the story of one unnamed painter[17] who finds himself in serendipitous fashion at the threshold of a hermitage, now converted in a hotel run by an ambiguous character, Don Gaetano. The painter soon finds out that the hermitage is often used for spiritual retreats by renowned politicians, economists, and, in general, by the current ruling class; after a sudden murder during one of the spiritual exercises, the novel turns into crime fiction with the arrival of the prosecutor Scalambri, who investigates the first murder and the ones that follow. The ending does not provide a clear resolution to the story; Sciascia creates a microcosm that mirrors the political situation of the time in which high functionaries are tangled with criminal endeavours, whose fogginess enhances the tense climate felt in the hermitage (and in Italian society as a whole). Given these premises, where does Dante fit in such a charged, contemporary narrative? Is it mere citationism or something more? Citations from canonic literary and philosophical authorities play a huge part in the novel, starting from the title: *Todo modo* is taken from the beginning of Ignatius of Loyola's saying *Todo modo para buscar la voluntad divina* ("Every way to look for divine will"). The presence of Jesuit tradition in the novel is accompanied by a myriad of literary and philosophical references (from Kant to Pirandello, to Voltaire), so that Dario Stazzone refers to *Todo modo*'s writing as palimpsestic and filled with a continuous citation game[18]. (He also points out that the complexity of citazionism in this novel covers the visual arts as well, in particular when the reader is presented with a painting by Rutilio Manetti – *Sant'Antonio tentato* – that functions as a striking connection between the subject of the painting and Don Gaetano)[19]. The fundamental role of *citazionismo* in *Todo Modo* is also highlighted by Ricciarda Ricorda: the scholar sheds light on the use of high-brow citations that serve the allegorical nature of the novel[20]. *Todo modo* – she argues – functions as an allegorical tale that, on the surface, deals with the mystery and the crime investigation in the Italian 70s, but that, through the elaborate series

of citations, shows a second level of meaning that deals with universal themes of corruption and the eschatological destiny of humankind[21]. Since Dante has often been put to political use[22], it is no surprise that Sciascia should include the *sommo poeta* in his citation game; however, one could argue that Dante's presence in the novel is much more pervasive and organic than that of the other authors, philosophers and artists gathered in its pages. Pier Paolo Pasolini himself acknowledged Dante's presence in his review of Sciascia's novel: "In *Todo modo* questa concezione quasi dantesca del mondo ritorna a riproporre la sua forma, la piramide del potere, monolitica all'esterno, estremamente complicata, labirintica, mostruosa all'interno"[23]. Pasolini rightfully underlines the physical and metaphysical spaces of the novel: just like in the Dantean *Inferno,* the spaces of *Todo modo* (namely the hermitage Zafer and its many ramifications) are extremely well-constructed and thought-out. Each guest is strictly confined to one room; meals are consumed communally at the same hour in the refectory; each spiritual exercise is to be made in a specific area of the building, with specific instructions and precise positions. Such attentive division of physical spaces in the *Commedia* (as in the rigorous explication that Virgil gives Dante in *Inferno* XI)[24] mirrors the eschatological destiny of the damned souls; in a similar fashion, in Sciascia's novel the attention paid to a choreographed spatiality (enhanced by the rituals of the spiritual exercises and, later on, by the murder investigation's proceedings) creates a seemingly organized reality which in fact is inhabited by a variety of modern-day sinners. In this regard, the scene in which the protagonist observes the first spiritual exercise appears to be quite telling. All the guests of the hermitage are reunited in the courtyard to continue their exercises. The protagonist, who does not participate in them, observes the scene from afar and notes that "tutti andavano raccogliendosi intorno a don Gaetano: non casualmente, ma come per un'adunata stabilita, prescritta"[25]. The ritual character of the scene is further revealed when the narrator notes how organized their movements are, and how they place themselves in geometric figures throughout the excercise while continuously chanting (first, they form a circle, then a square). The choreographed nature of the operation slowly transforms them and their reality in the eyes of the

protagonist, so much so that the chanted expressions "si intridevano di un senso tutto fisico, non più metafore ma eventi che stavano realizzandosi, che si realizzavano, in quel posto al confine del mondo, al confine dell'inferno, che era l'hotel di Zafer"[26]. Such a radical and spiritual transformation is further made explicit at the end of the sequence:

> E in quel momento anche chi, come me e il cuoco, li vedeva nell'abietta mistificazione e nel grottesco, scopriva che c'era qualcosa di vero, vera paura, vera pena, in quel loro andare nel buio dicendo preghiere: qualcosa che veramente attingeva all'esercizio spirituale: quasi che fossero e si sentissero disperati, nella confusione di una bolgia, sul punto della metamorfosi. E veniva facile pensare alla dantesca bolgia dei ladri[27].

There is perhaps no place more gruesome than the seventh *bolgia* of the eight circle of Hell in Dante's *Inferno*: the sinners destined to be there were thieves, and their punishment consists in being continuously transformed into reptiles, and viceversa. Dante pushes the boundaries of the vernacular language in order to go into battle with the Latin poet Ovid (author of the *Metamorphoses*) and create a chilling scene of complete dehumanisation[28]. Sciascia's specific reference to that moment in the *Inferno* is by no means arbitrary: just as the sinners in the seventh *bolgia,* once criminals, are so detached from their own essence as human beings that they perpetually become something inhuman, so the participants of the spiritual exercises, respected members of civic and political society, once in the hermitage begin their process of transformation. The hermitage functions as an infernal place in which its occupants reveal their fraudulent selves; the subsequent murders further enhance such infernal spiralling. Sciascia's intent in leaning into the specific Dantean imaginery of the *bolge* is furthermore revealed in the last section of the novel, when the protagonist is about to leave the premises of the hermitage. He arrives in the courtyard with his luggage; upon seeing him, Scalambri and the police commissioner exchange the following dialogue:

> "Hai fatto presto" – constatò Scalambri guardandomi le valige.
> "Non vede l'ora, è naturale, di lasciare questa bolgia" disse il commissario"[29].

The murders have not been resolved, and order has not been restored: the climate of uncertainty and fear which ruled over the hermitage mirrors the political situation of the world outside. By linking the Dantean imaginary of the seventh *bolgia* with the process of metamorphosis the guests undergo, Sciascia seems to treat his characters like the damned souls in the *Inferno*: as Auerbach pointed out, in the *Commedia* the human being appears to be in life a mere *figura* of his final and complete destiny in the afterlife[30]. In *Todo modo,* the contained spatiality of the hermitage slowly reveals the true nature of its occupants; respected figures in life, criminals in this physical metaphor of afterlife. The murders remain unsolved precisely because Sciascia does not want to blame a specific member of the community: all of them, in some way, contribute to the fraudulent and criminal proceedings both of the situation in the hermitage and of the country as a whole[31]. Scuderi underlines how the assassination of the ruling power in the novel makes Sciascia a symbolic avenger of the entire social order of the 70s – an order which was severely delegitimized[32]. At the beginning of the novel, Sciascia uses the word "sdoppiamento" to refer to Don Gaetano's demeanour[33], highlighting the double nature of the priest[34] that will be a trait of all the people involved in the murders: the physical ambivalence of the sinners of the seventh *bolgia* becomes, in Sciascia, a moral one.

As stated, the spatialized references to the *Inferno* allow Sciascia to compare Dantean use of morality and the lack of it in 1970s Italian political structure[35]: however, dispersed throughout the book there are linguistic references to the *Paradiso* as well that appear to serve another purpose. If, in fact, the Dantean echoes of the *Inferno* function both as evocative representations and charged metaphors of a pervasive criminality, the use of few, selected expressions linked with the third *cantica* allow Sciascia to touch upon the themes of the ineffable and the mysterious. It is worth remembering that when Sciascia was writing the novel, terrorist attacks and unsolved murders were spiking throughout the entire country, and their entanglement with the government and the ruling class was starting to infect the psyche of the general public[36]. Two of the main characteristics of Dante's *Para-*

