

The Detective as a Historian: The Legacy of the Resistance in Macchiavelli and Guccini's Crime Series

With its stress on legality, culpability and responsibility, a crime novel is a particularly suitable medium for recounting history (Browne and Kreiser Jr. xiv). As a variant of the historical novel, in Georg Luckács's words, it "offers a truer, more complete, more vivid, and more dynamic reflection of reality than the receptant otherwise possesses" (36).¹ It often recounts history from a hypocaliptic perspective: that is, a micro-story that illustrates a macro-story or history (Cortellessa). This is exactly what happens in Lorian Macchiavelli and Francesco Guccini's *gialli*.² In their crime series set in a small village in the Apennines, the two authors re-examine Italy's recent past.³ With the investigations of the sleuth, *maresciallo* Benedetto Sansovito, into a number of crimes, Macchiavelli and Guccini re-interpret a period of Italian history that stretches from the end of the nineteenth century, when Italy was a land of migrants, to the 1970s, which were characterized by social and political unrest. Through the detective's enquiry into the past, Macchiavelli and Guccini emphasize the importance of understanding the historical roots of Italy's frail democracy. As we will see, they also challenge the loss of historical memory in Italian society and the covertly approved amnesty for crimes committed during the German occupation of Italy in the name of a (still unresolved) reconciliation. By re-establishing historical differences between the Republic of Salò and the Resistance and making the detective a former partisan, they contest the instrumental use of 'revisionist' theories in a critical period of Italy's recent history. Last but not least, the investigative process also allows Guccini and Macchiavelli to comment upon contemporary events, drawing a parallel between the past of the investigation and the present of the reader, in a pattern typical of historical crime novels (Milanesi 13).⁴

This article focuses on the representation of Fascism and the Resistance in Sansovito's series. It looks in particular at *Tango e gli altri. Romanzo di una raffica, anzi tre* (2008), as this narrative can be considered a highly conscious response to the climate of historical revisionism that characterized the rise to power of the *Alleanza*

Nazionale (born from the ashes of *Movimento sociale italiano* (MSI), the neo-Fascist Party) with Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* in 1994, and its ability to maintain power through Berlusconi's governments in 2001-2005, 2005-2006 and again in 2008.

As Jonathan Dunnage (225) explains, especially from the late 1980s onwards some 'revisionist' historians, in particular Renzo De Felice, argued that the history of twentieth century Italy had been hegemonized by the Left and that Fascism and the Resistance had been misinterpreted.⁵ Revisionist historians emphasized the *Ventennio* as being a period of modernization for Italy that had helped to generate a greater sense of national identity among Italians. Revisionists also criticized anti-Fascism and the Resistance as a movement dominated by its communist components. They claimed that if the Fascists had behaved brutally during the war of Liberation, the Communists were also responsible for atrocities. While this position was contested, several Left-wing historians and politicians admitted the need for new research into the recent past in order to free the interpretation of this crucial part of Italian history from the ideological constraints of the Cold War period.⁶ However, while historians debated, right-wing parties used revisionist declarations to bolster their political position. In this period, the proliferation of studies, memoirs and newspaper articles featuring young men fighting for the Republic of Salò decontextualized the stories of the combatants on both sides, showing what Raffaele Romanelli describes as a "discursive tendency to dissolve all distinctions, often through an appeal to individual experience and to the emotions" (343).

In this climate of revisionism and propaganda, a number of crime writers, such as Edoardo Angelino, Corrado Augias, Leonardo Gori, Carlo Lucarelli, Luciano Marrocu and Lucio Trevisan set their stories during Fascism and the war.⁷ As Luca Somigli points out, the development of this particular narrative tendency at the same time as the so-called 'revisionist' debate on the interpretations of Fascism and the Resistance was hardly a coincidence ("Rewriting Histories" 18). On the contrary, following a tradition of social and political commitment of the genre in Italy,⁸ crime fiction

intervened, both explicitly and implicitly, in the very public discussion on the meaning and the moral and political implications of a series of pivotal moments and events at the twilight of the Fascist regime and its artificial continuation with the Italian Social Republic. (Somigli, "Rewriting Histories" 18)

