

*'Figlio d'esseri umani':
Animals in Italo Calvino's War Novels and Novellas
(1947-1957)*

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Declaration

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ABSTRACT

'Figlio d'esseri umani': Animals in Italo Calvino's War Novels and Novellas (1947-1957)

Molly Abigail Tanış

On November 17, 1946, the former Partisan and budding Italian writer, essayist, and intellectual, Italo Calvino, wrote an article for *L'Unità* against the atomic bomb testing done in the Bikini Atoll of the Marshall Islands. He did not chastise his fellow man alone for this atrocity. Instead, he asked the reader to consider the perspective of the human and nonhuman animals living in the affected areas and having to not merely survive, but somehow live, in the wake of the aftermath. Throughout history, war has long exposed humanity's most base cruelties for the sake of greed and power, even if they are often carefully wrapped under cover of welcoming ideals like glory, honor, and sacrifice. Beyond textbooks and bids for political gain in times of war, glimmers of humanity's generosity of spirit also thrive. A photograph of a child caught in the brutal workings of the war machine can still touch us. People's stories and their experiences of war speak to every one of us as they call into question equally the depths as much as the heights of our humanity. The male protagonists from three of Calvino's war novels and novellas from the postwar period, from 1947-1957, forge the definition of humanity anew by challenging dichotomies between humans and nonhuman animals. The placement of Calvino's protagonists on the threshold when faced with both fictional and historical wars offers new insight on timeless questions of the body, the soul, and language. The methodological approach undertaken to conduct this research reflects the multiplicity of the subject at hand. A two-fold comparative literary and multidisciplinary perspective with a focus on new and old fields of Philosophy, Psychology, Literary Criticism, (Zoo)Anthropology, and Ecocriticism intends to engage a variety of human and nonhuman branches of knowledge and experience as well as meaningfully juxtapose them on the same page. The hope of this project is, albeit in a small way, to illuminate the many paths towards an inquiry of the soul and reinvigorate the power of literature as a scene of engagement across time, space, and language.

Keywords: **Italo Calvino – war – humanity – animals – storytelling – novel**

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DISSERTATION SUMMARY

This dissertation, *'Figlio d'esseri umani': Animals in Italo Calvino's War Novels and Novellas (1947-1957)*, demonstrates one possible research pathway to challenge the definition of what humanity consists through the relationships and encounters of humans with nonhuman animals, especially dogs, cats, horses, and birds in addition to many other species. A series of interrelated case studies based on works of literature, in which the male protagonists of Italo Calvino's novels and novellas from the immediate post-war period of 1947-1957 and their relationships with nonhuman animals upend assumed intrinsically human features. When these characters are not explicitly stripping away at dichotomous modes of thinking, they are also thoughtfully playing with the definitions of humans as the animal that has language or the animal that clothes itself. The methodological framework employed to carry out this research was two-fold: a comparative literary perspective was united with a multidisciplinary approach, which includes fields such as Literary Criticism, Psychology, Philosophy, (Zoo)anthropology, and Ecocriticism. The focus of this study on the novels' male protagonists also favored a specifically character-based approach to the texts. This interest in the points of interaction between human and nonhuman animals, especially against the backdrop of war stories, seeks to challenge the timeless and timely debates between the physical body and the rational mind, nature, and culture, animal and human, body and soul, us and "the other." The consignment of polarizing dichotomies and the divisive wars that spring from them to the annals of history and legend may be a fool's errand and even impossible.

Nevertheless, this thesis is not merely the demonstration of a variety of academic skills and an accumulation of knowledge on a particular area of study. A part of its work is also to encourage dialogues, exchanges, and explorations beyond the confines of definitions. Yet, some things do require an unambiguous rigor, such as the following, which delineates the boundaries of the following composition, which the reader will soon be encountering in its entirety.

The whole thesis encompasses the following components, which will each be described more fully in the following paragraphs: an introduction, three content chapters, a conclusion, and a list of references.

The introductory chapter elaborates on the key concepts upon which are the foundation of this dissertation. Italo Calvino would write about war and its atrocities throughout the entirety of his writing life, without restrictions of genre or period. The present selection of texts, his first three war novels, and novellas, is also compared and studied with regards to his other works related to the subject of war, such as newspaper articles, essays, songs, short stories, caricatures, letters or interviews. Calvino's conviction throughout his reading and writing life of the singular importance of experience and living in the world gave a unique perspective to his fascination with matters of language and storytelling. The myriad of animals the male protagonists of Calvino's war novels and novellas encounter contour a "di scorcio" or *defamiliarized* poetics that can unsettle established norms and situations, including the atrocities of war that have become all too

commonplace and on the brink of normalization. Although Calvino's novels would require a sizeable menagerie to house all the nonhuman animals these three texts alone present, the tension between domesticated and wild animals, especially for birds, cats, dogs, and horses, will be demonstrated. Calvino's animals do not speak for their own sake. Instead, they retain a symbolic quality that dialogues with nonhuman animals from literary history in comparative texts from Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, up to the twentieth century. In addition to multiple literary texts providing a more rounded perspective on our understanding of Calvino's three novels and novellas, the multidisciplinary considerations into a variety of fields of knowledge will also attempt to confront the dichotomies between human and nonhuman animals apparent in those disciplines as well. This dissertation has aimed to intersect studies of Italo Calvino's war novels and novellas with the roles of animals in them to observe whether any meaningful aspects of the human form are either reinforced or torn asunder. While the original spark of this dissertation was to locate Calvino's components of the definition of "human" and "humanity," upon embarking on this research, it reveals a far more vibrant dialogue among human and nonhuman animals. The section delineating the particulars of the many interrelated and evolving research questions precedes a more greatly detailed roadmap of the three content chapters the reader will encounter before the conclusion of this dissertation.

The first content chapter analyzes Italo Calvino's debut novel, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (1947), which is entitled: "Along the Threshold in Calvino's Bestiary of the Resistance." The two protagonists that are analyzed are Pin, the child narrator, and Kim, the psychology student brigade commissar. While Pin lies on the threshold between the home front and the battlefields of war, child and adulthood, together with Kim, they jointly form as much as they challenge the dichotomous poles of nature and culture, imagination, and rationality, child and adulthood. The chapter contains three sections. The first section analyzes the animality and humanity of Pin as he navigates the world of children, men, and women, his utopic space where the spiders make their nests, his hometown torn apart by civil war, and the complicated interpersonal and inter-creatural dynamics of the partisan's camp. In the second section, peripheral characters, such as the townsmen, Italian Fascist and German Nazi soldiers, and the women that are a part of Pin and Kim's life stories elaborate upon the flexibility of identities bestriding the thresholds of child and adulthood, town and countryside, human and nonhuman animals. Given that Kim makes but a cameo appearance in the ninth [out of twelve in total] chapters in the novel, it seems reasonable that Kim's interest in humanity, and almost utter lack of interactions with nonhuman animals, expends a similar proportion of the following literary analysis.

The second content chapter initiates the study of the first installment of Calvino's post-facto trilogy, *I nostri antenati*, from the 1950s, with *Il visconte dimezzato* (1952), which is entitled: "The Humanizing Power of Reading: Medardo and Pamela's Comprehension Skills of Non-human Animal Others." Albeit this novella is structurally

composed of dual pairs of characters or groups of them, it challenges the dichotomous structure of understanding life or a text. These conjoined pairs include not only the two halves of viscount Medardo's self, *il Gramo* and *il Buono*, who are the main male protagonists, but also Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo, the nameless nephew narrator and Medardo's father, Aiolfo, as well as the young fair shepherdess maiden Pamela, and Sebastiana, a nursemaid and maternal figure. This novella engages the question of the body conjointly as well as that of language. Both lie at the crux of Calvino's inquiry into the fluidity of the definition of humanity in the face of war. Not only is viscount Medardo's body's split and subsequent reunification at the forefront of the investigation of the frame and its human and animalesque components; the languages *il Gramo* and *il Buono* compose, and Pamela and Doctor Trelawney correctly interpret, are built upon a syntax of animals' bodies. Medardo's journey toward bodily and spiritual re-integration is inextricable from his lack, and subsequent re-acquisition of reading comprehension skills is all the more prominent when placed in direct contrast to those of Pamela. Pamela's status within the novel, which is famously deprecated even by Italo Calvino's pen, may have disregarded her position and skills as complementary or marginal, yet read in conjunction with viscount Medardo, reinstates her as a formative and critical piece to the reading of the text in the following analysis.

The third, and final, content chapter continues to explore the question of the body from the aspect of clothing and masking, or unmasking it, with a respectful nod to language and its relationship to rationality as much as irrationality, which appears in the second installment of the post-facto trilogy, *Il barone rampante* (1957), which is entitled: "Accoutered Hunters among the Nearly Leafless Hunted of *Il barone rampante*." Cosimo's rebellion and his "sovrumana" adherence to his ideals are contextualized with those of his sister, Battista, and of his half-uncle, *il Cavaliere Avvocato* Silvio Enea Carrega. This protagonist's threshold stance between being a hunter and being the one who is hunted is compared to a similar position of the wolf in human and nonhuman animal spaces. Cosimo's special relationship with his hunting dog, *Ottimo Massimo*, will not only extend but dialogue, with a long and ancient lineage of stories of hunters and their hunting dogs. Although Cosimo's ascent to the trees did not initiate on account of considerations of clothing, the differentiation between humans and nonhuman animals along the norms of dress codes and their subversion or reinforcement of an identity will be juxtaposed to that of language as an ambiguous defining element of one's humanity and its assumed monopoly on rationality.

The concluding remarks following these chapters synthesize the main findings as well as acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of the research project undertaken. Future points of entry into academic research in the field and for the researcher are also put forward.

The list of references entails all the sources cited in this dissertation.

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*Dove vola l'avvoltoio?
avvoltoio vola via,
vola via dalla mia terra,
che è la terra dell'amor.*

-- Italo Calvino 1994: 638

INTRODUCTION

The measure of our humanity should not be determined by any skill or trait or achievement that marks our species as dissimilar from other animals. How we treat our fellow human beings, nonhuman animals, and the world we inhabit during times of war is a far more accurate indication of the complexity that should define humanity. Historically humans have demonstrated their utter disregard for humans and nonhuman animals alike in times of war and peace, committing crimes against humanity such as rape, genocide, torture, summary executions, using children for military purposes, among far too many others to enumerate here. What if, instead of giving rules to conduct war and condoning so-called war crimes such as harming civilians, warfare itself was a crime against not just humanity, but against all beings who inhabit this one Earth? Although we do not know of any wars that rage among the various species of nonhuman animals, the conflicts of humans positively affect not only the participants in them but cities and towns, families and friends, nonhuman animals, and the surrounding environment. A bomb or a cannonball or a bullet does not destroy only one human or one building, it irrevocably impacts a place, a society, and any unfortunate caught in its path. This consideration of the wide-ranging consequences of war takes its shape from a classical text, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which will resonate throughout this discussion of Italo Calvino's challenge to the definition of humanity through male protagonists' encounters with nonhuman animals in his early period war novels and novellas.

When cultural, literary, or social historians refer to 'the golden age' of a civilization or a country, a period of relative peace and stability, Ovid's four ages of man: the golden,

silver, bronze, and iron, unquestionably come to mind. According to the Ancient Roman lyrical text, the first age of man, the “golden age,” was defined by a never-ending season of spring when “flowers which had never been planted were kissed into life by the warming breath of the gentle zephyrs” (Ovid 2016: I.107-108). Humans were free to inhabit the earth and “practice the gentle arts of peace. The earth was equally free and at rest, untouched by the hoe, unscathed by the ploughshare, supplying all needs from its natural resources” (Ibid. I.100-102). Paradise did not spring eternal, however, and soon the gods brought changeability to the lives of the earth, humans, and nonhuman animals during the “age of silver” (Ibid. I.116-118). In this age, humans began to have to till the soil to collect their food and tie beasts of burden to manage their plows in the spring to harvest in the autumn (Ibid.). Work was not seen as an evil, just a step down from the idyll of heaven on Earth. A third age, that of ‘bronze,’ would show humans’ descent still further away from bliss and tranquility with a tendency towards cruelty and “more ready to take up menacing weapons, but still not vile to the core” (Ibid. I.126-127). In the fourth age, that of “iron,” humans’ utter depravity, subverting, and turning away from familial and societal ties to each other, is instigated by abuse of the Earth itself. This depiction of greed and selfishness as the final straw that broke humanity gives way to none other than the very war the peace of the golden age had so cherished. The promise of the golden age was utterly shattered when in the iron age,

the affluent earth was not only pressed for crops and the food that it owed; men also found their ways into its very bowels, and the wealth which the gods had hidden away in the home of the ghosts by the Styx was mined and dug out, as a further incitement to wickedness. Now dangerous iron, and gold – more dangerous even than iron – had emerged. Grim War appeared (Ibid. I.137-141).

With the advent of War, the blind goddess, Justice, too, had abandoned her hope and was the last to leave the humans to the hell they had made (Ibid. I.149-150). While the universe, with its heavens, Earth, gods, humans, and nonhuman animals may have developed out of chaos according to Ovid, humans were capable of forging a destructive force to throw everything into a far worse condition of disorder. Nevertheless, seeds for humanity's regeneration can flourish even in the most abject times of war, and the stories we tell about them uncover glimmers of the heights and breadth of our human understanding.

The subsequent pages of this dissertation will not divulge one all-encompassing answer to the question of the boundaries of the definition of humanity. By retracing the points of contact between human and nonhuman animals through analysis of the male protagonists and the narrators of their stories of war, not only the dichotomy between the two will be thrown off balance. The co-involvement of these 'sons of human beings' ["figl[i] d'esseri umani"] with a veritable menagerie of diverse nonhuman animals through storytelling will categorically challenge long-held notions of humans as being an animal that has language or an animal that wears clothes (Calvino 1991: 758). These notions often intersect in the following analysis of Italo Calvino's first three war novels and novellas – *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, *Il visconte dimezzato*, and *Il barone rampante*. The working definition of a war novel and novella for this dissertation will be as follows. In an attempt to traverse the seemingly insurmountable line of demarcation between Calvino's Neorealist writings of the mid-late 1940s with his debut novel, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, and some of his novellas and novels from the 1950s of his so-called 'fantastic' period, *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il barone rampante*, the broader picture of the thematic resonance of war that bridges across genres in Calvino's oeuvre and poetics are discussed in further detail in

this introduction. For now, it is sufficient to note that a war story, be in in the form of a novel or a novella, indicates either battle scenes in which the male protagonists directly participate or witness, such as Pin in the Partisan brigades during the Second World War or Viscount Medardo in Calvino's fictionalized rendition of the Ottoman-Hapsburg wars or Cosimo's fictional encounter with Napoleon and his army after the French Revolution. As to the distinction between the form of categorizing that war story as a novel or a novella, Mary Doyle Springer's word count limit of between 15,000-40,000 words has been utilized to account for the contestable length of *Il visconte dimezzato*, which has 23,743 words, in comparison to the longer *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and *Il barone rampante* (1975: 9). Regardless of the permeability of each literary case study, each chapter of this dissertation individually and in concert will foster exchange and dialogue rather than reinforce binaries to restore humanity's complexity in and of the world that is home to human and nonhuman animals alike.

Before embarking on that invigorating journey and discussion, some relevant preparatory information would not go amiss. Following a brief biographical sketch of Italo Calvino's formative years, his war experiences, and his life and writing career during the late 1940-1950s, the place of the three war novels and novellas within all of Calvino's multi-genre writings on war in fiction and nonfiction alike will be contextualized. The significance of storytelling will be analyzed in conjunction with its ability to distill and interrogate essential elements of human and nonhuman animal life. The centrality of Calvino's *defamiliarized* or "di scorcio" poetics to his ability to discuss a conception of humanity as a part of the world in its entirety will be evaluated (Shklovsky 2004: 16; Calvino 1991: 1191). Following a presentation of the significant works of Calvino

scholarship, comparative literary criticism, and multidisciplinary studies that shaped this dissertation, the unique perspective this dissertation attempts to provide will be contextualized, especially as it joins studies of war and studies of nonhuman animals in literary Calvino studies. The questions that arise from this dissertation will then be followed by a brief but informative road map to each of the three following chapters of how war novels and novellas that can inform and tear asunder preconceived and long-established concepts of humanity and animality.

War stories continually resurface throughout Italo Calvino's forty-year writing life and considering his own life story; it is of little wonder. Although this is a dissertation based on literary criticism with primary emphasis on the original texts, some aspects of Calvino's biography merit particular attention, the following pages seek to provide a few background strokes about Italo Calvino's family, his birth in 1923, his formative years and education, his war experiences and briefly touch on his life during the years in which he published the novels and novellas that the following three chapters will focus in on, from 1946-1957. Italo Calvino's parents, Mario Calvino [1874-1951] and Evelina Mameli [1886-1978], were both respected scientists. Mario was an agronomist, originally from the city of San Remo, and had worked in Mexico and later would move with his young family near Havana, Cuba, where Italo Calvino was born (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 14). Evelina [Eva] Mameli, from Sassari, was a botanist, and was moreover the first woman to achieve a university post in the Botany Department at the University of Cagliari and then in Pavia (Ibid.).

Additionally, her brother, Efigio Mameli, was a chemist. Although Italo Calvino may have been born into a family of scientists, he would not disregard but continue an appreciation for logic and precision with his passion for the humanities (Baranelli and

Ferrero 1995: 14). After Mario and Eva got married in 1920, Italo Calvino was born on October 15th, 1923, in the town of Santiago de la Vegas, near La Havana, Cuba (Serra 2006: 21). Although his family did not remain there long, as they returned to San Remo in 1925, the place of his birth must have been of some personal significance to the writer as “Santiago” would become Calvino’s battle name when he was a partisan during the Second World War (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 15). His younger brother, Floriano, was born in San Remo in 1927 and would go on to become a geologist and teach at the University of Genoa (Ibid.). Before either of their illustrious careers took off, as happens to most children, Calvino’s parents would influence his education and formation.

Italo Calvino’s youth and adolescent years were not only marked by interests in diverse forms of art. The education he received at school, which both of his parents would actively participate in, also shaped him. Both Calvino’s perspective on language as well as perhaps on the imposition of a completely secular education arguably established the basis for his geometric, precise, rational view of *the non-written* as well as *the written world*, which he would later write about in his 1983 essay “Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto” (cf. Calvino 1995 (2): 1865-1875). Indeed, in the years of Calvino’s elementary, middle, and high school years, from the 1920s-1940s, his parents agreed that both of their children should have “un’educazione integralmente laica, chiedendo l’esonero a scuola dalle lezioni di religione: all’epoca un fatto davvero più unico che raro” (Serra 2006: 23). In conjunction with a scientific worldview, it would be especially Calvino’s mother’s view that language should be clear, proper, and precise that encouraged rigorous study of the standard Italian language rather than any of the regional dialects that exist on the peninsula. Calvino would write in his 1976 interview on “Il dialetto” that in no uncertain terms “l’autorità più forte

che influiva sulla [sua] educazione era quella di [sua] madre, nemica del dialetto e sostenitrice molto severa della purezza della lingua italiana” (Calvino 1995 (2): 2816). If we take language as the essential component of reading and writing, it is interesting to note that among Italo Calvino’s passions for the arts that he would develop in his adolescent years – for cinema, drawing, and theatre as well - he would come to enjoy reading books only relatively later. When he was twelve or thirteen years old, Calvino recounts how his earliest memory of being fully immersed in a book began with one particular story and author who will return throughout our examination of the animal symbologies present in all three of the novels examined in this dissertation, namely Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*. Even if the provenance of the book was not significant, its story indelibly left a mark on Calvino’s formation as a reader because, after reading it, Calvino notes: “Non ricordo se ci arrivai attraverso una biblioteca scolastica o perché lo ebbi in regalo. Da allora in poi avevo qualcosa da cercare nei libri: vedere se si ripeteva quel piacere della letteratura provato con Kipling” (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 43). During the years, while Calvino was attending high school, starting in 1934 at the Ginnasio-Liceo G.D. Cassini, his youthful passions for cinema, drawing, and theatre would begin. Some would continue throughout his writing career, as exemplified by the little-studied field of theatre in Calvino studies examined in Maria Enrica Ferrara’s monograph on the subject (cf. 2011). In addition to his cinematic viewings during this time, he would not just be a passionate observer but would also create some caricature vignettes, which would be published in *Il Bertoldo*, the Milan based magazine under his pseudonym, Jago, in the spring of 1940 (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 50-51). Calvino would graduate from high school in the year 1941. In 1941, Calvino had his decision about what course to study at university to make,

and his university years followed anything but a routine and standardized path when thrown in the middle of history and circumstance.

From 1941-1947, Calvino's university experience is marked not only by a dramatic change in the area of education he wishes to pursue, from the Sciences to the Humanities, as well as in different cities across the country, Turin and Florence but is also defined by his experience of the Second World War as an antifascist and partisan. Calvino eventually enrolled in the Department of Agricultural Studies at the University of Turin, where his father, Mario, had been working from 1936-1938 (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 54). In January of 1943, however, Calvino would transfer to the University of Florence to their Department of Agriculture and Forestry (Serra 2006: 24). In the autumn of 1944, both Calvino and his younger brother, Floriano, would join the communist Garibaldi brigades in the Ligurian Pre-Alps Mountains. It was not enough that Calvino and his brother Floriano were endangering their lives for a political-cultural ideal for their country. Italo would have to confront the Fascists' less than humane war tactics personally. On November 15, 1944, Calvino was arrested "per attività cospirative, e associato al carcere sanremese di Santa Tecla. Convinto di essere fucilato il giorno dopo, per vincere l'angoscia passa la notte a recitare mentalmente dei versi di Montale" (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 56-57). They did not execute him, however. As he was boarding a truck that would take him to a recruitment enrollment center for the Fascists, Calvino managed to escape. He then passed December 9th, 10th, and 11th, hiding in a burrow in the forest until he was able to rejoin the partisan forces (Ibid.). In the meantime, Calvino and Floriano's parents were "trattenuti a lungo come ostaggi dai tedeschi, e le brigate nere [finsero] per tre volte di fucilare il professor Calvino sotto gli occhi della moglie, che continu[ò] a comportarsi con assoluta dignità e

fermezza di fronte alle SS e ai militi” according to his 1960 personal essay “Autobiografia politica giovanile” (Calvino 1995 (2): 2746). Indeed, it was his mother’s “disadorno rigore” and “severità moralistica laica scientifica umanitaria antibellicista zoofila” that inspired both Calvino and his younger brother to join the partisan brigades in the first place and combat war’s atrocities as much as injustice (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 57). Following the Liberation of Italy on April 25th, 1945, from the Second World War, in September of that year, Calvino would continue his interrupted studies. This time he enrolled himself in the Department of Literature at the University of Torino, from which in 1947, he would graduate with a thesis on Joseph Conrad (Serra 2006: 24). During his second period of university years, Calvino would begin frequenting the Einaudi publishing house and meet with literary figures such as Elio Vittorini, Cesare Pavese, Natalia Ginzburg, and Giulio Einaudi himself. After graduation, Calvino would begin his work in different fields, both as an editor at Einaudi and as a fiction and nonfiction writer with works of short stories and novels, as well as submitting articles and essays that would appear in newspapers.

Calvino’s first published piece of creative fiction was the short story “Di padre in figlio” in 1946, which also notably records the breach of war’s atrocities onto the home front (Calvino 1991: 181-188). This short story, along with his essay from November of the same year that appeared in *L’Unità*, “Le capre ci guardano,” would set the tone for Calvino’s perspective on the far-reaching ripple effects of the horrors of war on all creatures, humans and nonhuman animals alike, that permeates his writings. As Calvino would consider the impact of wars atrocities from a different perspective, that of nonhuman animals through writing and storytelling, the reader might pause to ponder the same questions for themselves:

Vi siete mai chiesti che cos'avranno pensato le capre, a Bikini? e i gatti nelle case bombardate? e i cani in zona di guerra? e i pesci allo scoppio dei siluri? Come avranno giudicato noi uomini in quei momenti, nella loro logica che pure esiste, tanto più elementare, tanto più – stavo per dire – umana?

Sì, noi dobbiamo una spiegazione agli animali, se non una riparazione. Loro possono capire quando noi li uccidiamo per mangiarli, quando li mettiamo a tirare un carro, forse anche quando li torturiamo per divertirci nelle corride, o quando li vivisezioniamo per esperimento. Sono cose che succedono più o meno anche tra loro. Ma la guerra? (Calvino 1995 (2): 2131).

These texts, both fiction and nonfiction, would be a point of entry into unpacking the symbolic nature of the menagerie of human and nonhuman animals that would come to populate his works. While Calvino upheld “certe verità fondamentali, molto semplici [...] Fraternità, solidarietà fra gli uomini” very dear to him, he did not endorse the notion of humans as superior to other nonhuman animals in his 1960 interview “La distanza e la tensione” with Maria Craipeau (Calvino 2012: 50). Instead, he would argue

per una concezione dell'uomo come non staccato dal resto della natura, di animale più evoluto in mezzo agli altri animali, e mi sembra che una tale concezione non abbassi l'uomo, ma gli dia una responsabilità maggiore, lo impegni a una moralità meno arbitraria, impedisca tante storture (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 72).

Calvino would use his skills and craftsmanship through storytelling to investigate the points of contact between humans and nonhuman animals in the world, even under the most trying circumstances of war. Before tracing the theme of war within Calvino's writings throughout his career, it is essential to contextualize them within his forty-year oeuvre and especially the contemporary, early period, from 1946-1959.

While Calvino was beginning work at the Einaudi publishing house, he would publish his first novel shortly after graduation, the one that the first chapter of this dissertation will be devoted to, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* in 1947, as well as a collection of short stories entitled *Ultimo viene il corvo* in 1949. The 1950s would prove not only to

be trying for Calvino, in terms of work, life, and historical circumstances but also a productive decade with diverse projects brought to fruition. The initial years of the 1950s would prove to have two important figures in Calvino's life, Cesare Pavese from the Einaudi publishing house, as well as his father, Mario Calvino, pass away. On August 27th, 1950, when Cesare Pavese committed suicide in the Albergo Roma in Turin, Calvino was only twenty-seven years old (Serra 2006: 18). The following year, 1951, Calvino's father, Mario, would pass away. Yet, as Biagio would later say in Calvino's *Il barone rampante*: "Ai lutti succedono presto o tardi eventi lieti, è legge della vita" (Calvino 1991: 700). Later that same year, Calvino would have the opportunity to travel to the Soviet Union. After having fought in the communist partisan brigades during the war against Fascism, and subsequently becoming a member of the Italian Communist Party [PCI], this journey to the USSR must have had an impact on his formation politically and as a global citizen. In 1952, he would publish *Il visconte dimezzato*, which is the subject of the second chapter of this dissertation, as well as another novella entitled *La formica argentina*. Throughout the 1950s Calvino would oscillate between publishing fantastic works with ones based in reality, as seen not only in the above example but also in other texts from the same decade, which will be described in the following pages after indulging in a thoughtful digression about this undercurrent in Calvino's writing in the 1950s. This particular pattern in his creative production appears to reflect the author's own attempts to meaningfully juxtapose the real world with the imaginary to forge something better for the world.

Calvino's creative struggle between art and politics, imaginary and real worlds would become a dominant undercurrent throughout the fifties along "quella fondamentale dicotomia che fu pure se non soprattutto autocensoria per il Calvino scrittore di quegli anni

Cinquanta: del realismo operaio contro la favola, dei *Giovani del Po* contro *Il visconte dimezzato*” (Serra 2006: 225). This is not to suggest that the boundary between fantasy and reality never converges in Calvino’s works, however. In a later interview in 1957 with Giuseppe Mazzaglia, Calvino would describe his appreciation for precision and method which was juxtaposed with his fascination with storytelling’s own concurrent tools thus:

Nelle cose che scrivo, se si vuol contrapporre un modo a un altro modo, si può osservare che talora la mia immaginazione lavora in modo meccanico, geometrico, chiuso, come composizione del racconto, sia esso fantastico o realistico, e talora in modo aperto, accostando liberamente i suoi dati (reali o fantastici) e configurandoli in schemi di racconto che trovano una loro armonia spontanea, come di forme naturali (Calvino 2012: 32).

The real world and the world of storytelling also converge through his career through the unexpected combination of both an editor and a writer where he would personify this seemingly insurmountable polar divide between engaging the world practically as well as creatively.

Calvino would work very intensely at Einaudi as an editor during the fifties, primarily because “rimase per lungo tempo il primo mestiere di Calvino, al quale quello di scrittore rubava i ritagli di tempo” (Serra 2006: 27). Calvino appreciated the importance of his editorial work. He would even write the following about the impact of his editorial work upon the cultural heritage of his country:

il massimo del tempo della mia vita l’ho dedicato ai libri degli altri, non ai miei. Ne sono contento, perché l’editoria è una cosa importante nell’Italia in cui viviamo e l’aver lavorato in un ambiente editoriale che è stato di modello per il resto dell’editoria italiana, non è cosa da poco (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 103).