diso are the growing impossibility of putting into words the ineffable experience of the *viator,* and heartfelt expectation of the final mystery of the *visio dei*: both these themes are aptly repurposed by Sciascia by the use of a calculated lexicon. A few pages into *Todo modo*, when the protagonist reaches the hermitage for the first time, he states that, while walking, he felt he experienced a "lago di sole"[37] (a lake of sun), a synaesthesia that it is similarly used by Dante in *Paradiso* I when he is about to begin his final journey to experience the mystery of God[38]. Don Gaetano also uses the word "transumanità"[39], which appears in the very same first *canto* of the *Paradiso,* when Dante is ascending toward God with Beatrice[40]. Furthermore, the changing geometrical forms assumed by the partecipants in undertaking the spiritual exercises (first they form a circle, then a square) remind us of the constant changes of position of the blessed souls that Dante encounters in each celestial *cielo,* and the metaphor of the "quadratura del cerchio", which indicates the impossibility of finding a solution to a problem, is used by both Sciascia[41] and Dante[42]. Also, when the protagonist is speaking with Don Gaetano about the murder that has just occured, the priest states: "Eppure non abbiamo che parole… bisognerebbe entrare nell'inesprimibile senza la necessità di esprimerlo"[43]. Instead of relying on its physical reality, like he did for the *Inferno,* Sciascia employs the linguistic resources of the *Paradiso* to enhance the aura of mystery and the limitations of language. In the *Paradiso*, a strenous battle with language finally leads Dante not only to reveal the ultimate mystery of the trinity – just for one, single moment – but also to reveal the journey to his readers. In Sciascia, the dispersed, linguistic reminders of these two aspects of the third *cantica* underline, by contrast, that the mystery of the murders must necessarily remain unsolved, and that not even language – of any kind – can bring us to a clarity of vision and understanding in the Italian *anni di piombo.*

Elio Petri's "Todo modo"

Distributed in 1976, only two years after the publication of its paper counterpart, Elio Petri's *Todo modo* quickly became one of the most debated – and censured – films of postwar Italy, so that its reception

led to a filmic *damnatio memoriae*[44]. The reasons for such ostracism lie in Petri's unflinching depiction of the entire political class of the time, and particularly of the protagonist, who appears to be a fictionalized version of the politician Aldo Moro (referenced in the film as M, the President), played by Gian Maria Volonté. Petri in fact shifts the narrative point of view, from the character of the painter (an outsider) in the novel, to the alleged Aldo Moro himself, who becomes one of the participants of the spiritual exercises. Since Moro was assassinated by the terrorist group Brigate Rosse in 1978, the general sentiment toward a film that made him a corrupt, volatile and morally questionable figure was not by any means positive. As a matter of fact, not only did the Christian Democratic Party try to block the film's release and postpone it after the 1976 summer election[45], but also, as Larry Portis points out, after the Moro attack Petri "was immediately accused in the press as having encouraged the kidnapping and murder with his film *Todo modo*"[46]. Naturally, the attention of critics and the press mainly focused, at the time, on the political themes of the film rather than its execution and its ties with Sciascia's novel. Since our interest here lies in tracing the Dantean references that have informed the novel as well, and especially how Petri has handled the Dantean vibe in the film, the theoretical framework of adaptation studies will necessarily need to be pushed further: Petri's *Todo modo* is, on a primary level, a 'showing' adaptation (in Hutcheon's aforementioned words), but it is also a second-hand adaptation of already adapted intersemiotic elements (the Dantean themes and references which are present in the novel). Therefore, since *Todo modo* – the film – functions as an adaptation *mise en abyme* (given the double, hierarical layer of intersemiotic adaptation – from poem to novel, and from novel to a film that adapts elements both from the poem and the novel), it will be necessary to assess in which cases both these adaptation layers intertwine in the film and when, instead, the Dantean visual and thematic references are employed without any direct ties with Sciascia's novel.
Michalczyk recognizes that "Petri designs a symbolic, Dantesque descent into hell"[47]. Compared to Sciascia's novel, which spatialized references to the *Inferno* by placing the characters into specific situ-