In other words, using a genre where topics such as the dichotomy between good and evil, and themes such as violence and justice are central, many writers highlighted the contradictions and flaws of the Mussolini regime in terms of civil rights and personal freedom in their stories set during the *Ventennio* and the Second World War. These writers also stressed the often ambivalent attitudes of many Italians who survived during Fascism without taking sides. Lucarelli's novels, which have enjoyed great success, are particularly notable as they investigate the dissociation of individuals from the responsibilities of the regime that they served in the name of alleged apolitical professionalism or loyalty. This attitude is exemplified by the detective, Inspector De Luca, who "may be able to ferret out the truth, to give shape and meaning to the mass of disparate clues that are placed before him," but is unable to translate this "into an act of justice, since this would presume an insight into the moral implications of his own actions that De Luca simply refuses to have" (Somigli, "Rewriting Histories" 21).⁹ A former commander of the notorious "Brigata Ettore Muti" and inspector of the Republic of Salò police, De Luca is only interested in solving crimes.¹⁰ Marco Sangiorgi convincingly argues (130) that his job becomes an alibi and a way not to distance himself from the regime.¹¹ As Somigli highlights, far from justifying this attitude, Lucarelli exposes the new mythology of the innocent Fascist by showing De Luca's stance as "a conscious and deliberate blindness, which, far from absolving the character from his responsibilities, implicates him all the more in the injustices of the regime" (Somigli, "Rewriting History" 23). All the fictional detectives, who are police detectives and therefore working within the Fascist institutions, are investigators interested in justice and do not hesitate to confront the authorities if they constitute an obstacle to their inquiry. Some fictional detectives—such as Piero Contini in *L'inverno dei mongoli*—also refuse to acknowledge their collusion

with Fascism. By contrast, other sleuths, such as Inspector Flaminio Prati in *Quella mattina di luglio* and Bruno Arcieri in *Il passaggio*, question their role and responsibilities as individuals in the chaos of the war and make choices of a moral and political nature. All these novels, which raise questions about legality and personal responsibilities in a troubled period of Italian history, are set in a few crucial years before and after World War II, and contribute effectively to the debate opened in the 1990s.

Seven years after the publication of Lucarelli's *Carta Bianca*, Macchiavelli and Guccini published the first volume of their series, which builds on previous crime novels set during Fascism. The fictional investigations span thirty years and do not follow a strict chronological order: in *Macaroni* (1997), a young Sansovito investigates a series of crimes in a small village in the Apennines in the 1940s whose roots go back to the 1880s. Sent to the Russian front as a punishment for his heterodoxy, he survives and, once back in Italy, joins the Resistance. In *Un disco dei Platters* (1998) already in his forties, he investigates two murders that have their origins in episodes dating back to the Second World War; in *Tango* (2008), he investigates a cold case connected to the Resistance; finally, ten years later, he confronts a new 'Fascism' and the strategy of tension in *Questo sangue che impasta la terra* (2001). The choice of a former Resistance fighter as the main protagonist allows the authors to reinforce their discourse on the Resistance and reexamine Italy's recent history. Equally important, in both *Un disco* and *Tango*, the investigations take place in another critical period of Italy's recent history—the 1960s, years that saw the alliance between the Christian Democrats and the MSI. This gives the authors the opportunity to condemn both the coalition of the 1960s, and those of the 1990s and 2000s with *Alleanza Nazionale*, as dangerous flirtations with authoritarianism. Finally, through a reaffirmation of the values of freedom, civil rights and democracy brought about by the Resistance in *Tango*, Macchiavelli and Guccini explicitly react to the attempt of Berlusconi's government to demonize anti-Fascism and indirectly oppose his efforts to minimize the importance of *Tangentopoli*. Indeed, as R. J. B Bosworth notes, Berlusconi's anti-Resistance attitude also expresses a desire to get over the *Tangentopoli* period:

If anti-fascism and its past were the canker at the heart of Italy, then the responsibilities of Craxian Italy for paving the way to *Tangentopoli* could be denied. If the Republic had been flawed in its first creation, then there was no need to ponder its most recent past. (225-26)

Born in 1934 in Vergato, near Bologna, Lorian Macchiavelli is a master of Italian crime fiction and author of various novels and spy stories, as well as a famous series featuring Sergeant Sarti Antonio¹² that has lasted for more than thirty years, covering a period from the 1970s to the present.¹³ All his narratives show a close proximity to Italy's political and social conflicts. Macchiavelli is also the co-founder of Gruppo 13, an association that aims to defend the genre from the attacks of critics and scholars while championing its literary dignity. His works and his passionate defence of detective fiction have been a source of inspiration for a new generation of *giallo* writers in Italy.¹⁴ Born in Modena in 1940, Francesco Guccini is considered one of the most important Italian *cantautori* [singer-songwriters]. During the five decades of his music career he has recorded 16 studio albums and collections, and six live albums. He is also a writer and a comic book author.¹⁵ His lyrics have been praised for their poetic and literary value and have been used in schools as an example of modern poetry (Gordon 123). Over the years, Guccini has gained the appreciation of critics and fans alike, who regard him as an iconic figure. Both Macchiavelli and Guccini share a love for the local traditions of Emilia-Romagna and the landscapes of the Apennines. In their series, they present a sleuth who is a clever and brave detective animated by a love of truth. Like his fictional colleagues in Italian crime stories set during Fascism and the Resistance, Sansovito also likes to investigate alone and is not afraid to confront complacent authorities in order to pursue justice.¹⁶ However, the choice of a former Resistance fighter as a sleuth who ensures a positive closure to an investigation and who values honesty and incorruptibility is a novelty in the genre. Most importantly, it was a deliberate political choice on the part of Guccini and Macchiavelli in a period when the values of the Resistance were under attack. As a Southerner and as an investigator who does not accept the official version of the truth, Sansovito is an "away-outsider," marginalized in

the same way as migrants and misfits (Porteous 119). In *Macaroni* in particular, he is marginalized in the village because he is a Southerner living in the north; as a detective, his superiors marginalize him because he does not bow down to the Fascist authorities. Although he is finally accepted by the villagers in this story, in the following novels he becomes an outsider as an ex-partisan in a world that has forgotten the sacrifice of thousands of men and women during the Second World War. This leads him to sympathize with people who live at the margin of society or who fight against the *status quo*.

