

Gli occhi del Lazio

Symmetries of closure in Gadda's Quer Pasticciaccio

Ask a reader of Gadda how *Quer pasticciaccio* ends, and the reply will be ‘almost’, the last word in the text, not the murderer’s name or the solution to the Merulana crimes. Much can indeed be made of this mark of non-closure. In its highly visible end-of-text position this one word in fact passes us the key to a poetics of survival to the novel’s mass. If, as in a chess game with chaos, our author appears to have lost track of the multiple moves performed by the here and now, he engineers a finale, writes the word that turns a text that has no longer cause-effect relations to play into a transitive lesson in complexity. Roscioni’s seminal monograph *La disarmonia prestabilita* comes to mind. Like Roscioni, in effect, ‘almost’ can be interpreted as arguing for a finally optimistic *funzione Gadda* to grow out of the all too often frustrating *caso Gadda*.

Separated from the last word by a comma, the Inspector’s ‘ripentirsi’ (RR II 276) in front of a female suspect, the repenting *almost* and *again* that arrests the narration, compels us, however, to look back at the engulfing materials we have just crossed. If we register the movement, our finale reads, then, not as the welcome release from an impossible textuality, but as a barely avoided descent into the *enigma della femminilità* of De Benedictis’ subtitle to *La piega nera*. Survived it as we have *in extremis*, the black inward fold of corporeality — the reverse, as it were, of the creative outward folding which, according to Dombroski, explains Gadda’s baroque — stops all cognition, while at the same time circularly re-opening the causal enquiry (De Benedictis 1991: 142-47; Dombroski 1999: 3-19).

Having arrived, that is, where it must go no further, the narrative connects back, literally, to its own textual incipit as if seeking re-enactment. Significantly, the ‘ripentirsi, quasi’ of the finale rephrases the original ‘pentirsi’ of Ingravallo’s ‘teoretiche idee’ on crime and ‘erotica’ in the opening pages of chapter one (‘E poi pareva pentirsi, come d’aver calunniato e’ femmene’, RR II 16-17). But there, in chapter one, what was given as customary (in his inquiries, we were told, Ingravallo would always go through some self-arresting repenting) also started to trace the one investigative parabola that finds its completion in the last two words of the novel. If the seriality of the parabola is thus established, *Quer pasticciaccio*, its one actual realisation, also ‘tende al suo fine’ — i.e., is closural right from its beginning, to turn a well known Gaddian phrase (RR I 119) into the main argument of the present work.

Let us reclaim one word further. Could the infinitive ‘riflettere’ (RR II 276), the last-but-two item (not counting the small change, a preposition), offer us some clues as to the narrative causality governing our textual enclosure? De Benedictis reads the inspector’s reflecting away (or recoiling from) the near encounter with matter within the local context of the concluding charge against Tina, the female suspect. Ingravallo has certainly stopped dead as a result of a reflection, and so has the supposed *opera aperta*, which in this way opens to re-enactment instead. Yet, the principle of (mirror) reflection could be more pervasive than that, and perhaps explain not just the exit text but the overall structure of *Quer pasticciaccio*. Generally regarded as a digressive and ultimately degenerative folding out of unrelated materials, Gadda’s crime novel could actually be dictated to by the self-enclosing narratives of the double. To explore such structures is the aim here. Issues of genre, spatial mimesis and cinematic projection provide the framework for this reading.

"No, nun so' stata io!" Il grido incredibile bloccò il furore dell'ossesso. Egli non intese, là pe' llà, ciò che la sua anima era in procinto d'intendere. Quella piega nera verticale tra i due sopraccigli dell'ira, nel volto bianchissimo della ragazza, lo paralizzò, lo indusse a riflettere: a ripentirsi, quasi. (RR II 276)

Something of a structural block affects the reader when it comes to *Quer pasticciaccio*. Or rather, we do see a structure, the chiasmus shape of the ten chapters, yet consider it to be a somewhat static *post factum* affair, as if all that symmetry could not generate a narrative sequence. We do not even need to reach the text's exit point, the above 'grugno a grugno' between inspector and suspect, to arrive at such conclusions. The novel can in fact be abandoned for the theory of it at any point, and the link with *Meditazione milanese*, Gadda's foundational philosophical narrative, recovered directly (if tangentially) from any of the text's digressions or units of fold. In *Quer pasticciaccio*, it is claimed, the causal flux is so weak ('gli elementi della trama non sono legati da rapporti causali solidi. Il flusso della causalità è labile e sorregge solo alcuni fatti marginali' Benedetti argues, for instance), the metonymical nexus are so arbitrary and non-narrative that the novel quickly exhausts its inertia, or, to put in Dicuonzo's words, 'individualizza all'infinito il racconto [...] approssima il proprio oggetto a partire da una pluralità di lingue e di stili [...] smonta ogni concezione pregiudiziale del reale'. To read for the plot — i.e., to read addressing issues of relative position within the sequence — is definitely not on the memo for the next millennium of the typical *gaddista*.

The argument could not be more self-paralysing. In a sense, we are still reeling from the novel's publication in 1957. Third generation survivors as we are (counting Contini, Roscioni, and the present post-Roscionians), we cannot as yet read *Quer pasticciaccio* the way Cecchi, one of the first reviewers, recommended one should: vertically, as one reads a musical score. Research, however, all too willingly remains a horizontal activity, its trusted poetics that of reading for loss of cohesion and dispersal, so much so that hardly any attention is paid to Gadda's life-long ambition to write a 'romanzo-romanzo' (Saccone 1988: 162). Or rather, we appear to believe in the fundamental irrelevance of sequence to Gaddian discourse already before getting to the book and regardless of the methodologies we bring to it. Recent theoretical developments may explain the situation in part. More importantly, Contini and Roscioni, the founding fathers of the *gaddistica* in the 1930s and '60s, did not expect their messy ingegnere to be able to construct a large-scale narrative, and we do read his work in their wake. Of course, Gadda's abortive *intrecci* are nothing but 'casi stiracchiati'; there can be no doubt that the linguistic experiment and the gnoseological quest rebuff any reader-gratifying narratives in this case. Yet, despite the unevenness of the page and the structural collapse of most large-scale projects, a clandestine narrative level (reliable, sequential, utterly meaningful) co-ordinates this irregular *progettualità* from setting to character, from episode to sequence especially in *Quer pasticciaccio*, Gadda's *monstrum maggiore*. To state that in our writer 'tutto in qualche misura, è collegabile a tutto' obviously represents no novelty (Terzoli 1995: 38). However, the very fact that such a statement is made but not argued, confirms that the field has given up, as it were, on this side of Gadda's writing.

As a consequence of both actual difficulties and long established persuasions, the classic detective novel in *Quer pasticciaccio* — i.e., Gadda's successful exploitation of the investigative machinery — has, for instance, not been explored even by those who, like Petronio and Pietropaoli, have brought it back to the fold, so to speak, of the 1930s and '40s Italian thriller phenomenon triggered by the launch of the *Gialli Mondadori* series in 1929. The gulf dividing Gadda from, say, his contemporary De Angelis may in fact have been qualified as 'breve' by the scholars interested in the bridging of the distance between paraliterature and literature. Somewhat surprisingly, however, it is left uncrossed and made to feel not at all that narrow when the genre's basic concerns — the murderer-victim-enquirer triangle, spatio-temporality, causality and morality — are discussed from the Gadda end of the debate.

One recalls, of course, Gadda's interest in the genre: his desire to be 'Conandoyliano' to attract the 'grosso pubblico' (this as early as 1928), his fascination for the corporeality of crime (the first narrative occurrence of the word *pasticcio* dates back to 1918 and is in connection with a murder), and his *convinto colpevolismo* or press-fed obsessive curiosity for at least two notorious murder cases, the

Pettine matricide in 1928 and the murder of the Stern sisters in 1946. While the former inspired a causal enquiry into the psychology of the victim-criminal to be — the unfinished *Novella seconda* —, the latter within weeks of being dropped by the press was already permanently relocated and recast for the opening instalment of *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (next door to Via Gioberti, incidentally) in the delayed January-February 1946 issue of Bonsanti's *Letteratura*.

Yet the genre can serve Gadda's cause in better ways than in notes of his interest in it. An analysis of some of the novel's specifics, conducted on what are regarded as the indispensable skills in a *giallista* — solid realism, psychoanalytical expertise and a poetic understanding of crime —, has certainly greater implications. An excellent body lies on the floor of *Quer pasticciaccio*. Discovered early in the structure, as established by the rules of the genre (by chapter two, in fact, via Merulana 219 has already been struck twice by crime, a burglary and a murder, with a temporal-spatial divide of only a couple of days and a staircase landing), and macaronically mangled as Gadda must make it, Liliana's body is the archetypally simple, gendered token of much real and fictional crime. The literary expert may read such bodies as metafiction. However, to the straightforward question they pose — for why, indeed, does the male mind have a female body on its floor? — the reader never fails to reply with as straightforward a mixture of horror and unembarrassed captivation.

On the specific aspects, still, and more precisely on realism, Gadda's Roman mimesis comes across as extremely convincing. And in fact, whether on the stage or on the screen or on both (*Quer pasticciaccio* has already been adapted thrice, and very successfully, as in the Ronconi/Bertolucci 1996 production, which used the narrative text as the script), the novel invariably acts out the magnificent audio-visual perception of Rome it has embedded into its prose. Moravia, Pasolini, Fellini — to name but the obvious names — all cashed in after the war on an Eternal City that had become, perhaps because of the war, more irresistible than ever. Gadda, a Milanese writing from Florence in 1946 and in Rome as of 1950, with Belli's poetry for his initial guide, managed like no one else to write Rome as an audio-painting by Caravaggio, in an extraordinary early baroque mannerism in which no amount of detail — folds of a dress, toes of a foot, or coins on a table — can overwhelm the ultimately realist figuration. As in a painting by Caravaggio, the splendid baroque vitality of God's (or is the Devil's?) Earthly City, its onlooking humanity and corporeal spatiality play the *concausa* to the inherently sexual crime or profanation perpetrated by one on Liliana's body. As such, Rome is indeed the perfect accomplice, the real place that nurtures the real criminal, which any detective novel worth its yellow Mondadori cover must have.

Now, central to this study, the body in and of Rome generates narrative movement — *sui generis*, of course, but still describable on the model of a classic investigative sequence. The Merulana crimes are followed, in fact, by the setting up of an enquiry, which at first revolves round the obvious prime and secondary suspects. Once this cast of people is cleared, the case enters the classic, still, complication-with-redirection middle game. Endless and aimless though it feels, this in turn leads to an actual simplification or loss of pieces out of which the end game can develop. I am using on purpose Roscioni's chess metaphor to argue that our contest with chaos begins to look as if under some form of control from the attacking authorial white set.

Interestingly, the narrative sequence just outlined matches the compositional history of the novel. Chapters one-six, which take us from crime to investigative crisis, correspond to the original instalments one-five *Quer pasticciaccio* grew into, before coming to a stop, within the calendar year of its first appearance in *Letteratura*. Chapters six-seven, which mediate the terms of the novel's survival, then represent the end-tail of the extraordinary 'esplosiva urgenza' of 1946. Dating the latter chapter remains problematic. Yet, although the text heralds the possibility of a resumption of the structural hostilities (in the same manner, chapter six had announced the looming 'naufragio del testo' in its incipit), the narrative impasse appears to be still too deep not to belong chronologically with the last instalment. The remaining chapters eight-ten — the end game having by now been visualised via the cinematic (in the late 1940s Gadda wrote his own film adaptation of *Quer pasticciaccio*; poor as we find it, *Il palazzo degli ori* holds the key to the mirror reflections in the finale I must reach for my conclusion) — have the

narrative pace and compositional history of an event about to come to an end. Indeed, the text can finally take its time, as is confirmed also by the fact that, with the exception of the famous Pestalozzi dream, published independently in 1953 (now in chapter eight), the again growing novel did not come out in journals.

Eleven years from start to finish, as Gadda himself noted in an essay that like the novel itself sounds testamentary, *Quer pasticciaccio* represents the most rapidly executed and least dismembered textual body in a literary output marked by the sprawling motility of a number of *disiecta membra*. To give a measure of comparison, *La cognizione del dolore*, Gadda's other major title, came out in instalments between 1938 and 1941, shed parts in various directions for well over a decade, was published in volume in 1963 thanks to Vittorini, Roscioni and Einaudi, and saw the addition of two more chapters in 1970. If the curve of a *scrittura a caldo* turning dreadfully cold and directionless is characteristic of the man, nowhere but in *Pasticciaccio* does he manage to write his struggle with the novel form into a story-line of sorts which has got, finally, plenty of staying power.

To look at it from a different angle, take Gadda's earliest extant large-scale project, the unfinished *Racconto italiano di ignoto del novecento*, not just a narrative '*in imminencia criminis*' (SVP 405) but the author's veritable *Ur-thriller*. Published posthumously in 1983, in its artificial frozen-flux state *Racconto* consists of narrative fragments and compositional notes, which, had things gone according to plan, would have been reabsorbed into a neat non-metafictional tripartite structure answering the causal question at the core of the project — '*Perché occorrono i fatti incredibili?*' (SVP 406) —, as the intended sequence of the three parts ('*La Norma [...] l'Abnorme [...] la Comprensione*', SVP 415) clearly indicates. What we do have in the surviving narrative, is the private *abnorme* right in the first fragment — the piece numbered as one bears, in fact, the title '*Assassinio di Maria de la Garde*' (SVP 401-05), a sample, as the writer himself thought, of his *scrittura a caldo* —, followed by the protracted collapse of the narrative project of the Italian tale of the title, which on the Manzonian example aspired to be the fresco of an entire society.

In more ways than one, *Quer pasticciaccio*, the masterpiece at the other end of Gadda's career, with Ingravallo's *teoretiche idee* for a compositional incipit, the double crime as the sudden rupture and structuring device in chapters one-two, the prime suspect no longer suspectable by chapter four, the critical mid-game that is announced, metafictionally, at the beginning of chapter six, and the conclusive all-reflecting *ripresa* that will stop only when the Inspector is struck by the right reflection, could be read as the successful realisation not of the planned but of the failed *Racconto* we have. That is to say, if Gadda's life-long struggle with the novel, with narratability in general, would seem to originate in the tug-of-war between rationally and subconsciously engineered structures, *Quer pasticciaccio*, by allowing the latter the run of the show, achieves that novelistic organisation which had been in the writer's poetics at least since the planned but never materialised submission of *Racconto* to the Mondadori competition in 1924.

But, in Gadda's own words, *Quer pasticciaccio* is '*un giallo*' — a vectorial narrative, a sequence programmed from the start to conclude on a '*bagliore folgorante che illumina al commissario protagonista la realtà dell'epilogo*', whatever Angelo Dicuonzo, the author of an essay *Sulla struttura del Pasticciaccio gaddiano* that not once looks into the subject of the title, may think in his fascination for a '*totalità "potenziale, congetturale, plurima"*' à la Calvino. Deconstructed it as he believes he has, but in reality having constructed, like others, a programmatic anti crime novel which *Quer pasticciaccio* is not, Dicuonzo fails to perceive that a genre reputedly without modern qualities has contained, in this instance, a writer with almost too many qualities for our times. What is lost in a pre-empted quest for complexity *per se*, is the real complexity, the extent and the depth of Gadda's espousal of the codes of practice of the crime novel. Contained, in fact, by the container most suited to his materials, Gadda can let unfold the kind of narrative sequence which in the unrestricted novel he finds impossible to bring to realisation. That the compositional curve could be turned into narrative movement — a phenomenon which in Gadda's career is unique to *Quer pasticciaccio* — represents, for instance, no *fatto incredibile* for the one narrative form which, without ever losing sight of its organising body on the floor, codifies

as the norm of both writing and reading that the *esplosiva urgenza* or initial thrust must sag, tangle and past the mid-text crisis somehow rekindle.

Equally matter of fact in the crime novel are the enquirer's innocence by default, the victim-criminal-enquirer triangle, and spatio-temporal causality. For crimes to be committed the enquirer must be above suspicion. But, if innocent by default, the moral imperative has to become acquainted with the criminal drive in order to explain the victim. Victim-criminal-enquirer do form a close relational triangle. If in it the man/woman of the law must accept to play the non-existent protagonist and the excluded party again by default, he/she will in the end act as the transferee for the crime. Ultimately, the enquirer's detection will consist in the reconstruction of the *there and then*. For time and space to move on and away from the rupture of normality, the enquiry must keep tight control of the textual spatio-temporal dimension, which is therefore clearly marked, accountable, linear.

And indeed, thanks to the good services of the crime novel, Ingravallo can partake of the Merulana affairs, reveal his own fictions of the deep, and even cast his Oedipal rival in the role of prime suspect, with no risk of incrimination for the colloquially, idiomatically phrased "suoi" delitti' (RR II 16). By the rule of the genre, in fact, he arrives innocent at the scene where the mother-Madonna has been murdered. Never before had Gadda dared to consign one of his mother figures on to a domestic floor of his *scrittura a caldo* — not in *Novella seconda* or in *La cognizione*, most notably, where the reluctance to focus on the body of the mother following the aggression, combined with the difficulty to de-criminate the highly suspect son and protagonist Gonzalo ('l'assassino nel pensiero') produce the finale's variants; nor in *Racconto*, whose textual delinquency is triggered by an 'Assassinio di Maria de la Garde' which is then not consummated. So, as never before, Gadda must now trust the genre — especially the linearity of its time and space —, and make of date-place markers the cause-effect grid that allows the Inspector to move on and away from a crime to which, on the other hand, a compressed spatio-temporality constantly points.

To put it differently, now that the crime novel has taken care of and assumed responsibility for Gadda's deeper and longer established narrative needs, now that a body lies behind and not in front of us as in *La cognizione* and the protagonist rests assured of at least his formal innocence, the text must and can speak of nothing but Liliana's murder through the triumphing corporeality of fascist Rome. The constituent materials of such textuality — the matricidal tension, the oedipal triangle, the link between environment and crime and, more important, between environment and victim — and their one cause — narcissism, of the mother, of the rival, of the environment; the corporeal thrust taking both individuals and the nation through life, love, death in one's own image — do construct a unitary fictional world, a Kantian narrative, which, for all its neo-Leibnizian folds, delivers the moral infinity, or infernal eternity, of a cohesive corporeality, with one remaining narcissism to bring to justice: the avenger's, Ingravallo's double.

In *Quer pasticciaccio*, it has been observed, everything comes in pairs, like hands, eyes, feet, which are redundantly, obsessively marked as forming twos. Liliana and the Oedipal rival represent one such perfect match and need no mirroring device. The two Merulana crimes, instead, literally face each other, advertise their specularity by means of their respective positions across the dividing landing. Even portions of the text can mirror each other. In chapter eight, for instance, the enquiry moves to the Alban Hills area to the south-east of Rome, where the semi-rural setting uncovers the Eternal City's narcissistic rule not by means of its relative position or direct resemblance, but via toponymical and descriptive signposting. Although, in fact, there are indeed such places as Divino Amore and Pavona, Due Santi and Casal Bruciato in the Albano Laziale area, the resumed *Pasticciaccio* (chapters eight-ten) is well and truly past spatial mimesis, as is proved also by the fewer dialogue exchanges and the decreased dialectal interference in the narrative parts. If anything, the highly toponymical new setting in sight of the finale projects the moral of Liliana's story on to an unfamiliar and defamiliarising landscape, which, given the late stage in the narration, never acquires a referential import of its own and yet displays nothing but systemic narcissism, thus emphasising the symbolic significance of the original tale. Or rather, from the depths of time and matter a coherent geo-historical causal chain has surfaced as

corporeality's one and only *fabula* ('Ma la Storia è una sola!'), and now the countryside governs the narrative unfolding of the last chapters from its own epicentre, Zamira's sulphurous business at the Due Santi cross-roads on the via Appia.

If we retrace the closing developments on the novel's map of the area, we will realise in effect that the two teams of investigators follow a single route, the precipitous descent from the castellated town of the law, Marino, to the junction where the text has erected its monument to the exhaustion (and renewal) of the Oedipal strife. Significantly, the unbrotherly Due Santi of the imaginary tabernacle are Madonnaless and yet still bound to the fiction of the *sacra famiglia*; they are also for ever walking in the direction of Rome, where, on the model of the City's foundational myth, their contest would be re-enacted as a new edition of the Merulana crimes. Against our first impression, then, the cross-roads on the Appia forms a moral *ipson*, not a point of stellar dispersal, a fact that is further confirmed by both the presence of a Manzonian intertext, the tabernacle of chapter one of *I promessi sposi* and the episode's function as the gateway to the *dénouement* or *degnommeramento*, as Ingravallo might have said.

From the Due Santi Pestalozzi proceeds in fact in the direction of Casal Bruciato. The stolen jewels of the first crime are found, and with them the principle of the organisation of matter. God's own narcissism (or preference for crystals) is indeed what caused the mineral value-system of life to be reduced to either 'rarità' ('muto splendore che è connaturato all'autonomia di certi esseri') or 'non-valore' ('d'un culo di bicchiere'): the bipolarity of matter — its evil 'serpere' or righteous 'poligonare' — began with the injustice of Creation by an unfair Law-giver (RR II 231-32). The earlier, debased etymological connection between God and the Menegazzi burglary ('da Menegaccio a Ménego e a Ménico, a Domenico, Dominicus, al "possessivo di cui era tutto"', RR II 51) is finally clarified. And so is the link between Liliana's and God's gems and rejects (or 'figli, bianchi o neri', RR II 105); the latter obviously count the bituminous inspector in their midst.

There is indeed a safe haven on the novel's map where perhaps even Ingravallo could find some existential shelter. Yet the location (a real church) and the icon (a real mosaic) can only be described *in absentia*, as the direction of the enquiries prevents the investigators from reaching the Madonna del Divino Amore by Castel di Leva, a mere eight kilometres away from the Appia or five and a half from the bridge over the Velletri railway line, as the text meticulously and correctly calculates. A significant chronological distance instead separates the icon's description from its most direct intertext, *La Madonna dei Filosofi* at the other end of Gadda's career. With no chance, then, of re-admission to the pre-Oedipal precincts of the Madonna and Child, Ingravallo goes through the Due Santi gateway and takes the road for Tor di Gheppio. There he tries to charge Tina with Liliana's murder. The ensuing *grugno a grugno* brings the woman's furious *occhi del Lazio* to the foreground of the inspector's field of vision. The narration stops as a result. In an interview with Maraini Gadda declared the novel to be concluded: 'Il poliziotto capisce chi è l'assassino e questo basta'.

Obviously, despite the extraordinary dramatic quality of the writing in the closing page, an inspector struck as if by lightning and yet unwilling to share his moment of understanding with the few surviving readers, does not come across as sufficiently cathartic. Besides, where in the text is the *bagliore folgorante* that should turn Ingravallo into a caravaggesque St Paul? However, before arguing with De Benedictis that the narration stops because it has nearly met the *enigma della femminilità*, we should perhaps consider that the climax in Tor di Gheppio was supposed to be but a interrogation on the Inspector's way to Virginia, at the Pavona, the toponym that gives away our criminal. Indeed, even too much catharsis would have been triggered by that second and last *grugno a grugno*, to judge from the *trattamento cinematografico* Gadda wrote between instalments and volume.

Published posthumously in 1983 but not at all a fragment unlike other materials in this category, the much-neglected-by-critics *Palazzo degli ori* — *Pasticciaccio* n. 1b as I called it elsewhere — never fails to disappoint the enthusiastic reader of Gadda. With quite some *contrappasso*, the frustration comes, this time, not from any excesses but from the filmic and textual poorness of the work. Visualise a Carolina Invernizio for the screen, structured on sudden close-ups and emotive fade-outs (or *lampi*), and you have the film Gadda was envisaging. Now if a lack of talent for the screen may be admissible, the

uncharacteristic absence of all stylistic exuberance, instead, appears to be not in a Gadda context, judging at least from the critical non-reception of the material, which thus far has not been admitted to any post-philological *variantistica*. Yet, financial considerations aside, why should Gadda persevere to write his film, when he would not do so for the best of his projects? *Pasticciaccio* n. 1b is, in fact, a finished work in more ways than one, for as well as reaching the elusive word *Finis*, it delivers the finale the narrative *Pasticciaccio* merely prepares.

In *Il palazzo degli ori* Gadda appears to be ready to exchange textual complexity for visual popularity, the old medium for the new one. Yet, in doing so, he not only confirms his interest in more popular forms of expression — the case made by those trying to bridge, to the advantage of paraliterature, the *breve abisso* discussed earlier —, but also allows his *immagini ossedenti* to be organised by a medium which he realises can be employed to reel out frame after frame of subconscious material, like a motion mirror, like a film placed in front of one's psyche. In the search for evidence supporting this reading, we need to look no further than the 1927 short story *Cinema*, where, despite the protective cover of literature, Gadda does not manage to conceal his disquiet at the subliminal performances the film theatre — 'la diabolica sala' (RR I 67) — attracts one to. The *trattamento* begins to look like no mistake, then, and may have some use in the study not only of the novel's variants but also of Gadda's master-frames.

One such frame is the murderess's arrest in the finale of the *trattamento*. *Pasticciaccio* n. 2 refrains from writing the scene, but *remembers* it only too well in the dramatic close-up that arrests the narration as well as the inspector. Arguably, in fact, Ingravallo stops dead in his charge against Tina, the wrong suspect, because this has triggered an intertextual reflection (indeed a *lampo*) with *Pasticciaccio* n. 1b, where 'il furore dell'ossesso' was produced by Virginia, Liliana's killer. Through Tina, that is, Ingravallo bypasses the *enigma della femminilità* of the official closure and recovers the film's original identification of audience and culprit: 'per carrellata surreale, il viso durissimo di Ingravallo si accosta e si dilata a primo piano, ossedente immagine del giustiziere'. Undoubtedly, the obscure forces of cinematic projection have caused a writer with almost too many languages at his disposal to regress to the expressionist child. Yet, through regression, the text re-enacts the one and only closure that satisfies the sum total of its signs.

In approaching popular art forms Gadda does not appear, then, to have tried to alleviate his causal grief, the realisation that the old crime can have no new causes. Nor is the cinema experiment really about channelling an overflow of narrative energy so that there may be a tighter structure and a working catharsis when the novel's progress resumes. The structure that could be tight and the catharsis that could be delivered in a narrative context, have in fact already been exhausted in the *scrittura a caldo* of *Pasticciaccio* n. 1. There, in the tense rounds of interrogations that follow the murder, Ingravallo has become re-acquainted with the old causes of much of his maker's writing — significantly, it has taken the prime suspect, the inspector's Oedipal rival, to make the man of the law realise that in life Liliana was not driven by the moral imperative, and why in death her body did not look like a *Pietà*.

That the one crime novel Gadda wrote should also be his last large-scale story was perhaps the inevitable outcome of a life-long resistance to the genre and the film that governed his psyche. Not by chance, then, this one parabola establishes and exhausts the possibility of serialisation, the only form of infinity the classic monocausal thriller could ever aspire to. An endless audience state on to which just one motion picture is projected is in fact what Gadda builds into his crime novel — a serialisation from within, and not towards new enquiries. This would explain why, despite being courted by the media, Gadda never resuscitated the cognition-stricken Ingravallo for a sequel of his mysteries of Rome.

Un lettore di Kant non può credere in una realtà obbiettivata, isolata, sospesa nel vuoto; ma della realtà, o piuttosto del fenomeno, ha il senso come di una parvenza caleidoscopica dietro cui si nasconde un *quid* più vero, più sottilmente operante, come dietro il quadrante dell'orologio si nasconde il suo segreto macchinismo. (SGF I 630)