ations, Petri's *Todo modo* uses the visual potential of film to enhance the Dantean allegory. The circular descent into hell starts at the very beginning of the film, with the alledged Moro in the car that is taking him to the hermitage. The camera work immerses the viewer in a 360 degrees perspective, moving in circles while the car is crossing a roundabout, already highlithing the circular shape both of the Dantean underworld and of the film narrative. When the protagonist arrives at the destination, he enters the hermitage through a circular elevator that is featured several times in the course of the film; while Sciascia did not describe in forensic detail the hermitage itself, Petri – aided by the expertise of production designer Dante Ferretti – crafts a minimalistic, and yet expressive microcosm whose Dantean ties are more conceptual than literal. Aside from the already mentioned infernal elevator (a stand-in for the nine circles of hell that brings us to the underground hermitage in which no natural light is to be found)[48], several choices of interior design and structural planning point toward a Dantean vibe. First of all, the setting is filled with several white statues, dispersed throughout the hermitage, that appear to be made of gypsum; one of the first the viewer encounters is placed in the catacombs (a place not present in Sciascia's novel) and represents the shape of a headless man, whose head is being held by the man himself. In the ninth *bolgia* of the eight circle (where the sowers of discord are punished), Dante and Virgil encounter the soul of Bertran de Born, holding his own head in his hands as *contrappasso* for having contributed to the estrangement between king Henry II of England and his son Henry the Young King[49]. The statue is framed in the background during the first meeting between the President and Don Gaetano, the representatives of the State and the Church respectively. As the film makes progressively clear, the way in which both characters interact with and eventually transform into one another (the President dresses up as Don Gaetano in the last section of the film)[50] problematizes the relationship between Church and State in the Italian social and political situation of the time; by juxtaposing their first interaction with a Dantean reminder of a distruptor of order and natural equilibrium,

Petri emphazises the unbalanced and toxic dynamic between the two institutions[51].

Another structural conceptualization of a Dantean infernal space comes when the audience follows the President into his ascetic bedroom: the most curious feature of the otherwise minimal space is a rounded, open hole in the ceiling (the same feature will be present in another crucial room of the hermitage, the main refectory). In the *Malebolgie* (the eight infernal circle – in which fraudulent sinners are punished – appears to be, both for Sciascia and Petri, the most evocative and repurposed of *bolgie*), Dante and Virgil come across those who committed the sin of simony, a punishment usually reserved for the clergy; their eternal destiny is to be stuck upside down in circular holes spread throughout the *bolgia*, waiting for the next sinner to push them further into the ground[52]. For Petri, the dichotomy between spirituality and materiality concerns each member of the ruling class: every single participant in the spiritual exercises finds himself[53] at the bottom of the simoniac *bolgia,* where – despite the *raison d'être* of their gathering – greed is favored over spiritual fulfillment. Petri further mocks their fraudulent attachment to money in a later scene, when the inconclusive investigation of the murders is still being held and each participant has to declare his financial, political, and economic affiliations. The scene, borderline ridiculous, resolves into a nonsensical blabblering, accentuating both the corrupt nature of the participants and the impossibility of uttering a resolution. As stated, Sciascia employed linguistic references to the *Paradiso* in order to stress the out-of-reach ineffability of the solution to the investigation (and of the country's *omertà* as a whole); Petri still uses language to express the impossibility of expression, but he leans on indecipherable initials and anagrams that recall the prophetic properties of the *Commedia*[54]. As Rugo points out, "in *Todo Modo* the director starts from clarity and slowly proceeds towards the acknowledgement that it is indeed impossible to overcome the essential ambiguity of the situation"[55]. Such ambiguity is therefore expressed through language, characters' blending (the President becoming Don Gaetano) and the pervasive presence of props such as the aforementioned statues and

the overarching cameras that hint at a second level of meaning. However, what Petri is *not* ambigous about is the adamant link between the hermitage and hell.

Just a few scenes in, Don Gaetano utters to the President that "L'inferno è qui vicino, sotto terra, ci siamo dentro, e io sono qui per accompagnarvi per mano"[56], and the priest later dedicates one of his meditations to the concept of hell, giving a passionate speech about the importance of remembering its existence and its depiction. Other infernal hints present themselves throughout the film (such as the aforementioned elevator, in which the character of the cardinal utters *descendamus ut ascendamus*[57], in a very Dantean fashion), developing Petri's intention to re-create the infernal microcosm (physical and metaphysical) that Sciascia has already narrated in the novel. Compared to Sciascia, however, Petri in his filmic adaptation renders the continuity between the infernal figurality of the hermitage and the infernal reality of the world outside even more apparent, resulting in the evocative Dantean final sequence. In this regard, an element which was not present in Sciascia's novel is the outbreak of a deadly pandemic which is deeply affecting the country. In the very first scene, the President's car journey to the hermitage is accompanied by a radio voice-over which informs its listeners about the latest news on the new pandemic, its death toll and its growing and alarming severity. Aside from the almost disturbing ties with our contemporaneity, Petri's choice to include an external threat (which is constantly repeated throughout the film) enhances the dichotomy between the two infernal worlds, or, in the aforementioned Auerbach's words, the figurality between the events in the outside world and the ones happening in the hermitage[58].

The final sequence aptly portrays such a parallelism. After the murder investigation has spiralled out of control, without arriving anywhere near a solution, the President exits the hermitage and finds himself surrounded by flames, caused by 'pandemic exterminators'. The shot of the circular elevator bringing him to the surface anticipates the reverse infernal logic of the final sequence: instead of finding flames at the bottom of an allegoric hell, the President – and the viewer –

experiences the resemblance of actual eternal torments once back in the real world. The reverse Dantean journey the President experiences is made further apparent by his entering a wood, a *selva*[59], where the final moments of the film take place. Here, following a path made of pages and pages of documents, the viewer is presented with a continuous stream of murdered people – the same people who participated in the spiritual exercises. They are not framed all together, but Petri shows them as if they belonged to a specific place, just as the damned souls in Dante's *Inferno* belong to a specific ultramundane circle. They are shown either alone or in groups[60]; in each shot, Petri enhances a specific characteristic that somehow reminds us of the condition of the *dannati*: the stench, the gore, the nudity. The latter is particularly associated with the last group of murdered people, piled all together, showing their bare bottoms to the camera, just like the sodomites in *Inferno* XV and XVI[61]. The members of the ruling class faced their final destiny once they exited the hermitage; the presence of their photographs on each of their murdered backs functions both as irrefutable recognition and as ultimate figurality. In this regard, it appears that Petri has chosen to film an infernal journey *à rebours*: his departure from the novel regarding the film's last sequence enhances the dichotomy between the two infernal settings, resulting in a much more brutal commentary on the country's political situation in the middle of one of the most heated decades of post-war Italy.

Conclusion

The canons of Italian literature and films of the second half of the twentieth century hardly ever include either of the two aforementioned works; due to unfortunate historical contingences (as stated, Moro's assassination occurred shortly after their publication and release) and a political climate that was not ready for such a politicized literal and filmic discourse, Sciascia's novel, and especially Petri's film, have been sidelined from a very long time. If, on the one hand, Sciascia's importance as a novelist and literary figure has been widely recognized since then, only recently has Petri's contribution to post-war Italian filmic tradition started to grow[62]. Nevertheless, their con-

nection to Dante's otherwordly imaginary has never been taken into serious consideration. Dante, we have noted, has been often used as a political authority, or as a source for endless political commentary over the centuries, in Italy and abroad[63]. Intersemiotic analysis of both Sciascia's novel and Petri's adaptation has shown that Dante's use as a political tool did not stop during the *anni di piombo*, although it is important to highlight the different choices and approaches in which each redeploys Dante. The novel *Todo modo* employs Dante both in its language choice and in its spatialized themes, whereas the film has enhances both the infernal imaginary and the continuity between the microcosm of the hermitage and the macrocosm of 1970s' Italy. Although Dante's presence can be considered to be of a second-hand nature in both the novel and the film[64], it nevertheless enriches Sciascia and Petri's *intentio operis*[65], offering only a first glimpse of a pervasive Dantean presence in the *anni di piombo* that demands further investigation.

[1] U. Eco, *Opera aperta*, Milano, Bompiani, 1962, p. 34.

[2] Ivi, p. 48.

[3] See F.A. Koslow, *Fantastic Illustrations to Dante's Inferno: Romantic and Contemporary Visions*, "Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts", Vol. 2, n. 4, 1990 and B.J. Watts, *Sandro Botticelli's Drawings for Dante's 'Inferno': Narrative Structure, Topography, and Manuscript Design*, "Artibus et Historiae", Vol. XVI, n. 32, 1995.

[4] See U. Winter, *L'inferno up to date. Attualizzazioni dell'Inferno di Dante nei fumetti* in "Dante e l'Arte", n. 5, 2018.

[5] See, among others, B. Corrigan, *Dante and Italian Theater: A Study in Dramatic Fashions*, "Dante Studies", n. 89, 1971 and A. Iannucci, *Dante, Cinema, and Television,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004.

[6] This expression comes from, surpisingly, from a 1981 German movie, *Die bleierne Zeit*, directed by Margarethe von Trotta, which dealt with two members of the Red Army Faction, a West German far-left group which came to prominence during the same period. See also G.M. Ceci, *Il terrorismo italiano. Storia di un dibattito,* Roma, Carocci, 2014.

[7] Although the periodization may vary: see A. Giovagnoli, *Gli anni Settanta e la storiografia sull'Italia repubblicana*, "Contemporanea", vol. XIII, n. 1, 2010.

[8] The term was coined by the English newspaper "The Observer" in 1969, following the Piazza Fontana bombing.

[9] For a broader insight on the period, see G. Oliva, *Anni di piombo e di tritolo. 1969-1980. Il terrorismo nero e il terrorismo rosso da piazza Fontana alla strage di Bologna,* Milano, Mondadori, 2019.

[10] L. Falciola, *Il movimento del 1977 in Italia*, Roma, Carocci, 2015, pp. 23-24.

[11] As we can see in E. Conti, *Gli anni di piombo nella letteratura italiana,* Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2013.

[12] In this regard, one of the most prominent examples is Carmelo Bene's 1981 *lectura Dantis* to commemorate the victims of the bombing of Bologna's main station in 1980. See R. Maenza, *Carmelo Bene legge Dante. Per l'anniversario della strage di Bologna (un video inedito),* Venezia, Marsilio, 2008.

[13] R. Jakobson, *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*, in Id., *On Translation*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959, pp. 232-239. Jakobson theorizes three ways of interpreting and analyzing verbal signs: intralingual translation (translation into other signs of the same language); interlingual translation (translation into another language); and intersemiotic translation (translation from language into another, nonverbal system of symbols). See also D. Aguiar and J. Queiroz, *Towards a Model of Intersemiotic Translation,* "The International Journal of the Arts in Society", n. 4,

2009, pp. 203-210; K.L. O'Halloran, S. Tan, P. Wignell, *Intersemiotic Translation as Resemiotisation: A Multimodal Perspective*, "Signata", n. 7, 2016.

[14] If dealing with the same time period, authors like Pasolini would better or more obviously fit the link between Dante and modernity. See E. Patti, *Pasolini e Dante. La divina mimesis e la politica delle rappresentazioni,* Oxford, Legenda, 2016.

[15] Maria Rizzarelli argues that the 70s marked a specific turn in Sciascia's narrative strategies, insofar as the relationship between literature and reality drastically changes. See M. Rizzarelli, *Sorpreso a pensare per immagini,* Pisa, ETS, 2013, p. 22.

[16] L. Sciascia, *L'affaire Moro,* Palermo, Sellerio, 1978.

[17] Traina proposes a possible identification with the painters Guttuso or Fabrizio Clerici. See G. Traina, *Una problematica modernità*, Acireale, Bonanno Editore, 2009, pp. 139-50.

[18] D. Stazzone, *Palinsesti letterari e pittorici in 'Todo Modo' di Leonardo Sciascia*, "Sinestesie", n. 1, 2021, p. 383.

[19] Ivi, pp. 385-386.

[20] R. Ricorda, *Sciascia ovvero la retorica della citazione*, "Studi novecenteschi", vol. 6, n. 16, 1977, pp. 59-60.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] See S.J. Noakes, *Medieval Texts and National Identities: Dante in Red, White, Green: Then Black*, "The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association", Vol. XL, n. 1, 2007.

[23] P.P. Pasolini, *Leonardo Sciascia, Todo modo*, in Id., *Saggi sulla letteratura e sull'arte*, Mondadori, Milano 1999, p. 233.

[24] After entering the city of Dis and encountering the eretics, Virgil describes to Dante the rigorous precision in which all the categories of sinners are distributed in the Inferno. D. Alighieri*, Commedia*, ed. G. Petrocchi, Milano, Mondadori, 1966-67.

[25] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974, p. 50.

[26] Ivi*,* p. 51.

[27] Ivi, pp. 51-52.

[28] A glaring example can be found in verses 70-75 of *Inferno* XXV: "Già eran li due capi un divenuti | quando n'apparver due figure miste | in una faccia, ov' eran due perduti | Fersi le braccia due di quattro liste | le cosce con le gambe e 'l ventre e 'l casso | divenner membra che non fuor mai viste". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[29] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo*, cit., p. 120.

[30] Cfr. E. Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2005.

[31] Roberto Contu aptly underlines how Sciascia publicly denounced fogginess and uncertainty of the bombing of Milan police headquarters, which happened only a year before the publication of *Todo modo*. See R. Contu, *Anni di piombo, penne di latta,* Perugia, Aguaplano, 2015, pp. 272-273.

[32] A. Scuderi, *Lo stile dell'ironia. Leonardo Sciascia e la tradizione del romanzo,* Lecce, Milella, 2004, p. 165.

[33] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo*, cit., p. 25.

[34] Rizzarelli underlines the double-nature of the character, linking it to the aforementioned painting and to the detail of the glasses. According to the scholar, "la lettura si complica, le parole si dispiegano in tutta la loro più feconda risonanza, implicando diversi livelli ermeneutici". See M. Rizzarelli, *Sorpreso a pensare per immagini*, cit., p. 33.

[35] As Traina points out, it is worth remembering that Sciascia is writing *Todo modo* "mentre matura l'esperienza del compromesso storico tra DC e PSI" and so the novel represents the ambiguity of the "solidarietà nazionale". See G. Traina, *Leonardo Sciascia*, Milano, Mondadori, 1999, p. 22.

[36] After the aforementioned Piazza Fontana bombing, similar attacks took place in Gioia Tauro (July 22, 1970), in the police headquarters in Milan (May 17, 1973) and in Brescia (May 28, 1974).

[37] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo*, cit., p. 19.

[38] *Paradiso* I, vv. 79-81: "parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso | de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume | lago non fece alcun tanto disteso". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[39] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo*, cit., p. 52.

[40] *Paradiso* I, vv. 70-72: "Trasumanar significar *per verba* | non si poria; però l'essemplo basti | a cui esperïenza grazia serba". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[41] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo*, cit., pp. 50, 70, 71.

[42] *Paradiso* XXXIII, vv. 133-136: "Qual è 'l geomètra che tutto s'affige | per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova, | pensando, quel principio ond'elli indige, | tal era io a quella vista nova". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[43] L. Sciascia, *Todo modo,* cit., p. 80.

[44] Not by Sciascia himself, who approved the plot changes of the filmic adaptation. See L. Sciascia, *Il mio 'Todo modo' e quello del film*, "L'ora", maggio, n. 5-6, 1976.

[45] J.J. Michalczyk, *The Political Adaptation: Rosi and Petri Film Sciascia*, "Annali d'Italianistica", vol. 6 (*Film and Literature*), 1988, p. 229. See also L. Donghi, *L'utopia grottesca: 'Todo modo' e l'apocalisse della DC,* in *Elio Petri, uomo di cinema. Impegno, spettacolo, industria culturale*, Roma, Bonanno Editore, 2015, pp. 205-212.

[46] L. Portis, *The Director Who Must Not Be Forgotten*, "Film International 46", Vol. 8, n. 4, 2010. Giacomo Tagliani also highlights the heated political climate surrounding the release of *Todo modo* in G. Tagliani, *Estetiche della verità. Pasolini, Foucault, Petri*, Cosenza, Pellegrini Editore, 2020, pp. 179-185.

[47] J.J. Michalczyk, *The Political Adaptation: Rosi and Petri Film Sciascia*, cit.

[48] As Dante would have put it, "un loco d'ogni luce muto" (*Inferno* v, v. 28). D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[49] *Inferno* xxviii, vv. 139-142: "Perch'io parti' così giunte persone | partito porto il mio cerebro, lasso! | dal suo principio ch'è in questo troncone. | Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[50] The theme of metamorphoses, which Sciascia specifically linked to the Dantean *bolgia* of the thieves, in Petri is less focused but more generally pervasive throughout the film.

[51] Let's not forget Dante's 'theory of the two suns', both present in the third book of the *Monarchia* and in *Purgatorio* xvi, vv. 98-99: "l pastor che procede | rugumar può, ma non ha l'unghie fesse". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[52] *Inferno* xix, vv. 73-75: "Di sotto al capo mio son li altri tratti | che precedetter me simoneggiando, | per le fessure de la pietra piatti". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[53] No woman participates in the spiritual exercises: in 1970s Italy, power, in all its form, was still firmly being held by men.

[54] A glaring example can be found in the last *canto* of *Purgatorio*, when Dante employs the vague expression "cinquecento diece e cinque" which could translate into the latin word dvx. *Purgatorio* xxxiii, vv. 43-45: "Nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque, | messo di Dio, anciderà la fuia | con quel gigante che con lei delinque". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[55] D. Rugo, *The Pedagoy of Political Film. Elio Petri's "Todo modo"*, "Studies in European Cinema", June 2015, Vol. xii, n. 2, pp. 106-117.

[56] My translation: "Hell is near, underground, we are in it, and I'm here to accompany you by hand".

[57] My translation: "We shall descend in order to ascend".

[58] E. Auerbach, *Studi su Dante*, cit.

[59] Dante's *Inferno* opens with Dante-character lost in a "selva oscura".

[60] Dante either presents a category of sinners as a whole (*canto* vii) or singles out specific individuals (as it happens often in the last circle, where the betrayers are punished).

[61] *Inferno* XVI, vv. 22-26: "Qual sogliono i campion far nudi e unti | avvisando lor presa e lor vantaggio, | prima che sien tra lor battuti e punti | così rotando, ciascuno il visaggio | drizzava a me". D. Alighieri, *Commedia*, cit.

[62] See D. Mondella, *L'ultima trovata. Trent'anni di cinema senza Elio Petri*, Bologna, Pendragon, 2013.

[63] In this regard, Dante's authority has vastly been used also over the course of the Italian political unification. See I. De Michelis, *Dante nel Risorgimento italiano*, "Dante: Rivista internazionale di studi su Dante Alighieri", Vol. 9, 2012.

[64] As previously argued, both function as an adaptation *mise en abyme*.

[65] As defined by Umberto Eco in his *I limiti dell'interpretazione*, Milano, La Nave di Teseo, 2016.