As Carlo Oliva (183) observes, the Sansovito series allows its authors to re-examine some crucial moments in Italian history. From the flow of emigration at the end of the nineteenth century through the last years of World War II to the years of the Economic Boom and the troubled 1970s, Sansovito's adventures compel the writers (and the reader with them), to examine the most important transformations of Italian society in the microcosm of a small mountain community. Although set in different periods of Italian history, all the novels deal with themes connected to Fascism and the Resistance, placing this period at the core of the narratives. This does not come as a surprise as Macchiavelli explored Fascism and the Resistance in a number of earlier novels. *Fiori alla memoria* (1975) starts with a series of acts of vandalism against a monument by a group of fallen partisans and ends with the discovery of the identity of the traitor who caused their death at the end of the Second World War. In *Sequenze di memoria* (1976), Macchiavelli associates the cruelty of the Fascist past with the aggressiveness of the capitalist economy, which radically transformed the way of life of entire communities during the Economic Miracle. The same issue is also at the heart of Sansovito's adventures in *Un disco*. In *Sequenze di memoria*, after the sudden death of Gianni, a childhood friend, the protagonist, nicknamed Ricotta, returns to his native village. Unconvinced by the official verdict of his friend's death, which the police consider a suicide, Ricotta discovers that Gianni was unofficially studying the level of pollution generated by a chemical factory that had become the main source of work for the village. The reason for Gianni's death, however, is not related to his environmental research, but lies in an episode that occurred during the Fascist era. Analyzing *Sequenze di memoria*, Somigli argues that “[v]iolence and

death are the result of the refusal to come to terms with history, to understand and deal with the wounds left by it upon the social body” (“L'impossibilità del ritorno” 78). This is also true of the Sansovito series, for which *Sequenze di memoria* represents an ideal prologue.

The first novel of the series sees a twenty-something Sansovito investigating a series of murders in a small village in the Apennines in 1939. The narrative presents several flashbacks that take the reader to the end of the nineteenth century through the story of a young villager, called Ciarèin, who migrates to Southern France in search of a better life. This story, which alternates with the main story set between 1939 and 1940, proves to be critical for the solution of the mystery. In the novel it is also revealed that *maresciallo* Sansovito had been transferred to the village as punishment for having investigated the children of some important Fascist officers. In *Macaroni*, Sansovito is a disillusioned officer who resents being sent to a cold and isolated village in the mountains and who is worried about his career and future with the *carabinieri*. This does not prevent him from rescuing an anarchist, Libero Guidotti, from the harassment of four *squadristi* in the local pub (“‘Lasciateci fare maresciallo. Queste non sono cose di sua competenza.’ ‘Per dio se sono di mia competenza! Io sono qui per mantenere l'ordine,’” 61). The next day Guidotti's body is found down a precipice, triggering an investigation and the questioning of the *squadristi* involved in the incident. At this stage of his personal story, Sansovito is similar to all the other fictional detectives of the Fascist era who display a firm sense of justice even when they find themselves in delicate circumstances. Indeed, Sansovito's decision to investigate Guidotti's death as a murder proves to be another blow to his career. Furthermore, like fictional inspectors Flaminio Prati and Bruno Arcieri, the sleuth also shows clear signs of uneasiness towards the regime:

Si guarda attorno e senza aspettare l'indicazione da un appuntato ancora irrigidito sull'attenti, va alla porta, la spalanca, si ferma sulla soglia e saluta fascistamente.

Il maresciallo si alza e ricambia sollevando il braccio destro a metà strada fra uno stanco saluto fascista e un annoiato saluto militare. Con un po' di fantasia. (84)

In this passage, Sansovito returns the salute of a *Federale* who has come from Bologna in order to interfere with the sleuth's investigation. His half gesture, something between a Fascist and a military salute, is symbolic of his problematic adherence to Fascism, which, as he has already painfully experienced, fails to deliver the values of justice and equality he pursues. This gesture also hints at his future decision to distance himself from the Fascist ideology as happens with the protagonists in Augias's and Gori's historical crime novels. Throughout the novel, Sansovito is increasingly worried about his future, but he continues to investigate the death of the anarchist: "Il vostro dovere è quello di arrestare i sovversivi e proteggere i cittadini onesti! 'Il mio dovere è di ricercare l'assassino o gli assassini'" (85). Sansovito points out to the *Federale* that his job is devoid of any ideology and his aim is to find the culprit no matter what the political consequences might be. The novel ends with the discovery of different culprits for the four murders that are all connected to the figure of Ciarèin.

An unresolved confrontation with Italy's Fascist past is the topic of *Un disco*. In this story, set in the 1960s, Sansovito comes back to the Apennine village at the center of his first investigation and sees some Fascist slogans still visible on the walls of a building:

Una sorta di libretto rosso scritto sul bianco dei muri. In pochi si sono presi la briga di cancellarle e chi ha provato a passarci sopra una mano di bianco se le è viste riaffiorare, quasi che il tempo, a dispetto degli uomini, volesse mantenere vivo il ricordo di una tragedia. (301)

In this passage, the Fascist slogans are an embodiment of Italy's recent past, which Italians would rather hide. However, the authors seem to suggest that it is impossible to wipe the slate clean. In spite of people's attempt to forget, the past is destined to resurface, often generating more violence, as evoked by the red paint of the writing. In the novel, the deaths of two children—one blown up by walking on an unexploded mine from the Second World War, and the other drowned—unveil crimes that occurred during the war. As Robin W. Winks (xiii) and Carlo Ginzburg (165) have argued, the detective and the historian collect, interpret and then explain their evidence in order

to find the truth. Their search becomes an investigation into society at large and their digging into the past often sheds light on the reader's present. Indeed, Macchiavelli and Guccini's sleuths perform a function which is typical both of the detective and the historian: Sansovito, like an historian, digs into the past to make sense of the present, symbolically wiping the white paint from the wall to reveal the naked truth written underneath that sheds light on both on the past and the present. By solving a case which has its roots in the Second World War, Sansovito is confronted with a present of political and social struggle. Mainly through the figure of Collina, aka Stalin, a communist who lives in the village, the reader is reminded of several events of the 1960s, such as the establishment of the Tambroni Government, a controversial coalition that included Christian Democrats, the neo-Fascist *Movimento Sociale* (MSI), and the monarchists:¹⁷

"Compagni, gli ottantatré feriti di Genova; Vincenzo Napoli, ucciso dalla polizia a Licata, e i suoi ventiquattro compagni feriti; i manganellati dalla Celere a Roma, a Porta San Paolo, e soprattutto i cinque compagni caduti e i feriti di Reggio Emilia, esigono giustizia!"

"Cosa stai facendo, Collina?"

Stalin posò la sinistra verso Sansovito: "Attività politica. Diffondo le notizie che i giornali e la televisione servi dei padroni e del governo non diffondono!" (*Questo sangue* 475)

In his analysis of historical crime fiction, Claudio Milanesi (13) detects a pattern that allows crime authors to reflect upon the present through past events. In the passage above, the authors refer to some recurrent events in Italy's recent history, such as the infamous 1960 coalition, which is implicitly linked to Berlusconi's alliance with *Alleanza nazionale*.¹⁸ Thus, *Un disco* intertwines the past (the 1960 alliance), the present (the alliance between Berlusconi and *Alleanza nazionale*), and the past again (the investigations into the 1960s), which is typical of the historical crime novel. Moreover, the reference to the flaws of the Italian press may remind readers of the unresolved question of Berlusconi's *de facto* ownership of a large part of Italian media. Undoubtedly, even after formally distributing ownership of his

empire to various members of his family, Berlusconi kept control of his companies and exploited this situation for propaganda purposes (Dunnage 226). The reference to “giornali e televisioni servi dei padroni e del governo” in the above mentioned passage can act as a cogent reminder to readers of the present state of the media in Italy.

The *maresciallo* never explicitly comments on the facts of his times, but he helps Stalin and ridicules a colleague who wants to stop his protest in front of the village church. Thus Sansovito implicitly supports Stalin’s views. Similarly, in *Questo sangue* Sansovito covertly fights the criminalization of the student and pacifist movements of the 1970s by helping Raffaella, a young woman falsely accused of a crime committed by an agent from a deviant section of the secret services. While several members of the police force only want to persecute students and political activists who they brand collectively as criminals (“Un branco di delinquenti! Se dipendesse da me li sbatterei tutti al muro!” *Questo sangue* 634), Sansovito does not accept this generalization and is determined to find the real culprit. In the novel, individuals and authorities plot an authoritarian shift in the Italian government and the writers highlight the idea that the danger of despotism is still present in Italian society.

In these stories, Sansovito only incidentally refers to his past as a partisan. In *Tango*, however, Macchiavelli and Guccini make a significant contribution to the debate about historical revisionism by linking Sansovito’s values of justice and fairness with his experience as a Resistance fighter. In the years around the publication of *Tango*, as Clark explains, the *Alleanza nazionale* had succeeded in gaining middle-class support (529). Its success revealed that “a significant number of Italians did not identify with the anti-Fascist tradition on which the Republic had been founded” (Dunnage 224). The ex-Fascists held key government posts and, in a revisionist era, “might claim to be the last custodian of the ideals and myths of ‘united Italy’” (Clark 529). Anti-Fascism, which had been very significant in the past and synonymous with ‘public interests’, had lost ground in some strata of the Italian population (529), while, as already mentioned, Cold-War-like propaganda promoted by Berlusconi had erased in many people’s minds the political and criminal responsibilities of the moderate parties which had ruled Italy for more than thirty years (Bosworth 225-26). It

is precisely in this political context that *Tango* operates. In this novel, set again in the 1960s, Inspector Sansovito investigates a cold case from 1944. The case concerns the execution by his own comrades of a young partisan, Bob, accused of the massacre of a civilian family for personal vengeance. In the beginning of the book it is explicitly revealed that Sansovito had refused to wear the new uniform of the *carabinieri* under the Republic of Salò and had joined the Resistance following his experience on the Russian front. As a partisan under the name of Salerno, *maresciallo* Sansovito had investigated the massacre of the civilian family without solving it. Almost twenty years later, in 1960, a character asks Sansovito to reopen the case and to clear Bob’s name. During the new investigation, the motivations of the group of partisans involved in that event are put under scrutiny in a political climate where Fascists and partisans are placed on the same level: “Lei non sarà mica uno di quelli che dice che i partigiani hanno ammazzato a destra e a sinistra senza guardare in faccia a nessuno” (*Tango* 132). More than evoking the political climate of the 1960s, these observations echo the often provocative statements of revisionist historians such as Ernesto Galli Della Loggia (1996) and journalists, such as Giampaolo Pansa who, from the 1980s onwards, argued that the partisans had also committed crimes against civilians (2003; 2008; 2014). However in *Tango*, Macchiavelli and Guccini almost obsessively point out the difference between the Fascists and the partisans.

“Chi scava la fossa?” domandò il vecchio. “La fate scavare a lui?”
 “No, non siamo fascisti e neanche tedeschi. La faremo noi”.
 (...) Tango lo interruppe con un gesto della mano. “No, la fossa la scaviamo noi, combattiamo anche per questo, l’avete detto anche voi prima, combattiamo per avere e fare giustizia, non per la vendetta.” (36)

In the novel, during flashbacks that move the action back to 1944, several partisans highlight the difference between the Fascists’ and the partisans’ behavior. In this passage, by digging the grave for their victims, partisans show respect for their rivals and demonstrate that they are fighting for justice and not revenge. The partisans also repeat that in order to reconstitute justice, they have to “per primi fare

giustizia” (44), even though that means condemning one of their own. In the part of the novel set in the 1960s, several official documents are read or explained by different characters in order to prove this point.

Scorre le righe e legge fra sé: “Regolamento di disciplina... Subordinazione... Armi... Ecco”. Legge a voce alta: “Rapporti con la popolazione civile. È considerato reato ogni atto di violenza, di minaccia a mano armata, di rapina eccetera a danno della popolazione civile eccetera eccetera... Poi sono proibiti:

- a) Violazione di domicilio e perquisizioni.
- b) Qualsiasi requisizione o prelievo individuale di denari e generi vari...
- Punizioni. Le punizioni sono: a) richiamo; b) biasimo; c), d)...
- g) pena di morte...” (283)

The difference between the code of conduct of the partisans and that of the Nazi-Fascist army, which had orders to retaliate against civilians (Belco 73-4), is striking, adding to the numerous references to war crimes that are scattered throughout the novel. In this passage in particular, Macchiavelli and Guccini refer to an actual historical document to support their thesis. The reference to actual places, dates, people, newspaper articles and documents assures verisimilitude as, according to Porter, “[p]art of the pleasure of reading depends on this sense of authenticity, allowing the reader to experience normally inaccessible or forbidden activities” (140).

At first sight, the above passages may deliver a simplistic distinction between the opposing sides. This is far from being true as *Tango* assimilates many elements of the revisionist debate. First of all, the crime investigated is a case of a miscarriage of justice perpetrated by the Resistance. Second, the real culprit is not a Fascist, but another member of the Resistance movement, who has joined the Resistance for opportunistic reasons and this element also challenges a ‘black-and-white’ depiction of the war of Liberation. Third, Sansovito struggles with his investigation because in post-war Italy nobody—from the left or the right—seems interested in re-opening a cold case. Indeed, just like Sansovito, who feels the urge to re-open the

case and bring the perpetrators to justice, the authors argue that an investigation into the Resistance should not be opposed despite the fact that a number of former partisans, in the narrative as in reality, are afraid to harm the memory of the war of Liberation.¹⁹ This necessity is exemplified by Tango’s character, a former partisan who ordered Bob’s execution. Having realized his mistake in executing Bob, Tango goes to his political commissioner to ask for the rehabilitation of the dead partisan. The answer “Lascia stare, Tango, che servirebbe solo a gettare discredito sulla Resistenza” (*Tango* 319), throws Tango into a state of guilt, marginalization and mental illness. Macchiavelli and Guccini criticize many former partisans who had reached positions of power in the new Italian society and were not interested in controversies concerning the past. However, in spite of embracing a more problematic interpretation of those important years of Italian history, they oppose the “tendency to dissolve all distinctions” that Romanelli underlines (343). In the following passage, for the first time in the series, Sansovito reveals his political affiliation:

“Senta, cosa vuole da me? Sono stato partigiano, e me ne vanto, e anche se qualcuno vorrebbe gettarci la croce addosso, io non ho mai cambiato idea. Abbiamo combattuto per la libertà e molti, troppi, ci hanno lasciato le penne. Abbiamo fatto bene a fare quello che abbiamo fatto. Abbiamo liberato l’Italia dai nazisti e dai fascisti, è chiaro? Adesso non mi vengano a dire...”
Sansovito lo ferma con un gesto: “Sono stato partigiano anch’io, da queste parti. Ero nella Matteotti.” (132)²⁰

As opposed to Lucarelli’s Inspector De Luca, Sansovito has chosen a side in the ongoing Italian conflict. He comes to believe that at a certain juncture of one’s life doing one’s duty is not enough. Later in the novel, he also attributes his desire to deliver the culprit to justice to his partisan past rather than to his job as a *carabiniere*.

“Questo non c’entra con la Resistenza, avvocato. Anzi, scoprire la verità vorrebbe dire rendere onore, visto che nessuno può restituirgli la vita, al povero Bob. E vuol anche dire che noi, che

nella resistenza eravamo, non abbiamo paura della verità e aggiungerrebbe più valore alla nostra lotta di allora.” (280).

In this passage, the use of the ‘noi’ (“non abbiamo paura”) conveys Sansovito’s affiliation to a group with precise values (“verità” and “lotta”). In other words, he explicitly associates himself with the struggle for freedom. Far from presenting a hagiographic representation of the Resistance, *Tango* delivers a strong affirmation of the core values of a movement that, with all its flaws, fought against a dictatorship and a brutal Nazi occupation of Italy. Therefore the two authors are on the same line with historians, such as Sergio Luzzatto (2013) most recently, who reaffirm the Resistance movement as a crucial experience for a democratic and free Italy. More importantly, *Tango* also represents a passionate reaction against the instrumental use of the revisionist debate for political purposes as propounded by the political right in the 1990s and 2000s, as highlighted by Bosworth.

For Sansovito, solving the mystery is a moral imperative. In this sense the detective behaves like a historian admitting the necessity for a new search into the past. As in Macchiavelli’s *Sequenze di memoria*, in *Tango* violence and death result from the refusal to come to terms with history and its wounds. *Maresciallo* Sansovito’s rejection of this attitude, which turns his implicit anti-Fascism into an open *presa di posizione*, becomes evident in the narrative and forms the foundation of the novel’s political framework. This also gives the authors the opportunity to comment on the present. Thus, when the MSI town councillor fears that the *maresciallo* is intent on rehabilitating the memory of a ‘bad’ partisan, Sansovito indignantly replies to mayor Olmi: “Al consigliere del Movimento Sociale non dobbiamo niente né noi né voi, sindaco” (197). These words mark a need for juridical independence. The use of ‘noi’ in this passage may refer to Sansovito’s belonging to the *carabinieri*, but can equally refer to Sansovito’s past as a partisan. Incidentally, this past is shared by the mayor, a Christian Democrat (“voi”) who fought in the war of Liberation. The declaration “al consigliere del Movimento Sociale non dobbiamo niente” can also be read as a criticism of the alliance between the DC and MSI of those years.

Sansovito’s superior, *tenente colonnello* Friggerio, warns the investigator of the highly sensitive case at hand, particularly complex because of the difficult political climate produced by the controversial Tambroni Government: “Vogliamo parlare del governo Tambroni, governo con i fascisti che ci eravamo illusi di aver cacciato fuori dall’Italia?” (279). The reference to the controversial Tambroni Government is more complex than the above examined reference in *Un disco*. Here the typical pattern of historical crime novels becomes more intricate because it not only ties the past of the crime (1940s) to the present of the reader (2000s), but also to the present of the investigation (1960s), creating a *fil rouge* insinuating a Fascist presence in Italian history from the Mussolini era to the 2000s. Finally, it is no coincidence that the real criminal of the massacre in *Tango* is finally revealed to be mayor Olmi himself, a representative of the party that had masterminded the alliance with the neo-Fascists. Furthermore, he had been elected by the local population because “[u]na brava persona e un buon sindaco e ammanicato com’è col suo partito al governo, porta vantaggi al paese” (133). Through the figure of Olmi, Macchiavelli and Guccini reveal that political opportunism and the cynicism of some Italians who view politics in terms of personal advantage, are both legacies of the past, dating back to the post-Risorgimento period.

The insistence on the values of the Resistance—while acknowledging the betrayal of those very values in different periods of Italian history—is a central theme in Macchiavelli and Guccini’s series. After exploring this issue in *Un disco* and *Questo sangue* in particular, the authors felt compelled to revisit it in *Tango*, explicitly positioning their detective as a bearer of partisan values in order to respond to the political reality of their time. Through a typical pattern of historical crime fiction, Macchiavelli and Guccini’s sleuth digs into the past to shed light on the present. By re-establishing historical differences between the *Republic of Salò* and the Resistance, they are not trivializing history. On the contrary, they are acknowledging a problematic vision of the Resistance, as well as fighting the instrumental use of ‘revisionist’ theories in a critical period of Italy’s recent history. The detective’s explicit *presa di posizione* in the last novel of the series is an anti-Berlusconi stance both for Berlusconi’s *sdoganamento* of *Alleanza nazionale* and the attempt to undermine

the meaning of *Tangentopoli*. Thus the tradition of political and social commitment in Italian crime fiction is reinforced in Macchiavelli and Guccini's *gialli*.

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ACIS

ENDNOTES

¹ According to Luckács, by “representing individual men and situations, [by] depicting them as exemplary men and situations (the unity of the individual and the typical), in bringing to life the... objective conditions of life as the particular attributes of individual people and situations” (39), historical fiction makes its own fictional world “emerge as the reflection of life in its total motion, as process and totality” (39). In other words, ‘typical’ characters need to embody in their individual fictional existence the larger historical forces peculiar to the place and time which they supposedly inhabit.

² *Giallo* (*gialli* in the plural) is the term commonly used to define crime fiction in Italy. It means ‘yellow,’ from the color assigned to the covers of the one of the first series of crime fiction launched in Italy by the publisher Mondadori in 1929. *Giallo* is used here in its widest meaning, that is to say it is a story where there is a crime and where an investigation takes place, as commonly accepted by scholars such as Giuseppe Petronio.

³ The series includes *Macaroni. Romanzo di santi e delinquenti* (1997), *Un disco dei Platters. Romanzo di un maresciallo e di una regina* (1998), *Questo sangue che impasta la terra* (2001), *Lo spirito e altri briganti* (2003), and *Tango e gli altri. Romanzo di una raffica, anzi tre* (2008). Macchiavelli and Guccini also wrote together *Malastagione* (2011), a crime novel also set in the Apennines, featuring forest ranger Marco Gherardini, aka Poiana.

⁴ There are few studies on Italian crime fiction. For a history of Italian crime fiction, see Del Monte, Rambelli, Carloni, Pieri, and Pezzotti, *Politics and Society*. Pezzotti, *Importance* deals with the relationship between crime fiction and its setting, while Di Ciolla tackles the topic of justice in crime fiction. On the relationship between crime fiction and history see Browne and Kreiser Jr. and Milanese. For an analysis of historical crime fiction set during Fascism see Somigli, “Rewriting Histories,” and Sangiorgi.

⁵ As many scholars have argued, the term ‘revisionism’ is ambiguous, since a certain kind of revisionism is implicit in the historian’s work. However, in the last twenty years the term has progressively changed to mean a less neutral and more politically oriented perspective on the past. More specifically in Italy, revisionism has come to signify “in popular terms, a reevaluation of the Fascist experience” (Ganapini 128).

Among the most important revisionist texts De Felice, *Rosso e Nero* and Galli della Loggia offer a critique of anti-Fascism and of the Resistance, described as controlled by its communist components. Other books, such as De Felice, *Intervista*, re-interpret the regime as a “soft” dictatorship. In “Retoriche di fine millennio,” Raffaele Romanelli disputes this image, speaking of a “mondanizzazione” (339), or normalization, of Fascism. For an overview of the different subjects of revisionist historiography, see Domenico Losurdo and Emilio Gentile. The revisionist debate among historians is a fascinating topic, but it is not the main focus of this article.

⁶ See Cooke for an analysis of the changing treatment of the Resistance in Italian culture.

⁷ The novels are Angelino’s *L’inverno dei mongoli* (1995); Augias’s *Quella mattina di luglio* (1995); Gori’s *Nero di maggio* (2000) and *Il passaggio* (2002), a series featuring Carabinieri captain Bruno Arcieri as the main protagonist; Lucarelli’s *Carta Bianca* (1990, translated as *Carte Blanche*, 2006); *L’estate torbida* (1991, translated as *The Damned Season*, 2007); and *Via delle Oche* (1996, translated as *Via delle Oche*, 2008), featuring Inspector De Luca; Marrocu’s *Fàulas* (2000), *Debrà Libanos* (2002), *Scarpe rosse e tacchi a spillo* (2004), *Il caso del croato morto ucciso* (2010), *Farouk* (2011), and *Affari riservati* (2013) which is a series featuring police inspectors Luciano Serra and Eupremio Carruezzo; and Trevisan’s *Il naso di Mussolini* (1998), *Prova di forza* (2001), *Pennetta indaga* (2002), and *Il mostro di Roma* (2002) a series featuring Inspector Epifanio Pennetta.

⁸ According to Gosetti (11) and Crawford (120) crime fiction has gradually introduced more realism in its stories and often reflects the tensions and problems of contemporary society. Oliva (179-94) and Bonfantini (63) argue that Italian crime fiction in particular tackles everyday problems and conflicts in Italian society.

⁹ For an analysis of this series see Somigli (“Rewriting History,” 20-23), Sangiorgi (130-36) and Amrani (365-74). Other crime novels of Lucarelli are set during Fascism. They are *Indagine non autorizzata* (1993), *L’isola dell’angelo caduto* (1999) and *L’ottava vibrazione* (2010). For an analysis of *L’isola* see Kirby Pitiot (375-86) and Millner (399-408).

¹⁰ The Brigata Muti was one of the Fascist paramilitary corps *Brigate nere* [Black Brigades] operating in Northern Italy from 1944 till the end of World War II. They acted as political police and were responsible for the repression of the Resistance. The Brigata Muti, operating in Ravenna, was responsible for several episodes of violence and torture.

¹¹ As Lucarelli explains, the figure of De Luca was inspired by a real policeman whom the writer had interviewed in the course of the research for his university thesis on the police of the Italian Social Republic (Bacchereti 185).

¹² This rank does not exist in the Italian police structure. It was a precise choice of the author to underline an ironic detachment from Sarti’s adventures; see Carloni (93). The almost constant inversion of first and last name in the series is meant to evoke the rituals of Italian bureaucracy (Somigli “Mysteries” 76).

¹³ A playwright and director of Gruppo Teatrale Viaggiante in the lively fringe artistic scene of Bologna, Macchiavelli started his career as a detective fiction writer in 1974 with *Le piste dell'attentato*. With this novel he gave birth to Sergeant Sarti Antonio, one of the most beloved *giallo* characters in Italy. The Sarti Antonio series is still ongoing.

¹⁴ Several recent crime writers explicitly describe Macchiavelli as a master of crime fiction. See Pezzotti (*Importance* 37).

¹⁵ Guccini published the autobiographical novels *Cròniche epafàniche* (1989), *Vacca d'un cane* (1993), and *Cittanòva Blues* (2003). He is also the author and scriptwriter of the comic entitled *Vita e morte del brigante Bobini detto "Gnicche"* (1980) and scriptwriter of *Storie dello spazio profondo* (1972) with Bonvi, among others.

¹⁶ Indeed Sansovito's integrity and assertiveness is very different from Macchiavelli's previous sleuth, Sarti Antonio. Sarti is subjugated by his superior, the despotic Raimondi Cesare. Sansovito is also the mind of the investigation, while Sarti needs to rely on his side-kick, university student Rosas, to make sense of the mysteries he is investigating. Finally, Sarti does not have a defined political conscience and is not able to understand the social and political transformations occurring in Bologna and in Italy. On the other hand, Sansovito reads facts and events of Italy and expresses a precise point of view. The passage from a postmodern and very human investigator to an invincible and almost omnipotent sleuth may seem a step back from Macchiavelli's earlier experimentalism with the genre. However, this choice is functional to the discourse that Guccini and Macchiavelli make on Italy's recent history.

¹⁷ In July 1960 violent demonstrations took place against the decision to hold the MSI annual congress in the anti-Fascist stronghold of Genoa. Violent battles between the police and demonstrators forced the Government to postpone the congress. Subsequent conflicts between civilians and the police in Sicily and Reggio Emilia caused the death of several demonstrators, and Tambroni was forced to resign (Dunnage 168).

¹⁸ See for instance Romanelli (340-43).

¹⁹ In the last twenty years, a number of books that re-examine the post-'43 period have been published. Among the most successful are: Luzzatto, "Partigia," in which, in spite of its flaws, the Resistance is still considered as a vital experience for establishing a democratic and free Italy; Pansa's controversial books *Sangue dei vinti*, *Grande bugia*, and *Bella ciao*. Pavone, *Guerra civile*, which introduced for the first time the concept of "guerra civile" for the war between Fascists and partisans; Peli, *Storia della Resistenza*; Revelli, *Due guerre*; and the memoir by historian Vivarelli, *Fine di una stagione*.

²⁰ Brigate Matteotti were partisan groups that responded to *the Partito socialista italiano di unità proletaria* (PDIUP). The groups often worked in collaboration with Brigate Buzzi Malatesta organized by the anarchists.

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