Nevertheless, after his humble beginnings at Einaudi fresh out of college in 1947, in 1961, Calvino would eventually change his role at the publishing house from executive editor to a consultant. Before that time, however, Calvino would publish a plethora of texts along the

threshold of fiction and reality in the 1950s, which might better contextualize some of his war novels analyzed in this dissertation.

Although not all of Calvino's nonfiction essays can be given the analysis due to them, they merit a place in this informational background section because these would often resonate with his fictional crafted between 1954-1957. Calvino would recreate his adolescent experiences before the outbreak of the Second World War in a three-part work of autobiographical fiction, *L'entrata in guerra* of 1954 (cf. Calvino 1991: 483-546). Although many of Calvino's essays that were written before or after the period of the texts examined in this dissertation, the piece from *Una pietra sopra*, entitled: "Il midollo del leone" written in 1955 provided a critical framework for the character-based approach to these texts. As the opening lines of the essay unequivocally relate:

Si parla spesso d'un problema del personaggio nella nostra letteratura d'oggi: personaggio positivo o negativo, nuovo o vecchio. È una discussione che se a certuni può parere oziosa, starà invece sempre a cuore a coloro che non separano i loro interessi letterari a tutta la complessa rete di rapporti che lega tra loro i vari interessi umani. Perché, tra le possibilità che s'aprono alla letteratura d'agire sulla storia, questa è la più sua, forse la sola che non sia illusoria: capire a quale tipo d'uomo essa storia col suo molteplice, contraddittorio lavoro sta preparando il campo di battaglia, e dettarne la sensibilità, lo scatto morale, il peso della parola, il modo in cui esso uomo dovrà guardarsi intorno nel mondo; quelle cose insomma che solo la poesia – e non per esempio la filosofia o la politica – può insegnare (Calvino 1995 (1): 9).

The beautifully tangled web of life that Calvino so adamantly expounded upon above would continue to infiltrate Calvino's texts in the following years, not only from the vast resources of personal and historical memory but on account of current events at home and abroad, especially during the watershed years of 1956 and 1957. During these years, Calvino would also complete the project inspired by Giulio Einaudi to create a canonical and unified collection of Italian fables and folktales. Calvino would not only gather together tales from

the twenty regions of Italy (cf. Calvino 1993). His unique touch would translate them from dialect as well as into one cohesive style for ease of readability, which would come out in 1956 (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 148). In world history, that same year would become infamous for the Soviet Union's brutal suppression of the revolt in Budapest, Hungary. This horrific event would lead to Calvino's disillusionment with the Communist Party. This tragedy, in conjunction with his perception of "l'incapacità del partito di rinnovarsi," would cause him to step down from the party and write a letter about his reasons for doing so, which appeared in *l'Unità* on August 7th, 1957 entitled "Lettera di dimissioni dal P.C.I." (Serra 2006: 27; cf. Calvino 1995 (2): 2188-2194). 1957 was the same year that he would publish the second installment of the post-facto "fantastic" trilogy studied in the third chapter of this dissertation, *Il barone rampante*, as well as the more reality-based one of *La speculazione edilizia*. Calvino's role in shaping Italian and twentieth-century culture in dialogue with the world would not end in the year of 1957. He would live and continue to write well into the year of his death, 1985. Along the way, the theme of war and its atrocities would resurface, which is a line of thought worth retracing.

The indelible mark of the experience of war left on Italo Calvino's person is not only apparent in writings about his life, as depicted in brief above. Calvino would probe and confront the horrors of war throughout the entirety of his writing life, from 1946-1985, and would do so across a variety of genres and media: in essays, newspaper articles, caricatures, short stories, novels, songs, letters, and interviews. The following selected yet representative compilation of Italo Calvino's published and unpublished works revolving around the theme of war helps better situate the three war stories analyzed in this dissertation. During the same adolescent years, he was submitting caricatures for the magazine *Il Bertoldo* based in Milan,

between 1940-1943, Calvino would also draw a satirical cartoon of an oversized Mussolini who shares the same face and expression of his horse (Baranelli and Ferrero 1995: 46). Although Italo Calvino's first novel, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* [1947], and his short story collection *Ultimo viene il corvo* (1949), fall under the category of the Neorealist period and genre, Calvino would not only confront not just one specific historical war through story throughout his writing career (cf. Calvino: 1991: 3-149; Ibid. 149-364). Instead, he would confront the timely and timeless ravages of war through a variety of genres, which should bear more critical weight in Calvino studies than they do presently.

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Calvino would not only continue to write stories specifically about the Second World War but also about the Korean War and the effects of the Cold War. Some stories excluded from the collection *Ultimo viene il corvo*, such as "Cinque dopodomani: guerra finita!" [1946] would appear in the newspaper, *L'Unità*, in addition to other stories inspired by his experience of the Second World War, such as: "Il reggimento smarrito" and "Tre Soldati e un generale" [1951], "Gli occhi del nemico" [1952], "Il generale in biblioteca" [1953], and "La bomba addormentata nel bosco" [1954] (cf. Calvino 1994: 845-848; Ibid. 896-901; Ibid. 969-978; Ibid. 907-911; Ibid. 935-940; Ibid. 947-951). Between 1952-1953, he would also compose two pieces about Italy's involvement in the Korean War, entitled: "Un compagno venuto da lontano" and "La storia di Kim-Ghi-U" (cf. Calvino 1994: 902-907; Ibid. 926-931). Calvino's previously mentioned short stories depicting his adolescent years, *L'entrata in guerra*, was published in 1954 and warranted a reminder here for the reader in the interest of reconstructing a cohesive chronology (cf. Calvino 1991: 483-546). In an eclectic blend of artistic media, Calvino would also compose lyrics for the 1958 *Cantacronache* movement, with anti-war and memorial

texts such as “Dove vola l’avvoltoio?” and “Oltre il ponte” (cf. Ibid. 638-640; Ibid. 641-642). While Calvino criticism has tended to separate Calvino’s Neorealist texts, such as *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, from his “fantastic period” of the 1950s, this dissertation will attempt to determine meaningful connections based not solely on genre but the shared theme of war to compare the former with two of his war novels and novellas from the 1950s, such as *Il visconte dimezzato* (1952) and *Il barone rampante* (1957) (cf. Calvino 1991: 365-444; Ibid. 547-778). His third installment in the post-facto trilogy of the 1950s, *Il cavaliere inesistente* [1959], a natural extension of this framework, regrettably lies beyond the confines of this present study (Ibid. 953-1064). Nevertheless, in addition to caricatures, short stories, novels, critical essays, newspaper articles, and songs, Calvino would continue to write about the difficulty in expressing the travesties of war through literature throughout his life. On the anniversaries of the Italian Liberation Day, April 25th, throughout the 1970s and 1980s Calvino would submit the following essays, such as “Ricordo di una battaglia” [1974], “Il mio 25 aprile” [1975], “Miracolo che ritarda” [1977], “I ritratti del Duce” [1983] and “Tante storie che abbiamo dimenticato” [1985] for prominent national newspapers such as *Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica* (cf. Calvino 1994: 50-58; Calvino 1995 (2): 2810-2813; Ibid. 2303-2305; Ibid. 2878-2891; Ibid. 2912-2919). With such a rich and extensive corpus to choose from, any scholar seeking to write about Italo Calvino and his writings about war must, unfortunately, surrender to the subtle and political art of selection, the process of which will be discussed presently with regards to Calvino’s complicated relationship as a writer of fiction.

Italo Calvino’s continual reexamination of the war story, although not all the genres in which he elaborated on it could be placed on these pages in the depth they deserve,

sparks important questions of memory, forgetting and commemoration, historical facts, and literary fiction, the symbiosis between the written and the non-written world. Tracing the encounters with nonhuman animals of the human male protagonists of Calvino's first three war novels and novellas – *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, *Il visconte dimezzato*, and *Il barone rampante* – aims to question the definition of humanity in times of war as it is represented in a story. Calvino's first novel, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, would reflect the conflicts between partisans, Fascists, and Germans post-1943 in Italy, which Calvino experienced first-hand. The wars that would provide the historical backdrop for the other two novels would be, respectively, the Ottoman-Hapsburg wars of the late seventeenth century in *Il visconte dimezzato*, and the French Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century for *Il barone rampante* (Calvino 1991: 1391). Instead of comparing *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* with Calvino's Neorealist writings from the immediate postwar period, the inclusion of *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il barone rampante* from his so-called "fantastic" trilogy aims to purposefully broaden the definition of the parameters of the war story. It is interesting to note that of the two 'ancestors' from the post-facto trilogy of *I nostri antenati* discussed in this dissertation, only viscount Medardo's survival as two half-persons when he is split in half vertically by an Ottoman cannonball could be defined as "fantastic." In contrast, Cosimo's ascent to the trees might be described as "fanciful, weird or eccentric rather than impossible" (Tompkins 2015: xx). The centrality of the protagonist as a conduit between real and fictional worlds, text and life, which has already been briefly mentioned above with regards to his 1955 essay "Il midollo del leone," can also be utilized to further our forthcoming discussion on the importance of the novel and novellas as literary genres for the author (Calvino 1995 (1): 9).

As a crafter of stories for over forty years of his life, Calvino was the first to admit the significance of his entry into writing through his life experiences. He would relate in an interview in 1957 with the same name, “la Resistenza mi ha messo al mondo,”: “la Resistenza mi ha messo al mondo, anche come scrittore. Tutto quel che scrivo e penso parte da quell’esperienza” (Calvino 2012: 34). Although he would write many of the short stories that came to be collected in *Ultimo viene il corvo* [1949] before *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, the genres of the novel and the novella would be significant for the author because of its unique abilities to capture and dialogue with life beyond its pages. As Noble Prize-winning author, Orhan Pamuk would inscribe in his Norton lectures many years after Calvino’s demise:

Novels gain their evocative power by drawing on our everyday experiences and sensations by capturing the essential features of life. Novels also form a rich and powerful archive—of common human feelings, our perceptions of ordinary things, our gestures, utterances, and attitudes. Various sounds, words, colloquialisms, smells, images, tastes, objects, and colors are remembered only because novelists observe them and carefully make note of them in their writings (Pamuk 2010: 130).

While Calvino might have agreed with the concept of novels as storage receptacles of artifacts from everyday life, he also believed they were a tool that could be used to understand the world better. According to Pier Francesco Lieti’s interview with Calvino in 1956, for Calvino novels also “corrispond[ono] a un modo d’interpretare i nessi della vita umana, che vige dagli inizi della letteratura e ancora più in là, e che continuerà sempre a vigere” (Calvino 2012: 25). He was cautious about attributing more power to literature than was its due, however. In his 1960 essay entitled “Pavese: essere e fare,” Calvino would write that that which “la letteratura può insegnarci non sono i metodi pratici, i risultati da raggiungere, ma solo gli atteggiamenti. Il resto non è lezione da trarre dalla letteratura: è la

vita che deve insegnarlo” (Calvino 1995 (1): 78). In an interview from 1956 Calvino would note the transformative power stored in works of literature, especially in the genre of the novel on account of its resonance with the real world:

Il *romanzo* in tutte le sue accezioni storiche è storia profana di *metamorfosi*: metamorfosi che possono essere un’educazione, un trapasso sociale individuale o collettivo, una guerra individuale o collettiva, un contrasto d’amore, una scelta di coscienza, ogni cosa rappresentata oggettivamente o simbolicamente o interiormente, purché esprima questo movimento in atto nel mondo reale, la continuità e continua diversità del reale (Calvino 2012: 25-26).

Calvino did not believe that the natural world should be precluded from human experience and our stories about it, but rather that they were inextricable from one another.

In addition to Calvino’s previously mentioned essay on the *written* and *non-written* worlds, his invested interest in the natural aspect of the non-written world may also have been encouraged on account of having been born into a family of scientists. Literature, books, and stories are not merely the means of escape from the tangible world for Calvino, but rather, a way to convey one’s experience of it. Indeed, as Calvino would write in his 1982 preface to Pliny’s *Storia naturale* entitled “Il cielo, l’uomo, l’elefante,” human life cannot be relegated to a realm outside of the natural world. Instead, Calvino would write that nature is akin to “ciò che è esterno all’uomo ma che non si distingue da ciò che è più intrinseco alla sua mente, l’alfabeto dei sogni, il cifrario dell’immaginazione, senza il quale non si dà ragione né pensiero” (Calvino 1995 (1): 929). These inextricable ties between the natural world and storytelling can also refer to the role of nonhuman animals in human stories continually for millennia through a variety of media, from ancient cave drawings to

present-day cartoons.¹ While the Paleolithic cave drawings of Lascaux, France are well known for their depictions of animals as some of the most prominent subjects of storytelling within that art form, in the Neolithic ruins of Çatalhöyük in present-day Turkey, there was an unexpected discovery. The inability to find a proportionate amount of leopard bones on the archeological sites to the depictions of leopards has led archeologists to believe that this place features a “narrative character of the wall paintings [that] remains unparalleled in Anatolia and the Middle East at this date” (Hodder 2006: 16). Nonhuman animals, whether they are a part of everyday human society and life or the human imagination, have irrevocably enriched our acts of storytelling throughout time and history.

Throughout this dissertation, not only did the decision of which texts to include the need to be selective. The analysis of which species of nonhuman animals, in conjunction with their interactions and relationships with the male protagonists, also had to be carefully chosen. Albeit scholars could spend ages indexing the various species of a veritable menagerie of animals populating Calvino’s works, some recurrent and prominent examples did emerge. While certain insects and gastropods, such as spiders, butterflies, lice, snails, and fleas, do make notable appearances throughout the texts, these creatures did not interact with the protagonists and narrators as much as other species of nonhuman animals

¹ I presented a paper in March 2017 at the 10th Annual Italian Graduate Studies Conference held at the University College Cork, Ireland, entitled “Drawing Animals: An Art, an Exercise, and a Folly” about breaking the boundary between adult and child fiction through the agency drawing animals afforded to the main characters, male and female, adult and child alike in two works by Italo Calvino in the late 1970s. With that paper I compared two contemporary pieces by Calvino, the chapter “Sporgendosi dalla costa scosciosa” from *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* [1979], and the short story that appeared in the *Corriere dei piccoli* entitled “I disegni arrabbiati” [1977] (cf. Calvino 1992: 642-649; Calvino 1994: 347-351).

did.² Thus, despite an effort to break dichotomies, there did arise a need to focus on certain species of nonhuman animals, specifically: horses, birds, dogs, and cats. These four species were not chosen arbitrarily, but rather, are a part of an observed pattern that demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of

animals represented in literature are those that exist in closest proximity to humans. This includes domesticated animals, to be sure, but also those with which we have historically had the most frequent contact: animals we hunt, animals we collect, animals we eat, animals we pet, etc. That horses, dogs, cats, parrots, pigs, and other domesticated or socialized animals are the most frequently represented is thus hardly surprising (Ortiz Robles 2016: 19).

These nonhuman animals' close associations with the male protagonists and narrators of the following texts also inspire questions about the nature of storytelling in Calvino's war novels.

Storytelling has been argued as a defining element that renders us human and the rest of nonhuman creatures as animals (cf. Gottschall 2013: xi-xvii). The concept of human beings as "storytelling animals" is useful to encourage dialogue and not to further established binary systems of thought on the matter. Historically,

this division can be traced back through the history of Western thought in the different iterations of the definition of the human as a privileged species of animal that has or has had something extra or supplementary appended to its animal nature: the human is a political animal (Aristotle); a promising animal (Nietzsche); an animal with soul (Descartes); a time-keeping animal (Heidegger) (Ortiz Robles 2016: 3).

Rather than adding yet another boundary line between humans and nonhuman animals, Gottschall's idea helps coagulate currents already present in Italian literary scholarship on

² I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Professor Clodagh Brook for pointing out this useful truth that had escaped my tunnel vision of Calvino's texts over the past six years of preparing my doctoral thesis.

the importance of storytelling and the presence of nonhuman animals in Calvino's works, such as Isotta Piazza's *I personaggi lettori* (2009) and Carpané's article on animal interrupters of male protagonists' reading of texts (cf. 2009; cf. 2011). Gottschall draws on literary history, critical theory, evolutionary biology, psychology, and neuroscience to demonstrate how storytelling is not an idle pastime unique to human beings, but rather, that it is a quintessential component of being a human. The communication of tales and narratives through dance, music, literature, sporting events, and film, among other media, for supposedly non-practical purposes proves to be a crucial development in our human survival (Gottschall 2013: 29). Indeed, the content of conflict-driven stories serves as "a virtual reality simulator where people and other animals hone responses to life's big challenges" (Ibid. 77). War stories are not intended to be manuals on military strategy. Instead, they can vividly depict the cost of human and nonhuman animals' lives lost to the war machine throughout time. Calvino's unique poetics from the margins, which will be discussed below, tackles this question in such a way as to invite dialogue and critical thinking to convey the heights and depths of our humanity in wartime.

A fundamental component and added strength of Calvino's poetics lies in his use of a perspective on the margins - "non di petto ma di scorcio" - to "spezzare la retorica" (Calvino 1991: 1191; Bertoni and Ferraro 2003: 29). Throughout the three texts serving as literary case studies in the following chapters of this dissertation, how Calvino's poetics from a "di scorcio" perspective resonates with the investigation of the definition of humanity in wartime through animals should be contextualized for each text. Before that, it is essential to note that common to all three works is an invested interest in the role of the stories' narrators. Although Calvino was referring to his use of a child narrator, Pin, for *Il*

sentiero dei nidi di ragno, to define his perspective as “di scorcio,” Pin was not the only child narrator of the male protagonists’ stories. While Pin was unique among the texts discussed because he was both a protagonist and a narrator, the narrators of *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il barone rampante* are not disinterested or neutral parties. Calvino purposefully chose intradiegetic narrators who were involved but in some way removed from the action of the plot, such as viscount Medardo’s nameless nephew who was based on “un «io» ragazzo, una specie di Carlo di Fratta” from Ippolito Nievo’s *Le confessioni di un italiano* [1867] as well as Cosimo’s younger brother by four years, Biagio, respectively (Calvino 1991: 1218). In creating Pin’s character, not only did Calvino, as a reader and student of comparative literature, have many examples of child protagonists/narrators in his archive of memory from Italian literature: Ippolito Nievo’s *Le confessioni d’un italiano* [1867] and Carlo Collodi’s *Le avventure di Pinocchio* [1883], but also from various sources of world literature, such as Lewis Carroll’s Alice from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-glass* [1865, 1871], both Mowgli from *The Jungle Book* [1894] and Kim from the eponymous novel [1901] by Rudyard Kipling, as well as Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s *Le Petit Prince* [1943], among others. Albeit this is a dissertation focused on providing a character analysis of the male protagonists, how their stories are told through their indispensable relationships with the narrators of their lives’ stories cannot be neglected. Beyond special attention to the narrators, each of the three novels serving as literary case studies in the three chapters of this dissertation demonstrates how Calvino’s poetics from a “di scorcio” perspective resonate with investigation the definition of humanity in wartime through storied animals.

While Calvino was able to articulate his use of a marginal, “di scorcio,” perspective for *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* as early as in his preface to the 1964 edition, almost twenty years after the novel’s initial publication, in an interview as late as 1983 he would continue to discuss the mechanics of this dynamic in his writing. Although well-read in the literary-critical theories of estrangement and “defamiliarization” based on the writings by Bertolt Brecht and Viktor Shklovsky, the former of which will be analyzed in greater detail shortly, Calvino would argue during his 1983 interview at the Teatro Sperimentale Giansanti in Pesaro, Italy, that as a writer he “istintivamente h[a] scelto di vedere la Resistenza attraverso gli occhi di un ragazzino che poco a poco si rendeva conto di quello che succedeva, ma non del tutto” (cf. Shklovsky 2004: 16-17; Calvino 2012: 542). Pin’s character destabilizes discussions of life, love, and death in a war novel on account of his threshold stance between child and adulthood. An orphan and the younger brother of a prostitute, Pin is continually attempting to distinguish between affectionate familial, if not the romantic love of adults such as Kim, and the mechanical or biological fulfillment of sexual lust. Although such a distinction will touch the other male protagonists of these novels, Kojève’s categories of animal and anthropogenetic Desire will help contextualize this point (1980: 4-6).

Furthermore, Pin’s threshold stance is not only based on his age on the brink between child and adulthood. It is also based on his movement between town and countryside, and his interests in nonhuman animals that adults might not notice or might even despise, such as spiders and frogs. Although the psychology student who would become a brigade commissar, Kim, does not encounter many nonhuman animals, his position within the narrative can also be described as along the margins. Calvino would

reflect that; as a student of agriculture and forestry who had enrolled in the partisan brigades, he could relate to Kim's perspective of the Resistance "come uno studente borghese vissuto in un mondo molto tranquillo che si trovava immesso in una realtà brutale e terribile, quindi completamente diversa dalla storia di un bambino sottoproletario. Però la distanza era corrispondente, era simmetrica" (2012: 542). Together both Pin and Kim's characters expressed perceptions of the author's experience and understanding of the effects of the war and the Resistance. Calvino would further add: "Io sono tanto in quel personaggio di monello dei bassifondi quanto nell'intellettuale che commenta; nessuno dei due è me stesso ma in qualche modo partecipo dell'uno e dell'altro" (Ibid.). A writer for Calvino was not just an observer but also a participant in and of the real world to fully incorporate reflections of it into such a text. That participant does not always have to be in the center stage to make themselves heard, however. How Calvino would make use of the threshold, the margins, and a "di scorcio" poetics in the other two literary texts, *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il barone rampante*, will be described below.

While in his first novel, Calvino would break down barriers and dichotomies raised between children and adults, friends and enemies, town and countryside, he would use his "di scorcio" poetics to confront the concept of humans as "the language animal" (cf. Taylor 2016). It bears reminding that a plethora of nonhuman animals possesses language as a means of practical communication if not for storytelling (cf. Friend 2004). Calvino turns this idea on its head by having the two halves of viscount Medardo in *Il visconte dimezzato* use animals' very bodies to form languages and is complemented by analysis of Shklovsky's theory of "defamiliarization" (2004: 16). Shklovsky's critical writing on "defamiliarization" would prove more applicable to discussion of *Il visconte dimezzato*

than *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* on account of the text that the Russian formalist argued it was exemplified by, namely, Leo Tolstoy's story of a horse, "Kholstomer" (cf. 2013: 445-459). Horses are noticeably absent from the warfare and Calvino's novel of the Second World War. Yet, they would be vital components of the historical fictionalized war between the Austro-Hungarian Empire against the Ottomans in *Il visconte dimezzato*. Albeit the nonhuman animals of Calvino's war novels do not speak themselves akin to Kholstomer's recounting of his own life story, they assist to confront "l'uomo contemporaneo...dimezzato, cioè incompleto, «alienato»" as Calvino would respond to Carlo Salinari's letter about his recently published novella, *Il visconte dimezzato* in 1962 (Calvino 2000: 353). One way to encourage people to move beyond the confines of their comfort zones and expectations is to upend the very tools they use to communicate, understand, and convey experiences of the world, namely language.

Drawing on a rich library of texts as well as contemporary debate, Calvino would engage in the question of language not only through fiction but in essays and interviews. He would note in his 1967 essay "Cibernetica e fantasmi" that with the methods available to twentieth-century questions of language and linguistics, "l'uomo sta[va] cominciando a capire come si smonta e come si rimonta la più complicata e la più imprevedibile di tutte le sue macchine: il linguaggio" (Calvino 1995 (1): 211). Calvino as well as Galileo, John Gray and Giorgio Agamben's reflections on the written word as the watershed between human and nonhuman animal languages will be further discussed with regards to *Il visconte dimezzato* on pages 72-73 and 92 of this dissertation (Ibid. 678; Galileo 1957: 237-238; Gray 2002: 86; Agamben 2004: 36). Although not an exclusively human tool, for language to be truly communicative, Calvino would argue in his 1965 essay "L'antilingua"

that language “vive solo d’un rapporto con la vita che diventa comunicazione d’una pienezza esistenziale che diventa espressione” (Calvino 1995 (1): 155). Calvino would expound upon his position by situating his thoughts within contemporary literary and philosophical quandaries of his times. According to the author’s interview with Helene Harth in 1985, Calvino believed that:

In questo momento la letteratura e la filosofia oscillano fra due estremi, o il pensare che ci sia solo il linguaggio e il mondo non esista, o il pensare che il mondo esista ma è ineffabile, cioè non si può tradurre in linguaggio. Io vedo il fascino di una posizione e dell’altra, però non mi sento di condividere né l’una posizione né l’altra. Credo che esista il mondo, non scritto, non parlato, indipendentemente dal linguaggio, e credo anche che il linguaggio possa avvicinarsi a rappresentarlo pur senza pretendere di sostituirsi a esso, possa cercare di conoscerlo per via di continue approssimazioni (Calvino 2012: 614).

Even though Calvino is aware of the faults and pitfalls of language, it is one of the tools of art at his disposal to produce a dialogue throughout his first three war stories. While both *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il barone rampante* challenge humans’ monopoly on the written word of storytelling via language, the last novel additionally complicates the use of clothing to distinguish human from nonhuman animals.

Although the plots of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and *Il visconte dimezzato* would evolve over a moment in the protagonists’ lives – Pin’s time in the mountains with the partisan brigades, viscount Medardo’s troubled homecoming from battle, *Il barone rampante* offers sixty-five years of the story of Cosimo’s life in the trees as well as the unfortunate events proceeding it. Although Pin, Kim, and viscount Medardo will learn new facets of the boundaries of humanity, the lifelong journey of Cosimo’s story presents the relentless progression of time on the human body, mind, and soul. Cosimo’s rebellion, contextualized with those of his elder sister Battista and his half-uncle il Cavaliere

Avvocato, will blur the lines between nobleman and vagabond, hunter and hunted, lover and beloved. As Calvino would later entitle his preface to the Einaudi edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in 1979 as "Gli indistinti confini," Calvino's works also would be based on the interplay with the in-between-ness of animality and humanity, of reality and the imagination, which are the foundation of Calvino and Ovid's worlds that are in constant motion and transformation (Calvino 1995 (1): 905). Calvino would also engage with lines from the diary of his mentor, Cesare Pavese [1908-1950]. Namely, with the idea that stories are inextricably tied to life. With the following examination of Pavese's terminology in Calvino's previously mentioned essay from 1960 entitled "Pavese: essere e fare," Calvino could study and appreciate Pavese's thought that a protagonist's story does not remain on the page. Instead,

essere tragicamente vuol dire condurre il dramma individuale – anziché spenderlo come moneta spicciola – a una forza concentrata che impronti di sé ogni tipo di azione, d'opera, ogni fare umano, vuol dire trasformare il fuoco d'una tensione esistenziale in un operare storico, fare della sofferenza o della felicità privata, queste immagini della nostra morte (ogni felicità individuale, in quanto porta in sé la sua fine, ha una controparte di dolore), degli elementi di comunicazione e di metamorfosi, cioè delle forze di vita (Ibid. 79-80).

The adventures and misadventures of Calvino's third male protagonist, Cosimo, provide intriguing intersections between the human and nonhuman animal world by close examination of the importance attached to clothing to either reaffirm or deny one's humanness. Cosimo's development of hunting skills to become a nobleman of the trees and his being hunted later after he has lost his sanity to love, exposes the fragility of the defining line between the hunter and being hunted. A respectful interpretation of all three of Calvino's war stories through the lens of his "di scorcio" poetics will be complemented by

the immense corpus of Calvino scholarship as well as comparative literary tools in conjunction with multidisciplinary studies.

Finding an untraveled path in the scholarship of one of Italy's most prominent intellectuals and writers of the previous century should be considered a new Herculean task. Some notable literary studies that have uncovered new trails include Maria Enrica Ferrara's aforementioned *Storia di una passione rimossa* about Calvino's engagement with the craft of theatre throughout his life or Bridget Tompkin's feminist reading of selected works from the 1950s in *Calvino and the Pygmalion Paradigm* (cf. 2011; cf. 2015). Isotta Piazza's *I personaggi lettori nell'opera di Italo Calvino* investigates the importance of reading protagonists throughout Italo Calvino's oeuvre, which is complemented by the value of reading and readers as described in the author's correspondence and essays beyond the confines of a fictional text (cf. 2009). Although the fictional setting in sixteen out of thirty-two of Calvino's creative pieces do not mention it explicitly, how the real space of the city of the author's childhood, San Remo, is presented and distorted in representation for the writer as much as the characters he crafts are highlighted in Nocentini's *Italo Calvino and the Landscape of Childhood* (cf. 2000). Beyond the critical but defined borders of literary studies, multidisciplinary studies of Italo Calvino's oeuvre have been conducted in Lucia Re's *Calvino and the Age of Neorealism: Fables of Estrangement* which include: narratological, sociohistorical, psychoanalytic, and Bakhtian readings as well as the psychoanalytical readings in Roberto Bertoni's *Inta'brigu Intu'bagu* and Robert Rushing in his articles "What We Desire, We Shall Never Have: Calvino, Zizek, and Ovid" or "Tutto è zuppa!," among others (cf. Re 1990; Bertoni 1993; Rushing 2006; Rushing 2010). Bolongaro's *Italo Calvino and the Compass of Literature* would

draw on the apparent tension between literature and politics throughout Calvino's early period, from 1947-1963, by contextualizing his findings with a first chapter on the contemporary historical and intellectual debates from which to continue his literary criticism of selected fictional works from Calvino's oeuvre (cf. 2003). Although many disciplines of knowledge have been incorporated into this dissertation, it is particularly invested in further developing the presence of Animal Studies in Calvino scholarship.

Animal Studies, as a relatively new and growing field in scholarship, appears to invite such a multidisciplinary collaborative approach. While each of the following critics' works will be discussed in greater detail later, the extensive work of Andrea Dini, Serenella Iovino, Damiano Benvegnù, and Eugenio Bolongaro, among others, to bring Animal Studies into Calvino scholarship has helped shape this dissertation immeasurably (cf. Dini 2002; Iovino 2011; Iovino 2013; Iovino 2014; Benvegnù 2016a; Benvegnù 2016b; Bolongaro 2003; Bolongaro 2009). Without Gian Carlo Ferretti's examination of Calvino's poetics as demonstrated in his nonfiction newspaper articles and essays, as his poignantly titled monograph *Le capre di Bikini* suggests, the importance of animals in Calvino's oeuvre and to his poetics might have remained on the margins of Calvino scholarship (cf. 1989). In that volume, Ferretti drew out Calvino's rightful place as truly a formative and engaging part of Italian culture throughout the twentieth century. Calvino achieved this with not only his creative writing in novels and short stories, his editorial and consulting work at Einaudi, or even his essays and letters. Ferretti highlights that Calvino would also engage through writing for newspapers, to which he would contribute throughout his life: *l'Unità* in the forties and fifties, in the same period contemporary to the three main novels that will be discussed in this dissertation, *Il Giorno* in the sixties, *Corriere della sera* in the

seventies, and *La Repubblica* in the seventies and eighties. While these Calvino scholars have left the most significant impact on the formation of this piece, this dissertation is not only a critical literature project but revolves around a dialogue with comparative literary poetics and multidisciplinary studies.

Albeit this dissertation is first and foremost a critical literature project based on a meticulous examination of the original text, the avenues of knowledge engaged in supporting this multifaceted inquiry into the breadth, depths, and heights of humanity as depicted in war stories involves more than can be contained in one field alone. Utilizing tools of comparative literary analysis to incorporate a variety of literary texts ensures that, although Italo Calvino's unique poetics remains at the core of the discussion, these novels are read in dialogue not only with each other but also with literary texts ranging in periods from Antiquity to those contemporary to their writing, as well as over a range of works of literature and languages from around the world. This thesis does not revolve around one theoretical frame, as feminist critics such as Bridget Tompkins has done in her recent monograph or Benvegnù's article has engaged in study of postcolonial ecocriticism, or as Lucia Re's multidisciplinary monograph has done, to provide but a few examples (cf. Tompkins 2015; Benvegnù 2016b; Re 1990). Nor does not pretend to engage the question of the animal from the animal's perspectives and give voices to their biological realities. Instead, this dissertation aims to provide a sample of scholarship based on interrelated themes that arise when juxtaposing the role of humans, nonhuman animals, and storytelling within his early period war novels and novellas, which are supported by providing a variety of avenues to approach this puzzling question of a characteristic essence of humanity in times of war as represented in literature.

First and foremost, as a thesis on Italo Calvino's literary works, the primary importance of revealing the craft of his storytelling examined in the following pages of this dissertation is not only inspired by a reader's perspective of these works. Instead, it also stems from a phrase in Calvino's 1985 Norton lecture "Rapidità" that the craft of writing truly "è [la] ricerca d'un'espressione necessaria, unica, densa, concisa, memorabile" (Calvino 1995 (1): 671). Besides, the attempt at including various and diverse branches of knowledge to enrich the present critical dialogue with his texts is inspired by another of his 1985 Norton lectures, "Leggerezza" in which Calvino writes: "Abituato come sono a considerare la letteratura come ricerca di conoscenza, per muovermi sul terreno esistenziale ho bisogno di considerare esteso all'antropologia, all'etnologia, alla mitologia" (Ibid. 653). Thus, a two-fold approach blends comparative literary studies and meticulous analysis of the original text with multidisciplinary studies within the limits of the scholar's resources and capabilities. While the original text is the foundation for the thesis, it is complemented and contextualized with primary texts from literary traditions from around the world.

As both a reader and writer, Italo Calvino had a well-established connection with ancient and contemporary classics, which he would interact with or incorporate into his fiction and nonfiction works. Two definitive characteristics of classics utilized throughout this dissertation are based on Calvino's definitions from his 1981 essay "Perché leggere i classici." The first notes how the effects of a classical work of literature are not static, but simultaneously reflect prior texts that inspired them and shape the future of written works after their publication: "I classici sono quei libri che ci arrivano portando su di sé la traccia delle letture che hanno preceduto la nostra e dietro di sé la traccia che hanno lasciato nella cultura o nelle culture che hanno attraversato (o più semplicemente nel linguaggio o nel

costume)” (Calvino 1995 (2): 1818-1819). Furthermore, regardless of their position in the canon of literature or within a specific or universal context: “un classico è un’opera che provoca incessantemente un pulviscolo di discorsi critici su di sé, ma continuamente se li scrolla di dosso” (Ibid. 1819). Despite the shelves and libraries of secondary criticism on a given text, that original text will remain unfathomable and inaccessible to readers’ and scholars’ [re]discoveries of it, according to Calvino. Authors’ original contributions are inevitably in dialogue with the works of their predecessors. Indeed, the beauty of having and acknowledging one’s place within a living and breathing literary “tradizione” is according to Calvino’s 1948 essay “Saremo come Omero!” to have an opportunity to “innovar[si] e innestare i nuovi contenuti” (Calvino 1995 (1): 1483-1484). Without having to corroborate that the following books actually graced Calvino’s physical library, their resonance with his creative works stands to be presented and contextualized.

The library of texts that dialogue with Calvino’s war novels and novellas span works from Antiquity to his contemporary era across languages and literary traditions. While each of the following components of comparative literary analysis will be analyzed in detail throughout the dissertation, a brief survey of texts will be presented here to demonstrate the breadth of comparative literary texts from which Calvino could have formed his verbal depictions of nonhuman animals in his war novels and novellas. Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, Virgil’s *The Aeneid*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, and Aesop’s *Fables* provide comparative stories to the later folkloric and fable traditions from Italy, Germany, France, and Denmark in the 1600s-1800s, which include: Giovanni Straparola, Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen (cf. Homer 1990; Homer 1997; Virgil 2013; Ovid 2016; Aesop 1998; Straparola 1927; Perrault 2002; Grimm

2014; Andersen 2008). Two writers from this period that do not fall under the folkloric or fable tradition that will feature prominently in our research on animals in Calvino's war novels include Cervantes' *Don Quixote* [1611] and Leo Tolstoy for not only the aforementioned "Kholstomer. The Story of a Horse," [1886] but also for *War and Peace* [1864].

Calvino's knowledge of writers and texts from the Italian tradition was further complemented by his interest in Anglophone writing and authors. Spanning from the 1200s to his contemporaries of the 1940s and 1950s, Calvino would engage with texts by Dante [1265-1321], Boccaccio [1313-1375], Petrarca [1337-1374], Ludovico Ariosto [1474-1533], Torquato Tasso [1544-1595], Galileo [1564-1642], Alessandro Manzoni [1785-1873], Giacomo Leopardi [1798-1837], Carlo Collodi [1826-1890], Ippolito Nievo [1831-1861], Italo Svevo [1861-1928], Aldo Palazzeschi [1885-1974], Eugenio Montale [1896-1981], Carlo Levi [1902-1975], Cesare Pavese [1908-1950], and Elio Vittorini [1908-1966], among others. Calvino's interest in Anglophone writers dates back not only to his childhood fascination with Rudyard Kipling [1865-1936]. After the Second World War, Calvino would eventually graduate from his interrupted university studies with a thesis on Josef Conrad [1857-1924], which has been analyzed in detail in an article by María José Calvo Montoro (cf. 2011). Other prominent Anglophone writers that will elaborate our discussion of war novel and novellas include Daniel Defoe [1660-1731], Jack London [1876-1916], James Joyce [1882-1941], and Flann O'Brien [1911-1966], among others. Calvino's avid readership of the classics has been established for far longer than his relatability to other fields of knowledge that have informed the multidisciplinary aspect of this dissertation's framework.

Although the fact that this dissertation does not follow one theoretical framework has been mentioned previously, the variety of concepts it does include should be presented and contextualized more thoroughly. The multidisciplinary nature of the following fields, Animal Studies, Zooanthropology, and Ecocriticism, is a common feature they share, and yet each area is distinct. This dissertation focuses not just on the study of nonhuman animals as the term Animal Studies might suggest, but rather, on their interactions with humans, which Zooanthropology examines specifically. Ecocriticism, in contrast, analyzes literature and the environment, which can include nonhuman animals. Many of the scholars and their texts included here do not grapple with the role of nonhuman animals in literature or thought through one field of study alone, but rather incorporate other disciplines.

Giorgio Agamben's integration of philosophy and biopolitics are informed by profound considerations of linguistics and literary studies, as but an example. Two key concepts of his that have shaped this dissertation include the idea of an open space between man and animal rather than a strict dichotomy, as well as his analysis of the werewolf figure caught between being lawless and being outside the realm of law through literature, cultural studies, and political thought (cf. 2004; cf. 1998). Some scholars who have gone beyond the theoretical to tackle the practical implications of the marginalization of animals directly include Roberto Marchesini and John Berger. Marchesini is a practicing veterinary and philosopher who has written on Zooanthropology and Posthumanism from the 1980s to the present. He has particularly highlighted the idea of breaking down walls and dichotomies among the species of humans and nonhuman animals via "*il concetto di soglia*, nell'idea che non esista un'ontologia umana separata-separabile dal non umano perché la realtà è fatta di soglie e non di muri" (Marchesini 2014b: 136). John Berger, a

writer and an art critic, has considered the marginalization of nonhuman animals in art, thought, and physical space and how that is related to a gradual shift away from nature for humans (cf. 1980). The scholastic duo of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's interest along the threshold spaces manifests itself in their concept of "becoming-animal," as well as its variations of "becoming-child" and "becoming-woman" (2003: 303, 323). While Jacques Derrida is an established authority on the field of semiotics, his recent lectures "The animal that therefore I am" and "The Beast and the Sovereign" engage the gaze of a cat at his clothed or unclothed body, as well as reexamining Daniel Defoe's novel, *Robinson Crusoe* (cf. 2008; cf. 2010). Peter Arnds' recent monograph on the import of the werewolf figure throughout German literary history to questions of power and parasitism, from the middle ages to the postwar era, has positively influenced the limited study of the role of wolves in Italo Calvino's war novels discussed in this dissertation (cf. 2015). These critical concepts from multidisciplinary studies will be complemented by other fields of study throughout this dissertation. Other noteworthy works of scholarship, from Calvino studies, literary criticism, comparative literary studies, and multidisciplinary studies with nonhuman animals at the center of their focus, cannot all be summarized here but must be encountered throughout the following pages.

While these texts from literary criticism, comparative literature, and multidisciplinary studies have been presented, key concepts and terms defined, how they come together in this thesis, and make this dissertation stand out are shown in the following elaboration of this thesis's argument. War stories recur in Calvino's oeuvre, but studies focusing on the war novel and novella across the divide between the Neorealist period or fantastic genre has not been previously discussed. The following dissertation presents but

one possible line of inquiry to emphasize a timeless and timely question of the definition of humanity in wartime and war stories. The presence of nonhuman animals is critical to the discussion of the stories of the male protagonists in his first three war novels and novellas. Calvino's animals are not ornamental, but rather, are carefully constructed components that elaborate on humans' fascination with both animals and storytelling for centuries. This idea is built on not only Calvino's "di scorcio" poetics of the margins but is also founded upon his close entwinement of the written and the nonwritten world. Rational geometry and wonderous enchantment come together, much like the following food-based metaphor Calvino would use to describe the inextricability of fantasy from reality in his 1982 interview with Alberto Sinigaglia entitled "Le età dell'uomo": "per prima cosa ci vogliono delle basi di esattezza, metodo, contretezza, senso della realtà. È soltanto su una certa solidità prosaica che può nascere una creatività; la fantasia è come la marmellata, bisogna che sia spalmata su una solida fetta di pane" (Calvino 1995 (2): 2868). This project aspires to meaningfully intersect studies on the war experience in Italo Calvino's oeuvre with that of nonhuman animals in a different light than has been previously studied before. Before detailing exactly how that dynamic will unfold in this dissertation, it is necessary to consider the questions raised by previous scholarship on each subject individually.

As Calvino's life story has already made the reader aware, his own experience as a partisan during the Second World War has been the subject of not only biographical studies on the Italian author, but rather, the topic of literary criticism in Calvino studies. Claudio Milanini's article, "Natura e storia nel «Sentiero» di Italo Calvino" utilizes questions posed in Calvino's 1958 essay entitled: "Natura e storia nel romanzo" to juxtapose analysis of the roles along the margins of nature, the connection between history and stories, as well as the

literary context of Neorealism and Existentialism to the author's debut novel (cf. Milanini 1985: Calvino 1995 (1): 28-51). While the entirety of the articles and monographs written on *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* cannot be listed here, it is interesting to note that Milanini would also study Calvino's writings on his experience of the Second World War through both fiction and nonfiction. In Milanini's article, "Calvino e la Resistenza: l'identità in gioco," Milanini uses archival material, Italo Calvino's handwritten notes, and testimonials of partisans from the same area and period to reconstruct biographical facts about Italo Calvino's experience as a partisan from approximately June 1944-April 1945 (cf. 1997: 174-177). The second section focuses on Calvino's published works within the genre of Neorealism, the novel *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (1947), and the short story collection *Ultimo viene il corvo* (1949) (Ibid. 178). He further includes Calvino's contributions to newspapers on the anniversary of Italy's Liberation Day, on April 25th, which is still a commemorative national holiday that celebrates the fall of Mussolini's dictatorship and the end of the Second World War (Ibid.). Although Milanini's article is an excellent guide to tracing Italo Calvino's writings about his war experience, as has been mentioned previously, this author would also write about this and others wars, such as the Charlemagne's Crusades, the Austro-Ottoman wars, the Korean War and the effects of the Cold War, through diverse media: short stories, newspaper articles, songwriting, art criticism, among others.

While Lollini would also touch briefly upon biographical information about Italo Calvino's experience of the Resistance, his essay would instead focus on how Calvino would write about an ethics of historical memory in his 1974 incomplete autobiographical essay, "Ricordo di una battaglia," which describes not just the author's recollections of his

participation in the battle of Baiardo on March 17th, 1944, but simultaneously raises questions about the intricate ethics of memory, forgetfulness, and commemoration (cf. Lollini 2006; Calvino 1994: 50-58). Sica's captivating recent article utilizes a single image to bring together a theme that touches upon war and nonhuman animals in Italo Calvino's oeuvre, that of the male warrior/knight/commander on horseback (cf. 2017). By contextualizing the icastic image of Mussolini on a horse that was prominent in the Italian civic landscape throughout Calvino's childhood, which he noted himself in his writings on the subject in the 1983 essay as mentioned earlier "I ritratti del Duce," Sica analyzes the close link between historical facts and literary representations by noting the lack of men on horseback in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, and their reappearance in *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il cavaliere inesistente*, both novels which are set during wars in which horseback warfare was more common (cf. Calvino 1995 (2): 2878-2891). She does not discuss the idea of the reversal of this role in *Il barone rampante*, in which Cosimo, the baron in the trees, does not ride a horse ever, even to fight for a revolution, and yet his beloved Viola rides a horse which conveys her nobility rather than her being a female warrior in the mode of Ludovico Ariosto's Bradamante, as but one example. While Calvino's partisan has been touched upon in Calvino criticism, studies on the nonhuman animals in his works has recently increased with regards to both his early period [1947-1963] but slanted more towards his later works [1963-1985].

While the majority of Calvino scholarship appears to have concentrated on his later period works, from 1963-1985, there have been some essential studies on the roles of animals in his earlier period works. Andrea Dini has analyzed the role of animals in Calvino's poetics from his first period in two essays, one of which focuses on two short

stories from the collection *Ultimo viene il corvo* about the fate of Ligurian countryman on the home front during the war (cf. 2010). The second essay reflects not only on the fact that some of Calvino's earliest critics, Enrico Falqui, Anna Banti, and Cesare Pavese, noted the dominant presence of animals within *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, *Ultimo viene il corvo*, and *Il visconte dimezzato* from as early as 1950 and 1952 but also on Calvino's interest in the animals of both Rudyard Kipling and Walt Disney's stories and films (cf. 2002: 31-32). Chiara Nannicini's article examines the narrative role of animals, be they real or fantastic, capable of speech or not, in Italian folklore and fairytales after Calvino's collection and translation of tales, which was published by Einaudi in 1956 (cf. 2008). Damiano Benvegnù brings postcolonial ecocriticism to Calvino studies in his analysis of Calvino's short story "Fratello pesceccane" and adaptation of Clement Richer's 1941 novel, *TiCoyo et son requin*, for Folco Quilici's 1962 film entitled: "Ti-Koyo e il suo pesceccane" (cf. Benvegnù 2016b; Calvino 1994: 587-603). Studies on animals in Calvino scholarship has not been limited to the more canonical texts of Calvino's rich literary corpus, either in his early period or his later writings.

While some articles focus on the role nonhuman animals in one canonical work from Calvino's later period, others compare texts spanning across the decades of the 1960s, '70s, and '80s of Calvino's literary production. How human's utilization and representation of nonhuman animals, such as the rabbit, in literature, can reveal the practices and values of a culture, as well as a writer's poetics and their thoughts on society, features prominently in Silvia Ross's article on Calvino's *Marcovaldo, ovvero le stagioni in città* from 1963 (cf. 2003). The intersection of human and nonhuman animals in space and thought based on the chapter "Il giardino dei gatti ottusi" from the same novel is mentioned briefly in Mario

Ortiz Robles' section on felids in works of literature (2016: 119-121). One of the most prolific ecocritical scholars on Italo Calvino, Serenella Iovino, has focused on Calvino's later period to conduct her analysis. Two of her articles study the role of madness or disability as a marginalized part of human society in Calvino's *La giornata di uno scrutatore*, which was written between 1953-1963 (Iovino 2011: 67-68; cf. Iovino 2010). Qfwfq, the "shapeshifter" protagonist of Calvino's *Cosmicomiche* [1964] and *Ti con zero* [1965], features prominently as one of the nonhuman storytellers that illustrates the relationship between human and nonhuman animal narrators in "a double dialectic of empathy and defamiliarization, human and non-human experientiality" (Bernaerts et al. 2014: 69). Discussion of Qfwfq's role along the threshold is enhanced by Serenella Iovino's article on the ecologies of the mind in *Le cosmicomiche* where "apparently abstract concepts and from situations that are totally outside the field of human experience, Calvino enacts a narrative/cognitive hybridization: he translates scientific hypotheses and theories into the language of our everyday life; he anthropomorphizes and familiarizes them, disguising them as the setting for ordinary situations" (Iovino 2013: 120). The analysis of nonhuman animals in Calvino's writings in the 1970s will be presented further on as they are not the singular focus of articles on the subject, but rather, are often discussed comparatively across his oeuvre. Thus, we will make a brief frog leap over the 1970s to elucidate on the special attention of academic study given to Calvino's *Palomar* [1983].

The four following articles examine the animals in Calvino's *Palomar* from different perspectives. Fabrice De Poli's article examines three narrative functions of animals in Calvino's *Palomar*: 1) contemplative, 2) anthropological, and 3) metaphysical

(cf. 2006). Elio Attilio Baldi's recent article offers a new reading of *Palomar* as a novel with regards to the conjunction of art and science within it, and specifically includes a section on animals in museums and zoos, which John Berger's previously mentioned article features (Baldi 2018: 12-15; cf. Berger 1980: 15). The following two scholars' articles will directly confront the representation of nonhuman animals in Calvino's final novel. Although the question of the animal as an intellectual debate can be traced through the history of philosophy through the writings of Heidegger [1889-1976], Emmanuel Lévinas [1906-1995], Jacques Derrida [1930-2008], and Giorgio Agamben [1942-present], the animals that populate Calvino's pages do not represent themselves or their biological lives (cf. Calarco 2008). Eugenio Bolongaro's article on the ethical-political role of intellectual relates how "the question of the animal can emerge only when animals are represented, but also, and just as clearly, only when the techniques put into play in the representation of the animal (anthropomorphism, allegory, symbolism) are problematized, as in the works by Calvino" (2009: 110). Carrie Rohman's article, which focuses on the captive zoo animals of the gorilla and the iguana from *Palomar*, acknowledges as well as challenges the need for a deep engagement with the concept of animals' alterity in literature and life (cf. 2009). The roles of nonhuman animals are often analyzed across his oeuvre through comparative literary analysis, which will be briefly contextualized below.

The articles by the following three scholars engage the role of nonhuman animals in Calvino's later period through comparative analysis within his oeuvre. While Serenella Iovino discusses briefly the presence of hybridity in works of Calvino's early period, specifically *Il visconte dimezzato*, *Il barone rampante*, and *Il cavaliere inesistente*, her analysis of *La giornata di una scrutatore*, *Le Cosmicomiche*, and *Palomar* highlights how

“Calvino offre a queste teorie etico-epistemologiche la verità di un universo di figure eloquenti che sono già sempre ‘aliene’ a sé, figure in cui l’alterità è di casa, in un mondo il cui statuto consiste proprio nel generare e nell’accogliere *creativamente* le differenze” (cf. Iovino 2014: 124, Ibid. 136). Her article, “Sedimenting Stories,” provides a geological reconfiguration of narrative studies by analyzing a variety of Calvino’s novels and novellas, including *La formica argentina* [1952], *La speculazione edilizia* [1957], *La nuvola di smog* [1958], *La giornata di uno scrutatore* [1963], *Marcivaldo* [1963], *Le cosmicomiche* [1964], *Ti con zero* [1965], and *Le città invisibili* [1972], to consider the layering of the Anthropocene in culture and society (cf. Iovino 2017). In contrast to focusing on the dynamic of otherness between natural and urban environments, Marco Piana’s article uses the studies of Michail Bakhtin on carnival and the grotesque to bring out the conjunction of corporality and animality in three works by Calvino: *La giornata d’uno scrutatore* [1962], the unfinished novel *La decapitazione dei capi* [1969], and *Palomar* [1983] (cf. 2014: 54). Laura Schram Pighi’s article on “La zoologia fantastica” combines ideas of place, person, and animality by presenting the role of a human protagonist and their “other” double who is often animalized in Italian utopia writing from the mid-1700s to the twentieth century (cf. 2010). How scholars have chosen to pursue the complicated relations between human and nonhuman animals in Calvino’s works has influenced and encouraged the formation of the following dissertation.

With many preliminary steps already arduously laid bare, the final stages should include a few specific words on the following thesis. The resulting work of research does not seek to answer just one question but strives to indicate the variety of avenues available to investigate how human and nonhuman animals’ relations form or tear asunder

characteristic defining features of humanity in war stories. The method used combines a character-based approach by focusing on the male protagonists of each of the following textual case studies with comparative literary criticism and multidisciplinary studies. Some of the critical questions this dissertation attempts to tackle have sprung from considerations of the texts as well as matters of methodology. How do the male protagonists relate, interact, and dialogue with nonhuman animals, such as precisely: horses, cats, dogs, and birds, among others? On the reverse side of the coin, how do nonhuman animals interact with the human male protagonists within these three war stories? How does Calvino's "di scorcio" or defamiliarized poetics foment not any one definition of humanity, but create a threshold between humanity and animality? How do episodes and excerpts from Calvino's texts resonate with texts spanning from antiquity and contemporary literature? What can the recurrent representations of storytelling add to the following discussion of human and nonhuman animal relations? All these questions will be addressed throughout the analysis of each literary case study, which will be elaborated on in detail below.

The final shape of this dissertation includes three content chapters, one for each war novel and novella that discussed the theme of human and nonhuman animals. The first chapter, on *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, considers the roles of the two protagonists, Pin, the child narrator as well as Kim, the psychology student brigade commissar. Pin's interactions among human and nonhuman animals along with the thresholds of child and adulthood, town and countryside, utopic spaces, and battlefields are examined in his relations with partisans, Nazis, Fascists, women, spiders, puppies, wolves, cats, and falcons. Kim's perspective is nearly devoid of contact nonhuman animals, except for some of the partisans

who take their battle names from animals. Yet his humanity finds resonance in his ability to say certain things about love and death that Pin's character cannot.

Although *Il visconte dimezzato*, the novella, which is the subject of the second chapter, is based on the tension along the spectrum between polar dualities, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* first paved the way for questioning binaries and dichotomous thought between human and nonhuman animals. Although humans' monopoly of the skill of language is briefly considered in the third chapter as well, viscount Medardo's inability to read the signs of horses and other animals' bodies on the battlefield leads to his splitting into two vertical halves, il Gramo the sinister right side, and il Buono, the good left half of the viscount. As Calvino would note on his text's apparent surface similarity to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the afore-mentioned interview from 1960 "La distanza e la tensione," Calvino's text, although influenced by Stevenson's, was beyond the "lotta fra il bene e il male. È l'uomo alienato" (Calvino 2012: 49-50). Man's strangeness and alienation from himself and others resonate with the following story of viscount Medardo. His fall in battle and his eventual reunification shows how humanity can not only alienate itself but reintegrate with the nonwritten world. In this novel of dualities, both viscount Medardo's bird adoring father, Aiolfo, and his nameless nephew narrator, Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo, and Sebastiana the nursemaid and Pamela the shepherdess will all aid the viscount to be reunified in body and mind. Although Pamela is a female main character in this thesis' focus on the male protagonists, her role as a formidable semiologist and her contribution to his reunification in terms of linguistic and social understanding cannot go undeveloped. Indeed, the complicated interpersonal dynamics among characters will saturate our discussion of the third chapter.

The third and final content chapter, on *Il barone rampante*, could be deemed a study of comparative rebellions. Although that of Cosimo, as the male protagonist, is the central axis around which the others are compared, one cannot say that the novel is only “la storia di questo ragazzo che a dodici anni decide di salire sugli alberi e di non scendere più per il resto della vita: vi muore a sessantacinque anni dopo aver cacciato, pescato, amato e partecipato alle guerre e alle rivoluzioni del suo tempo,” as Calvino would note in his 1960 interview entitled “La distanza e la tensione” (Calvino 2012: 47). Instead, the role of human and nonhuman animals in the rebellions of both Cosimo’s elder sister, Battista, and their half-uncle, il Cavaliere Avvocato, offer a deeper understanding of the consequences of Cosimo’s refusal to eat snail soup and his subsequent ascent to the trees to never come down to earth again. In addition to questions of language, the idea of humans as a clothes-wearing species is challenged through each of the three rebels’ stories. Articles of clothing and the act of wearing clothes not only help to discern if a being is human or a nonhuman animal. They also associate that person with a part of a group, society, or family. In the case of Cosimo, Battista, and il Cavaliere Avvocato, the clothes they wear depict their marginalization from the center of the community, whether by imposition or by free choice. In addition to the snails, Cosimo’s complicated relationships and encounters with other nonhuman animals such as cats, dogs, wolves, and horses will feature prominently in the following analysis.

The storied nonhuman animals that Pin and Kim, viscount Medardo, and Cosimo encounter throughout the following three chapters have lessons to teach us all about humanity and animality in depictions of war, and not only to students of contemporary Italian literature. Although writers and readers may argue it is not necessarily always best

to begin at the beginning, in the interest of keeping to matters of chronology, the first chapter that analyzes Calvino's first war novel, and indeed his first novel, will be the starting point of this dissertation's investigation into the interactions of male protagonists with various species of nonhuman animals.

CHAPTER 1:

Along the Threshold in Calvino's Bestiary of the Resistance

An author's first published work comes back to haunt them - as Calvino himself noted in his "Prefazione del 1964" - because the first text inevitably becomes a referential baseline for all their future works (cf. Calvino 1991: 1196, 1202). Following a similar line of thought, the author's own life story often influences the contours of the page he or she crafts, despite literary critics' attempts to dissociate the author from their text. Although Calvino would break away from a family of scientists to engage with the humanities and the arts, he would nevertheless bring some of that scientific curiosity into his literary works, most directly in his *Cosmicomiche* from the 1960s (Serra 2006: 176). However, as we shall see from his very first novel, flora and fauna alike would not be mere idle background material, but rather permeate the meaning of the stories he wove. *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, published in the immediate Italian postwar period, stands out for a myriad of reasons, not only for its well-known fable-like qualities but also for its child protagonist, Pin. Before delving into Pin and Kim and their relationships with animals and storytelling, let us situate the literary-historical context of Calvino's novel more firmly.

Calvino's first novel is often referred to as a Neorealist fable, an apparent oxymoron, because albeit it depicts the partisan experience, Pavese was the first to note its fable-like qualities in his review of Calvino's novel in the newspaper *L'Unità*: "Diremo allora che l'astuzia di Calvino, scoiattolo della penna, è stata questa, di arrampicarsi sulle piante, più per gioco che per paura, e osservare la vita partigiana come una favola di bosco, clamorosa, variopinta, «diversa»" (Pavese 1962: 273). Calvino's unique contribution to

Neorealism should be contextualized with other Neorealist literary and cinematic texts from a variety of authors. While Elio Vittorini's "La mia guerra" from his *Piccola Borghesia* [1931] short story collection also had the unusual conjunction of a child narrator and a war story, he would go on to write his more well-known novels, *Conversazione in Sicilia* [1941] and *Uomini e no* [1945], the second of which dealt with the partisan experience. Although in contemporary cinema of the Neorealist genre films such as Rossellini's "Roma, città aperta" [1945] and de Sica's "Ladri di biciclette" [1948] there were notable child characters, their role as protagonists, narrators, or both is not as apparent as that of Calvino's Pin. Indeed, in comparison to the novels published in the same year, 1947 - Vasco Pratolini's *Cronache dei poveri amanti*, Cesare Pavese's *Il compagno*, Primo Levi's first edition of *Se questo è un uomo* - Calvino's novel stood out for this very reason. Renata Viganò's *L'Agnese va a morire* [1949], Carlo Cassola's *La ragazza di Bube* [1959], Luigi Meneghello's *I piccoli maestri* [1964] are also among the classics that captured the *Zeitgeist* of the Italian partisan Resistance, even if they are not within the Neorealist genre. Notably, among these authors of novels of the Resistance, it is Beppe Fenoglio's *Una questione privata* [1963] that would be considered by Calvino as "il libro che la [sua] generazione voleva fare" (Calvino 1991: 1202). Fenoglio's text, along with the later *Il Partigiano Johnny* [1968], appeared to Calvino to write about the Resistance "proprio com'era, di dentro e di fuori, vera come mai era stata scritta" (Ibid.). Calvino did not choose to express his experience in the Partisan brigades from his perspective, but rather through the eyes of a child. Pin is hardly the embodiment of angelic innocence among the demons of war, however.

Pin is a mischief-making child causing havoc among rather inept and marginalized partisans, which was a deliberate choice on the part of Calvino:

decisi che l'avrei affrontato non di petto ma di scorcio. Tutto doveva essere visto dagli occhi d'un bambino, in un ambiente di monelli e vagabondi. Inventai una storia che restasse in margine alla guerra partigiana, ai suoi eroismi e sacrifici, ma nello stesso tempo rendesse il colore, l'aspro sapore, il ritmo (Ibid. 1191).

Pin is not only a character on the periphery on account of his age in comparison to the women, Italian partisans and Fascists, and German Nazi soldiers that populate the novel. Instead, he lies on the border oscillating in the direction towards a new conceptualization of contours rather than stark boundaries between humanity and animality. As Bonura argues, Pin comes to embody "l'abiezione fisica e morale di un'umanità che ha come solo valore la dignità paradossale di essere ai margini. Un'umanità che sul piano biologico potremmo definire animalesca. [...] Ma è proprio così degradata quest'umanità? È proprio così negativa?" (1983: 48). Pin's unique voice within the genre of Neorealism is vital in and of itself. Yet, it is also essential to recognize the very porousness of that umbrella definition, which Calvino himself would relate to his readers in his preface to the 1964 reprinting of his debut novel.

Calvino's poetics of the margins, as it is expressed in his choice of a child protagonist such as Pin, was his own literary choice, and yet it was not done in counterpoint to the norms or proscribed poetics of an established literary school. Neorealism, indeed, was not an organized or regulated literary circle or movement: "fu un insieme di voci, in gran parte periferiche, una molteplice scoperta di diverse Italie, anche – o specialmente – delle Italie fino all'ora più inedite per la letteratura" (Calvino 1991: 1187). Moreover, Neorealism was "prima che un fatto d'arte, un fatto fisiologico,

esistenziale, collettivo” (Ibid. 1185). The psychological effects felt by all involved were given reign in creative outlets such as literature and film and sought to describe the singular and collective experiences of the Resistance. In a letter to Lev A. Veršinin almost a year after writing the preface to the 1964 edition of the original of 1947, Calvino maintains that this novel could only have ever been a product of the time in which he wrote it and of the experience he had had at that moment: “È un libro che ho scritto in un’epoca unica e forse irripetibile della mia vita. Quell’immediatezza e quel calore vitale è difficile che sappia ritrovarli: allora avevo un’esperienza di realtà molto forte alle mie spalle; tutto quel che è venuto poi in confronto è molto pallido” (2000: 879). What was the message of Neorealism then, if its characteristics were not itemized across authors and genres and inscribed in stone via manifestos? Calvino’s stories are never disinterested from the human element of the characters or his “understanding of history as human action and his passionate involvement in it” (Re 1990: 72). This novel, as the first example of Calvino’s war stories, is no mere exercise in narrative geometry with regards to the partisan experience of the Second World War. Indeed, Calvino’s narrative maneuverability demonstrated in this text ignites the possibilities of invigorating storytelling for a modern setting replete with classical resonances to forge something at once both new and timeless, as well as seeks inclusiveness rather than the perpetuation of dichotomies. This text is but part and parcel of a crucial and universal ideal: “calling for a collective effort to build a truly human and humane society” after two decades of Fascist culture based on the suppression of freedom, propaganda, censorship, and violence (Re 1990: 49). The characters, specifically - Pin, the partisans, the women, the Fascists, the German soldiers, and Kim – will be studied in the

following chapter as animals of story, and how their role bridges our greatest strengths in being human and holistic in times of war.

The main goal of this thesis is to complicate the definitions of humanity and animality as dichotomous poles that otherwise would never come to intersect or dialogue and to unite them instead. This chapter will interrogate this question in its first literary case study with the novel *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* with a character-based approach. Specifically, it will trace the actions and speeches that define its protagonists, Pin, and Kim and their interactions, or lack thereof, with nonhuman animals. On one side of the spectrum, we have a child protagonist, Pin, and on the other, the partisan brigade commissar, Kim. Their interactions with the women, fellow Italian partisans and Fascists, and German Nazi soldiers will assist in shaping their character development as well as the movement of the narrative. This chapter will entail three sections examining the importance of animal symbolism and imagery: the first analyzing Pin, the second focusing on women and the Fascists and Germans, and thirdly, Kim. While the primary focus is naturally on the original text, our analysis of it will be enhanced with multidisciplinary and comparative literary approaches to the book. The comparative literary texts that also feature puppies and wolves, spiders, lack of horses, birds, and cats will emphasize the import of stories as a conduit to better understanding our humanness as well as learning about one's story through *bildungsroman* coming of age tales from Aesop and Homer to Kipling, among others. Pin's age constricts but does not fully inhibit Calvino's ability to discuss matters of love, life, and death in times of war. Kojève's concepts of Animal and Anthropogenetic Desire will help elucidate the fragility between Pin's expressions of love, understanding, and abject destruction, in comparison to Kim's intellectual frustration with

the whole business of war to define and dispatch one's enemies who are all too similar to one's self (1980: 4,7). Although Kim encounters fewer nonhuman animals than Pin, his convictions also hinge on some of those mythical, irrational, but also humane, animalities that storytelling makes available to him that his studies of psychology do not. Although Kim may not encounter many nonhuman animals, he and Pin must both confront certain atrocities of war that unfortunately continue to this day.

1.1 Pin's Itineraries along the Thresholds of Child and Adulthood, of the Town and the Countryside, and as a Story-Hungry Puppy among Wolves and Birds, Cats, and Spiders

With no disservice to the poet John Donne, no man may be an island, but they are certainly a territory that can be developed, defined, and discovered (2001: 446). Pin and his perspective, as one of the three central voices of this novel, is exhibited by his unique placement on the brink between adulthood and childhood. Pin is considered a liminal character not only because of his age but as this in-between status is translated into his characterization on the threshold of human and nonhuman animals. It is in this in-between space that animal symbologies and mythologies inform Pin's identity as a child about what it means to be human and that he will be able to observe and participate, be and become a part of the adult, human, and natural world. Indeed, as Ortiz Robles notes, tales of the *enfant sauvage* that Pin also embodies to a degree, which was "domesticated in the story of Mowgli or Tarzan – traces the progress of the animal-human as it sheds its animality to

become a member of the human community to which he always belonged, if not, as in Romulus and Remus, to become the founder of civilization itself' (2016: 21). Pin's character may suggest a path towards a better understanding of humanity's depths and heights in and of nature. Within the novel, Pin's being emblemized as an animal by others, in conjunction with his being relegated to the border realm of the irrational and the real world on account of his age, will complicate the definition of who and what is human and humane, especially in wartime. This welcome challenge to the boundary lines of Pin's humanity and animality is manifested in two main components in the text. The first, which often recurs throughout the arch of the novel, is the manifestation of Pin's cruel gestures towards animals done to mark out his place in the world via domination over other living non-human creatures, especially spiders. The second shows Pin as subject to the whims of adults and history as well as the environment when he is depicted as a puppy among wolves, birds, cats, as will be analyzed in greater depth throughout this chapter.

Pin's various encounters with flora and fauna of his native Ligurian coastal city are hardly ornamental throughout the novel. Pin's ability to define himself is made possible not just by his actions and thoughts but also by his physical surroundings. Indeed, the narrative's movement and perspective are reflected in Pin's physical placement along a borderline. He does not fully belong neither to the town among his sister and his partisan neighbors nor in the natural world of the path to the spiders' nests. Pin's very existence in the eyes of his author/creator is also described as: "il protagonista simbolico del mio libro fu dunque un'immagine di regressione: un bambino. Allo sguardo infantile e geloso di Pin, armi e donne si ritrovavano lontane e incomprensibili; quel che la mia filosofia esaltava, la mia poetica trasfigurava in apparizioni nemiche, il mio eccesso d'amore tingeva di

disperazione infernale” (Calvino 1991: 1200). As the journey to places heavenly or hellish recurs throughout Calvino’s oeuvre,³ Pin’s world is comprised of not just his imagination and inner feelings but also his movement in the world. Furthermore, Nocentini proposes that “the story’s movement away from the city to the hill appears to suggest the protagonist’s reclaiming of the natural world as opposed to an urban existence degraded by poverty and exploitation. The hills are the place of direct confrontation with the other (whether represented by nature or the enemy) in the open, beyond the bounds of the urban setting” (2000: 20). Pin’s initial collision between the urbanized town and bucolic nature will involve conflicting notions of survival and humanity amid life and war.

We do not know how Pin came upon his haven, the path to the spiders’ nests, but the idyllic nature of that place is eventually rudely intruded upon for Pin. A critical difference of perspective on whether to prioritize animal survival or humane ideals during wartime sparks a debate between Pin, the adult men of his town’s local *osteria*, and his older sister Rina la Nera because she engages in prostitution with men from all flags and across the political spectrum. One day, Pin is ignored by the adult men at the *osteria* because of these complicated boundary lines between who is an ally and who is an enemy during wartime. To regain the men’s trust and confidence, Pin can no longer humanize his

³ See for a limited selection of but a few examples of heavenly and hellish places in Calvino’s oeuvre, in the three *Cosmicomiche* renderings of the Orpheus myth as seen in “Senza colori,” “Il cielo di pietra,” and “L’altra Euridice” a project spanning from 1964-1984 (cf. 1992: 124-134, 1216-1223, and 1994: 379-387, respectively). The famous lines from *Le città invisibili* of 1972 can also be included in that particular discussion:

L’inferno dei viventi non è qualcosa che sarà; se ce n’è uno, è quello che è già qui, l’inferno che abitiamo tutti i giorni, che formiamo stando insieme. Due modi ci sono per non soffrirne. Il primo riesce facile a molti: accettare l’inferno e diventarne parte fino al punto di non vederlo più. Il secondo è rischioso ed esige attenzione e apprendimento continui: cercare e saper riconoscere chi e cosa, in mezzo all’inferno, non è inferno, e farlo durare, e dargli spazio (1992: 497-498).

or his sister's "relazioni" with the Nazi soldier, Frick, by claiming that she and her prostitution are: "internazionale come la crocerossa" (Ibid. 11, 12). In order to preserve his fragile position among the men of the *osteria*, Pin does agree to their request that he steal Frick's pistol. Nevertheless, Pin perceives this regrettable event as an irrevocable turning point indicating "l'odio dei grandi" that wartime has made manifest like never before for him (Ibid. 17). Although Pin does not understand this hatred or what it "avere dei nemici" truly means, it will be a foundation stone into his understanding of his is different than both the adults as well as the other boys of the neighborhood who are not even included in such ventures (Ibid. 68). Pin is initiated early into what he perceives as an axial component of men's lives and the blurred realities of war when they become soldiers or partisans, in this case. The second piece of men's lives, [physical] love [through sex], is not as new to Pin, on account of his exposure to his older sister, Rina la Nera's, prostitution. When Pin flees with his precious ticket back into the good graces of the partisans, Frick's P38 pistol, he takes it to his haven, the path to the spiders' nests, where he will inescapably combine his conflicting understandings of love and war in the lives of men.

While looking to hide the stolen pistol in his haven - the path to the place where the spiders make their nests - Pin is confronted with the very animals whose home he seeks to make ill use of for his ends (Calvino 1991: 24). Having just fled his sister's room while she was with Frick only to see the coupling of the spiders at his place, his haven beyond the city walls and back amid Nature, the two scenes of copulation are too readily comparable for Pin's eyes. Thus, he gives way to a sudden urge to want to kill the spiders with the very pistol he had stolen (Ibid.). The spiders will provide another example of Pin's frustration at his inability to understand what he sees as the two axes of male life: 1) [physical] love

[through sex], and 2) death: “I ragni sotterranei in quel momento rodono vermi o si accoppiano i maschi con le femmine emettendo fili di bava: sono esseri schifosi come gli uomini, e Pin infila la canna della pistola nell’imboccatura della tana con una voglia di ucciderli” (Ibid.). Pin’s aggressive actions against the spiders give him an ephemeral moment of power and authority in a world where he is all too often the one unable to take action in the world of adults. Indeed, on account of his in-between stance between childhood and adulthood, Pin “si sente solo e sperduto in quella storia di sangue e corpi nudi che è la vita degli uomini” (Ibid. 14). While spiders may not be the most commonplace animal, or insect, associated with war stories, Pin’s momentary interaction with them, as well as the continuous significance of the path to the spider’s nests throughout the novel, invite a closer investigation into a comparative literary approach to the spider and the lessons in humanity it has to show Pin and the reader. The texts that will elaborate our discussion of the import of spiders in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* include the Ancient Greek myth of Arachne laid down in Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Ananse from African folklore, tarantella music, dance, and performance, as well as Italian literary texts spanning from Dante and Petrarca to Leonardo da Vinci [1452-1519].

The following comparative literary texts that include spiders will be analyzed chronologically, beginning with Ancient Greek poetry to the Italian Renaissance. Calvino’s 1985 Norton lecture, entitled “Leggerezza,” would highlight the myth of Arachne among his many literary examples. The story acts as a “«mito delle origini»” of spiders, a turn of phrase which Calvino would mention with regards to *Le cosmicomiche* in a 1965 interview entitled “Nelle «Cosmicomiche» continuo il discorso dei romanzi fantastici” (Calvino 2012: 112). In *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, the spiders of Calvino’s novel resonate with the

story of both the Ancient Greek and Roman goddesses for Athena and Minerva wisdom, purposeful war, and the womanly arts – which notably include weaving in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. He indicates the rendition explicitly from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* from 8 ACE in Ancient Rome in his 1985 Norton lecture entitled “Leggerezza,” where the very fingers of Arachne transform her as she weaves, both narrative tales and of physical webs,⁴ into a spider: “racconta delle dita di Aracne, agilissime nell’agglomerare e sfilacciare la lana, nel far girare il fuso, nel muovere l’ago da ricamo, e che a un tratto vediamo allungarsi in esili zampe di ragno e mettersi a tessere ragnatele” (1995 (1): 638). This text’s description of a mortal women’s weaving skills will be analyzed to demonstrate how the woven webs of tales resonate with the storytelling permeating Pin’s animalized humanity.

The opening story of the sixth book of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* details the tale of a mortal girl, Arachne, who was extraordinarily gifted with weaving and boasted of her talent so much as to draw Minerva/Athena’s attention to it and thus provoked the goddess’ anger. When Minerva does deign to accept Arachne’s proposal to compete in a weaving competition, the subject each artisan chooses to carry out on the loom is no meaningless theme, but rather an active demonstration of power. Whereas Minerva not only depicts the twelve gods of Mount Olympus as a united house of supernatural strength, she also weaves into the four corners of her tapestry various tales of the harsh fates awaiting those foolish mortals who fail to acknowledge the gods’ sovereignty (2016: VI.83-102). Arachne, in contrast, chooses to reveal a harsh truth through storytelling in her woven tapestry by portraying an unpleasant attribute of some of the gods, who often used their powers to

⁴ For yet another spider-like abode of story, see also Italo Calvino’s “città-ragnatela,” Ottavia from *Le città invisibili* [1972] (1992: 421).

change themselves into animal forms to carry out a deception (Ibid. VI.103-130). In her rage at Arachne's artful and aesthetically pleasing display of a truth that "betray[ed] the gods' misdemeanors," Minerva sentences Arachne and all of her descendants to weave for the rest of their lives, not for art's sake or a means of trade, but to procure her daily sustenance and "practice her former art in the web of a spider" (Ibid. VI.131; Ibid. VI.145). *The Metamorphoses* is not the only notable text from Calvino's library of classics to revolve around arachnids. Moving from an Ancient Greek myth as it was rewritten for an ancient Roman audience, there are also relevant folkloric and literary examples spanning from antiquity to the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and into the Baroque Era that can provide a small survey of relevant storied spiders.

The resonance of spiders from folklore and fables is notable because they form a part of an ancient literary and symbolic tradition of joining animals and storytelling. Two characterizations of the spider are from the African as well as southern Italian fable and folkloric traditions. In the first case, the "astuto e intraprendente" Ananse has been the subject of cultural studies, and Calvino also mentioned it briefly in his 1955 essay entitled "Le fiabe africane" (1995 (2): 1544). Neil Gaiman [1960-present] has also recently published a fantastic novel building upon this African folktale spider of trickster god entitled *Anansi Boys* (cf. 2005). For a multidisciplinary folkloric engagement with spider mythology in the Italian tradition, Puglia's *tarantismo* offers an amalgamation of story, music and lyrics, dance, and performance. For a more detailed study about *la tarantella*, please see Jerri Daboo's seminal *Ritual, Rapture and Remorse: A Study in Tarantismo and*

Pizzica in Salento (cf. 2010). The dance, *la tarantella*,⁵ which derives its name from the Italian word for spider, “la tarantola,” is described by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* as the place where: “the spider is supposed to become a pure silhouette, pure color, and pure sound to which the person dances” (2000: 336). This integrated aspect of spiders with storytelling across media – weaving, literature, folklore, dance, and music resonates with Pin’s fascination with spiders. Although this musical side of Pin’s characterization has not been heavily studied, the connection has been highlighted in De-León Jones’ article (cf. 1997). Pin ‘tells’ stories through song and thus demonstrates how

voice and language are central to the construction of the character, who is associated with terms related to song that demonstrate the power of a voice capable of bringing pleasure to its audience or of transforming itself into a weapon of derision. Songs are an integral part of community life, an expression of shared experience and identity whose function changes according to the context (De-León Jones 1997: 361-362).

Pin’s preoccupation with spiders is further elaborated by examples from Italian literature from Dante’s reappraisal of the myth of Arachne to Petrarca and da Vinci’s depictions of spiders in their respective works.

Only one of the following texts reiterates the Greek myth of Arachne, specifically Dante’s *Divina commedia* (2005: *Purgatorio* II.43-45). In contrast, the second laurel crown of Florence to write about spiders, Francesco Petrarca, would write in his *Epistole familiari* [1359] a “«mito delle origini»” different from the one in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* mentioned above though the form of the fable “Il ragno e la podagra (Calvino 2012: 112). A spider

⁵ As but one example of such music, the reader is invited to listen at their leisure to “Lu rusciu te lu mare” performed by Alla Bua for an off-the-page experience via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jryWN38HfQ>.

dialogues with the personification of the disease, gout. They both realize that they would be better off with the other's owners because their respective owners reflect their different characters. Thus, they decide to change owners, and from this exchange onwards, "accade che la podagra abiti nei palazzi in mezzo alle delizie, il ragno nei tuguri dei poveri in mezzo allo squallore" (Petrarca 2007: 64). During the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci would also contribute three of his fables with regards to the spider, which he interestingly inextricably entwined with death in: "Il ragno e l'uva," "Il ragno, la mosca e il calabrone," and "Il ragno intrappolata" (cf. 1974: 23, 24, 29). Before returning to Calvino's first novel, it is worth mentioning that beyond the literary and mythological considerations, the reader should remain aware of specific biological facts about spiders. Specifically, insects they like to eat, such as the fireflies that appear in our novel, and the symbolism that arises from this. While fireflies or "luciole" in the original Italian, are but one of many varieties of insects that a spider could feed on, they will appear as a determining factor in Pin's life story and not just as a part of a spider's diet (Calvino 1991: 147). Uniquely within the Italian language, the word "luciole" is practically synonymous with prostitutes (Re 1990: 314). Pin's conflict between seeking affection from his sister and the other adults and yet not being able to understand what his child-self perceives as adult preoccupations of sex and war can upend the balance of the constant juxtaposition of love and death, Eros and Thanatos. This is demonstrated by Pin's encounters with human and nonhuman animals, be they wolves, birds, cats, or spiders.

Pin attempts to not only vent his frustration on nonhuman animals and insects. He also tries to understand the intrigue of the adults around him who are far from being ideal role models. Calvino himself sought to populate the novel with altogether human, and not

idealized heroes, whose quandaries continue to interrogate the reader long after they have turned the page. A critical piece of Pin's dialogue of human animality is realized through his encounters with what a child perceives as two conjoined and essential facets of adulthood as: "la genesi dei nuclei di 'armi e donne,' e cioè della violenza (Thanatos) e del sesso (Eros)" (Bertoni 1993: 37). Sex and the violence of war as representations of Eros and Thanatos for Pin indeed "simbolizzano gli estremi della sua estraneità al mondo degli adulti" (Ponti 1991: 51). Pin is no longer a child, and yet neither is he an adult. It is in this in-between space that his "sense of isolation [that] is caused by his position outside the symbolic order" is reinforced (Re 1990: 277). As Pin will come to witness firsthand, sexual relations, be they illicit or sanctified, are hardly ever devoid of politics or of a struggle to balance power, be it emotional or familial. When describing human acts of sexual intercourse, this search for the meaning beyond the practical reproductive purpose arises. Yet Calvino posed an essential question in his 1970 essay "Definizioni di territorio: l'erotico (Il sesso e il riso)" as to whether there can ever be any possibility of a scientific, geometric, logical "rappresentazione diretta, oggettiva, spassionata, dei rapporti sessuali come fatti della vita in mezzo agli altri fatti della vita" (1995 (1): 262). Kojève draws a definitive line between being human and being an animal as being based on a blurred dividing line between human affection and love in contrast to animal reproduction:

The very being of man, the self-conscious being, therefore, implies and presupposes Desire. Consequently, the human reality can be formed and maintained only within a biological reality, an animal life. [...] All the Desires of an Animal are in the final analysis of a function of its desire to preserve its life. Human Desires, therefore, must win out over this desire for preservation (1980: 4, 7).

Our self-identification as humans is no easy exploration in the best of times, never mind in times of war when soldiers, and often even civilians, must face the choice of having to kill

or be killed. If the saying “Make love not war” made famous in the 1960s in the United States implies that Love, not Hatred is the opposite of war, then the expansion of a definition of love to embrace a humane and a natural biological level simultaneously presupposes the inclusion of both humanity and animality within it.

Such is no easy task of assimilation for anyone, never mind our protagonist Pin poised on the borders of child and adulthood, animal and human. He not only navigates but moreover negotiates the very boundary lines because as he is fascinated by the partisans and disgusted by the women around him. He seeks to be not only a part of the adult world but also of the moment in history that is permeating his life and its story. This boundary-crossing marks out for Pin “the transition from myth to history, and from nature to culture, [and it] also involves a transition from infantile to adult sexuality” (Re 1990: 266). Pin’s journey in in-between space with considerations about who is friend and foe, human and animal, family and enemy demonstrate that “danger lies in transitional states, simply because the transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable” (Douglas 1966: 96). Calvino, as a master of the indistinct and permeability, does not shy away, but rather, embraces the challenge to show how “il confondersi nell’indistinto, nell’*‘anima del mondo’* può paradossalmente produrre ragione; e non si elude più, anzi si cerca l’incontro col perturbante-bosco-follia” (Bertoni 1993: 117). Thus, it is no accident that Pin’s haven is on the path to the spiders’ nests, where he experiments with his feelings and his understanding. His placement on the threshold, and not on one side of the line or the other, is what Pin must confront for others to see the arbitrariness of such stark boundaries between humans and nonhuman animals. One of Pin’s most significant trials is yet to come, however, when he has to face the consequences of having stolen Frick’s pistol and

trying to bury it in the forest where he will be reconfigured as a puppy among Fascist wolves.

Animals do not just permeate Pin's literary world, but rather, he becomes reconfigured as an animal himself, notably as a puppy. Those around him act as though and do treat him like a small puppy. Pin is depicted, not as an adult dog or even a wolf - wild and independent and fearsome, but rather as a tamed puppy that is subject to the whims, orders, and expectations of adults. Pin's depiction as a domesticated puppy is our first example along the threshold of the dynamic of domesticated and wild animals within Calvino's war stories in the battle for a new integrated definition of humanity. Humans' relationship with nonhuman animals has changed over time as they have removed themselves from nature and domesticated both themselves and other animals. Importantly for our continued discussion of the politics of power dynamics, it should be noted that

for much of their history and all of prehistory, humans did not see themselves as being any different from the other animals among which they lived. Hunter-gatherers saw their prey as equals, if not superiors, and animals were worshiped as divinities in many traditional cultures. The humanist sense of a gulf between ourselves and other animals is an aberration. It is the animist feeling of belonging with the rest of nature that is normal (Gray 2002: 17).

With the malignant progression of time, particularly from the Victorian era onwards, animals have become reintegrated into human society by being put on display in zoos and circuses or within the homestead as domesticated animals and pets. However, as Berger has stated:

the cultural marginalization of animals is, of course, a more complex process than their physical marginalization. The animals of the mind cannot be so easily dispersed. Sayings, dreams, games, stories, superstitions, the language itself, recall them. The animals of the mind, instead of being dispersed, have been co-opted into other categories so that the category *animal* has lost its eternal

importance. Mostly they have been co-opted into the *family* [as pets] and into the *spectacle* [in zoos or circuses] (1980: 15).

Calvino's restructuring Pin as a puppy does not merely extend the metaphor of his childlike isolation from the world of adults around him. Instead, it forges a significant, yet unexpected, alliance that foments as many questions as it does answers.

While Pin's characterization as a puppy might at first glance suggest the reinforcement of the idea of children and animals as being "inferior, uncivilized beings who require reform, [this link] can potentially free children from the expectations of civility and reconnect them with nature" (Superb 2012: 78). As a character situated on the threshold already, further depicting Pin as a puppy, indeed, demonstrates how "children too have one foot in the wilderness of instinct and gratification and the other in civilization and social acceptability. This duality generally is considered problematic by adults, but canine characters, fraught with duality themselves, allow child characters to mediate between both states" (Ibid. 79). That "children have no scruples over allowing animals to rank as their full equals" might also demonstrate how Pin's association with the animal and natural world does not stop even with his identification and description of himself (Freud 2001: 147). It is also perpetuated by both the male and female adults around him. As early as the first chapter, the reader is introduced to Pin by us hearing him being called for none too kindly by an elderly woman as: "Pin! Macaco! Muso brutto!" (Calvino 1991: 6). Also, not only do the other characters see him as a puppy to order around and tease. Even the narrator follows a similar logic by describing him and his movements as if Pin were a small puppy. After Pin steals the pistol, he and the narrator ponder how he will have to hide his tracks upon his return: "poi tornare a quattro piedi sui propri passi, pian piano e senza mai

togliere la lingua di tra i denti: forse se si togliesse la lingua di tra i denti succedrebbe qualcosa di spaventoso” (Ibid. 18). There is one place in the world where Pin does not feel like a puppy among wolves, namely, on the path to the spiders’ nests. This unique space, upon further analysis of the original text, has much to offer along with the many thresholds of childhood and adulthood, reality and fiction, love and death, peace and war, family, friend, and foe.

Pin’s classification as a liminal character is not only defined because of his age. Instead, it is also based on his movement between various settings and places. Indeed, as Belpoliti notes, Pin’s entire world exists along the spectrum between: “città/campagna, uomini/animali” (2005: 96). Pin’s dominion over nonhuman animals and insects does not only assist in proving himself to be capable of authority and autonomy, which all people must do to grow up and reach adulthood. Pin must also have a physical space of his own to test the waters, a place where he can make decisions and not be governed by anyone and must be self-reliant and be held responsible for himself and his actions. Pin’s two areas consist of his little closet under the stairs with a peephole into his elder sister’s room and the path to where the spiders make their nests. The first fails to provide any semblance of a feeling of safety for Pin. The second is, unfortunately, so easily susceptible to harm and destruction, especially during wartime. Nature is not only an environmental backdrop for the novel. Nature is the “fonte della spinta vitale che muove l’uomo ad agire nel mondo e insieme rappresenta il limite delle sue capacità di comprenderlo e padroneggiarlo” (Falchetto 1994: 45). Pin does not have all the figurative tools to navigate the baffling world of adults’ actions and decisions, and his internal confusion functions to mirror his physical “disorientamento esistenziale” (Falchetto 1989: 37). Thus, it is on the path to the spiders’

nests, and not his little cot at home with his sister, that will provide the space for Pin to interrogate his confused understanding of the world of adults.

Besides circumstance and setting, what is it about the path to the spiders' nests that make it an ideal place for Pin to grapple with such questions? The very name he gives it may be an indication of this blurred integrity that Pin embodies across dichotomous poles. Spiders spin webs, they don't make nests. Indeed, the members of Dritto's partisan band do not hesitate to point out this inconsistency to Pin: "Ma va' la! Quando mai i ragni hanno fatto il nido.⁶ Mica son rondini" (Calvino 1991: 72). Yet, Pin sees the combination of the two, a blend of storytelling and reality, reflection, and action, when he follows the path to the place where the spiders make their nests. Since that is Pin's unique perspective, to have to share that with someone leaves him vulnerable. As both a real and a fictive place for Pin the path to the spiders' nests is "assimilabile a una funzione narrativa fiabesca: esso rappresenta il luogo lontano da tutto e da tutti, e proprio per questo l'unico nel quale è potenzialmente possibile stabilire rapporti non-conflittuali con la realtà" (Ponti 1991: 93). Much like the very spiders who make their nests rather than weave the webs characteristic of their species, this place of Pin's is one that he can call his own. At the same time, it resembles "l'utopia [che] sfida il tempo insediandosi in un non luogo, negando il rapporto col mondo altro e necessariamente nemico" as Calvino would later relate in his 1973 essay "Per Fourier 3. Commitato. L'utopia pulviscolare" (Calvino 1995 (1): 307).

Pin had few people he could trust and with whom he could share this place. Indeed, even his sister was considered among the other adult "enemies" to be excluded from this

⁶ Compare with the exact wording of Pamela's astute assertion in *Il visconte dimezzato*: "Quando mai le farfalle hanno punto qualcuno?" (Calvino 1991: 405).

place. When Pin allows Cugino to enter his world, his life, in his childlike naïveté, he felt a great joy to have finally found someone to share the place he cares about so much.

Unfortunately, he did so without considering the possibility that Cugino, too, could betray him or his trust, as he has seen countless other adults do to him before (Calvino 1991: 145). In being able to share it finally, however, the path is no longer solely Pin's, and it can "no longer be the exclusive locus of the bond between Pin and the natural order, a bond that lies outside of history itself" (Re 1990: 265). Pin's two places in the world - just outside his sister's bedroom and the path to the spiders' nests - are interlocked spaces. They keep Pin as a character and the plot of the novel in a state of tension. Much like a bridge, Pin also hangs in the balance "suspended on the border between nature and culture, childhood and adulthood, myth and history" (Ibid. 281). This place that Pin had found for himself is "il luogo fatato per eccellenza, in cui l'eroe dovrebbe essere in condizione di comporre e scomporre la realtà a suo piacimento" (Ponti 1991: 93). The security and terrestrial sanctity of Pin's path to the spiders' nests, where he temporarily resides outside of history, is tenuous, however. Before Pin will return to the spiders' nests and naïvely assume Cugino's interest in the place is akin to his own, Pin will face the awful juxtaposition of love and betrayal, loyalty and death. These will be demonstrated not just by human actors, but also with other nonhuman animals as well. Pin's witnessing of the haphazard fulfillment of sexual desires on the road to render an abstract and seemingly unreachable idea of love tangible will concurrently make war's inextricable ties to death and destruction all too visible. While he had been passingly initiated into the webs of love that adults had woven themselves up in, Pin will first have to grapple with the violence and death that war brings

and the blurred lines of loyalty and identity and humanity that they can unfortunately entail.

To come of age is never easy, never mind when forced to do so during less than encouraging historical circumstances of merciless wartime. Pin must learn two other components of adulthood during war beyond the power of love and humanity. He must come to understand the fear that is overcome to be willing and able to shoot someone dead, and he must also learn what and who is an enemy. As a young child, the worst altercation in the novel he probably ever experienced was when he insulted his sister or got in trouble with the men at the *osteria* when one of his songs touched a raw nerve with someone in his audience (cf. Calvino 1991: 54-59). While kicking and screaming and making a scene is regrettable; nonetheless, it is not an irreversible action, such as taking someone's life. Pin comes to terms with these great and terrible concepts of life and death, violence, and peace, in a similar way as he seeks to understand the world adults: through his observations of nonhuman animals. Be they friend or foe, Pin "non sa ancora cosa vuol dire: avere dei nemici. In tutti gli esseri umani per Pin c'è qualcosa di schifoso come *nei vermi* e qualcosa di buono e caldo che attira la compagnia" (Ibid. 68, my emphasis). Nor does he yet fully comprehend the moral and ethical turmoil that can happen with anyone who is put or places themselves in the line of fire. Pin attempts to imagine it, but even his most detailed and elaborate work of the mind and conscience barely prepare him for what he will experience.

Pin's feelings on the subject place him along the threshold not just of a child and adult, but of the definition of humanity and brotherhood. He admits that:

in fondo, di trovarsi in mezzo agli spari avrebbe paura, e forse non si sentirebbe il coraggio di sparare addosso a un uomo. Ma quand'è in mezzo ai compagni vuol convincersi d'essere uno come loro, e allora comincia a raccontare cosa farà la volta che lo lasceranno andare in battaglia e si mette a fare il verso della mitragliatrice tenendo i pugni avvicinati sotto gli occhi come sparasse. S'eccita allora: pensa ai Fascisti, a quando lo frustavano, alle facce bluastre e imberbi nell'ufficio dell'interrogatorio, ta-tatata, ecco che tutti sono morti, e mordono il tappeto sotto la scrivania dell'ufficiale tedesco con gengive di sangue. Ecco la voglia d'uccidere anche in lui aspra e ruvida, d'uccidere pure il piantone nascosto nel pollaio, anche se è tonto, d'uccidere anche la sentinella triste della prigione, proprio perché è triste e tagliuzzata in faccia dal rasoio. È una voglia remota in lui come la voglia di amore, un sapore sgradevole e eccitante come il fumo e il vino, una voglia che non si capisce bene perché tutti gli uomini l'abbiano, e che deve racchiudere, a soddisfarla, piaceri segreti e misteriosi (Calvino 1991: 70-1).

Pin's placement on the threshold between child and adulthood and across definitions of humanity and animality is striking because his very being upsets the traditional conceptions of how a war story should be told. The story, as told from a little boy on the brink of being human and animal, complicates definitions of either one. As Calvino would write in his preface nearly twenty years after the novel's publication in 1967: "che ce ne importa di chi è già un eroe, di chi la coscienza ce l'ha già? È il processo per arrivarci che si deve rappresentare!" (Calvino 1991: 1193). This journey that lies at the crux of narrative space comes back full circle. Not just fiction, but reality too demonstrates that "la vita umana ha di per sé la forma di una storia, che comincia con la nascita e finisce con la morte" (Calvino 2012: 401-2). Calvino would further elaborate in this same 1980 interview with Daniele del Giudice entitled "Si può ancora narrare una storia?" that "Qualsiasi definizione di una persona vera implicita una biografia" (Calvino 2012: 401-2). Two interrelated events will irrevocably shape Pin's life story along the borders of animality and humanity. War's disruption of Eros and Thanatos will add layers to Pin's understanding of loyalty to

and betrayal of kith, kin, and country, as well as bring to the surface the significance of both deception and revelation within even one person's life story.

Pin is thrown into the crux of two situations where love and death are inextricably intertwined during the partisan resistance of the Second World War. The first is when Mancino is ordered, by his wife's lover, Dritto, to kill his falcon, Babeuf.⁷ The second is when Pin is subsequently tasked with the burial of Babeuf and unknowingly does so during one of Dritto and Giglia's trysts (Calvino 1991: 116). Dritto ordered Mancino to kill the bird because he considered the falcon to be a liability for their partisan band with his hunting and screeching instead of a help. The parrot, Cocò, from Aldo Palazzeschi's short story "Salvare Cocò" from *Bestie del 900* [1952], would also meet a similar fate. Although he is not killed, he is left in the care of his owner, Margherita Capello's, two servants, Rosalia and Fabio, because she is afraid that "egli [Cocò] potesse in qualche modo da compromettere la sua stessa salvezza" (2006: 149). Her very separation from Cocò causes "una fossetta," a dimple, to form on her forehead. In the original Italian, the dimple is only a few letters away from for the word for the grave, or "fossa," in which Pin would have to bury Babeuf (Ibid. 151; Calvino 1991: 115). Babeuf's demise will also be inextricably intertwined with the sensual physicality of Dritto and Giglia, which is also symbolized for Pin within nonhuman animal terminology. In the first, Babeuf is given the status of a

⁷ For but one example of Italian literature on falconry, please see Federico II di Svevia, King of the Holy Roman Empire and of the Two Sicilies and the treatise he had compiled, with Book V specifically focusing on falconry, in *De arte venandi cum avibus* [1260]. This text has been recently edited and published Anna Laura Trombetti Budriesi (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2007) based on an original manuscript which has been conserved in the Vatican Library [codice Pal. Lat. 1071]. For comparison with Giovanni Boccaccio's novella about Federigo degli Alberighi's falcon, please also see the ninth story of the fifth day in (cf. 2002: 470-476).

fellow-creature of the soul of the world. The falcon is humanized when the story of his death and burial is compared to the story of the four Calabrian partisan brothers who, in revenge for their younger brother Marchese's death, had the Fascists they captured dig their own graves (Calvino 1991: 80-1). To be sure, Pin does not have to dig long and wide for their defunct winged companion, however: "basta una piccola fossa; un falchetto non è un uomo" (Ibid. 123). Following Pin's internment of Babeuf, Pin not only loses some of his childish naïveté about matters of life, death, and survival. Also, "con il falchetto, Pin dà sepoltura al mondo fantastico della sua infanzia. Il subitaneo esplodere della battaglia conferma l'importanza simbolica dell'avvenimento" (Bonsaver 1995: 252). While the horrors of war are thrown into Pin's face as the partisan band goes off to battle, another fact of life is also placed there when Dritto and Giglia stay behind and go at each other like dogs in heat.

While Pin had been initiated into the allure of sexual satisfaction for adults from his peeping into his sister's bedroom, the rendezvous of Dritto and Giglia shows Pin far worse transgressions of loyalty in comparison. In addition to Kojève's differentiation mentioned above between Animal and Anthropogenetic Desires, within folktales, marriages "made sex permissible, changed it from something animal-like into a bond sanctified by the sacrament of marriage" (cf. 1980: 4, 7; Bettelheim 2010: 297). Since Rina la Nera and Giglia's animal-like sexual acts happen outside of marriage their "brief but instrumental roles [...] as object[s] of desire [...] augur disaster: la Nera's lovemaking with German soldiers leads to betrayal of her compatriots; Giglia's passion becomes entwined with Dritto's downfall and the detachment's disgrace" (Schneider 1981: 97-98). The intemperate passions of this betrayal of both marital vows and soldierly duty is reflected on

to the scene of battle as much as the impromptu hearth and home of the partisan's camp when "nella vallata infurierà la battaglia, la casolare succederanno cosa strabilianti, cento volte più eccitanti della battaglia" (Calvino 1991: 114-115). Although both Giglia and Dritto are described as dogs, Giglia remains framed in animal and sexualized symbology as a female cat for her betrayal. At the same time, Dritto's actions are given neither animal attributes nor adverse consequences: "saranno già per terra uno sull'altro, mordendosi la gola come i cani! [...] Il Dritto ha le mani sotto i capelli della donna, nella nuca e lei fa un movimento da *gatta*, come per sfuggirgli" (Ibid. 120, my emphasis). When the partisans do inevitably come back from the battle, they begin their traditional after-dinner songs. Pin's participation in these is legendary from the time he was entertaining his fellow townsmen in the *osteria* long before he reencountered them on the battlefield (Ibid. 8). After he is reunited with Mancino and the other inept partisans thanks to Lupo Rosso, Pin is asked to sing "canzoni d'amore, o canzonette da ridere: vogliono i loro canti pieni di sangue e di bufere, oppure le canzoni de galere e di delitti che sa solo lui, oppure anche canzoni molto oscene che bisogna gridare con odio per cantarle" (Ibid. 69).

That night, in particular, Pin cannot restrain himself and actively seeks to strike a nerve in Dritto. He achieves this by managing to unite three pivotal sexually charged animal symbologies of dogs, pigs, and bull horns in one song: "-Oilìn oilàn in un cespuglio van, oilìn oilàn come du can!" [...] "- Porci! – grida Pin, scoppiando a piangere. - Cornuti! Cagne!" (Calvino 1991: 137). Whether Pin was angrier at having to bury Mancino's falcon or because Dritto had excluded Pin once again from the world of adults to have a roll in the rhododendrons with Giglia, Pin's song is not merely a matter of depoliticized self-expression. Pin's song undermines both Giglia and Dritto in front of the rest of the partisan

band because in performing it, Pin hopes his song will create a divisive sense of community in which he is reintegrated and simultaneously Dritto and Giglia will be the ones excluded. The mocking and accusatory tone in which Pin conducts the song recall a “legame profondo, a livello antropologico tra sesso e riso. Perché il riso è pura difesa della trepidazione umana di fronte alla rivelazione del sesso, è esorcismo mimetico - attraverso lo sconvolgimento minore dell’ilarità - per padroneggiare lo sconvolgimento assoluto che il rapporto sessuale può scatenare,” as related in Calvino’s 1970 essay mentioned above “Il sesso e il riso” (Calvino 1995 (1): 262). However, Pin’s provocation has consequences that he did not intend. Soon afterward, he is effectively banished from the partisan band and must make his way, either home or somewhere else in the world.

Where does he feel at home in the world, indeed? Is it at his sister’s house with a cot in the closet? Or in the mountains with the partisans? Or back at the *osteria*, which is now depleted of his fellow townsman? It turns out that Pin will direct his way in life back to the path to the spider’s nests. Pin orients his new adventure there precisely because he assumes he will be able to recover the pistol he stole from Frick and buried there. An army of one may not have to trust anyone, give of themselves, be responsible for others. Yet, there is also no one else to lean on in times of need or expect help from either. Pin does not make the connection that his utopic space is just as, if not more, fragile as the comradeship of the partisan band of which he has just witnessed the collapse. Instead, he believes that the path to the spider’s nests “è un posto solo di Pin, un posto magico. Questo lo rassicura molto. Qualsiasi cosa accada, ci sono le tane dei ragni, e la pistola sotterrata” (Calvino 1991: 131). It is there that he can be himself and be his own man “senza nessuno che gli storca le braccia fino quasi a romperglielle, senza nessuno che lo mandi a sotterrare i falchi

per rotolarsi in mezzo ai rododendri, il maschio con la femmina” (Ibid. 139). What Pin does not know is that his space is about to be invaded by war’s blurred definitions of loyalty to family and country when Cugino returns to the story.

Cugino’s reappearance at Pin’s side on the path to the spiders’ nests is not incidental, but rather is intertwined with arms and women, but not for the reasons Pin thinks. Pin’s return to the path to the spiders’ nest is anything but triumphant because he had found his pistol stolen from him by a turncoat formerly from Dritto’s brigade, Pelle. The Fascists’ newest member had given Pin’s gun to his older sister, Rina la Nera, after he had deemed the piece unworthy of his own extensive stolen arms collection (Calvino 1991: 143). Pin had stolen the pistol from Frick in Rina la Nera’s bedroom, and now with its return to the same place if not its original owner, “the movement of pistol and narrative now comes full circle” (Schneider 1981: 99). Pin would use the same words to codify similarly la Nera a female dog for her betrayal of Pin and the partisan cause as he had done to describe Giglia’s betrayal of Mancino in song, as shown above: “Cagna! Spia!” (Calvino 1991: 137, 143). Yet, Pin takes the pistol from her again, only to lend it to Cugino, but without knowing that Cugino would eventually kill Rina la Nera with it. When Pin should feel at his lowest, on account of his disappointments from the partisan band and la Nera, he encounters Cugino in his tainted haven of the spiders’ nests. When Cugino asks Pin if he will give him directions to la Nera’s house, Pin does not second guess his possible motivations as he obliges his friend. Although Cugino had ostensibly warned Pin of the catastrophes women bring to men, Pin is not the least bit suspicious of his sister’s fate as a lone gunshot resounds from the town just after nightfall.

Later that night, upon his return, Cugino and Pin speak of things tremendous and banal, of women, animals, and beauty in life. The fireflies that punctuate the night sky with their “piccoli chiarori” are optimistic, bright lights during that time of day (Calvino 1991: 147). Cugino and Pin compare these small lights to women, and especially to their mothers, which is a good turn in the depiction of women during wartime and this novel in particular. Naturally, Pin still perceives the fireflies and women alike in a distrustful and jaded gaze, saying equally of women as of fireflies: “a vederle da vicino, le lucciole,⁸ - dice Pin, - sono bestie schifose anche loro, rossicce” (Ibid.). Cugino’s response lies in the realm of the aesthetic by supposing that exterior appearance of the body can be utilized as a ready and unquestionable mirror of the interior of the soul: “- Sì, - dice il Cugino, - ma viste così sono belle” (Ibid). Calvino will also later make use of this same technique in choosing the outfits of both il Cavaliere Avvocato and Battista after their rebellious acts, which will be scrutinized in the third chapter of this dissertation on *Il barone rampante* (1957). For now, Cugino and Pin have much to discuss and learn together. The last sentence of the novel shows that such a relationship is just beginning: “e continuano a camminare, l’omone e il bambino, nella notte, in mezzo alle lucciole, tenendosi per mano” (Ibid.). That Pin and Cugino continue to follow a path of life together leaves the reader with hope for not only the characters’ life stories but our own. The quintessential trait of literature that cannot be

⁸ It is important to note that the same fireflies here in Calvino’s 1947 novel as symbols of hope and possibility will eventually be declared indeed dead in Pasolini’s article published in *Corriere della sera* February 1, 1975 on account of the devastation of Italy during World War II and the country’s subsequent transformation from a rural to and industrialized society thanks to the economic ‘miracle’ in the 1950s entitled “Il vuoto del potere” which is also known as “L’articolo delle lucciole” in *Scritti corsari*. (Milano: Garzanti, 2001) 132-133.

taken for granted is its incredible art of drawing the reader into the story as much as into themselves, no matter how remote in time, place, or personality the characters might be from the readers of their story.

Pin is an unusual protagonist for the genre of postwar literature because his childlike outlook on the world broadens the possibilities for him and others to explore a human animality. Following a brief literary-historical contextualization of this novel with the Neorealist movement, one of our unusual animals within war stories, spiders, was also explored through the lens of comparative literature. Except for Pin's one interaction with spiders, their literary significance within this war story is sublimated by the lack of their physical presence. It is on the path to where the spiders' make their nests that Pin will not feel like a puppy subjected and excluded by adults. While the partisans and fellow townsman define and belittle Pin as a small puppy dog to be played with and directed, Pin has been able to turn the tables and identify the adults around him as animals from Giglia and Rina la Nera as treacherous female dogs and felines. Pin's liminal position between childhood and adulthood allows him to ask some of the most critical questions of the novel along the borders of who is human and who is an animal. Pin's position as a child disrupts the way a war story can discuss the proximities of love and death, Eros and Thanatos, sex and violence, war, and peace. Are the partisan townsmen right that Pin's sister Rina's friendly, as well as intimate relations with Fascist or Nazi enemies, are unacceptable in times of war? Can Dritto's decision to have Mancino's falcon killed, supposedly to ensure the safety of the partisan band, be counterbalanced by Dritto's deception of them to lie with Giglia rather than lead them into battle? While we have already explored some nonhuman animals and places and events related to Pin, there are still others that, albeit they are not of

Pin's interest or invention, will impact his life irrevocably within the pages of these animals of story. The importance of storytelling, as it appears in its various forms within the novel, will be juxtaposed to two main groups of people Pin can use to understand the world around him. Namely, the women, as well as the partisan, Fascist, and Nazi men, to understand two components of the adult world, he so covets, which are love and death.

1.2 Pin Encounters Storied Women, Partisan, Fascist and Nazi Animals in Wartime

While the unfortunate efficacy of one of Pin's songs has already been illustrated above, the stories he tells, through various media, are as significant as the storied animals he sees in the women, partisans, Fascists, and Nazis around him. The first part of this section of the chapter will undertake to show the camaraderie formation of storytelling, be it in written, oral, or visual form. The second and third will seek to illuminate another aspect of the question of humanity in wartime through the category of gender. The second section will focus on the role of women and their re-configurations as animals and as the source of stories, specifically, as they are their catalysts and muses, but not active narrators themselves. The third subsection will investigate the male Fascist and the Nazi soldiers and their enemy status, which can dehumanize them during wartime. These elements will help to question the easy categorizing of humanity, animality, and the integration of the two.

Reading is not the only vehicle that initiates people into the realm of storytelling. Not only can a book transport a person to another place in their mind. The reader, be they a

child or adult, is given guiding principles about relationships with others through books. The mention of Dritto's love of recitation, especially from his times in prison when a fellow prisoner read *The Count of Montecristo* significantly by Alexandre Dumas père [1844], does not only mirror feelings of imprisonment through a story about a prisoner. More figuratively, Pin is trapped in the in-between of child and adulthood as Dritto too feels trapped in his role as commander and because he is unable to fulfill his lust for Giglia without recourse to deception. The choral nature of the recitation shows how the story belongs to everyone listening to it, Pin as much as Dritto, and the other partisans. Stories bind the listeners not only to each other but also to listeners from times past. The universality of stories' effect lasts beyond the moment of its telling. This is especially apparent in Pin's songs of war prisoners or Dritto's remembering *The Count of Montecristo*. Their retelling "create[s] a sense of solidarity among the men through shared experience as prison is part of the collective experience of the partisans, a sort of initiation that even Pin has been through" (De León-Jones 1997: 366). Long before Pin is imprisoned for stealing Frick's pistol or Dritto recalls the recitation of *The Count of Montecristo*, the men of the *osteria* had seconded the notion of masculinity as being [re]formed by the idea that "chi non è stato mai in prigione non è un uomo" (Bernardini Napoletano 2003: 15; Calvino 1991: 8). Pin cannot only begin to identify himself with songs and experience of imprisonment, but those stories and experiences give him a path to become a part of the world of adult men around him who have also been imprisoned by the Fascists and the Nazis.

Pin, who usually is the center of attention with his songs or jokes for the adult men, will pull himself into that central space even when he is not reading one night for the

partisans. With the reading of a detective story one night, Pin “non capisce che gusto ci sia a leggere e s’annoia” (Calvino 1991: 76). Albeit part of Pin is a child who wants to play, he is also mischievous and far from naïve about some things. The “uscite” Pin is known for, the dangling punch lines, ensnare his unsuspecting target into an insult (Ibid.). What does a child such as Pin do when he gets bored? He starts teasing the men around him, particularly that night’s storyteller, Zena il Lungo is also known as Berretta-di-Legno, to whom Pin will add a new, and offensive, nickname. Since Pin knows little about arms and weapons and war, he instead relies on his knowledge of straight men’s enchantment with both women and a code of honor to torment that night’s storyteller who had usurped Pin’s place at the center of attention among the men in the *osteria* once they had formed a partisan band in the hills. Not only does Pin insult Berretta-di-Legno and his masculinity, but Pin also degrades his love of reading through animal metaphors. After Zena calls Pin a “faccia di porcospino,” Pin, calls him “Labbra di bue!”⁹ (Ibid.). That an ox is, of course, a castrated bull escapes nobody’s notice as it reinforces the insult mentioned above to Zena’s masculinity when Pin says:

- Berretta-di-Legno, cosa dirà tua moglie quella notte? / - Quale notte? – fa Zena il Lungo detto Berretta-di-Legno, che non è ancora abituato alle uscite di Pin. / - Quella notte che andrete insieme a letto per la prima volta e tu continuerai a leggere libri per tutto il tempo!¹⁰ (Ibid.)

⁹ The figure of the ox also featured prominently in Calvino’s short story from the collection *Ultimo viene il corvo* [1949], “Di padre in figlio,” which was set on the Ligurian countryside home front during the Second World War (cf. 1991: 181-185).

¹⁰ This insult of Pin for Zena’s preoccupation with books lies in the act of reading as an act of negligence of his wife, or moreover his and her physical needs. Pin’s insult also anticipates the positive symbiosis of il Lettore and Ludmilla, La Lettrice’s, blissful matrimonial bed between the book and bed covers from Calvino’s *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* of 1979 (1992: 870). The theme of reading men neglecting the physical desires of their wives, or lady loves, recurs not only in *Il visconte dimezzato* when Pamela invites her goat and duck to interrupt il Buono’s

In fiercely interrogating the dialogue of what it means to grow someday to become a man, Pin must also come to understand women. In this tale, he has far fewer examples from which to draw a sample. Pin's long-deceased mother, his elder sister, Rina, la Nera, and Macino's wife and Dritto's lover, Giglia, are perhaps not ideal, but Pin is exposed to them.

monotonous reading/re-education of Pamela with Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1991: 425). In addition to the idea of reading as interfering with marital pleasures and responsibilities, the participation of nonhuman animals will also reoccur when Ottimo Massimo attempts to bring Cosimo back into the thrill of the hunt, even over so seemingly harmless and small a creature as a butterfly, from his literary pursuits in *Il barone rampante*: "Cosimo era su di un noce, un pomeriggio, e leggeva. Gli era presa da poco la nostalgia di qualche libro: stare tutto il giorno col fucile spianato ad aspettare se arriva un fringuello, alla lunga annoia. Dunque leggeva il *Gil Blas* di Lesage, tenendo con un amano il libro e con l'altra il fucile. Ottimo Massimo, cui non piaceva che il padrone leggesse, girava intorno cercandosi pretesi per distrarlo: abbaiano per esempio a una farfalla, per vedere se riusciva a fargli puntare il fucile" (Ibid. 640). Gian dei Brughi's inactive state of brigandage, as set in motion by some excellent books furnished by Cosimo, is interrupted by dangling a spider in between the book and Gian dei Brughi's nose, as seen in *Il barone rampante*: "Bel-Loré ebbe un'idea. C'era lì una ragnatela con un grosso ragno. Bel-Loré sollevò con mani leggere la ragnatela col ragno sopra e la buttò addosso a Gian dei Brughi, tra libro e naso. Questo sciagurato di Gian dei Brughi s'era così ramollito da prendersi paura anche d'un ragno" (Ibid. 645). Later on in the same novel, Cosimo's notoriety for his arboreal trysts will challenge the disconnect between reading books and pursuing one's physical lust in the episode of "la Quercia delle Cinque Passere," as related by the merchant, Gè, to Cosimo's younger brother Biagio (Ibid. 693). It is important to note that in Italian there is a sexual *double-entendre* in the word "passera," or sparrow (Tompkins 2015: 111). As Biagio relates: "Se le era portate tutte cinque sui rami, Cosimo, una qua e una là, e si godevano il tepore, tutte nude, cogli ombrellini aperti per non farsi scottar dal sole, e il Barone era là in mezzo, che leggeva versi latini, non riuscii a capire se d'Ovidio o di Lucrezio" (Calvino 1991: 693). Although Cosimo was an object of worry to many fathers and fiancés at this point in the novel, this story portrays Cosimo's love of books and literature and reason as above his physical desires and pleasures. Indeed, as Tompkins puts it succinctly, "Cosimo is portrayed as being above the spectacle and unaffected by their temptation as he reads to them from the Latin classics. Obviously, the fact that Cosimo is reading Latin rather than looking is part of the joke, as is the fact that Gè could not make out whether it was Ovid or Lucretius that Cosimo was reading" (2015: 112).

It is not an accident of fiction that the only two principal female characters of the novel are set in stark contrast to one another. On the one hand is Rina la Nera Pin's prostitute sister, who appears to have no reservations, political or moral, and takes on clientele who are enemies and partisans alike. On the other is the less than lily-white Giglia, an adulteress wife of the cook for the partisan band, Mancino. Together they "fulfill the fateful role of betrayer played by the evil queens and stepmothers of myth and fable" (De León-Jones 1997: 362). Pin's life is not to be found solely within the confines of the novel. His story interacts with those of the characters in and outside of the text that connects him to fable and [f]actuality. The women in Pin's life serve as models and reference points for what life's relationships are like or could be. Indeed, there are even models of experience as a continually evolving process, which is reflected in nature's fluidity. Indeed, it is worth reiterating that for all beings, "a becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two: it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both" (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 323). It is important to note that marginalized humans or nonhuman animals mediate this process of becoming for Deleuze and Guattari by not only designating as a state of being that of "becoming-animal," but also those of "becoming-woman" and "becoming-child" (Ibid. 303). This process of metamorphoses into something beyond human man as a superior being by including nature - nonhuman animals, women, and children - calls into question the hierarchical structures of society and proposes a new outlook on the dynamics of relationships of power. Marchesini points out that women's lives and bodies are linked to the cyclical aspect of nature and seasons, while men's are mostly exempt. It is only when human man is considered a part of natural life, and not hierarchically superior to it that we

can begin to question and challenge “questa visione androcentrica [che] ha contribuito in modo rilevante al radicamento della dicotomia natura/cultura, perché era funzionale a giustificare il predominio maschile all’interno della società umana. Solo controllando la donna l’uomo poteva non lasciarsi soggiogare dalle forze della natura” (2002: 79-80). It is when men lose their dominant roles in the text – i.e., when Dritto no longer commands either the partisan band or his lust for Giglia or when Frick lets his guard down to be with la Nera and Pin can steal his pistol – that forces higher than they, such as history and nature, step in to fill the void. Unfortunately, these interventions are not always to the men’s advantage. Pin’s penetrating eye is there to help collect, if not attempt to connect, the disparate pieces of fragmented masculinity and femininity during stories set during wartime. What is said about the women of Pin’s world is just as important as the actions he witnesses committed against them. Among the two main categories, physical or symbolic, most of the insults and complaints the men – partisans, Fascist and German soldiers alike – have of women, are drawn from images of violence and nonhuman animals such as horses and cats.

Are all manners of insult equally brutal? What does the fact that the following examples of insults the characters exchange are drawn from animals’ physical attributes, and metaphorical and symbolic considerations imply for our analysis of the text (Ponti 1991: 112)? As to the first, many of the nonhuman animal descriptions attributed to women are meant to describe them physically and only subtly imply an insult in one verbal image. For instance, when the reader is first introduced to La Nera, she is leaning out the window

and defining black hair, and that she has a “faccia equina”¹¹ is noted (Calvino 1991: 10). We will return to the symbology of horses and their relation to war and warriors in Calvino’s novels of the post-war period with regards to *Il visconte dimezzato* [1952] and a lesser extent also in *Il barone rampante* [1957]. Both stories are set in periods when horses and warriors worked more closely than during the Second World War, from the Ottoman-Austrian wars of the late seventeenth-century in the former to the Napoleonic Wars in the latter. It is sufficient to say one should not describe a woman’s face as “horse-like” without being a fervent admirer of horses because it is not typically an animal attribution associated with beauty.

In contrast, although the insult Pin ascribes to Giglia’s movements as cat-like is contemporaneously physical and symbolic in its sexualization, it is also seen in a more positive light than that attributed to La Nera above (Calvino 1991: 60). In the case of Giglia, her green eyes are put forth first and then followed by how she moves her neck in the same way as a cat would arch its back. Perhaps the chronological order of the descriptions of the women is not as important as the fact that each insult contains some intrinsic physical description and an animal-like attribution. This technique will be applied not only for women but also for the male characters. If a nonhuman animal attribution can be positive in one case and slightly negative in another, the tendency to ascribe any animal

¹¹ Another conjunction of women and work horses if not ones for battle appears in the tenth story of day nine from Boccaccio’s *Decamerone*. That story details a poor priest, Gianni, who agrees to cast a spell so that his business partner, Pietro, can have his wife, Gemmata, turned into a mare, a female horse, so they can bring more things to the market. By touching the lady from head to toe and saying the appropriate spell this metamorphosis would have been complete, if only Pietro’s burst of outrage at Gianni’s putting in a “tail” had not caused the spell to break (2006: 769-773).

as inherently other, bad, and marginal, falls flat. While Giglia's cat-like movement at first glance may appear sexy, at the time, she is coyly trying to dissuade the advances of Dritto. While Giglia's agency or lack thereof could be the subject of academic research, upon closer inspection, the case of a cat is intriguing because it can play the role of the predator or the one who has fallen prey to a trap. Some comparative literary examples of cats would not go remiss in our studies of nonhuman animals and literature in war stories.

While the figure of the cat is typically associated with women, and not just in Italian but across world literature, the few examples listed here also include poignant examples of a male cat. Both of these are characterized by selfishness and deceptiveness of their qualities, which is relatable to our present text even if they are not war stories.

Returning briefly to the question Giglia has presented us of a cat's role as predator and prey, Calvino would have had ample material to draw upon from Aesop's *Fables*. In the two following examples, the cats' deceptions, unfortunately, do not go undetected, as the morals of the stories "The Cat and the Mice" and "The Cat and the Birds" indicate: "If you are wise you won't be deceived by the innocent airs of those whom you have found to be dangerous," and "Know your enemies" (Aesop 1998: 10, 12). However, the cat's predator status is turned upside down in the story of "Venus and the Cat" in which notably a female cat falls in love with a male human and pleads with the goddess to turn her into a woman so she can marry the man (Ibid. 54). When Venus grants the cat's request, the goddess wishes to see if the cat has changed on the inside as well as she has on the outside. She does this by putting the cat-turned-woman to the test by placing a mouse in front of her. The cat-turned-woman soon grapples with and proceeds to eat the mouse right in front of her new husband, and it is from this tale that the moral of the story "Nature exceeds

nurture” is propagated (Ibid.). While Giglia is not the protagonist under investigation in our analysis of Calvino’s poetics of human animality in war stories, Pin’s observation of her, among other storied animals, has added as many questions as it has attempted to answer. Pin’s interactions with storied animals will not stop with la Nera and Giglia in isolation. He will also observe how these women are treated by members of the partisan band, Fascists, and Nazis.

Not only is Pin’s world made understandable through the nonhuman animals around him, such as cats and horses, spiders, and the falcon. These creatures also act as his linguistic tools to express himself and to make sense of his place in the world. Animals and the symbolic metaphors derived from their comparisons with humans as objects or protagonists are flexible enough to be positive or negative according to tradition and or the speaker’s intention. To be called an animal is not always an insult or a confirmation of the supremacy of hierarchical thought. Being in the midst of a war novel, however, much of the animal imagery does serve a purpose to expose the cruelties of war. Here women and enemies are fellow creatures that, nevertheless, must be consigned to a distance and objectified to be able to call them enemies, exclude them, and hurt them. These actions are not without such profound remorse and crises of consciousness. Instead, they pose contradictions of ourselves and our claims of morality and argue for embracing a human animality.

Nonhuman animals are not merely conduits for easily assimilated physical descriptions. They are also utilized as symbolic currency to elaborate a character and their story. The women and the men of Pin’s life and story during the Second World War are not immune to this treatment. As Calvino himself would later write in his 1982 preface on

Pliny's *Storia naturale* entitled "Il cielo, l'uomo, e l'elefante," an animal's appearance in a story is never innocent. Indeed: "l'animale, vero o fantastico che sia, ha un posto privilegiato nella dimensione dell'immaginario: appena nominato s'investe d'un potere fantasmale; diventa allegoria, simbolo, emblema"¹² (1995 (1): 929). In a text permeated with the easy dichotomy of good and evil, friend and foe, this dividing line also continually [m]aligns men with the former and women with the latter. Where Pin's sailor father was absent, Cugino fills a void for Pin with male camaraderie and bonding. He does this not just with the path to the spider's nests, but also while they are taking care of bodily functions necessary for their biological selves, if not for their rational aspects: "Ora è giorno, e l'omone sta pisciando sulle ceneri spente; anche Pin si alza e si mette a pisciare vicino a lui"¹³ (Calvino 1994 1: 55). Pin cannot engage in a similar type of activity of male bonding with either his sister, his deceased mother, or with la Giglia. Thus, once he joins the partisan band, it is essential to note the representations of women in this text. As there are not any female partisan fighters or mail and firearms couriers present, the prostitute, the

¹² Calvino's preface from the 1982 Einaudi edition of Pliny the Elder's *Storia naturale* cited above was originally entitled "Il cielo, l'uomo, l'elefante." While elephants abound in world literature, for an auditory experience, follow the link to the fifth movement of Camille Saint-Saëns's "Le Carnaval des animaux" entitled "L'Elephant": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZAGLJtj5RU>.

¹³ This kind of male bonding as well as being compounded with a sense of competition will reoccur in *Il barone rampante* with Cosimo's famous first re-encounter with his father after his ascension to the trees: "-La ribellione non si misura a metri, - disse [Arminio]. -Anche quando pare di poche spanne, un viaggio può restare senza ritorno. [...] -Ma io dagli alberi piscio più lontano! - frase senza molto senso, ma che tronca netto la questione" (Calvino 1991: 609).

adulteress, and the ghosts of the past, i.e., Pin's mother, are the only examples of women available to Pin and the reader. Moreover, one of Cugino's first pieces of advice to Pin deals with both war and women. While this war novel revolves around a boy trying to make sense of a man's world in times of war, the role of women is fixed at its center. According to the battle-hardened Cugino, this is not because of women's roles as fighters or nurturers, but rather, as the gangrenous root cause of war: "Al principio di tutte le storie che finiscono male c'è una donna, non si sbaglia. Tu sei giovane, impara quello che ti dico: la guerra è tutta colpa delle donne..." (Ibid. 54). As one literary example, Cugino could have mentioned the abduction of Helen of Troy that would precipitate the Trojan war recounted in Homer's epic *The Iliad* (cf. 1990). Cugino fails to mention, however, that women are all too often among the civilian and military victims of killing, rape, torture - all the world's most base cruelties distilled - during wartime. From where does "a particular fascination with women as victims of violence" resurface in this text (Morgan 1999: 74)?

Calvino returns to nature and nonhuman animals.

Giglia and Rina la Nera, as the only living and breathing female characters, are subjected to violence as much as insults. In the first case, Pin's appraisal of Giglia's person by redefining her as a female dog, a bitch, for her roll in the rhododendrons with Dritto has been discussed above (Calvino 1991: 139). Rina la Nera is not only metamorphosized as a nonhuman animal by the insults her younger brother Pin hurls at her. The other men describe her, or the violence they speak about against her is also often dehumanizing animal terminology. In the first instance, Miscèl il francese threatens Pin with the following if he should fail to procure the pistol from the German soldier Frick that frequents his older sister: "tua sorella la facciamo girare rasata e nuda come *una gallina*

spennata”¹⁴ (Ibid. 12, my emphasis). Later, Pin not only considers his sister to himself as a performing monkey for men, but he also does not hesitate to call her that directly to her face: “sua sorella, quella scimmia, va coi capitani” and “Scimmia! – grida, con tutte le sue forze. – Cagna! Spia!” (Ibid. 132, 143). Of course, la Nera’s most significant offense lies not in her engagement of a morally circumspect profession to provide for herself and her younger brother. Instead, it is her apparent disloyalty to their partisan neighbors and friends by taking money from a German soldier, from the enemy, which is perceived as yet another type of unforgivable infidelity. The women are not the only dehumanized storied animals in this war novel. The partisans, Fascists, and Nazis are also subjected to Calvino’s icastic nonhuman animal symbologies.

While there are many storied wild animals among the partisans, Fascists, and Nazis that Pin encounters, such as wolves and giraffes, the former animal will resonate the most in contrast to both Pin’s placement as a domesticated puppy and contemporary national mythology of the wolf during the years of Fascism in Italy. Interestingly, the narrator

¹⁴ The female chicken is not attributed just to Rina la Nera, but also features in one of Pin’s dreams. Although the role of animals in oneiric spaces of this novel could not be given room for its deserved exploration in this chapter, Pin’s dreaming animals was the subject of a paper I presented at Trinity College Dublin in December of 2015. After he escapes with Lupo Rosso from prison, Pin drifts off to sleep in the chicken coop. He identifies so much with the place that he dreams he is a chicken, moreover a female chicken and not a rooster of the roost (Calvino 1991: 50). Pin’s being on the threshold between boy and man is reconfigured in a feminized animal form because of his vulnerable position after he has escaped from prison and the fact that he has less experience than his partisan compatriot, Lupo Rosso. Pin is a female chicken rather than that of the authoritative male rooster, whose position of dominance and strength would be so aptly described in Aldo Palazzeschi’s short story “Pompona” from *Bestie del 900* thus: “*Tuba*, il gallo che la massaia considerava quale amico, un alleato, il confidente (la spia); autorità suprema del pollaio, il solo rispettato da quella cisposa, specie di sultano, unico maschio adulto fra tante femmine anziane e bambine” (2006: 4).

describes the Fascists and the Nazis as two sides of the same coin, which may be attributed to their being different but equally inimical to the partisans. Indeed, to also label the Fascists and the Nazis as “due razze speciali,” especially in the light of the contemporary language of Nazism and the 1938 Racial Laws in Italy, can only be purposeful. The Fascists’ mice whiskers could be seen as an intentional counterpoint to the rodentification of Jews as seen in Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* [1980], which was culled of course from actual contemporary Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda: “quanto i tedeschi sono rossicci, carnosi, imberbi, tanto i Fascisti sono neri, ossuti, con le facce bluastre e *i baffi da topo*” (cf. 1996; Calvino 1991: 27, my emphasis). In literature and on the battlefield, a name is more than just a name. For some of the partisans Pin encounters, their chosen or given battle name stems from animal physical description and symbology. Giraffa has a distinctive neck whose battle name icastically depicts him with just one word (Ibid. 11). The battle name for Pelle, the turncoat from Dritto’s partisan band to the Fascists, simultaneously refers to “skin” and an animal’s hide, especially if it is turned into “leather.” The story of how Lupo Rosso got his battle name simultaneously recounts his coming into being as a partisan.

In a joint effort with his commanding officer to find a name that could combine his communist principles and at the same time undermine Fascist symbologies, Lupo Rosso relates the following: “Quando il commissario m’ha detto che Ghepeù non andava bene, io gli ho chiesto come mi potevo chiamare, e lui ha detto: chiamati Lupo. Allora gli ho detto che volevo un nome con qualcosa di rosso perché il lupo è un animale Fascista. E lui m’ha detto: allora chiamati Lupo Rosso” (Calvino 1991: 36-7). The Fascist wolf that distresses Lupo Rosso is connected historically to the she-wolf that suckled Remus and Romulus, the latter being the legendary founder of the Roman city and empire (Ovid 2000: II.382-425).

The very name for Fascism derives from the name for a weapon from ancient Rome, which was an ax with a bundle of rods tied around it known as the *fasces* in Latin, or the *fascio littorio* in Italian (Falasca-Zamponi 2000: 95). Dogs and wolves, puppies tame or wild, will prove to be of great significance in both political and metaphorical symbologies. Indeed, dogs and wolves have continually abounded in world literature since antiquity, a few examples of which will be briefly highlighted below.

Following the resonance of Fascism's reappraisal of mythologies of the ancient Roman empire to evoke nationalizing sentiments, the following wolves of world literature also improve the reader's understanding of the place of wolves in Calvino's war novels and their stance on the brink of human animality. The guardian dog of the gates of Hell, Cerberus, has been depicted with additional features to the characteristic three heads, such as snake tails to form this chimerical figure, as one can compare in the descriptions of him across various Classical texts: Homer's *The Iliad* (1990: VII.368) and *The Odyssey* (1997: XI.623), Virgil's *Aeneid* (2013: VI.417), and Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* (2016: IV.449), as well as his cameo appearance in Dante's *Divina commedia* (2005: *Inferno* VI.13-33). With regards to wolves, especially, a well-known story about the importance of honesty with ourselves and others have been passed down to us from Aesop's *Fables* in "The Shepard Boy and the Wolf" (cf. 1998: 25-26).

Proceeding from fables to fairytales wolves have a disturbing aspect in both German and Italian folklore. The Grimm's version of "Little Red Riding Hood" translated from the original "Rothkäppchen" only slightly differs from two such tales from the Italian tradition (Grimm 2014: 85-87). Although not studied in detail within the confines of the argument of this dissertation, it would not go amiss to mention but one of Calvino's

editorial projects from the same decade, in which he translated, into one language and one style, a collection of *Fiabe italiane* [1956], which included the two tales similar to “Little Red Riding Hood.” Namely, “Zio lupo” from the region of Abruzzo and one from the Emilia-Romagna region, “La finta nonna” (cf. 1993: 276-278, 653-655). Calvino would retrieve this story of “Little Red Riding Hood” in his novel *La giornata di uno scrutatore* [1963]: “«Siamo come Cappuccetto rosso in visita alla nonna malata, - pensò Amerigo. - Forse, aperta la tendina, non troveremo più la nonna, ma il lupo». E poi: «Ogni nonna malata è sempre un lupo»” (1992: 75). Moreover, Calvino also pointed out in his 1946 article for L’*Unità* entitled “Da Esopo a Disney” that beyond anthropomorphism and allegory, the novels *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906) by Jack London demonstrated that London was “il primo a intuire un dramma sociale negli animali: il dramma lupo-cane ossia anarchia-società” (1995 (2): 2135). Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* [1894] relates the tale not only of a boy, Mowgli, brought up by a family of wolves. His friendships with other nonhuman animals, a bear, and a panther, among others, teach him how to interact with humans so as not to become one of the hunters the wolves fear so much. Our comparative literary discussion of wolves, and their unique position on the edge of society and notions of power, will be purposefully interrupted here so it can be returned to in the analysis of the third chapter of this dissertation on *Il barone rampante* (1957). Pin is not merely a puppy among wolves. His relationship with other humans reconfigured as tamed and vulnerable dogs must also be investigated, especially since this is how many partisans are described in the novel.

Another place where the animal and the human world of family collide is in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*. Not only are the women female dogs in heat, but the partisan

prisoners like Pietromago and the prison guard alike come to be physically described as dogs¹⁵ as well. When Pin sees Pietromago sick and dying in his cell and plucks off his lice for him Pin “lo guarda nella faccia gialla, pelosa come quella di *un cane*, sente il suo fiato ansimargli il viso” (Calvino 1991: 40-41, my emphasis). Although the depiction of Pin’s former boss as an ill street dog describes Pietromago’s physical deterioration within the prison walls, the guard Pin encounters while he is trying to escape the prison will reveal an altogether different, but equally demobilizing, weakness. Pin distracts the prison guard with the sheer possibility of a photograph of a beautiful woman without even having an actual one in his hand (Ibid. 44). By the mere suggestion of it and a few complementary pantomimes of attempting to hide the non-existent picture, Pin succeeds in involving the guard’s attention to the degree that the guard does not detect Lupo Rosso coming up behind him. Lupo Rossi is thus able to trap the guard and his gun in a trash can so that he and Pin can escape the prison. Pin’s demonstration of the power of possibility causes the prison guard to lose his dehumanized duty-bound self and be human. The guard seemed to visually devour the wisps of female flesh with his eyes like a caveman akin to a nonhuman animal: “la sentinella è china sopra di lui, ed è riuscita ad aprire completamente gli occhi, *due occhi da animale cavernicolo*” (Ibid. 44, my emphasis). The human animality of partisans, Fascists, and Nazis, and guards alike is not told only by juxtaposing nonhuman animal qualities with descriptive and icastic words, but also through images and painting.

¹⁵ While throughout Calvino’s oeuvre dogs are often, but not always, depicted as powerless and submissive, in Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* [1869], the dogs in Pierre’s nightmare will cause him to rethink his lifestyle and seek some way of improving himself, dogs have the power to frighten him and stir him to action on account of their, perhaps latent wolf-like ferocity as was conveyed by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky’s brilliant translation (cf. 2007: 386-388).

Words are not the only means of defining the partisans and Fascists through descriptions of nonhuman animals; the visual arts also come into play. As but one example, Pin's fascination with the partisan Mancino's tattoos complicates images and imagery of both human and nonhuman animals. The reader is first introduced to one tattoo of Mancino's on his leg, that of a butterfly, which was "lasciata scoperta dai pantaloni sdruciti" (Calvino 1991: 63-4). Pin's curiosity is peaked, and he asks Mancino what precisely the purpose of the tattoo is: "a cosa serve?" (Ibid). Mancino's answer can be seen on the one hand as patronizing and typical of adults when he dismisses Pin's question as an overdose of curiosity.

Yet, like all works of art, must Mancino's tattoo exist only to be circumscribed by the symbolic baggage that the image of a butterfly implies? The butterfly might recall some lines from one of John Keats' love letters, such as: "I almost wish we were butterflies and liv'd but three summer days – three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain" (2012: 398). If not, its importance as an image in art and literature throughout history has been a symbol of delicacy and lightness during the process of metamorphosis that reflects the transformative stages of life (2012: 398). Unlike spiders, butterflies, as storied insects in Calvino's war novels, will reappear in our discussions of *Il visconte dimezzato* and *Il barone rampante*. Mancino has quite the gallery of imagery to offer Pin through his tattoos, however. The sailing ships, hearts, scythes, and hammers, Madonnas become a tableau of nature, movement, violence, religion. For all the people Pin has encountered in his short life, including himself, who seek affection, love, and lust, Pin notably spots yet another tattoo while Mancino is indisposed of "un uomo in piedi e una donna inginocchiata che s'abbracciano" (Calvino 1991: 89). All these

seemingly disparate and fragmented images once brought together form but a piece of the human puzzle towards better understanding the quintessential components of life: nature, human and nonhuman animals, movement, war, love. War has been a continual human-made disaster since antiquity. Yet not all battles are fought for profit, vanity, or greed. Sometimes war is inevitable because “anche l’aria e il sole sono cose da conquistare dietro le barricate” (Pratolini 2011: 141). The good things in life are worth defending. Yet is there truly any space, any possibility for more humane humanity in times of war, is the question?

From history textbooks to politicians’ rhetoric, war has always been made out to sound heroic and alight with the intensity of a worthy cause. The soldiers who put their lives on the line are the ones who must endure it, though. No one grows up instinctively defining some humans as enemies and others as friends or believing that there are times when one must harm to achieve a greater good. However, the cruelty of war and its actions never stay solely on a battlefield between two soldiers. Instead, they affect the lives of their loved ones; their parents, spouses, siblings, relatives, and children as well. As Bettelheim notes, “today, as in times past, the most important and also difficult task in raising a child is helping him to find meaning in life” as well as to give them the compass to grow and participate in a complicated human society that has as many rules as there are exceptions (2010: 3). When Pin meets Cugino for the first time, Cugino has no holds barred about telling this young child he kills. Counterintuitively,

Pin non ha paura perché sa che c’è chi ammazza la gente eppure è bravo: Lupo Rosso parla sempre d’ammazzare eppure è bravo, il pittore che stava di fronte a casa sua ha ammazzato sua moglie eppure era bravo, Miscèl Francese adesso avrebbe ammazzato gente anche lui e sarebbe sempre restato Miscèl Francese. Poi l’omone col berrettino di lana parla d’ammazzare con tristezza, come lo facesse per castigo (Calvino 1991: 53-54).

While we might expect to see, based on the fairy tale elements in this novel, the drawing of polarities and dichotomies, Calvino instead embraces the complexities not only of the definitions of who is human and who is animal but also of who is a friend and who is an enemy. Encouraging complications rather than reinforcing dichotomies can be a risk when depicting war stories, be they for an adult or child audience, because “presenting the polarities of character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two, which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn truer to life, with all the complexities that characterize real people” (Bettelheim 2010: 9). The discourse of the enemy, like that of the animal, has historically excluded and marginalized others and reflects a dichotomous way of thinking that has little resonance with the border-crossings of reality (Lotman 1990: 124). Lévi-Strauss also concurs and builds upon the idea that thought in terms of binary oppositions is regrettably inevitable because “all mythemes of whatever kind must, generally speaking, lend themselves to binary oppositions, since such operations are an inherent feature of the means invented by nature to make possible the functioning of language and thought” (1981: 559). One of the chief aims of this dissertation is to bring to the fore as much as to investigate Calvino’s challenge of that tenuous dichotomous thought and representation in life and literature.

Thus far, Calvino’s interest and appraisal of nonhuman animal symbologies in the war novel has informed our investigation into a more inclusive definition of humanity. Not only have animals populated his books, but their interest in storytelling is an intrinsic aspect of that camaraderie formation among one of his protagonists, Pin. Our cruelties and our mercies should bring out our utmost, our most in tune with nature and with ourselves and the world around us. While “the hunting-machine, the war-machine, the crime-machine

entail all kinds of becomings-animal that are not articulated in myth,” it falls to the power of literature and art to show ourselves capable of every shade and light (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 267). Ponti argues that on account of the incapable and morally reprehensible actions of “quell’universo di diseredati ed emarginati [partigiani] perde definitivamente ogni connotazione economica per diventare metafora universale della condizione umana” (1991: 100). Nevertheless, they are a part of humanity, even if it is far from ideal.

The frailty of the partisans, the closeness they have with nature, their imperfection, their animal-likeness does make them human, an integral and integrated part of the human condition indeed. Calvino himself wrote in a letter to Eugenio Scalfari that he considered the novel that he had finished a month prior in December of 1946 to be “un’esperienza di malvagità e schifo umani, ma con una speranza di redenzione quasi cristiana (terrena, però), più dichiarata che raggiunta” (2000: 172). As in many of Calvino’s works, “il mondo della natura è così vicino all’uomo in Calvino che la realtà umano e non-umano forma una sola continuità al cui interno sono possibili continui slittamenti e trasformazioni” (Cardona 1988: 194). It is possible to argue that alongside Calvino’s intentions for the novel to give this effect with regards to the partisans, Pin and his conception of the spiders’ nests could also imply a terrestrial outlook on religion. Pin is wholly at one with the earth, nonhuman animals, and things that a child can see, touch and destroy or comfort at will, and he can form his universe and be at one with it simultaneously. Without showing a supernatural divinity as the prime-mover of the machinations of the plot of the novel, Calvino argues in his 1958 essay “Natura e storia nel romanzo” that, in counterpoint to the importance of any divinity, “i grandi romanzi sembra che nascono puntualmente apposta per correggere le

idolatrie tenute dalla filosofia, per guardarle con l'occhio critico e relativo dell'uomo che non si considera più il centro dell'universo"¹⁶ (Calvino 1995 (1): 31). While Pin is not the only character endowed with such power and desires, the telling of his story has offered much to the reader as to the state of the *anima mundi* during wartime through a variety of animal symbologies (Calvino 1995 (1): 706). While we have already taken into profound consideration Pin and the partisans, Fascists, Germans, and women in their animal states, the task at hand before us is to investigate another prominent protagonist who complicates and challenges the easy dichotomy of rational human goodness and animal instinctive base cruelty enveloped in Kim, the commissioned officer.

¹⁶ The critical eye at work in Calvino's stance of displacing humanity as the epitome as well as the central focal point of being also recalls to mind Galileo's important discovery on January 7, 1610 which proved that neither the Earth and the species of humanity are at the center of the universe, which he would detail in his *Sidereus Nuncius* published that same year (cf. 1957: 21-58).

1.3 Kim's Humane Bodymind

While the many intersections of narrative space and reality have been discussed in this chapter, the significance of psychology and contestable human high logic has been embodied by the character Kim. Kim could have been configured as a student in any subject, for being a student alone among the partisans and the women of the town and Pin would have made him stand out. Why choose and highlight medicine, and the field of psychology, in particular? As Pin's human need for affection was examined above, so Kojève's delineation between humans and nonhuman animals along the lines of Animal and Anthropogenetic Desire will return in our literary analysis of Kim, especially since this concept is reflected in Kim's interest in psychoanalysis (1980: 6). After having been introduced to the term and the idea in Jerri Daboo's *Ritual, Rapture and Remorse: A Study of Tarantism and Pizzica in Salento*, where she uses the word "bodymind" to "indicate a psychophysical unity of body and mind," this is also how I will be using the term throughout this discussion on Italo Calvino's war novels, and in this particular section on Kim (2010: 39). Kim's life story, as it is elaborated on by his relationship to others as well as his famous monologue/intervention in the ninth chapter of the novel, will be examined in detail to continue this study on the protagonists and their human-animality in Italo Calvino's first war novel, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*.

Kim's chosen field of study, and how it affects his relationship with the other partisans, illuminates how psychoanalysis not only saturates our lives but also infiltrates Calvino's storytelling. As we have noted above, Pin's more earthly, physical, and animalesque perspective on the world and his attempts to understand love and his place in

it are direct opposites of what we will see with Kim. Through Calvino's view, which is projected on to Kim, "the interpretive system of psychoanalysis is constructed not around sexuality per se, but rather around desire, which [Calvino] sees as the dynamic force of human existence and the historical transformation of the subject" (Re 1990: 271). Kim's words and his character speak to greater things about life and love, about an embraced human animality that still needs to be heard. Before diving into the possible resonance of such integrated thought between human and nonhuman animals, the textual evidence from Kim's life story should be analyzed.

First, as the narrator and the character himself asks: "«Kim...Kim...Chi è Kim?...»" (Calvino 1991: 108). His is a partisan brigade commissar by title. His background, however, includes his life as a student of psychology. According to the narrator, Kim holds "un enorme interesse per il genere umano, in lui: per questo studia medicina, perché sa che la spiegazione di tutto è in quella macina di cellule in moto, non nelle categorie della filosofia" (Ibid. 99). By placing the exact words "genere umano" within the mouth of Kim, a psychology student, Calvino continues to weave a comparative literary dialogue with the work of his friend and colleague, Elio Vittorini. Specifically, with the incipit of the latter's novel, *Conversazione in Sicilia* [in serial between 1938-1939 and published as a stand-alone novel in 1941]: "Io ero, in quell'inverno, in preda ad astratti furori. Non dirò quali, non di questo mi son messo a raccontare. Ma bisogna dica che erano astratti, non eroici, non vivi; furori, in qualche modo, per *il genere umano* perduto" (1986: 9, my emphasis). Philosophy and the medical discipline of psychology, especially for their joint interest in quandaries of ethics and morality, are not such distant fields of study from one another.

Both of these fields will intersect not only in Kim's monologue from the ninth chapter but also from the literary namesake of his *nome de guerre*.

Kim derives his *nom de guerre* from the child protagonist of the eponymous book by Rudyard Kipling [1901], upon which even the narrator does not fail to elaborate. Following Kim's famous exchange with Ferriera about Dritto's misfit band of partisans, the narrator refers to Kim's feeling like the protagonist of Kipling's book, not just once, but twice:

Ogni tanto gli sembra di camminare in un mondo di simboli, come il piccolo Kim in mezzo all'India, nel libro di Kipling tante volte riletto da ragazzo [...] Il commissario di brigata si sente come l'eroe del romanzo letto nella fanciullezza: Kim, il ragazzo mezzo inglese mezzo indiano che viaggia attraverso l'India col vecchio Lama Rosso, per trovare il fiume della purificazione (Ibid. 108, 111).

The protagonist of Kipling's story is a young orphan boy from Irish parents who, among his adventures and misadventures in British-occupied Lahore, finds he is destined to help a Tibetan lama, Red Blade, on his spiritual quest (cf. Kipling 2011). Not only is Calvino's Kim "attracted by the magical element of the written word" in storytelling, but he also approaches the field of psychoanalysis "with its particular logic and language [that] seek[s] to describe the interior world of the unknown, the obscure unconscious motivations that push the characters to act as they do" (De León-Jones 1997: 366). Calvino's interest and fascination with Rudyard Kipling go beyond Kim's namesake. It also stems from his writing in the 1946 article, as mentioned above, "Da Esopo a Disney" that "il trionfo della biologia aperse nello secolo scorso la via a una vera letteratura animalesca. Kipling mise per la prima volta l'uomo in mezzo agli animali, il ranocchio-umano Mowgli, a pari a pari, e i suoi animali, se pur parlanti e umanizzati, sono psicologicamente vivi" (Calvino 1995 (2): 2135-2136). This blend of subjects that Calvino admires in Kipling resonates with Calvino's own literary techniques, which allow for a more rounded contemplation of what

it means to be human, to be animal, even to be at all. Kim cannot be studied in isolation, but rather, he should also be explicitly compared to his counterpoint, Pin, as well as to his interactions with other actors in Calvino's war novel.

Although Kim is his own literary character, there is a part of him that is also Pin. Together they demonstrate and depict optimistic and pessimistic takes on life and love that is both childlike and mature. The narrator's voice unifies Pin and Kim as they "si formano i significati e i valori del romanzo" (Ponti 1991: 58). Within Kim, there is a fundamental tension between what is human and what is an animal. On the one hand, much like the cat's gaze that preoccupies Derrida in his nakedness, there is something animal and earthly in the studious and observational gaze of Kim as a budding psychologist that unsettles those around him (Derrida 2008: 3-4). Kim, even though he is an adult in a position of authority in the partisan band, finds himself excluded from their camaraderie "perché li guarda sempre fissi negli occhi come volesse scoprire la nascita dei loro pensieri e a un tratto esce con domande a bruciapelo, domande che non c'entrano niente, su di loro, sulla loro infanzia" (Calvino 1991: 99). Kim incarnates and dialogues with "aspetti dell'atteggiamento pensoso interrogativo o partecipe di Calvino nei confronti della *zona oscura*, di un'alterità prerazionale o arazionale che è anche dell'uomo" (Ferretti 1989: 39). Despite Kim's deep appreciation for logic, reason, and order, he admits an illogical side that is also an intricate part of our humanity. For Kim "tutto deve esser logico, tutto si deve capire, nella storia come nella testa degli uomini: ma tra l'una e l'altra resta un salto, una zona buia dove le ragioni collettive si fanno ragioni individuali, con mostruose deviazioni e impensati agganciamenti" (Calvino 1991: 100). Yet, Kim also maintains this detached logical supposedly human perspective too as he "studia gli uomini, analizza le posizioni

dell'uno e dell'altro, scompone ogni problema in elementi distinti, «a, bi, ci», dice; tutto chiaro, tutto chiaro dev'essere negli altri come in lui" (Ibid.). Some things that are not as unambiguous for the partisans as much as for Kim will be revealed during his visit as brigade commissar with Ferriera.

During his visit, Kim will make at least two out of three betrayals apparent for all to see. He will reveal the fact that Pelle had turned coat to fight for the Fascists, which was a critical piece of information for Pin to know that Pelle might have stolen his P38 pistol. Additionally, Kim informs the partisans that although the other commissars did not know the exact circumstances of the fire that would alert the Nazis to the partisan band's presence in the hills, specifically that Dritto and Giglia were having a tryst, they knew that it was Dritto's fault (Calvino 1991: 100-101). Although Ariosto was writing figuratively as to why Charlemagne took Angelica out of Orlando's reach in the following lines from his Renaissance poem, *Orlando furioso*: "Il savio imperatore, ch'estinguer volse / un grave incendio, fu che gli la tolse," the fire Dritto and Giglia's lust caused was all too real (Ariosto 2012: I.vii.7-8). Kim and Ferriera question Dritto about the fire, and although he does not reveal any details, he instead takes full blame and responsibility (Calvino 1991: 102). Ferriera and Kim inform Dritto that despite his claims of illness, tomorrow's battle would be decisive for his fate, in the army, and life if necessary (Ibid.). To drive the point home, Ferriera goes so far as to say that sick or not, trained partisan soldier or not, every man available should join in tomorrow's battle and states explicitly that "tutti gli uomini devono andare in azione, nessuno escluso, nemmeno il furiere, *nemmeno il cuoco*" (Ibid. 103, my emphasis). If Mancino, the cook, was away from the partisan camp on the battlefield with the rest of the partisan band, then Dritto could have a few more precious

moments with Giglia all to himself. Dritto's line of thinking makes abundantly apparent when he responds to the commissars with an unexpected enthusiasm: "Nessuno escluso, - ripete, - nemmeno il cuoco? – e si fa attento" (Ibid.). The reader has already encountered above the embrace and disappearance of Dritto following the battle from Pin's perspective. What the dynamic of Ferriera and especially Kim, add to this pivotal moment in the plot remains to be seen below.

Although Kim's overtly anti-fascist and philosophical monologue gives his character weight and significance, it is not only in contrast to Pin that he must be considered but also to his companion, Ferriera. With regards to physical features, from the moment of Kim's appearance in the story, there is already a dynamic of opposing characteristics akin to that between Cervantes' Sancho Panza ["belly" in Spanish] and Don Quixote (de Cervantes Saavedra 2010: 61). Like the more terrestrial concerned Sancho Panza in comparison to Don Quixote's actions inspired by ideals and their particular physical features, so too "Ferriera è tarchiato [...] [e] Kim è allampanato" (Calvino 1991: 99). This difference in physical characteristics is further reflected in their divergent life experiences, with Ferriera as a professional soldier and Kim as a student. Although Ferriera and Kim do not appear to be aware of Dritto's tryst with another man's wife, after their visit to the partisan band, Ferriera questions Kim about his ability to distinguish between theory and practicality. Specifically, Ferriera wants to know if Kim is finally convinced that his idea of putting all the misfits in a band together was a bad idea. Instead, Kim says: "Per me, - dice, - questo è il distaccamento di cui sono più contento" (Calvino 1991: 103). However, Ferriera disagrees: "- Ma Kim, quando la capirai che questa è una brigata d'assalto, non un laboratorio d'esperimenti?" (Ibid.). Kim has trouble expressing

his opinion: “- Storie, - dice, - storie. Gli uomini combattono tutti, c’è lo stesso furore in loro, cioè non lo stesso, ognuno ha il suo furore, ma ora combattono tutti insieme, tutti ugualmente, uniti” (Ibid. 103-104). While Kim will later elaborate on his idea of what the partisans are fighting for across all strata of society at that moment, he is entirely aware of what Dritto’s band comprises. Namely, it is a partisan band of “ladruncoli, carabinieri, militi, borsaneristi, girovaghi. Gente che s’accomoda nelle piaghe della società e s’arrangia in mezzo alle storture, che non ha niente da difendere e niente da cambiare” (Ibid. 105-106). National mythologies have often been reinforced by little challenged processes of canonization and historiography, which are made effective by their “standardized and homogenized language” (Hobsbawm 1990: 54). Yet, stories, especially Kim’s group of misfit partisans as well as Calvino’s invested interest in the representation of Pin’s character, demonstrate the undervalued significance of the marginalized periphery. These characters along the margins will only be aided by the topics of discussion of Kim’s well-known intervention in the ninth chapter, which will challenge conceptions about love and death, friend and enemy.

The core of Kim’s discourse revolves around two key points to inspire and encourage the partisans and the reader their present hell of war in stark contrast to their better reasons for participating. In the first point, Kim and the partisans are a part of a historic moment fighting in the Resistance in the hillsides of Italy against the German Nazis and the Italian Fascists. As an auto-criticism of himself, which recall Calvino’s own life experiences as a partisan in the Garibaldi brigades, Kim exposes the pros and cons of a student turned soldier:

Poi c'è qualche intellettuale o studente, ma pochi, qua e là, con delle idee in testa, vaghe e spesso storte. Hanno una patria fatta di parole, o tutt'al più di qualche libro. Ma combattendo troveranno che le parole non hanno più nessun significato, e scopriranno nuove cose nella lotta degli uomini e combatteranno così senza farsi domande, finché non cercheranno delle nuove parole e ritroveranno le antiche, ma cambiate, con significati insospettati (Calvino 1991: 105).

Although Kim is a student, the experience of war that he has lived is not invalidated by it. Indeed, he has just as much right to be a part of history as anyone who has something, or someone, worth defending. As we have already seen in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and will reencounter in not just the other works by Italo Calvino examined in this dissertation, but in many stories of war love a knight's lady, or a soldier's lady love reappears as a reason or a consolation for going to war.

The following excerpt complicates the boundaries between human and animality along a bipolar fault line of Desire that such dynamics between men and women during wartime might bring to the surface:

Human desire, or better still, anthropogenetic Desire produces a free and historical being, conscious of his individuality, his freedom, his history, and finally, his historicity. Hence, anthropogenetic Desire is different from Animal Desire (which produces a natural being, merely living and having only a sentiment of his life) in that it is directed, not toward a real, 'positive,' given object, but toward another Desire. Thus, in the relationship between man and woman, for example, Desire is human only if the one desires, not the body, but the Desire of the other; if he wants to 'possess' or 'assimilate' the Desire taken as Desire - that is to say, if he wants to be 'desired' or 'loved' rather than 'recognized' in his human value, in his reality as a human individual (Kojève 1980: 6).

If Desire were seen instead as a sight of integration of humanity and animality rather than its boundary, then the tenor and candor of stories of love and war would be reshaped for the better. The dilemma between nonhuman animal survival, living to fight another day, and the human integrity of being able to live with one's self the day after, is no comfortable balance to uphold. Indeed, in Kim's estimation, there is no need to wait for someone else's

judgment of the partisans' actions because regardless, they are already part of history, and fundamentally so. He does not stoop to petty insults of the Fascists or the Nazis, but rather mercilessly investigates the dehumanization of war through storytelling and national mythologies.

Albeit Pin cannot fully grasp what is the essential element that distinguishes a friend from an enemy, Kim does know what must be done in the mind as much as by the body to understand the mechanics of war: ““Ma capisci che questa è tutta una lotta di simboli, che uno per uccidere un tedesco deve pensare non a quel tedesco ma a un altro, con un gioco di trasposizioni da solgare il cervello, in cui ogni cosa o persona diventa un'ombra cinese, un mito?”” (Calvino 1991: 105). Despite knowing all too well the rules of the game of war, Kim actively seeks and illuminates the import of humanity, goodness, and animality in equal measure. These aspects seek not only our own personal survival but that of a better human condition during and beyond times of war:

Ma allora c'è la storia. C'è che noi, nella storia, *siamo dalla parte del riscatto*, loro dall'altra. Da noi, niente va perduto, nessun gesto, nessuno sparo, pur uguale al loro, m'intendi? Uguale al loro, va perduto, tutto servirà se non a liberare noi a liberare i nostri figli, *a costruire un'umanità senza più rabbia, serena, in cui si possa non essere cattivi*. L'altra è la parte dei gesti perduti, degli inutili furori perduti e inutili anche se vincessero, perché non fanno storia, non servono a liberare ma a ripetere e perpetuare quel furore e quell'odio, finché dopo altri venti o cento o mille anni si tornerebbe così, noi e loro, a combattere con lo stesso odio anonimo negli occhi e pur sempre, forse senza saperlo, noi per redimercene, loro per restarne schiavi. Questo è il significato della lotta, il significato vero, totale, al di là dei vari significati ufficiali. *Una spinta di riscatto umano*, elementare, anonimo, da tutte le nostre umiliazioni: per l'operaio dal suo sfruttamento, per il contadino dalla sua ignoranza, per il piccolo borghese dalle sue inibizioni, per il patria dalla sua corruzione. Io credo che il nostro lavoro politico sia questo, *utilizzare anche la nostra miseria umana, utilizzarla contro se stessa, per la nostra redenzione, così come i Fascisti utilizzano la miseria per perpetuare la miseria, e l'uomo contro l'uomo* (Ibid. 106-7, my emphasis).

How will Kim form a bridge across the rhetoric of the enemy as nonhuman other from this eloquent specimen in which he argues that there is something inherent in fighting against injustice, and furthermore that the partisans are on the right side of history while the Fascists and Nazis are not? Kim's bridge also forges a connection between love and death, where sometimes one must commit acts of violence to assure the continuation of peaceful affection. This revisitation of Eros and Thanatos, through Kim's eyes instead of Pin's, will be analyzed below.

As Kim walks alone on guard duty one night, his monologue of the ninth chapter not only touches upon history and sacrifice but on fear, love, and death. At that time of day, Kim cannot help but be unwillingly drawn into the depths of his childhood fear of the dark. Not even his thoughts manage to distract him from this irrational fear of the darkness and the unknown void it places before his eyes: "i tronchi nel buio hanno strane forme umane. L'uomo porta dentro di sé le sue paure bambine per tutta la vita" (Calvino 1991: 107). In recognition of his inability to go beyond his fears at the moment, Kim posits that: "arrivare a non aver più paura, questa è la meta ultima dell'uomo" (Ibid. 108). Kim does not stop at acknowledging the dark zones that cannot be accounted for by reason and logic.

Kim also appreciates the significance of myth, magic, and storytelling in our human lives: "Kim è logico quando analizza con i commissari la situazione dei distaccamenti, ma quando ragiona andando da solo per i sentieri, le cose ritornano misteriose e magiche, la vita degli uomini piena di miracoli. Abbiamo ancora la testa piena di miracoli e di magie, pensa Kim" (Calvino 1991: 108). Kim embodies not only the importance of human reason and logic. His character also speaks to something that Calvino considered very important according to his 1960 interview entitled "Colloquio con Carlo Bo," which is that "ciò che

conta è quel che siamo, è approfondire il proprio rapporto con il mondo e con il prossimo, un rapporto che può essere insieme d'amore per ciò che esiste e di volontà di trasformazione" (Calvino 2012: 69). Calvino's connection with the world around him and his wanting to transform it, as exemplified in this interview and in his essay entitled "Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto" reiterated throughout this dissertation, relate to the author's conceptions of both Kim and Pin, even if Pin does not appear to know Kim in the ninth chapter of the novel:

Kim è affezionato a questi uomini, al riscatto che si muove in loro. Quel bambino del distacco del Dritto, come si chiama? Pin? Con quello strugimento di rabbia nel viso lentiginoso, anche quando ride...Dicono sia fratello di una prostituta. Perché combatte? Non sa che combatte per non essere più fratello di una prostituta (Calvino 1991: 108).

In contrast, Pin's implied encounter with Kim is revealed to be even more subtle when Gian l'autista runs into Pin after the battle. Gian informs Pin that Kim had wanted to assign him to Dritto's band, but Gian had thought it was best not to be placed there. Pin thinks to himself without replying: "«Lui non sa cosa vuol dire, forse è lo sconosciuto del comitato di quella sera all'osteria che ha fatto un rapporto cattivo su tutti loro»" (Ibid. 127). If Kim and Comitato are the same people, then Kim's role in the plot could be traced back to the second chapter and not limited to his monologue in the ninth one that is often revisited in Calvino scholarship. The mediations on fear and death that had precipitated Kim's internal monologue are also complemented by his thoughts on love, which will be contextualized below.

The barely human forms that cloud Kim's physical vision are soon replaced by more personal meditations that revolve around the ghost of his pre-war self and that life in which a certain lady, Adriana, would fill his nights instead (Calvino 1991: 107). There are

some ghosts of our lives or ourselves that we do not mind their revisiting of us so much. Dante's words through Francesca in the second circle of hell are found to ring true: "E quella a me: 'Nessun maggior dolore / che ricordarsi del tempo felice / ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore'" (2005: *Inferno* V.121-123). In troubled times, the hope love inspires in us, for a soldier as much as for his enemy across the line of battle, can be emotional as much as an intensely bodily and spiritual feeling. Kim can identify with the Nazi or the Fascist at the other end of his rifle, which may also be thinking something akin to what he repeats to himself: "Ti amo, Adriana" (Calvino 1991: 110). Kim's juxtaposition of love and death in that simple phrase is the catalyst for his thinking about his small but vibrant place throughout the course of history.

Kim does not only recognize the unexpected significance of his place in wartime. Through his personal thoughts about his life and love and the fragility of it in wartime, he is able to extend beyond himself and consider the broader picture of human history. Kim relates his predicament thus:

Forse non farò cose importanti, ma la storia è fatta di piccoli gesti anonimi, forse domani morirò, magari prima di quel tedesco, ma tutte le cose che farò prima di morire e la mia morte stessa saranno pezzetti di storia, e tutti i pensieri che sto facendo adesso influiscono sulla mia storia di domani, sulla storia di domani del genere umano (Calvino 1991: 110).

Kim revisits his difficulty in compartmentalizing the logical with the mythic aspects of the battle to come: "Certo io potrei adesso invece di fantasticare come facevo da bambino, studiare mentalmente i particolari dell'attacco, la disposizione delle armi e delle squadre. Ma mi piace troppo continuare a pensare a quegli uomini, a studiarli, a fare delle scoperte su di loro" (Ibid.). Kim not only builds on his security in the order and logic of the alphabet, but also his love for Adriana: "Domani sarà una grade battaglia. Kim è sereno.

«A, bi, ci,» dirà. Continua a pensare: ti amo, Adriana. Questo, nient'altro che questo, è la storia" (Ibid. 111). Kim's story, and its meticulous integration of human animality, does not end with his closing lines of the novel. It instead echoes with that of Pin as much as it resounds off the page for past, present, and future readers.

Both Pin and Kim have traveled the path of not just the spider's nests, but of life. They have encountered women, arms, and along the way, what it means to be a human. While the women and the enemies help to bridge both Pin and Kim and their apparent animal and humanity respectively, it is not a coincidence that this first half of the chapter began with the act of storytelling and has come to a close analyzing the supposed embodiment of human rationality and logic, Kim the commissioned officer. Storytelling, humanity, and animality are not as disparate from each other as they might appear. While Calvino did not give Kim the final word, it is the motion of Pin's story that pushed the novel and its reader to consider answers that lead to more questions than were asked in the first place. Pin's interactions with spiders, dogs, wolves, cats, and birds on the home front, in the utopic space on the path to the spiders' nests, and the battlefield, in contrast to Kim's not having encountered even one nonhuman animal in our text, form an integrated perspective in the war novel. Pin's position on the threshold and Kim's marginalization are not unique. They can represent conceptions about belonging, which can, unfortunately, lead to divisiveness if left unattended. Attention to the very words of this novel and its comparative literary resonances have shown the difficulties, and moreover the necessity, of thoughtful integration and inclusion. While the craftsmanship of one man has formed this novel, this text suggests that there lies something quintessential within all storied human and nonhuman animals.

From the ashes of Calvino's experience of the partisan resistance during the Second World War blossoms this novel. This novel, replete with less than competent partisans, inept and not wholly alienable Fascist and Nazi enemies, women either saintly or tainted with little room for the true to life examples that lie in the in-between, and a scholar and a child breaks with as much as proposes a cohesive harmony with many literary traditions in and outside of Italy. As an opening to the investigation of these storied nonhuman animals of in-between and in transformation, hopefully, Pin and Kim, as well as viscount Medardo and baron Cosimo, the protagonists of Calvino's second and third war novels and novellas, will be guides as we continue our journey embracing complexities and challenging polarities. The second chapter of this dissertation will mark the beginning of our investigation into Calvino's second war novel, *Il visconte dimezzato* [1952], on the border of humanity and animality. In comparison to the immediacy of the publication of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* [1947] after the end of the Second World War, Calvino will not repeat himself by writing another novel loosely based upon his personal experiences. Instead, he will demonstrate the unfortunate continuation of war by situating his succeeding stories in not so remote real and imagined archives of personal, national, and timeless history and memory. In the next literary case study, the use of animals' bodies as the very components of language to send messages of love, health, and threats will be discussed. Viscount Medardo's being, from a whole but illiterate soldier of human and animal understanding into two distinctive halves and the reunification of his self against the backdrop of a fictional version of the Austrian-Ottoman wars of the seventeenth century, will be studied below.

CHAPTER 2:

The Humanizing Power of Reading: Medardo and Pamela's Comprehension Skills of Nonhuman Animal Others

Our second literary case study follows both a multidisciplinary and comparative literary introduction with a proposal for the close relationship of animals and storytelling for Calvino's question into the depths of humanity, as demonstrated in his war novels and novellas and our first chapter on *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*. The investigation of that question in the previous chapter focused on the shared marginalization of its protagonists, Pin, and Kim, as the former encountered many animals, including spiders, cats, dogs, wolves, and birds, and both protagonists tackled their understandings of history and storytelling. Pin's liminal position between childhood and adulthood and his closer contact with nature was contrasted to that of Kim. Kim was also excluded from the companionship of the partisans based on his status as a brigade commissar and as a student who complicated the embodiment of utter rationality as he confronted the irrational and the inexplicable of war, love, and life through life experience and behind the mask of his studies in psychology. Presently, Italo Calvino's second war novella, *Il visconte dimezzato* [1952], will be analyzed with regards to the humanity of storied animals. The novella tells the tale of viscount Medardo as he sets off with his squire, Curzio, from Terralba, Italy, to Bohemia to fight the Turks during the mid to late-seventeenth century. During the battle, Medardo is split in half by a cannonball. Each of his halves survives and inhabits, respectively, his good and evil characteristics, which come to be referred to as *il Buono* and *il*

Gramo,¹⁷ the former being the left, and the latter the right, sides of his body. His story is replete with intersections of nonhuman animals and storytelling that will define the boundaries of the theoretical, comparative, and literary examination of the text.

Viscount Medardo's ability as a reader will be a barometer for the breadths and depths of his humanity, which is also informed by animal symbologies and narratological considerations. His struggle for his self will be laid bare upon the background of a historical battle, will be aided by the love each of his split halves, il Gramo and il Buono, develop for the shepherd maiden, Pamela. For indeed, "meritous as such self-development is, and while it may save our soul, it is still not enough for happiness. For this, one must go beyond one's isolation and form a bond with the other" (Bettelheim 2010: 292). Calvino's description, as mentioned above, focuses on Pamela's having symbolic weight on the narrative only in contrast to viscount Medardo as "appena uno schema di concretezza femminile in contrasto con la disumanità del dimezzato" (Calvino 1991: 1212). Nevertheless, this chapter will highlight her importance. Specifically, how "Pamela is both impetus and goal, essential thematically as well as narratively" (Gabriele 1994: 47). Indeed, "the urge to possess Pamela is one of the strongest forces driving both the Good and the Bad Medardos and is the ultimate catalyst for their reunification" (Tompkins 2015: 7). Furthermore, "Pamela is a wily survivor, extremely independent, and she is also a remarkable semiologist" (Ibid. 42). Her strength as a reader in comparison to viscount Medardo's lack of reading comprehension will be especially applicable to our present

¹⁷ The etymology of this half of Medardo's nickname means someone who experiences melancholy or is sorrowful, according to the *Vocabolario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, edited by Ottorino Pianigiani. (Roma-Milano: Società editrice Dante Alighieri di Albrighi, 1907), 663.

discussion. This will be enlightened on Calvino's essay from the early 1980s mentioned earlier about the nature of stories and the ability to read both written and non-written worlds.

Although this essay is useful throughout the entirety of this thesis, three key ideas from it will be especially applicable to this chapter's reading of Calvino's *Il visconte dimezzato*. Both viscount Medardo's reading comprehension difficulties and Pamela's strengths in that area fuse different zones between Calvino's written world and the nonwritten world. As his 1983 essay suggests, the written world lies on the page and is couched between words and alphabets, whereas the nonwritten world is "quello che usiamo chiamare *il mondo*, fatto di tre dimensioni, cinque sensi, popolato da miliardi di nostri simili" (Calvino 1995 (2): 1865). *Il Gramo* and *il Buono*'s construction of languages based on nonhuman animals' bodies, such as horses, birds, bats, jellyfish, among others – blur the lines between such dichotomous notions of unbridgeable written and nonwritten worlds. These constructed animal bodied languages remind us that the written world finds its most profound resonance when it [re]connects its reader[s] to the nonwritten world. Furthermore, akin to the fluidity of the definition of a written text, the definition of a story need not be confined to genres of novels, short stories, or poems, among others. Instead, regardless of the outer frame that defines the work, its internal workings are what matter. Indeed: "siamo consapevoli che quando ci viene raccontata una storia (e quasi tutti i testi raccontano una storia, anche un saggio filosofico, anche un bilancio di società anonima, anche una ricetta di cucina) questo racconto è messo in moto da un meccanismo, *simile* ai meccanismi d'ogni altro racconto" (Ibid. 1868). In this essay from 1983, Calvino not only challenges definitive borders between the written and the nonwritten world, between

writing and life. He also investigates the intimately conjoined physical and mental processes of reading. As he relates:

Leggere, più che un esercizio ottico, è un processo che coinvolge mente e occhi insieme, un processo d'astrazione o meglio d'estrazione di concretezza da operazioni astratte, come il riconoscere segni distintivi, frantumare tutto ciò che vediamo in elementi minimi, ricomporli in segmenti significativi, scoprire intorno a noi regolarità, differenze, ricorrenze, singolarità, sostituzioni, ridondanze (Ibid. 1871-1872).

Reading and comprehension as a conjoined physical and mental process better situate this chapter's investigation into viscount Medardo and Pamela's reading skills.

This chapter will be comprised of five sections. In the first, second, and third, Medardo's lack of reading comprehension skills before the split of his body and character, as il Gramo and il Buono independent of each other and the languages they construct, followed by Pamela's¹⁸ abilities as a reader. Her role in reunifying Medardo during the final duel will comprise the fifth and final section. The theme of duality plays out in this text not only for the protagonist, Medardo, but manifests itself in other dualistic pairs, namely: Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo, the Huguenots and the Lepers, and Sebastiana in comparison to Pamela as a central female character. For their lack of involvement with animals, the Huguenots and the Lepers will not be as discussed as

¹⁸ The name, Pamela, first appears in world literature in the novel *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* by the English writer Sir Sidney Phillip in 1580, and apparently comes from the combination of two Greek words: παν ("all") and μέλι ("honey") according to the article on this name "Pamela" written by Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle, and Flavia Hodges In *A Dictionary of First Names*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 214. The role of Arcadia and idyllic spaces, such as Pamela's refuge in the forest after il Gramo's attempt to abduct her from her family when she refuses to marry him will be discussed in further detail in this dissertation on pages 123-126 and 133-134 of this dissertation (Calvino 1991: 408). Tompkins has also noted in her work that Calvino could have had comparative literary references to Samuel Richardson's *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded* [1740] and Carlo Goldoni's plays *Pamela nubile* [1750] and *Pamela maritata* [1759] (2015: 42).

thoroughly as the other dualistic pairs of Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo and Sebastiana and Pamela. Beyond the internal structural interest of the characters' relationships, some key themes will give Medardo a reason to use nonhuman animals' bodies to create languages with a syntax he can learn from to become a better and a holistic human once again.

The impetus of love, as manifested in their attraction to Pamela, will be a reunifying force for il Gramo and il Buono as viscount Medardo. Yet this will be achieved after he has been fortified with additional experience and wisdom. Medardo's nameless nephew, who is the narrator of the story of viscount Medardo's life and transformation, would say that Medardo's reunification demonstrated that because he had "l'esperienza dell'una e l'altra metà rifuse insieme, perciò doveva essere ben saggio" (Calvino 1991: 443). Indeed, all these characters will play a critical role in demonstrating that "it is the balance between the active and the inactive, the healthy and the ill, the hero and the antihero that makes society survive and move forward" (Weiss 1993: 43). The relationship between nonhuman animals and storytelling is based on a foundation of a variety of classical texts, which will further shape Calvino's vision of how humanity can still survive in wartime. The intelligence of human and nonhuman animals alike will be demonstrated mainly through Shklovsky's concept of "defamiliarization" in literature through Leo Tolstoy's long short story of the horse "Kholstomer," which continues the thread of Calvino's poetics along the periphery to tell a war story. Birds, both waterfowl as well as birds of prey, will help to illustrate Medardo's reading comprehension, or lack thereof, as will the bees, ants, pigs, goats, and ducks. Medardo's "l'entrata in guerra" as "l'entrata in vita" will be beset by birds and his inability to read the messages their bodies convey from the very beginning of his story.

Medardo's entrance into life and battle along with his father's opposing symbiosis with the birds that il Gramo witnesses upon his return home to his father after his battle wounds, will be presented below (Calvino 1991: 1316).

2.1 A Comparison of viscount Medardo and his father, Aiolfo's, Understanding of the Bodies of Birds and Horses

The very incipit of the novella posits Medardo's internal battle for the self as it is laid out on the background of a historical struggle. This first section introduces the reader to critical points of analysis that will reoccur and change throughout the story with regards to both Medardo's character as well as his relationships with the other characters in this text. Medardo's struggle for his self is not merely a matter of surviving the bodily harm of battle. Instead, it is there that his dyslexia of reading signs will be revealed. It will be demonstrated there before it can later be remediated through his experiences as a divided self towards bodily, spiritual, and comprehensive reintegration. Medardo's arrival on the battlefield is inextricably connected to the interpretation of the nonhuman animals-as-words present there by his squire, Curzio. Specifically, birds that are not typically associated with the field of battle, such as cranes, storks, and flamingos, will render the disconnect apparent. Curzio's animals-as-words, which will later form the bases of both il Gramo and il Buono's languages based on a syntax of nonhuman animals' bodies, recalls to mind, Jacques Derrida. He would coin the neologism in the original French as "animots," or "animal-words" in English, which sounds exactly like the French word for animals in the plural form, "animeaux" (2008: 37). The question of the human and the nonhuman animal body and its manifestations as tangible language will be carefully

considered. Aiolfo, viscount Medardo's father, has one more lesson to teach his son after his return from the war as a halved man in spirit, mind, and body. Albeit Aiolfo is unable to understand the birds' languages of chirping, unlike his son, Aiolfo can genuinely comprehend intellectually and emotionally the birds' bodies as texts. Medardo, even when he returns as *il Gramo*, the right-sided sinister half of his self, cannot even comprehend this message before Aiolfo's demise. Medardo goes into battle and thinks that experience will be his initiation into manhood. Yet, once there, he realizes that he must confront, and win, his struggle for his self through reading comprehension on the battlefield as well as the home front.

Viscount Medardo's difficulties with reading comprehension on figurative, symbolic, and meaningful levels are shown from the very incipit. The text to be deciphered is not composed of black letters on white pages. Instead, it is based on the interplay of humans and animals, and their very bodies, which form the text.¹⁹ Medardo and the split of his body are not the only examples of exploration into the question of the body in the novella. As Count Medardo makes his way towards the battlefield, he is accompanied by his squire Curzio who explains the puzzling scene Medardo sees before him. How better can Calvino have Curzio show something as "macabra e inumana" as war than by alienating its common symbologies (Calvino 1991: 367)? Readers take comfort in standards of language which are founded upon knowing the meaning of a word and its place within a given system. Be it oral or written in nature, communicative language is

¹⁹ With regards to animals and texts, birds are not only the subject of Cosimo's written treatises after he goes insane after losing Viola, but their bodies become an integral part of the printed texts, which will be discussed on pages 219-220 of this dissertation (cf. Calvino 1991: 736-737).

understood to be one of the supposed watershed features of being between humans and nonhuman animals. As Agamben notes:

What distinguishes man from animal is language, but this is not a natural given already inherent in the psychological structure of man; it is, rather, a historical production, which as such, can be properly assigned neither to man nor to animal. If this element is taken away, the difference between man and animal vanishes (2004: 36).

If the argument of humanity and animality as lying upon the threshold of language is to hold, then there must be a definitive characteristic of it that delineates the borders of humanity and animality because it is well known that nonhuman animals also possess and utilize the tools of their respective languages. Gray remarks that “what is distinctly human is not the capacity for language... It is the crystallization of language in writing” (2002: 86). Indeed, Calvino also believed that humanity was able to be defined by the “*facoltà che più la caratterizza, cioè l’uso della parola,*” as he would point out in his 1985 Norton lecture entitled “*Esattezza*” (1995 (1): 678). The communicative and practical aspects of *il Gramo* and *il Buono*’s languages based on the bodies of nonhuman animals will be placed in analytical tension with not only his nephew narrator’s interest in storytelling (Calvino 1991: 344). These physical languages will also be opposed to Gottschall’s argument that storytelling is central to human existence and not just a defining characteristic of it (2013: 13). Before Medardo is split into *il Gramo* and *il Buono*, who will forge their animal-based languages to communicate and win over Pamela’s heart, the viscount’s reading comprehension skills with regards to nonhuman animal bodies are demonstrated by Curzio’s interpretation of the unexpected presence of waterfowl on the battlefield.

Calvino will further challenge the communicative and storytelling nature of a battlefield by substituting the nonhuman animals, specifically the birds, expected to

populate such a time, place, and setting. To call language itself into doubt ensures the reader is not an idle or complacent spectator. Instead, [s]he is forced to consider and rethink the text before their eyes. In the field of battle, birds that typically would not appear - storks, flamingos, and cranes – have linguistically and physically: “sostituito i corvi e gli avvoltoi” (Calvino 1991: 367). The birds that do populate the battlefield Calvino lays before Medardo’s eyes - cranes, storks, and flamingos - have some critical literary lineages.

Two of the species of birds above - storks and cranes - are intriguing to compare and contrast. Although they have a similar outward appearance because both are long-legged and long-winged, storks are more notoriously carnivores in comparison to the omnivore cranes. This feature is brought out prominently in “The Bird-Catcher and the Stork” from Aesop’s *Fables* (1998: 210). Storks also have the added folkloric symbolism as the carrier of newborn babies to their happy parents. However, in Ancient Greek mythology, they would have been reviled creatures. The Greek goddess Hera was jealous of the beauty of the pygmy Queen, Gerana, and turned her rival into a stork (Ovid 2016: VI.89–91). As a stork, Gerana attempted to steal Hera’s son from her. Over time the stork became to symbolize a baby courier rather than a baby thief. Storks, cranes, and flamingos have not come to Medardo’s battlefield by accident either. Natural and human-made disasters, famine and drought, have driven them from their habitats. War had made these birds adapt most frightfully so that “anch’essi mangiano carne umana ormai” (Calvino 1991: 379). Without Curzio’s assistance, as Serra states, Medardo could not understand “i messaggi negativi, di morte, che lo circondano. È incapace di leggerli” (2006: 168, my emphasis). Medardo’s reading comprehension skills do not stop at the appearance of waterfowl. Rather, they are extended upon the broader view of the battlefield in which

fallen human and nonhuman animal remains are indistinguishable from each other, especially those between soldiers and their horses.

The substitution of waterfowl for birds of prey is not the only disordered scene after the battle. As Medardo advances towards his destiny, the mixture of human and animal remains reaches the point where they are indistinguishable from one another.²⁰ This mixture allows readers to catch a glimpse of a particular spiritual oneness as creatures of the universe in death, which should instead be celebrated in life:

in groppi di carcasse, sparsi per la brulla pianura, si vedevano corpi d'uomo e donna, nudi, sfigurati dai bubboni e, cosa dappprincipio inspiegabile, pennuti: come se da quelle loro macilente braccia e costole fossero cresciute nere penne e ali. Erano le carogne d'avvoltoio mischiate ai loro resti (Calvino 1991: 368).

This connection between living creatures in death is made more explicit by the author's purposeful play on words in the original Italian where he juxtaposes the expirations of the horses and their riders at the hands of Ottoman scimitars: "Prima tocca ai *cavalli* e dopo ai *cavalieri*" (Ibid. 369, my emphasis). The intricate association of horses with their riders not only recurs throughout Calvino's texts. Instead, it is a part of a long and proud lineage of horse symbologies on the battlefield of history and the page.

Indeed, the tension between domesticated versus wild nonhuman animals that recurs in Calvino's works is also revisited in the symbol of the horse because "as a domesticated animal, the horse also represented dominion over the natural world but was valued simultaneously for its docility - its ability to accept discipline - and its aggression

²⁰ Compare with Gurdulù's cosmic unity of being and all-too-existent state from Calvino's *Il cavaliere inesistente* [1972]. He loses the definition of his particular and individual self in adopting, even if momentarily, the many and various selfhood of ducks, frogs, pear trees, soup, the war dead, even the earth itself (cf. Calvino 1991: 972-974, 996, 998-999).

(as a warhorse) and speed (as a racer)” (Michie 2007: 145-146). In Calvino’s war novels and novellas under examination in this dissertation, the warhorse and the domesticated horse will both appear. Some key classical texts with regards to the role of the war horse will be briefly introduced: from Aesop’s *Fables* to Homer’s *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* to Leo Tolstoy’s long short story, “Kholstomer.” Aesop’s tale, “The Horse and the Soldier,” demonstrates the importance of preparedness and dedication when a soldier, in peacetime, neglects his horse to the degree that when war does come again, it has no strength to carry the soldier back into battle (1998: 106). Homer’s epic will not only provide the Western tradition with the story behind the metaphor of the Trojan horse (cf. Homer 1997: VIII.487-498). During the war between Greece and Troy for Helen, “Homer describes the death of a soldier on the battlefield and then the death of a horse. Both deaths are equally transparent to Homer’s eyes, there is no more refraction in one case than the other” (Ibid. IV.271; Berger 1980: 9). Indeed, Achilles considers his horses to be at fault for Patroclus’ death because they failed to recognize that Patroclus, and not he, was the one riding them (1990: XIX.480-510). The goddess Hera, however, gives the horses the power of speech to respond to Achilles’s accusations of them (Ibid.). The opportunity for animals to speak out, even if based upon a human perspective, will be presented not only in Italo Svevo’s “Argo e il suo padrone” with regards to our discussion of dogs in *Il barone rampante*, but also in the examination of the text by Leo Tolstoy, “Kholstomer. The History of a Horse” [1886] below. Even though this story does not deal explicitly with a warhorse or battles, the eponymous character’s life story will reveal similarities of human and nonhuman animal preoccupations of identity and confront death’s horrible equalizing powers.

Tolstoy's story does not merely recount the tale of a particular horse from his birth to his death. The uniqueness of the tale rests on the sections in which the horse, Kholstomer, often translated as "Strider" into English from the Russian original, regales his fellow horses throughout five nights with his own life's story before his, and his previous owner's, demise (Tolstoy 2013: 445-459). In addition to the significance of a nonhuman animal narrator, there are three critical facets of Tolstoy's work and its critical reception, which are worthy of reflection. In the first case, this short story was indicated by Viktor Shklovsky in his Russian formalist essay, "Art as Technique," which gave rise to the theoretical concept of *defamiliarization* in literature studies (2004: 16-17). Calvino's "disorcio" poetics uses various techniques to give the effect of *defamiliarization* throughout all three texts discussed in this dissertation. Shklovsky states that if "habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war," then the work of *defamiliarization* in art is to unsettle something ordinary and every day to make it extraordinary again before the viewer's eyes (Ibid. 16). He goes on to indicate Tolstoy's story as an example of this process when Kholstomer does not understand and becomes disheartened by the institution of private property.

Through defamiliarization Tolstoy can challenge, linguistically and socially, the concepts of ownership and possession, be it of a horse by an equerry, or the horse's owner, Prince Sierpukhovskoi, of his mistress. When Kholstomer first heard the enthused use of words like *mine* by the humans around him, he adds possession to the three-part crux of his unhappiness in life: "I was threefold unhappy: I was piebald; I was a gelding; and men imagined that I did not belong to God and myself, as is the prerogative of every living thing, but that I belonged to the equerry" (Tolstoy 2013: 450-451). That Kholstomer's coat

was not fashionable because of splotches of color on it resounds with the question of clothing the body, human or nonhuman animal, as will be investigated in greater detail in the following chapter on *Il barone rampante*. As a castrated horse, a gelding, Kholstomer had no social position in the stud with the male horses and could not be [re]productively useful to the mares either. Indeed, much like his unfortunate owner, he did not even have a lady horse to call “*his*” to worry about her running off with another horse like the unfortunate Prince Sierpukhovskoi (Ibid. 455). Lastly, Kholstomer’s life was not even his own to live. Rather, it was subject to the discretion of men who would deem him worthless, even in death. To add insult to injury, it was according to their opinion that Kholstomer’s hide was not worth the trouble of procuring, and it was they who left his flesh out for a she-wolf to feed herself and her cubs with (Ibid. 463). The story closes with this direct juxtaposition of Kholstomer and his former master, Prince Sierpukhovskoi’s, deaths. The stories demonstrate all too vividly how one horse’s body is disposable and unimportant yet is helpful to others²¹ even in death. The other, which never did anything useful throughout the entirety of its life, that the human body instead is given full ceremony and respect in death, albeit

neither his skin nor his flesh nor his bones were of any use. [...] Long had it been useless to everyone, long had it been only a burden. But still, the dead who bury their dead found it expedient to dress this soon-to-be-decaying, swollen body in a fine uniform, in fine boots, to place it in a fine new coffin, with new tassels on the four corners; then to place this new coffin in another, made of lead, and carry it to Moscow; and there to dig up bones of people long buried, and then to lay away this

²¹ For a biological and spiritual continuity of life and matter, please compare with Gurdulù’s lines on the matter in *Il cavaliere inesistente*: “Gurdulù trascina un morto e pensa: «Tu butti fuori certi peti più puzzolenti dei miei, cadavere. Non so perché tutti ti compiangano. Cosa ti manca? Prima ti muovevi, ora il tuo movimento passa ai vermi che tu nutri. Crescevi unghie e capelli: ora colerai liquame che farà crescere più alte nel sole le erbe del prato. Diventerai erba, poi latte delle mucche che mangeranno l’erba, sangue di bambino che ha bevuto il latte, e così via. Vedi che sei più bravo a vivere tu di me, o cadavere?»” (Calvino 1991: 998-999).

malodorous body devoured by worms, in its new uniform and polished boots, and to cover the whole with earth (Ibid. 464).

The defamiliarization of the remains of the battlefield by Calvino with the waterfowl substituting the ravens and vultures described above resonates with not only Kholstomer's story but also with other works of literature in which the story of the horse forges unexpected connections.

Before examining the contemporary Italian literary context of horses in stories, the play "Equus," written by Peter Schaffer in 1973, is also an intriguing comparative text with regards to ideas of love and devotion, religion and adoration, by relating horses to Christian mythology. The Book of Revelation in the Bible also provides the white, black, red, and pale horses of the apocalypse representing the catastrophes: War, Famine, Death, and Conquest or Pestilence and their four horsemen (2009: 6.1-8). In Calvino's novella of dualities, the stark contrasts between "us" and "them," "Ours," vs. "the Other" along religious lines will come to blur the bounds of the definitions of humanity and animality as well. In his 1985 Norton lecture, "Rapidità," Calvino would also meditate on the figure of the horse within the Italian tradition, through the eyes of Giovanni Boccaccio, Galileo Galilei, and Giacomo Leopardi. A medieval prose writer, a seventeenth-century scientist with a penchant for literariness, and a nineteenth-century poet would together forge something great with specific regards to "il cavallo come emblema della velocità anche mentale [che] marca tutta la storia della letteratura, preannunciando tutta la problematica propria del nostro orizzonte tecnologico" (Calvino 1995 (1): 663-665).

In Boccaccio's first novella from the sixth day of *Il decamerone* [1353], the dexterity of an oral storyteller, or his lack thereof, is conveyed through the metaphor of his

horsemanship (2002: 493-495). Indeed, for both Boccaccio and Calvino, the *novella* and the novel are not merely written worlds of story, but are also the conduit to those worlds: “la novella è un cavallo: un mezzo di trasporto, con una sua andatura, trotto o galoppo, secondo il percorso che deve compiere, ma la velocità di cui si parla è una velocità mentale” (Calvino 1995 (1): 663). Galileo would use the metaphor of the horse for its speed or ability to bear weight in his *Saggiatore* [1623]:

If reasoning were like hauling, I should agree that several reasoners would be worth more than one, just as several horses can haul more sacks of grain than one can. But reasoning is like racing, and not like hauling, and a single Arabian steed can outrun a hundred plow horses (Galileo 1957: 271).

Leopardi, in contrast, would highlight the force, both scientifically and figuratively, of “la velocità, per esempio, de’ cavalli o veduta, o sperimentata, cioè quando essi vi trasportano [...] è piacevolissima per sé sola, cioè per la vivacità, l’energia, la forza, la vita di tal sensazione. Essa desta realmente una quasi idea dell’infinito, sublima l’anima, la fortifica” in his *Zibaldone* [1832] (2004: 1058). These literary representations of the horse are comparable to those that affect the life story of the protagonist of Calvino’s second war story, Medardo. Although it is not until the end of the second chapter of the novella that Medardo was unhorsed and split into two autonomous halves by a cannonball,²² the

²² Among one of the many eloquent digressions as the story of Tristram Shandy’s life is narrated in the 1760 novel by Laurence Sterne, is his uncle Toby’s apparent interest and readings on the subject of projectiles, specifically of cannon balls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69-70. Later on in the story, as the theme of sight and vision will come up not only in our discussion of *Il visconte dimezzato*, but also in *Il barone rampante*, Sterne writes of the eye as being related to a cannon ball in the following lines: “An eye is for all the world exactly like a cannon, in this respect; That it is not so much the eye or the cannon, in themselves, as it is the carriage of the eye—and the carriage of the cannon, by which both the one and the other are enabled to do so much execution. I don’t think the comparison a bad one: However, as ’tis made and placed at the head of the chapter, as much for use as ornament, all I desire in return, is, that whenever I speak of Mrs. Wadman’s eyes (except once in the next period) that you keep it in your fancy” (Ibid. 452).

question of the body as symbolic representation and physical means of reading comprehension of the world for both him, and later for his father, Aiolfo, will be determined by the participation of nonhuman animals such as horses and birds before, during, and after the battle.

Medardo's inability to read the signs from nonhuman animals' bodies is juxtaposed to the plethora of signs he can understand the night before the battle. It is there that the splitting of Medardo's very body sparks the story of his life. As aforementioned in the introduction to this chapter, the interplay of human and nonhuman animal bodies in between physical and narrative spaces is connected to the body as a source of textual production and interpretation. For Medardo to be able to understand the animals' bodies as texts, he will have to experience a physical division of his body to re-forge and better understand all of his self. Our five physical senses inform our perception and thus an understanding of the world around us (cf. Hobbes 2012: 26-28). They demonstrate that "il corpo è dunque lo spazio dialogico del nostro essere con il mondo" (Marchesini 2009: 120). As a space that is in constant dialogue with other beings and other areas, the body has not only contours and texture and shape, but most importantly, it has boundaries and definitions. Moreover, it is not infinite. Yuri Lotman, among other Russian Formalists, spoke about the interconnectedness of art as being at once a singular representation and in harmony with a cosmic universality among other texts. This notion challenges the ideas of dichotomies like finite and infinite in the following lines:

Being spatially limited, a work of art is a model of an infinite universe. The frame of a painting, the footlights in theatre, the beginning and end of a literary or musical work, the surfaces which mark the borders between a sculpture or an architectural edifice and the space artistically excluded from it – all these various forms of a law that applies to all art: a work of art is a finite model of an infinite universe. Because

a work of art is, in principle, a reflection of the infinite in the finite, of the whole within an episode, it cannot be constructed as the copy of an object in the forms inherent to it. It is the reflection of one reality in another; that is, it is always a *translation* (Lotman 1977: 210).

Works of art, like languages and bodies, are mortal and finite and can also serve as “maps of power and identity” (Haraway 1991: 180). Medardo’s self-identification and abilities will be configured by an understanding of not only his body but all bodies’ connectedness as conduits of understanding through language, be they human or nonhuman animal.

Bodies and languages are inextricably connected because of the simultaneously specific and universal natures of their communicability. This is not solely through the physical form of body language or *il Gramo* and *il Buono*’s use of animal bodies as the syntax of their respective languages. The communicative function of bodies and languages is not a given, but rather problematic because, as Sartre wrote: “I do not know my language any more than I know my body for the other. I cannot hear myself speak nor see myself smile. The problem of language is exactly parallel to the problem of bodies” (1956: 374).

For a text to create meaning and foment communication, an “a” must be the letter “a,” written as one character, and not have any other symbolic meaning besides its designation as “a” among all the other letters of a given alphabet. Be it a language written or spoken:

there lies an average intelligibility, and in accordance with this intelligibility, the discourse which is communicated can be understood to a considerable extent, even if the hearer does not bring himself into such a kind of Being towards what the discourse is about as to have a primordial understanding of it. We do not so much understand the entities which are talked about; we already are listening only to what is said-in-the-talk as such. What is said-in-the-talk gets understood, but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially (Heidegger 1973: 212).

As a “model which can stand for any bounded system,” the physical nature of the body can be transformed into a text that can be represented and deciphered physically (Douglas

1966: 115).

Indeed, are not all persons, all beings, unfathomable “new lands”²³ to be discovered and explored and understood? This conceptualization shared between bodies, languages, and texts allows for an exchange of information and understanding of the world with and through the body itself. On a linguistic and semiotic level, for every bounded system, be it a body or a language, there must be a boundary that defines it. As space for encouraging dialogue and exchange, “the notion of boundary is an ambivalent one: it both separates and unites. It is always the boundary of something and so belongs to both frontier cultures: to both contiguous semiospheres. The boundary is bilingual and polylingual” (Lotman 1990: 136). As will be described in detail later, Medardo’s ability to read books such as Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata* is unquestioned (Calvino 1991: 425). Instead, it is his inability to read the world around him and its nonhuman animals that will be placed in stark contrast to both Aiolfo and Pamela’s proficiency with understanding people and animals following Medardo’s splitting of his body, which will be analyzed below.

By projecting Medardo’s battle for a complete self onto the background of a historically fictionalized war, the night before the battle Medardo’s body and the perceptions of his five senses will compound his inability to comprehend the world around him and his role within it as had the storks, flamingoes, and cranes among the human and horse remains of the battlefield previously. Also, his reflection in which he appreciated his

²³ Specifically, the lines “O my America! my *new-found-land*, / My kingdom, safeliest when with one man mann’d, / My Mine of precious stones, My Empire, / How blest am I in this discovering thee!” from John Donne’s “Elegy XIX: To his Mistress Going to Bed”. *Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse and Prose*. (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2009), 117.

physical wholeness was an act of foreshadowing of his body being split the day after. Although Medardo was physically tired the night before the battle, he could not sleep because his mind would not let him rest (Calvino 1991: 371). Sleep rests and restores the physical body of any being, human or nonhuman animal, while “the psyche is a self-regulating system that maintains its equilibrium in dreams” (Jung 2002: 100). However, Medardo can enter neither the oneiric realm nor rest his physical body that night. Instead, he must confront his surroundings with his precarious physicality.

His five physical senses help him to describe the Christian camp as well as his own body. While he did not taste or smell anything that night, he does see, hear, and touch certain things that reaffirm the wholeness of his body. Medardo’s being was shown to be but a small part in the whole of the cosmos and within the battle, as he “guardava in cielo le stelle di Boemia” (Calvino 1991: 371). The sounds that compose a symphony of the night are a blend of human and nonhuman animal voices, but not their physical bodies. Their voices are a source of stories²⁴ and the building blocks of physical presence and existence when he hears “i richiami delle sentinelle, i cavalli nitrire e il rotto parlar nel sonno di qualche soldato” (Ibid.). This auditory sense is formative to Medardo’s inter-relation with not only the humans and nonhuman animals around the camp, but also his thoughts. As he thinks, he worries about his possibility of promotion in the army, the next day’s battle against the Ottoman Turks, and “alla patria lontana, al suo fruscio delle canne nei torrenti” (Ibid.). Without gifts of clairvoyance, what Medardo can physically see and touch that night writes his fate in stone as much as in thought. While he “tendeva lo sguardo al

²⁴ Compare the following line from Calvino’s *Le città invisibili* [1972]: “Chi comanda al racconto non è la voce: ma l’orecchio” (Calvino 1992: 473).

margine dell'orizzonte notturno, dove sapeva essere il campo dei nemici, e a braccia conserte si stringeva con le mani le spalle, contento d'aver certezza insieme di realtà lontane e diverse, e della propria presenza in mezzo a esse" (Ibid.).

In physically touching the boundaries of his body his self is touched by the atrocities of war and prescient of his traumatic involvement in it to come: "sentiva il sangue di quella guerra crudele, sparso per mille rivi sulla terra, giungere fino a lui, e se ne lasciava lambire, senza provare accanimento né pietà" (Calvino 1991: 371). Yet in his heart – a physical and figurative place – however, he had felt neither "nostalgia né dubbio, né apprensione" (Ibid). Medardo's thoughts could not succeed in altering the very boundaries of the count's dilemma before, during, and after the battle. Afterward, he realizes that his battle wound has left him "vivo e dimezzato" (Ibid. 375). Medardo's physical split, before the split in his character along the lines of not just right and left, but good and evil, can not only be situated in comparative literature. It also speaks to the continuity of the question of the division of the body and the soul from ancient times to the present.

With Medardo's battle wound, Calvino has reconfigured the metaphysical divide along the lines of body and mind, physicality and mentality. Medardo's split also resonates and continues the discourse, from antiquity onwards, of the differentiation between body and soul. It gives a voice and space to the possibility of what could happen if such a division were realized, and the person could still live, breathe, walk, and cause trouble afterward. The body-mind divide, which has permeated literary, cultural, and critical thought for centuries, has too many iconic representations to delineate here in full. One of the most famous ones, between Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza from Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote*, is readily comparable in Medardo's halves of il Buono

and il Gramo respectively. These texts also dialogue with other halved knights from world literature, including Rudolf Erich Raspe of *The Adventures of the Baron of Münchhausen* [1785], as well as the Italian folktale collected in Calvino's *Fiabe italiane* "Il dimezzato," among others (1993: 222). Although, in due consideration of the fact that Medardo is a fictional character within a war novella with elements from the fantastic genre, his divided physical condition is perceived as a monstrous truth.

Monstrosity inevitably touches upon core problems and solutions of being "come [un'] esperienza insieme del limite e delle radici antiche dell'umanità" (Falcetto 1989: 49). Indeed, split along the lines of good and evil, humane and beastly, these two halves of Medardo demonstrate how in the "figura del «mostro,» umano e non umano non si fronteggiano, generando attrito le scintille, luce: ma sono dolorosamente commisti, agglutinati, formando un amalgama opaco, ottuso, incongruo, che suscita reazioni di accorta e stupefatta pietà" (Barengi 2007: 55). Medardo's transformation into a monstrosity is a "transgression of human identity" to become a more understanding and compassionate human being (Baker 2000: 101). Before that, the language of birds' physical bodies, which was first witnessed on the battlefield by Medardo, is taken up again by his father, Aiolfo, before the return of Medardo's bad half, il Gramo, to Terralba.

Whereas Medardo has demonstrated difficulty in understanding the physical texts the bodies of the waterfowl before him on the battlefield, in contrast, Medardo's father, Aiolfo, comprehends not only a superficial reading of such signs.²⁵ Aiolfo is also aware that they also stir something in his soul and not on a physical level. As Medardo heads off

²⁵ Compare with Dante Alighieri's *Convivio* [1304-1307] for four categories of understanding a text, and life: literally, allegorically, morally, and anagogically. (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1995), II.i.1-6.

to war, Aiolfo recedes from the court life of a nobleman to take care of the birds in his aviary. What had been Aiolfo's sometime hobby had not only gone on to become a passion. Over time it had "s'era andata facendo più esclusiva" (Calvino 1991: 376). While his family lineage and progeny defined the elder count's identity, their castle was not merely a physical embodiment of that power, but also their abode. With Medardo absent, Aiolfo transfers his love for his son on to the birds in his aviary. