Antonio Tabucchi and the Journey of Self-Discovery: A Jungian Reading

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Abstract: The article centers on two novels by Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi—*Requiem: A hallucination* and *For Isabel: A mandala.* It analyzes the polysemic elements that constitute the symbolic construction of both works, supported by the main tenets of Jungian psychology and in particular the notions of *coniunctio oppositorum*, individuation, and journey of self-discovery. The investigation explores the relationship of Tabucchi's narrative with works by Ferdinando Pessoa and Herman Hesse. Homologies between the author's view of the self, cognition, human reality, and the formal structure of the novels are examined through the Bakhtinian notion of dialogical narrative and through his metaliterary and self-reflexive mode of writing.

Keywords: Tabucchi, Jung, animus, anima, *coniunctio oppositorum*, shadow, archetype, individuation, dreams, ghosts, journey, Buddhism, mandala, self-discovery, Pessoa, Hesse, Dante, Bakhtin, dialogical and metaliterary novel, gender, agon, truth, cognition, modern hero.

Introduction: Psychological Subtext, Material Culture, and Intertextuality in Requiem

The objective of this article is to examine two novels by the Italian writer Antonio Tabucchi, *Requiem: A hallucination* and *For Isabel: A mandala,* through the critical perspective of Jungian psychology.

From the first pages of *Requiem* (1994) the reader is transported in a dream-like narration that recounts the story of a compulsive-obsessive search by a narrator, presented as "one of those bourgeois intellectuals full of prejudices" (p. 12), for his friend Tadeus and for Isabel, a woman who supposedly had a love affair with both. The narrator expresses a sense of loss and bewilderment ("my problem is that I don't know why I'm here, it is as if it were all a hallucination" [p. 14]), as he wanders through the streets of Lisbon. The story is developed through an ambivalent version of events, suspended between the identification of elements of the unconscious and a naturalistic representation of daily experiences. On the one hand, the novel is constructed through constant referents to Portuguese material culture (food, wine) and behavioral traits that project an overview of

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social identities.[1] On the other, dialogues with characters whom the narrative voice recounts as being deceased, mingled with repeated metaliterary allusions, shift the narration towards the exploration of the menacing anxieties experienced by the ego and a process of individuation involving symbols and images of the unconscious.

The hallucinatory and dream elements, fused with the search for the two characters, a male and a female, warrant an investigation of the psychological subtext of the novel and, in particular, the desire of a *coniunctio oppositorum*, a union, a relation of complementarity that relates to the Jungian principles of animus and anima. Indeed, the oneiric narration performs the function of reintegrating fragments of the vast totality that form the conscious and unconscious life of the self. The possibility of the Jungian interpretative grid arises from the first page of the novel through the ambiguous and polysemous adoption of two terms, "shadow" and "ghosts." The first, although employed in a denotative sense, a figure cast on a surface by being exposed to light ("I glimpsed the silhouette of my shadow and that seemed absurd … incongruous, senseless; it was a brief shadow, crushed by the midday sun" [p. 11]), is linked to analytical psychology, as the dark side of the psyche, the aversion towards specific traits that make up its structure. This interconnection is in part validated by the unusual adjectives that modify the term. "Everyone carries a shadow," wrote Jung (1958), "and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is" (p. 76). On the one hand, Jung connects the second term, ghosts ("He said twelve o'clock, but perhaps he meant twelve o'clock at night, because that's when ghosts appear" [p. 11]), to dreams, fantasies, and neurotic manifestations of the psyche and, on the other, to the incorporeal and the spiritual. He wrote: "The universal belief in spirits is a direct expression of the complex structure of the unconscious **….** For the primitive, the phenomenon of spirits is direct evidence for the reality of a spiritual world. If we inquire what these spirit-phenomena mean to him, and in what they consist, we find that the most frequent phenomenon is the seeing of apparitions, or ghosts" (Jung, 1960, p. 101, p. 303).

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[1] *Requiem* was originally written in Portuguese in 1991 and translated into Italian the following year. Tabucchi defines it a "Portuguese adventure" (1994, p. 15) and in a note to the novel writes: "a story like this could only be written in Portuguese; it's as simple as that" (p. 5). Indeed, Portugal, its land, people, and culture represents a central narrative space in Tabucchi's work. He is the Italian author for whom upon his death the title of the necrology of a national Italian paper read, "L'italiano che sognava in portoghese e si specchiò in Pessoa" [The Italian who dreamt in Portuguese and mirrored himself in Pessoa] in G. Ferroni (2012), p. 31. He found his love in Portugal (he married Maria José de Lancastre), lived there, and died there. Tabucchi taught Portuguese literature at the University of Siena. As a sign of affection towards that country, a section of his travel notes is entitled "Oh Portogallo" (in *Viaggi e altri viaggi*, 2013, [Journeys and other journeys], p. 161). He guides the reader through the neighborhoods of Lisbon, cafes frequented by poet António Ribeiro Chiado and by Fernando Pessoa in particular, the author whose works represent a powerful impact on his narrative. He travelled extensively through Portugal, from Évora to Alter do Chão, to the Azores and particularly Ilha do Faial that inspired the novel *The woman of Porto Pim* (1991; first Italian edition, 1983). When he visits India, Portugal is a constant presence. Portuguese Goa is not only present in his travel memories, with reminiscence of Alfonso de Albuquerque, the viceroy of India from 1509 to 1515 who founded that colony (*Viaggi e altri viaggi*, p. 126), but also in the novel *Indian nocturne* (first Italian edition, 1984), in which the geographical space is connected to Pessoa's poetry. One of his most celebrated novels (turned into a film), *Pereira declares: A testimony* (1995; first Italian edition, 1994), is set in Portugal under the regime of Salazar, depicting the oppression and the struggle for freedom. *The last three days of Fernando Pessoa: A delirium* (1999; first Italian edition, 1994), deals with the poet who on his deathbed deliriously converses with his heteronyms, Álvaro de Campos, Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Bernardo Soares, and António Mora—the different alter egos that he had constructed and used for most of his publications, each with a fictitious biography, style, and worldview. *All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are mine*.

Tabucchi's conflation of dream and modes of the modern quest narrative, with its obstacles and challenges, substantiates the Jungian reading. The hallucinatory-oneiric structure of the narration expresses the pursuit of the integration of the conscious and the unconscious, the masculine and the feminine, together with the attempts of the ego to grapple with its shadows. It is useful to recall that for Jung literary works express obsessions and neuroses that can be traced back to complexes that form the core of psychic life. In many respects, they perform the same function of myths, primitive tales, imagery, and religious iconography. They convey the need to integrate the ego and self as a way to pursue a wholeness, a totality that encompasses the entire psyche and establishes a liberating and meaningful unity. He wrote: "Myths go back to the primitive storyteller and his dreams, to men moved by the stirring of their fantasies. These people were not very different from those whom later generations have called poets and philosophers" (Jung, 1972, p. 78; see also Jung, 1971, pp. 84−105). However, the Jungian elements are not adopted as direct and uncomplicated replications-simulations transferred to the genre of fiction. As will be illustrated, they undergo continuous contaminations and fusions with literary works and other broader cultural referents.

In the opening chapter, the narrator's first encounters with others arise at a metaliterary level. The dialogues with the ghosts allude to a character of Pessoa's *The book of disquiet*, precisely one with the disabilities, described as the "crippled seller of lottery tickets who would pester me in vain" (Pessoa, 2002, p. 481). He reads to the narrator passages from a journal, significantly called *Esprit*, the soul, a belief viewed as once more fashionable after years of oblivion. He asks if he shares that belief in a "vital, collective sense, perhaps even in a Spinozist sense" (p.16). The answer is that it may be either his soul that brought him to this specific location (geographic space) or his unconscious. But the "Lame Lottery-Ticket Seller" retorts: "the Unconscious is found in the Viennese bourgeoisie at the turn of the century, we're in Portugal here … we have nothing to do with Central Europe, no *we* have soul." And the narrator replies: "That's true … I do have a soul, you're right, but I have the Unconscious too … the Unconscious is something you catch, it is like a disease, I just happened to catch the virus of the Unconscious" (p. 16).

The encounter with Tadeus Waclaw Slowacki (a writer friend of Polish descent, imprisoned under the Salazar regime and freed because of foreign pressure in the mid-1960s [p. 29])[2], oscillates between a visit to the cemetery where he is buried and dream-like events of the home where they spent time together.[3] In fact, the scene is enwrapped in darkness that causes disorientation and makes him "stumble" over objects scattered here and there, among which a statue of a friar from Calda da Rainha with a "huge penis" (p. 31).

Tadeus is a projection of the image of the animus, the masculine component of the Jungian archetypal structure of the psyche, conceived as the connection of the ego to the

[2] The last name recalls the romantic Polish poet Juliusz Slowacki, 1809−1849, who died in exile and was buried in Paris at the Montmartre Cemetery.

[3] The relevance of dreams in Tabucchi's narrative is demonstrated by a volume of short stories, *Dreams of dreams* (1999; first Italian edition, 1992), which recount dreams of historical figures, mainly artists he admired, such as Ovid, Rabelais, Caravaggio, Leopardi, Chekhov, and the ever-present Pessoa. The epigraph reads: "Under the almond tree of your woman / when the first August moon rises behind the house, / you'll be able to dream, / if the gods are smiling, the dreams of another—Ancient Chinese song." This same volume includes *The last three days of Fernando Pessoa: A delirium*.

unconscious. Significantly, in the midst of a conversation on the existence of the soul, Tadeus tells the narrator that he is writing a "dark" and "somewhat gloomy" love story of a bishop and a nun, figures of religiosity and spirituality. Here, too, the presence of masculine-feminine is indicative of Jungian allusions of our psychological-spiritual needs. Indeed, the discussion between the two characters on the Super-Ego reinforces this association ("it just reached its expiry date, like milk in a carton" [p. 32]), together with the only direct reference to Jung in the entire novel. The narrator explains: "the imagination should be handled with care, even the collective imagination, someone should have told Herr Jung that food always comes before the imagination" (p. 39). Tabucchi adopts Jungian principles, integrated in a material culture that encompasses the dimension of the body, including sexuality (Isabel's love story just mentioned) and sustenance.[4] For the latter, the references to food and drinks of Portuguese culture are copious and in this particular chapter are emphasized by the list of all ingredients necessary for a perfect dish of the popular *sarrabulho* (p. 38), together with a good glass of Reguengos de Monsaraz. In other words, in this journey of individuation and realization of one's identity, Tabucchi expresses the view that the material culture represents a dimension marginalized by analytical psychology even though, as Tadeus points out to the narrator, he is a "materialist" but not a "dialectical materialist," an orientation that "distinguishes" him from "the Marxists." Furthermore, it is significant that the communication of some elements of the material culture are entrusted to the character of Senhor Casimiro's Wife (also referred to as Casimira, as if her name was of no importance, [pp. 32−39]), a figure of ordinary, common folks, who slaves in the kitchen of their restaurant, and displays, in her subordinate role, the gender inequalities of Portuguese society. (Gender issues and general social perspectives on Portugal are explored further on). It is fitting at this point to provide additional insights into the figure of Isabel from the viewpoint of analytical psychology and specifically as a symbol of the anima.

The Reparation of the Psyche and the Reconjunction of Opposites

The narrator exhibits an acute obsession for Isabel and is seeking a reconciliation both with her and with Tadeus. Indeed, the Jungian notions of compensation and *coniunctio* are employed as expressions of the activity of the psyche to reconnect the poles of animus and anima as a way to overcome neurotic anxieties and experience a balanced and peaceful relationship with oneself and the world. "I want to live in peace, I want you to rest in peace too, I want peace for all of us, Tadeus," explains the narrator, "that's why I'm here, but I'm here too because of another idea that obsesses me, because of Isabel" (p. 36). The urgency to overcome an existential malaise is further demonstrated by the reference to amineptine (p. 42), a tricyclic antidepressant that provides a sense of well-being but at the same time causes drowsiness. "All those drugs for the soul are junk," Tadeus insists, "you heal the

[4] Tabucchi seems to allude here to Jung's emphasis on the spiritual and inner world, relegating the corporeal to a marginal role. However, even though the analysis of the psyche and of the spiritual needs of the modern age is at the core of Jung's entire work, he never neglected the importance of the body. Indeed, in a 1933 essay that presents an overview of his principles, "The basic postulates of analytical psychology" (1985a), he wrote: "we must admit that as to cause, purpose and meaning, the human psyche—however we approach it—is first and foremost a close reflection of everything we call corporeal, empirical and mundane. And finally, in the face of all these admissions, we must ask ourselves if the psyche is not after all a secondary manifestation—an epiphenomenon—and completely dependent upon the body" (p. 182).

soul through the stomach" (p.42). The reparation of the psyche starts from the reconjunction of the opposites, here exemplified by the opposition male-female, soul-body, spiritual-corporal. The narrator is anxious to reencounter Isabel as a ghost ("how can I find Isabel again?" [p. 40]), knowing that she had an abortion and subsequently committed suicide ("She wasn't happy … she got depressed, and it was because of the depression that she committed suicide" (p. 41). Here the story reveals an ambiguity with reference to the child's father, since he may be Tadeus or the narrator himself (p. 41). After wondering through different areas of Portugal, he rushes back to Lisbon where he thinks that he will find Isabel at the Casa do Alentejo. Indeed, the maître d'hôtel announces that Madame Isabel is waiting for him in another room (p. 89). The encounter, however, is never described, and apart from a reference to a pousada called Santa Isabel (p. 97), a significant association of sainthood with spirituality, she never reappears in the closing chapters of the novel.

Isabel's suicide symbolizes the impediment towards a total reunification of opposites. The concealment of the conversation with Isabel's ghost from the narration indicates that which is inexpressible, inaccessible, or unattainable. Indeed, this perspective is in line with Jung's (1968) notion that the self, as the "whole circumference which embraces both the conscious and the unconscious," as "the centre of [a]totality" (p. 41) can be equated to an Imago Dei, a God-Image of a transcendental nature that exists outside the confines of human cognition. In other words, the totality of the psyche transcends consciousness. In addition, in as much as the psyche is formed by a reservoir of archetypal images, it is inexhaustible and limitless. Neither analysis, within the realm of psychology, nor writing, within the realm of literature, can reduce its infinitude and multiplicity to a single image or to a singular manifestation of an intelligible meaning. Both Tabucchi and Jung are confronted by the search for a self that is situated within the boundless and infinite apeiron of being.

As a result, the novel casts the vision of the inexhaustible and of the limitless on the perception of reality and on the mechanisms that are at the base of literary writing itself. The taxi driver who is disoriented in navigating the streets of Lisbon and the anxiety that ensues (pp. 19−21) connote the unknown, the multitude of possible directions of human reality, together with the cognitive limits imposed by boundless possibilities. This leitmotif of the novel manifests itself in situations of opaqueness and visual difficulties (the Cemetery Keeper whose sight is "blurred," pp. 26−27), events dictated by chance and randomness, impossible to control or predict, fortuitous encounters with the unexpected, the infinity of the future, and the resulting angst for not knowing one's fate. Particularly revealing is the episode of the Old Gypsy Woman who reads the narrator's hand and sees that his life is similar to that of a "sleepwalker," floating as if in a dream, without a full grasp of reality's occurrences. "I can feel myself dissolving into air at the touch of your hand, as if I was becoming part of your dream too," she exclaims (p. 25). The unpredictability of the future, firmly linked to the notion of the limitless, reemerges in the episode of the narrator's Father as a Young Man (appearing in the past in contrast to the narrator who is in the present), eager to know his future. "I'm here because I want to know something, I want to know how my life will end," he insists, begging an answer from his son (p. 49).

Self, Writing, and Agon

The problematics of the psyche and its inner and external relationships are incessantly refracted on the process of writing itself and on the narrator's anxiety of influence (to use Bloom's [1997] expression) that drives him to confront literary figures towards whom he feels indebted. Portuguese referents centered on the figure of Pessoa but, as will be noted, on others as well, dominate this metaliterary dimension.

The impossibility to ground the psyche, and consequently subjectivity, on a solid and one-dimensional structure, unscathed by the lacerations of opposites, is mirrored, as a homological equivalent, by a view of writing as elusive and indefinable in its memorial echoes, reverberations, (un)conscious citationality. The obsessive desire to enter into a dialogue with the ghost of Pessoa may indicate a condition of agon, an I-other struggle in the attempt to free writing and identity from the effect-authority-control of the father. In literary terms, Bloom (1997; original publication 1973) defined this sort of Oedipal relationship as askesis, a process of "self-purification" intended to affirm one's literary autonomy and identity (p. 15, pp. 115−136). The Portuguese writer is referred to by name (p. 13), through his semi-heteronym, Bernardo Soares (p.14), or he is either called The Guest or The Seller of Stories.[5] In addition, biographical details and literary considerations regarding Pessoa abound: the loss of his father at a young age, his mother's second marriage, his fluency in English for having lived in South Africa, the time period during which he lived, references to his styles and allusions to him as a precursor of postmodern postures, remarks about his disquietude and more (pp. 91−107). Pessoa's writing is recalled in its multiplicity of genres ("all kinds of stories, tragic, comic, dramatic, jolly, superficial, profound" [p. 92] or portraying a "reality … completely fragmented" [p. 93], "postmodern" like the restaurant in which they decide to dine [p. 94]). Particularly revealing is the connection between writing and restaurant dishes: "sea bass trágico-marítimo" [tragic-maritime], "cod escárnio e mal-dizer" [literally: derisive and slanderous cod], "sole *interseccionista*" (p. 102) with the reference to the avant-garde movement of Interssecionismo, much influenced by futurism and conceived by Pessoa in 1915, that advocated intersections and simultaneous occurrences of internality and externality, visual and auditory components, real and oneiric images. The latter dyad corresponds fully to Tabucchi's practices and is firmly applied in the novel.

The conversation is marked by tension, disagreements, and conflictual views on literary topics, such as historical avant-gardes and futurism ("Is that why you wanted to see me? … in order to insult me?" [p. 98]; "You're a liar … an utter liar," the narrator antagonizes Pessoa [p. 104]). And when he asks, "Did my company displease you?" the narrator replies, "No … it was very important, but it troubled me" (p. 99); and to the question "are you pleased with the day you've had?" the answer is "I don't quite know how to put it … I feel quieter, lighter" (p. 104). These snippets of conversation reveal both the presence of agon and the possible liberating effects from the phantasm of the father, a liberating lightness that may perhaps relieve an emotional weight eager to ascertain autonomy and self-recognition. It is intriguing that a chapter unrelated to the encounter

[5] The term heteronym is Pessoa's invention. He created fictitious authors such as Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos, and Alberto Caeiro, who had their own personal histories and identities. Bernardo Soares was identified as a semi-heteronym, another side of his personality whose name appears as the author of *The book of disquiet* (2002).

with Pessoa is centered on art and the imitation of masters. A copyist at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon is reproducing and amplifying selected details of the triptych by Hieronymus Bosch *The temptations of Saint Anthon* (pp. 60−67). Bosch creates oneiric and hallucinatory images that Tabucchi's novel may recall. However, the contextualization within a practice of reproduction devoid of "inspiration" (p. 63) and performed for monetary objectives suggests an anxiety of influence for Tabucchi's own writing ("without inspiration painting is nothing," the narrator comments, "the same with the other arts" [p. 63]).

These metaliterary and self-reflexive musings are intricately linked to problematics that are devoid of definitive and unitary perspectives and solutions. The undetermined and the uncertain are essential versions of poetics and worldviews both for Pessoa and Tabucchi. Indeed, crucial elements of the dialogue between the narrator and the Portuguese writer center around the irreducible multitude and coexistence of features that inform both the ego and the forms of writing—the plurality of styles as already observed and the use of heteronyms that project different expressions of the self. The ghost of Pessoa affirms: "my ego has a very special centre, indeed if you wanted me to tell you where that centre is I couldn't … don't abandon me to all these people who are so certain about everything, they are dreadful … personally I don't trust literature that soothes people's consciences" (p. 99), and the narrator agrees. "I'm a failed writer, that's my story" (p. 92) he adds (here referred to as the Seller of Stories), a disquiet that underscores insecurities related to the realm of writing that are transferred from Pessoa to Tabucchi.

In synthesis, the fragile and provisional nature of identity coincides with the instability of linguistic-literary forms. Because the self is destined to be inaccessible in its totality and constituted by the absence of a reconciliation of the feminine and the masculine, writing is governed, in Pessoa as in Tabucchi, by what Bakhtin (1984) defines as a dialogical and polyphonic construction of the text that involves its psychological, formal, and ideological fabric, a heteroglossia that can encompass a plurality of languages, genres, and cultural worlds.[6] In this sense, Tabucchi's narrative expresses an aversion towards any practice of monologism and thus refuses to pursue unity through any form of bonding agents. It embraces epistemological, ontological, and existential uncertainties that express the impossibility of unequivocal meanings. On the narrative-formal structure, this posture parallels spatial and temporal discontinuities, contaminations and overlapping of genres, together with polyphonic literary memories. The lighthouse, where the narrator sojourned while producing a story, is crumbling (p. 74), and he recalls it "swathed in mist" (p. 76) that, juxtaposed to the act of writing, casts a veil that hampers any possibility of transparency. Indeed, the lighthouse, whose different color lights were used as a "luminous alphabet" for communicating with ghosts (pp. 79−80), does not emit sufficient lighting,

[6] In his study on Dostoevsky (original publication in Russian, 1929; revised in 1963; first English edition, 1973), Bakhtin (1984) distinguished between a "monological" and a "dialogical," "polyphonic" novel. The latter is differentiated by its "multi-leveledness and multi-voicedness." He wrote: "here we are dealing with an ultimate dialogicality, that is, a dialogicality of the ultimate whole … Dostoevsky's novel is dialogic. It is constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other; this interaction provides no support for the viewer who would objectify an entire event according to some ordinary monologic category (thematically, lyrically or cognitively)—and this consequently makes the viewer also a participant" (pp. 20, 18).

and things remain enveloped in an inevitable opaqueness. The narrator comes to this conclusion: "I was writing and wondering why I was writing, the story I was working on was a strange story, a story without a solution" (p. 76). Furthermore, comedic or slightly parodic elements clash against the melancholic tendency of the narration or the restlessness engendered by a tragic version of reality. On the one hand, they express the pain of the psyche, together with the fluidity and variability of the human subject and, on the other, a formal transgression of consolidated and unidirectional canons of traditional genres.[7]

Social Culture, Gender, and Quest Narrative

The Jungian reading of the archetypal figures of animus and anima, as central agencies of the psyche in its search for totality, can be expanded by shifting the attention from the psychological ambit to that of the material culture. The novel warrants an investigation of gender in relation to identity, social attitudes, and cultural practices. To start with, what is the treatment of women's social roles? Is there a subversion of dominant cultural models? As has been observed, the symbolic-archetypal level of the novel constantly merges with the dimension of Portuguese culture, social conditions, and issues of collective values and identities. It is significant that Isabel's suicide is caused by a state of depression following her abortion. This, combined with the issue of an uncertain father and, arguably, with a condition of abandonment, points to a social milieu that drives women to despair and powerlessness (pp. 40−41). Women's gender roles and self-image are portrayed through a critical eye. The novel exposes the marginalization of women within the Portuguese society of the times, their relegation to domestic roles, or in a couple of episodes their victimization through prostitution. As already remarked, the life of Senhor Casimiro's Wife revolves around her work in the restaurant kitchen making perfect *sarrabulho*. The figures of other women share a similar destiny. The lighthouse keeper, Vitalina, "looked after the house and cooked" delicious dishes as the "*arroz de tamboril*" and had to endure a husband who got drunk every evening (pp. 74−75). At Isadora Inn, the owner is an old, retired prostitute and her maid, Viriata, a young, essentially illiterate lady from the Alentejo region. She recounts that in the past when she looked after her sheep, on Christmas eve male shepherds sang, but not the women—they were busy cooking in the kitchen (p. 47). The maid's gender role is further accentuated by the fact that she offers to lie down beside the narrator as he was resting. When he refuses, she proposes to do nothing else but "scratch" his back (p. 47). The condition of women does not seem to be viewed exclusively from the perspective of a gender determinant detached from wider social factors. Notably, the Barman of the Museum of Ancient Art considers Portugal a country inhabited by people who "don't know anything, they're ignorant … they don't travel enough" (p. 55). These observations are met by the narrator with a sense of irony (the main problem seems to be that they never order his cocktails but only lemonade and fruit juice [p. 56]), perhaps to expose unfounded

[7] As underscored, these practices cannot be disconnected from the epistemological uncertainties and ambiguities that inform Tabucchi's work. At the same time, the attenuation of the tragic through the adoption of comic and metanarrative elements contributes to foregrounding the strategies of writing and its fictitious dimension. In this sense, they assist in moving the reader away from emotionally introjecting the painful and mournful states described by the events. Or to be clearer: the reader is induced to experience an act of reading that constantly shifts between a reflection of the realities of life and the awareness that the story is also a literary construction. At the level of genre, Tabucchi makes use of the investigation and the search that typify detective fiction.

viewpoints based on nationality. In fact, the conversation with the maître d' of Casa do Alentejo, as a juxtaposition, centers on "class consciousness" and on the economic inequalities that dominate the world (p. 87).

The gender issue reemerges in relation to same-gender relationships. The last chapter begins with a male waiter introducing himself to the guests with the diminutive of a female name, Mariazinha. As he appears to be cheerful and smiling, Pessoa's ghost asks the narrator in English "*Can homosexuals be gay?*" The narrator retorts that António Botto, Pessoa's poet friend who, in the 1920s, provoked a scandal with texts that dealt openly with "homosexual" subjects, was cheerful. But Pessoa insists that Botto was not a merry individual and that "*he was an aesthete*," which is "*not the same thing at all*" (p. 97). Whether this remark alludes to a differentiation of the aesthetic realm from that of the everyday reality or denotes a difference of views generated by the evolution of epochal models (Pessoa's and the narrator's lived timeframes do not coincide) does not constitute the central issue. Unquestionably, gender inequities are approached through the lens of a social critique that cannot withstand any other possible perspective. But gender, from a psychological and inner dimension, espouses firmly a Jungian orientation demonstrated by the archetypal figures of animus-anima and by the reference to a sexuality that defies the boundaries of male-female. As a result, the gender motif relates to the overall epistemological and ontological orientation that informs the novel.

As mentioned, the structural feature of *Requiem* is based on that of the quest narrative which foregrounds an obstinate search and an unyielding pursuit of a goal. This is a genre that spans across literature from the *Odyssey* to the Bible, from Medieval Romance to Joyce and Tolkien. But the quest as an inner journey is fundamental in Jung's psychology as well. The need for completeness and wholeness is the psyche's ultimate quest. Dreams, symbols, and literature are its most central channels of expression. The novel includes elements that recall Dante's quest in the *Divine Comedy*. *Requiem* too is narrated through dialogues with spirits and guided by the objective of reaching truth, spiritual light, and totality of being. Here too, as in the medieval text, there are two major levels: the temporal dimension expressed by the historical conditions of Portugal and its society and the atemporal dimension that comprises spiritual and ontological questions, archetypal projections that pertain both to the individual and collective dimension. Furthermore, Tabucchi divides the novel into nine chapters, the number associated with key elements of the *Comedy*.

For Isabel: Self-Discovery, Wholeness of the Psyche and the Mandala

The sequel to *Requiem*, published posthumously (first Italian edition, 2013), is titled *For Isabel: A mandala*. It revolves around Tadeus's search for Isabel. As the subtitle indicates, the narrative structure centers on the configuration of the mandala, drawing particularly on the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, the novel is divided into nine chapters, each titled with the specific number of the circle that recalls the mandala's concentric circular geometry and its symbology (in Sanskrit the term means circle). Each circle represents the various stages in the pursuit of discovery: knowledge of reality, desire for truth, spiritual insight, and the realization of self-identity.

This novel too is considerably mediated by Jungian psychology. Jung, in fact, devoted extensive attention to the mandala's geometrical composition that gives form to an individual quest of self-discovery and wholeness of the psyche. It is the symbolic

expression of regaining a lost order and internal rebirth. Jung, with his seminal studies on Eastern religions, alchemy, and visual symbolism, identifies in the mandala the two most fundamental functions of the psyche, the process of individuation, as the journey towards the realization of one's own spirituality and identity, and that of integration, the final merging of the conscious with our unconscious inner centre. As one of his closest collaborators wrote, it expresses the "union of the personal, temporal world of the ego with the non-personal, timeless world of the non-ego" (Jaffé, 1964, p. 236). In its religious manifestations, particularly Buddhist, with its circles that turn into squares and vice versa, the mandala symbolically creates the image of a cosmic wholeness.[8] In Jung's (1963) words, "The mandala symbolizes, by its central point, the ultimate unity of all archetypes as well as of the multiplicity of the phenomenal world, and is therefore the empirical equivalent of the metaphysical concept of a *unus mundus*. The alchemical equivalent is the lapis and its synonyms, in particular the Microcosm" (p. 463).

For Jung (1968), the mandala's circular and quaternary structure provided a map of the self, the mental-spiritual state of "inner certainty" and "self-reliance" (p. 531), self-knowledge and reconciliation of opposites, and dualities for which he adopted the term "syzygy," from the Latin "*syzygia*," meaning conjunction, joining together. The geometric configuration of circles, squares, and triangles represents the journey of the self towards its center and the interconnectedness of all its components as in an alchemical union of the different. In his quest towards the center of being, Tadeus follows several paths in search of Isabel, here too a symbolic figure of the union with the feminine and of wholeness.

The protagonist receives clues from characters he meets along the way. As in any canonic quest narrative, their function is to aid the "hero" on his mission—assist him in achieving his object of desire, reunion with Isabel, the event that promises meaningfulness to his life—and to experience it as an undivided and complete being. A quest necessarily presents obstacles and antagonists. In this case, the disappearance of Isabel is wrapped in mystery and opacity that Tadeus is called to comprehend and to interpret. Portugal's fascist oppressive regime during the years of Salazar is the major antagonist. Isabel engages in anti-government activities that cause her vanishing and possibly her death.

The first interlocutor-helper is Isabel's girlfriend Mónica (circle 1) who offers Tadeus clues about her youth and her involvement in the political underground resistance. The second is the priest who supposedly celebrated her funeral (c. 2) but is unaware of the cemetery where she lies. Through a series of conversations that involve Isabel's nanny (c. 2), a bartender, Joaquin (c. 3), and Tecs (c. 3), a jazz singer who knew Isabel, he discovers that she may have committed suicide in the Caxia Prison for her activities against the regime (2017, c. 3, pp. 55−56). However, a death certificate is not recorded in the archives, and consequently Tadeus learns that "officially, she never died" (c. 3, p. 56). He gathers a

[8] Jung (1968) distinguished between ritual and individual mandalas. He adopted the latter as a key tool for his therapeutic practices in as much as they would open the door to the self and thus to the "totality of the psyche." He wrote: "The true mandala is always an inner image, which is gradually built up through (active) imagination at such times when psychic equilibrium is disturbed or when thought cannot be found and must be sought for." He observed that the self encompasses both the conscious and the unconscious. In a mandala, he wrote, the "totality is ego plus non-ego. Therefore the center of the circle which expresses such a totality would correspond not to the ego but to the self as a summation of total personality" (pp. 96, 106; section entitled "The symbolism of the mandalas"). For further reference to Jung's studies on the mandala, see Jung (1973).

lead on how to contact the prison guard, Uncle Tom, whose real name is Almedia (c. 4). Tadeus tells him, "I want to know everything," and the answer is "Everything is nothing." He persists: "if everything is nothing, then I want to know this everything that's nothing" (c. 4, pp. 61−62), "the truth is burning inside me … you mustn't fear truth" (p. 62). The guard reveals that Isabel was not pregnant (p. 63) and that in prison a girl named Magda was beaten during an interrogation and subsequently ingested pieces of a glass bottle that made her hospitalization necessary. The guard helps Isabel escape by pretending she is Magda's sister and accompanies her in the ambulance (p. 67). Mr. Tiago, a photographer, bribes the guard with money (p. 69). Ambiguity pervades this episode: Isabel adopted the name of Magda in her political activities (c. 5, p. 76).[9] Tadeus tells the photographer that life is unavoidably precarious and uncertain: "death is a curve in the road, to die is simply not to be seen" (p. 77). To the question "Then why?" Tadeus, alluding to the configuration of the mandala, answers "To make concentric circles … to finally reach the center" (p. 77).

Tadeus describes the mandala as a representation of the psyche and as a Buddhist ritual with reference to the material utilized for its making: "I'm working with colored dust … a yellow ring, a blue ring, like the Tibetan practice, and meanwhile, the circle is tightening toward the center, and I am trying to reach the center." To the question "To what end?" he replies: "to reach consciousness, you photograph reality: you must know what consciousness is" (pp. 77−78). The "dust" refers to the sand, usually obtained from crushed marble and colored with vegetable dyes employed by the Tibetan monks for their mandalas. Normally, after a short period, the sand of the mandala is collected into a pile and dispersed into flowing water to signify the impermanence of all life's expressions.

The photographer pulls out a picture of himself as a baby and asks "is this who I am? Is this who I was? Who I've been?" (p. 78). He adds "do photographs of a lifetime represent time divided among several people or one person divided into several different times?" (p. 79). The conversation merges art as representation of reality and view of the world:

> the photograph, like music, catches the instant we fail to catch, what we were, what we could have been, and there is no way you can counter this instant, because it is righter than we are—but right about what?—perhaps about how this river changes, as it flows and carries us along, and about the clock, about the time which controls us and which we try to control (p. 80).

Here Tabucchi absorbs the philosophical orientation of authors like Pessoa and Pirandello. There are no fixed and stable identities. They are masks and constructions that time inevitably rips off and dissolves, showing their emptiness, deception, and illusionary fabrication.[10] The reflection on the medium of art and on its intent to capture the essence

[9] In *Indian nocturne*, the characters of Magda and Isabel are marginal figures. However, their identities are already mixed up: "I realized that really that letter was for Magda, it was to her I'd written it, of course it was, even though I'd begun «Dear Isabel»" (1989, p. 24).

[10] Here are a few observations on selfhood and identity made by Pessoa (2002) in *The book of disquiet*—as mentioned, written under the name of the fictional author Bernardo Soares: "A horror at the prospect of having to live got up with me out of bed. Everything seemed hollow, and I had the chilling impression that there is no solution for whatever the problem may be" (p. 98); "Today I was struck by an absurd but valid sensation. I realized, in an inner flash, that I'm no one. Absolutely no one … I don't know how to feel, how to think, how to want. I am a character of an unwritten novel, wafting in the air, dispersed without ever having been, among the dreams of someone who didn't know how to complete me … I am the nothing around which

and permanence of being shifts from photography to writing. Tadeus remarks: "I began to write before I'd reflected on what writing truly was, and maybe if I'd understood from the start I would never have written a thing" (p. 79). Mr. Tiago pulls out a picture of Isabel and then goes through a series of shots he plans for an exhibit entitled "*Polaroid-Reality*" (p. 81). He decides to take a last photograph with Tadeus holding Isabel's picture, sitting with a "fake backdrop behind" (p. 81), similar to Isabel's with the backdrop of the sea (p. 82). When the Polaroid picture is pulled out, Tadeus does not appear in it. "Where are you?" Mr. Tiago asks, "it's like you don't exist" (p. 82). Tadeus explains that he is not showing because he comes from a place "very bright … so bright, sometimes the camera is blinded" (p. 82).[11] In the end Mr. Tiago reveals that Isabel left for Macao, for centuries a Portuguese settlement in China and a strategic route of the opium trade, that same day the picture was taken to meet a Catholic priest (p. 82). He then has no need to escort Tadeus out "you can easily find your way" (p. 82), he says, as if alluding to a degree of acquired autonomy on his part.

The configuration of the mandala recurs also in the garden that Tadeus visits in that region of China. The garden is enclosed by gates on all sides, guarded by a "gatekeeper" (c. 6, p. 83), just as mandalas show four gates in the squares that contain the circles. The gates are the entry points that lead to specific paths. The name of the gatekeeper in Chinese means "Light Shining Upon Water" (p. 84), which suggests, together with the already mentioned star, Sirius, the pursuit of enlightening the self by shedding light on the dark components of the psyche. Tadeus is looking for the path that leads to a cave. It is described as part of his "terrestrial journey," essential for coming to know his "destiny" (p. 86). For this undertaking, which takes place at nighttime, he is aided by the gatekeeper who provides him with a "flashlight" (p. 86). The symbolic connotations are various: the darkness of the psyche and of the unconscious, associated with the fear of the unknown, must be probed and brought to light. Indeed, the symbolic element of the descent into the cave represents a sort of catabasis necessary to delve deeply into his inner self, an obligatory passage for achieving a meaningful existence. Tadeus insists on the urgency of dispelling the darkness in other encounters as well: "I come from a place where splendor reigns, and I can't leave this whole area of my life in darkness" (pp. 102−103). At this stage of his quest, he must go through a "garden that stinks of piss" (p. 86), a reminder of the discomforting challenges that need to be overcome along the way.

The presence of two characters playing mahjong, a game of strategy but also dominated by chance and risk-taking, underscores the uncertainty of the journey. Tadeus observes that one of the players has a set of four "white dragons" and thinks he "could use" them "that night" (pp. 86−87). Their need highlights the difficulty of the mission. In

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everything spins" (p. 262); "Am I alive or do I just pretend to be? Am I asleep or awake?" (p. 468). Interestingly, this book on which Pessoa worked from 1913 to the year of his death in 1935, published posthumously in 1982, was translated into Italian by Tabucchi in collaboration with his wife, Maria José de Lancastre (1986). As for Pirandello, all of his characters, both in his theatrical works and in his novels, are faced by the constant crumbling of their individuality. Their attempts to construct fixed and permanent identities are inevitably dissolved. The flow of time turns them into empty masks, illusions that make apparent the void and the emptiness of their fabrications. It will suffice to recall a drama such as *Six characters in search of an author* (1921/2005) and his novel *One, no one, and one hundred thousand* (1926/2018).

[11] The text's consideration of the relationship between photography and reality does not disclose elements that would make apparent a clear connection with the Polaroid camera used by the Pop artist Andy Warhol for his portraits. In any case, it is a significant correlation.

Chinese culture, dragons are symbols of might and power, and the white ones specifically are connected to inner force and higher levels of human existence.[12] As if in an altered state of consciousness, Tadeus enters the cave and sees a bat that speaks with Magda's voice (p. 87).[13] It is Tadeus's inner feminine voice, the voice of the anima that needs to be heard. The bat, as a nocturnal creature, associated with darkness, symbolizes, in Jungian terms, the "shadow," what is obscured or concealed, the repressed, the dark side of the psyche with which he must come to terms before reaching the realization of selfhood. But the bat also signifies the capacity to navigate in darkness—the bats' most prominent ability through the use of the so-called echolocation. The reference to the Chinese custom of bringing caged songbirds to gardens (p. 85) is perhaps an allusion to the necessity of the psyche's unconscious animal-irrational component to "speak" and to liberate itself from the restrains (cages) imposed by the ego.

Through the bat, Magda communicates with Tadeus from Lisbon, and she wants him to believe that Isabel left her a note before she "committed suicide" by "swallowing two bottles of pills" (p. 89). Tadeus refuses to accept this version of the facts, and Magda in the end reveals the name of the Catholic priest who met Isabel in Macau. Prior to meeting the priest, Tadeus walks into a restaurant where an old Chinese waiter, making a "gesture, like some sort of exorcism," tells him that "his soul is in pain, full of spirits, must go to the forest, ask cleansing of forest genies" (p. 94). This process indicates openly an act of purification, often found in traditional quest narrative, that precedes the final stages of a hero's journey.[14]

Self, Time, Space, and Infinity

Beginning with the encounter with the priest, the relationship of the self with infinity is at the center of the narration—the cosmic realities of a boundless universe and the limitlessness of eternal time. The meaning and purpose of human existence cannot be defined without an attempt to comprehend infinite space and time. Tadeus's association with Sirius, the brightest star in the constellation of the Great Dog that emits a twinkling light, highlights the vision of space. This spatial perception reemerges when he compares himself to a pulsar, a cosmic object that appears to blink intermittently (p. 97). The intermittency of the light denotes two opposite phenomena, namely presence and absence, as if to connote its undependability and the uncertainty of the human condition, suspended between clarity and opaqueness, knowledge and ignorance. The gaze on the vastness of the universe, contrasted to the limited space of the earthly existence, our "little corner of the

[12] On a symbolic level, the dragon in Western cultures represents the enemy, the evil force that the hero (e.g., Perseus, Saint George) must defeat. As an archetypal figure in Jungian analysis, it can play this function as well. However, it acquires other symbolic meanings in relation to different contexts, among which the mother-image connected to the fear of incest or to the passage from matriarchy to patriarchy. Because of its strength, in China it became symbol of imperial power and thus a positive image. It is also associated with fertility, beneficial rain for crops, good fortune, and transformation. In the novel, the author selects specifically a "row of four white dragons" (p. 86), which, in the game of mahjong are opposed to red dragons representing the animal sphere, including the human, the green dragons representing the plant world, and the white ones representing spiritual heights. For this reason, Tadeus perceives them as creatures that he can use for descending into the darkness of the cave.

[13] *In Indian nocturne* Magda is already characterized by her voice, "Magda's shrill voice" (p. 23).

[14] For an in-depth overview of the traditional hero see Campbell (1968).

world" (p. 97), highlights further this conception. The views on the cosmic dimension resurface in the encounter with Lise, the astrophysicist whom Tadeus meets after various leads to find Isabel. She assumes the function of a "guide" (p. 116) in expanding Tadeus's cosmic awareness. "The universe has no boundaries," in the Milky Way alone there are "four hundred billion" stars, and "in the universe we know, there are hundreds of billions of galaxies," the astrophysicist explains (p. 117). The reaction to the infinite recalls both the Kantian sublime, an emotion of awe but also of anxiety and dread, and Leopardi's collapse of all rational coordinates when one faces the boundlessness of space.

Lise's human curiosity and desire for knowledge lead her to an observatory in Chile ("I needed to observe vast interstellar spaces, I was here on Earth, I was a minuscule dot that wanted to study the boundaries of the universe" [p. 121]), where she thinks she captured, on a radio telescope, mathematical messages from Andromeda that would prove the existence of intelligent beings in other parts of the universe (p. 124). She believes that the scientific community would consider her "crazy" if she disclosed these findings (p. 124). She decides to leave for India where an ancient text reveals to her the conception of a universe, without set and secure directions, in which "the cardinal points can be infinite or nonexistent, as in a circle" (p. 124). This notion forms a juxtaposition to Tadeus's search for the center of concentric circles. Lise's universe has no boundaries. Its unlimitedness and directionlessness imply the absence of a destination, of a privileged point from which spatial reality can be observed. Indeed, these spatial elements transcend the realm of science and cognition. They are equated to Lise's own emotional state of mind: "I too have lost my boundaries," she observes (p. 117). At the same time, her awareness turns into a sentiment of despair that recalls Leopardi's and the Romantics' worldview. For the loss of her disabled son, Lise cries: "we proud miserable beings who think of ourselves as normal … life is not just cruel, it's evil … I wanted to cut myself off from this miserable earthly crust where life is vicious" (pp. 120−121).

To the infinity of space corresponds the notion of infinite time. In the midst of the exchanges with Lise, the narrator observes: "There was an unusual silence in the room as though we are outside time" (p. 122). These conceptions recur in the dialogues with three other characters: the priest, the Ghost Who Walks, and the Mad Fiddler. The priest directs Tadeus to meet a poet, identified as "The Ghost Who Walks," who may hold information about Isabel. He maintains that both Tadeus and the poet exist in an atemporal dimension: "he [the poet], like you, is from outside time" (p. 104). When Tadeus meets the poet, to the question "Where are you from?" he replies: "I am from endless time … from the endless time that outstrips us both" (pp. 108−109). And in the final episode, the Mad Fiddler tells Tadeus: "The distant past … the near past, the present, the future, sorry, I really don't know tenses or time, it's all the same to me" (p. 134).[15]

Archetypal Figures and Literary Memory

The dimension of the timeless corresponds to the Jungian notion of the archetype. As an inherent structure of the human psyche, archetypes are universal images and motifs that

[15] A recurrent feature of Tabucchi's novels is that they do not portray a single, distinct time, a present detached from the past and vice versa or a future dissociated from the projections of the present. Time subjects consciousness and writing itself to the destiny of transiency, to an experience of ceaseless disintegration. However, these same ravaging effects that time produces open the self to new interactions with the world and new possibilities of creativity.

are beyond history and a specific timeframe. Archetypes are expressed not only by dreams but also by myths and literary works. Indeed, the correlation between time and archetype takes a metaliterary turn in Tabucchi's treatment of characters and figures that shape the novel. They are personal projections that can be attributed only in part to hidden expressions of the psyche. As literary archetypes, they are embedded in a reservoir of texts and of authors that form Tabucchi's conscious and unconscious memory of literature that constitutes his world. At the same time, they are not exclusively personal, inasmuch as they point to collective needs and desires that structure the human psyche.

The character of The Ghost Who Walks can be traced to Álvaro de Campos. The Ghost smokes opium ("took another pull of opium" [p. 110]) and speaks as if in a state of "delirium" (p. 112). The Ghost is clearly constructed on Pessoa's heteronym, the author of the poem "Opiário." Indeed, it is not a coincidence that the setting is Macau, an important Portuguese colonial possession involved in the opium trade. At the same time, the representation of the character as a ghost and a poet can be associated with Pessoa himself, with his interests in the occult, theosophy, and esoteric doctrines. The Ghost Who Walks, who possesses powers that transcend human consciousness and an ability to penetrate into the deeper realities of the psyche, embodies the archetypal figure of the human spirit that yearns to transcend phenomenal reality. His pronouncement "I do not know anything, about anything, not the past, not the future, my poetry concerns the eternally inherent" is a clear-cut indication of the timeless search for the unseen and the eternal (pp. 109−110). Also, The Ghost provides Tadeus with the metaliterary reading of Isabel when he affirms that "she's a shadow who belongs to literature" and asks, "why are you looking for a shadow who belongs to literature?" Tadeus replies: "perhaps to make her real … to give some meaning to her life, and to my rest" (p. 110). The reiterated reference to the "shadow" shows both an allusion to the Jungian use of the term and, in its association with "literature," a version of writing as a medium that gives expression to archetypal figures, agents of deep-seated messages and meanings of the psyche. However, it also underscores the way in which Tabucchi elucidates his own writing. On the one hand, it expresses the desire to encounter reality and to establish a dialogue with it; and, on the other, it reveals a construction organized and accomplished by a writing fashioned by a literary memory, by that which is inherited from other writers.

The reference to Hesse further illustrates the archetypal and metaliterary twist. The narration connects him to a castle, turned into a monastery, located in the mountains of the "country of William Tell" (p. 112), Switzerland. In fact, Hesse lived there during various stages of his life and, at one point, specifically in the town of Montagnola where he rented part of Casa Camuzzi that looked like a castle. It is not fortuitous that Switzerland is also Jung's country of birth and that Hesse had a close relationship with him beginning in 1917. Hesse's involvement with analytical psychology actually dates back to a period during which he experienced a nervous breakdown (1916) and underwent analysis with Jung's assistant, Dr. Joseph Lang. Tadeus sees Hesse's portrait (smiling and wearing his typical panama hat [pp. 114, 117, 118]) when he visits the castle identified by The Ghost Poet.

The reference to Hesse and the allusion to Jung are intricately linked to the core motifs of the novel. Hesse, the author of *Siddhartha*, contributed remarkably to opening Western literature to Asia's mystical and religious realities, Buddhism in particular. In the field of psychology, Jung's contribution to the study of Eastern spiritualism and its

symbology is unparalleled. The mandala, as an archetypal expression of the psyche, is undoubtedly an essential figure of his investigation.

Tabucchi had already referenced Hesse in *Indian nocturne* (1989, pp. 40−41) in relation to his ties to India's religious culture. In this novel, the motif of the mandala and the Buddhist spiritual orientation are directly tied to Hesse as a literary bridge between East and West. In addition, *For Isabel* reveals substantial similarities with Hesse's *Journey to the East*. It too is structured around the motif of the inner journey and of the quest. It is an imaginative and dream-like voyage without a specific geographical setting described as "the home and youth of the soul, it was everywhere and nowhere" (1972, p. 51; original German publication, 1932; first English translation, 1956). As Tabucchi's novel, it too transcends time. Hesse defines it as the "union of all times" (p. 51). But more interestingly, it is a journey with the dead, Plato, Lao Tse, Pythagoras, Novalis, Baudelaire, and Don Quixote (Hesse, 1972, p. 66), and with characters from his previous novels, a strategy adopted by Tabucchi as well. Hesse, as Tabucchi, problematizes the objective of the quest. The search for truth is questioned as a fulfillment of absolutes. Truth is inevitably "distorted" and "altered," refracted in a multitude of possibilities ("How awry, altered and distorted everything and everyone was in these mirrors, how mockingly and unattainably did the face of truth hide itself behind all the reports, counter-reports and legends! What was still truth?" (Hesse, 1972, p. 106). In *For Isabel*, the metaliterary direction of the narration acquires an intertextual element, as in the case of Hesse's novel, with the figure of Xavier, the spiritual leader (suitably referred to as Mr. Lama) of the Swiss castle-monastery. Xavier is the same character of *Indian nocturne*, vanished in India, whom the narrator is desperately trying to locate. Xavier, like Hesse, has become in this novel a figure that connotes the achievement of higher expressions of spirituality and meaningful existence. Tadeus seeks his aid ("help me reach my center" [p. 128]) to fit Isabel in the center of the mandala because the circles are "growing tighter" (p. 127). Xavier points to the difficulty of the task ("Mandalas must be interpreted … otherwise, it's too easy to reach the center" [p. 129]), but provides him with a clue, linked to Naples, essential to guide Tadeus's search.

Also, on a metanarrative level, Tabucchi ventures into the problematics of writing and its complex relation to reality. Asked about his sins by the Catholic priest, Tadeus replies, "I wrote books … that is my sin … a sort of arrogance towards reality" (p. 99). The priest identifies arrogance with pride, one of the seven deadly sins ("arrogance according to the precepts of the Mother Church is pride, you're guilty of the sin of pride" [p. 99]). Tadeus explains: "I got in my head that the stories I imagined could recur in reality, and I was writing stories that were evil … and then much to my surprise that evil did occur in reality, and so, I've stirred events, that is my pride" (pp. 99−100). Tabucchi raises the issue of the function of literature and its possible impact on reality. The complexities of writing, identity, and inner experiences that pervade his narrative, here shift towards the relationship between literary language and externality. Tadeus's "pride" problematizes the role of literature and its power to transform human realities.

The Modern Hero and the Impossibility of Wholeness

The novel oscillates between an intraliterary/metaliterary dimension and an extraliterary dimension that encompasses the realities of the personal and collective psyche, together with social-political preoccupations. However, pride does not generate hubris. The

epigraph to the novel, "*Who knows, the dead might have a different custom*," taken from Sophocles's *Antigone*, cannot engender the tragic destiny of the Greek playwright's heroine. Tabucchi's novel as well is engaged in a dialogue with the dead, but the protagonist cannot assume the role of the ancient hero whose hubris becomes the cause of the tragedy. The modern author can construct drama, but not tragedy. Tadeus does not die, nor can he reestablish any order for himself and for others. As a contemporary "hero," he embodies both the impossibility of tragedy and the impossibility of the conquest of the objectives that he had initially set out to achieve on his journey. Near the end of his journey, Tadeus exclaims: "think of me as someone who searches … you know, the important thing is to search, and not whether you find something or you don't" (p. 125). As a mythological archetypal hero, Tadeus abandons the everyday, ordinary world and ventures into the supernatural realm where he faces great obstacles and experiences extraordinary visions. However, his adventure does not end up in a victory over the hidden and obscure forces of the world. He recounts his adventure but does not possess a redeeming message to deliver to his fellow human beings. He affirms the importance of the search and of the adventure, but without reassuring promises of peace and security.[16]

Much more pronounced here than in *Requiem*, the allusions to Dante's *Divine Comedy* can be read in this perspective. Like Dante, Tadeus too descends into the realm of the dead. On the first leg of his journey, the protagonist ends up in the Portuguese city of Cascais, characterized by a coastal precipice called "Boca do Inferno," "Mouth of Hell" (p. 35).[17] The reference to the gate of the mandala reinforces the correlation with the gate of Hell in Dante's *Inferno* (Canto III). Furthermore, one of the encounters of Tadeus takes place at the "Escavras do Amor Divino," "a boarding school for girls in Lisbon" (p. 16). The reference to divine love establishes a clear link to Dante's work and makes possible a link between Isabel and Beatrice. As in Dante's doctrine of love, the female figure elevates man to greater spirituality and wholeness. Isabel's going up a hill (p. 138), just as Beatrice appears to Dante on the hill of purgatory (*Purgatory*, Canto XXX), establishes a further correspondence. The presence of lights at the end of the novel (p. 136) corresponds to Dante's "eternal light" of *Paradise* (Canto XXXIII). However, these intertextual elements do not translate into a corresponding version of the world. For the medieval author, Beatrice is an allegory of Grace sent by Providence, a Christ-like figure, a savior who embodies philosophical and theological principles that lead Dante to truth as well as spiritual and

[16] Jung (1985b) clearly distinguished the inner condition of humanity in modern times and that of past ages. In his essay (originally published in 1933) "The spiritual problem of modern man," he draws a deep divide between humanity in the Middle Ages and in modern times. He wrote: "Men were all children of God under the loving care of the Most High, who prepared them for eternal blessedness; and all knew exactly what they should do and how they should conduct themselves in order to rise from a corruptible world to an incorruptible and joyous existence. Such a life no longer seems real to us, even in our dreams. Natural science has long ago torn this lovely veil to shreds …The modern man has lost all the metaphysical certainties of his mediaeval brother …. Whatever values in the visible world are destroyed by modern relativism, the psyche will produce their equivalents (pp. 208, 220).

[17]Boca do Inferno is also connected to Pessoa and his association with British writer and occultist Aleister Crowley. Pessoa translated into Portuguese Crowley's poem *Hymn to Pan* and in 1930 met him during his visit to Portugal. On that occasion, Crowley disappeared during a visit of Boca do Inferno. It turned out that Pessoa helped him to fake a suicide in order to elude one of his lovers who had accompanied him on the trip. He reappeared in Great Britan shortly thereafter. It is not a coincidence that Boca do Inferno appears in this novel centered on the figure of Isabel whose story in *Requiem* is connected to a possible suicide.

intellectual regeneration. As underscored in the closing analysis, Isabel cannot offer the modern "hero" any salvation or liberating outlooks for facing life's inner turmoil. A signal that disengages Tabucchi's intertextual memory from Dante's worldview is identifiable in the reference to the "Great Dog" (p. 14) that recalls the "Greyhound" (*Inferno*, Canto I), an allegorical figure that points to a future savior of humanity. Ironically, here the "Great Dog" becomes "The Hot Dog" (p. 51), the name of a bar where Tadeus has one of his encounters.[18]

As the story moves to its end and Tadeus follows his last lead that takes him from the Italian Riviera to Naples, he diverts from his main objective by looking for a "Social Print Shop" that in the past printed leaflets of anarchist groups. He references the writing of Pietro Gori (1865−1911), a prominent figure of Italian anarchism, the author of notable political writings, celebrated for the poem, turned into the popular song, "Addio Lugano bella," which denounces oppression and defies the social order ("And it's for you exploited, / for you workers, / that we are shackled / the same as criminals … / bourgeois republic, / one day you'll have shame / and today we accuse you / in front of the future…"). He learns that the Print Shop no longer exists; it was bombed years earlier. The oppressive political forces of history, like the Salazar regime that functions as a background to Isabel's life, are combined to the obliteration of political radicalism—the printing shop is "destroyed by a bomb" (p. 131), rebuilt and ironically transformed into a "pastry shop" that makes "magnificent desserts" (p. 132). Tadeus's obstacles and personal search merge with a collective political outlook unable to provide orientation for a meaningful existence. Indeed, the social and political conditions are viewed through the lens of dystopia.

In this ninth and final circle, as the story moves to the Italian Riviera and then to Naples, Tadeus dialogues with a violinist, the "Mad Fiddler" who introduces himself as the conductor of an orchestra in charge of the story: "I directed the entire score, consider me your orchestra director … I'm directing your concentric circles" (pp. 132, 134). The name of the violinist is taken from one of Pessoa's poems written in English, entitled precisely "The Mad Fiddler" (*Poesia inglesa*, 1995, p. 318). It can be read as a tribute to Pessoa; but, at the same time, it alludes to a narrative that, like a musical score, needs a variety of instruments and musicians to be played. Tabucchi is paying homage not only to Pessoa as an inspirational author for his work, but also to a multitude of other voices that have contributed to shaping his writing. Musical analogy also includes Beethoven's composition, his 26th sonata "*Les Adieux, L'Absence, Le Retour*" (p. 131), played by the violinist.[19]

The violinist places Isabel's photo in the "center of the circle" and plays a segment of the composition, the *Farewell Sonata* (p. 135). At that same instant, Tadeus sees Isabel who "held out her hand," and he "squeezed it" while she exclaims: "as you can see I still exist" (p. 135). As if in a dream, they are transported to a place where Tadeus can see "distant lights" (p. 136), and they are quickly at the harbor of Setúbal. A boat takes them

[18] Tabucchi's intertextual allusions can be veiled and ambiguous. In the case of the "Great Dog," it is worth remembering that in Dante the allegory of the "Veltro," Greyhound, is, among a few other possibilities, traditionally linked to the historical figure of Cangrande della Scala, a nobleman of the 14th century, patron of the Florentine poet. His name literally means Big Dog.

[19] The correlation with music is at the centre of Bakhtin's (1984) notion of the polyphonic novel. He wrote: "The unity of Dostoevsky's world cannot under any condition be reduced to the unity of an individual and emotionally accented will, any more than musical polyphony can be so reduced" (p. 22).

to Portinho da Arràbida, seen full of its lights (p. 136). Wearing a "white scarf," while she is saying goodbye, Isabel says: "We're in our then … Now and then have been erased" (p. 136). Temporal differences have disappeared. Time is reduced to a unity that encircles the entire relationship between Tadeus and Isabel. But as for the significance of this relationship, Isabel explains:

> you have formed your circles with great skills, you know everything about my life, my life was exactly like that, I ran away towards nothing, and I made it through, now you have found me in your last circle, but you need to know: your center is my nothing … I want to disappear into nothing … you've found me into this nothing … your search for me is over, but you were only searching for yourself" (p. 137).

It is possible, within a Jungian theoretical framework, to link Isabel's words to the archetypal image of the animus-anima ("you were only searching for yourself"), an allusion to a self in search of the union of the masculine and the feminine. However, this search for unity and wholeness results in reiterated reflections on nothingness. It is unwarranted to analyze the weight and the ramification of the term within the realm of literature and philosophy, from Romanticism to late modernity. However, it is useful to remark that the notion is in sync with the Buddhist outlook as Hesse effectively portrays (particularly in *Siddhartha,* 1979; original German publication, 1922; first English translation, 1951) who, as already underscored, represents one of the important "voices" that can be traced in the novel. At the end of his search, Hesse's Siddhartha too cannot rest his life on any firm foundation: "I know nothing, I possess nothing, I have learned nothing" (Hesse, 1979, p. 95); "Time is not real … if time is not real, then the dividing line that seems to lie between this world and eternity … is also an illusion" (Hesse, 1979, p. 143). An additional similarity is constituted by Hesse's reference to music at the end of his novel. As Siddhartha listens to the flowing river, he hears the "music of life," the "song of a thousand voices" (Hesse, 1979, p. 136), just like Tadeus and the Mad Fiddler. Yet Siddhartha reaches enlightenment, a state in which the self, without any sense of separateness, embraces the entire flow of existence ("the consciousness of the unity of all life"; "his [s]elf had merged into unity"; "I am going into the unity of all things" [Hesse, 1979, pp. 130, 136, 137]). The Buddhist "harmony," "serenity" (p. 136), and the "glowing … of light" (p. 137) experienced by Siddhartha at the end of his journey are not possible for Tadeus.

At the end of the novel, Isabel tells him to have no regrets. He should not feel "guilty" because "there's no little bastard child" of theirs "in the world," and he "can … go in peace." The "mandala's complete" (p. 138). Did she have an abortion? The narration does not provide an answer. But clearly the absence of a child connotes the impossibility of a new life or of a regeneration capable of transforming and renewing one's reality. She also reveals the cemetery where she is buried. The tombstone reads: "here lies Isabel known as Magda, come from afar and longing for peace" (p. 138). Her last words are "rest in peace on your constellation, while I continue along my path in my nothing" (p. 138), as she leans over and kisses Tadeus (p. 139). The yearning for "peace" does not lead to its conquest. Tabucchi's characters do not reach the fulfillment achieved by Siddhartha or the possibility of wholeness and unity promised by Jungian therapy. In the closing lines of the novel, the violinist reappears, he blows on the sand with which the mandala is made, and the "circle was erased." Tadeus asks: "Why'd you do that?" The answer: "Because your search is

through … and it takes a puff of wind to lead back to the wisdom of nothing" (p. 139). At that same instant, in the distance, Isabel waves her white scarf as she says goodbye. The mandala with its concentric circles is a fragile and transient construction, as are identities, knowledge, and views associated with life's meanings.

Tabucchi does not offer reassuring or comforting epistemological and identitary perspectives. Nonetheless, the nothingness communicated by the Mad Fiddler is associated to "wisdom." The Buddhist enlightenment is a cultural referent and not a conquest. Nonetheless, in the closing circle, the Portinho da Arràbida is described full of "distant lights" or with "lights … drawing closer" (pp. 136−137), as in the night sky the presence of a "star" (p. 136) and of a "pale neon moon" (p. 139) is noticed. On a metaphorical level, the insistence on these luminous elements, in full contrast to the darkness of the night, reveals that the search has been able to shed flashes of light on the opacity of human existence.

Closing Remarks

To sum up, Tabucchi constructed these two novels on a multitude of levels. They can be condensed as follows. The area of internality is elaborated through cultural referents, in particular Jungian psychology and Buddhism. This dimension is intertwined with a metanarrative and intraliterariness level developed through intertextual echoes centered on Pessoa, Dante, and Hesse, but also on other arts, such as painting and music. The area of externality is explored through the relationship of the characters with social and political realities, specifically the conditions of Portugal under an oppressive regime, as well as through commentaries on political ideologies such as anarchism, reflections on gender politics, and the condition of women and their roles in society.

The interaction of these areas, together with the vision of the indeterminacy of the self and of the fortuitousness that governs both life's events and the process of writing, engenders a dialogical narrative that cannot be reduced to a singular voice. Dialogical writing performs the function of listening to the other through the activation of the literary and cultural memory (Jung's orientation is central) that, in turn, becomes a tool for the exploration of one's own self and of the external world. The results are discontinuities, oscillations between fictitious dimension and investigation of reality, epistemological indeterminations, and antinomies that inhibit any possibility of unity. This polyphonic structure, as condensed in the image of the orchestra conducted by the Mad Fiddler, is significant on an ideological level as well. The author is dispersed in a multiplicity of cognitive and psychological directions by either suspending his personal dominant inclinations or displaying himself as made up of complexities that exhibit conflictual orientations. The multiplicity of identities and the ambiguous and indefinite constitution of selfhood represent Tabucchi's fundamental narrative frame and his ontology of existence. The Humanistic-Cartesian subject, an autonomous and centered agent that guides events and navigates through well-defined cognitive maps, capable of identifying assured itineraries and fundamental convictions, gives way to a subject that experiences an entropic vision of the world, its instability, opaqueness, and unpredictability. This orientation does not imply, however, that in Tabucchi's narrative there is an absence of an ideological focus. Isabel is also Magda, an archetypal-psychological-emotional symbol and a woman engaged in the social and political realities of her times. Tabucchi projects in these narrative strategies his core ideological and literary objectives which are guided by a homological

and dialectical relationship between the autonomy of writing and its heteronomous possibilities. In his impossible quest for an ultimate and total understanding of human subjectivity, truth, and reality, Tabucchi represents the figure of the contemporary writer, a wanderer without a final destination. He perceives the psyche in an unrelenting reconfiguration of itself, in as much as it is the result of an ever-changing dialogue with the world in its manifestation of events and conversations.

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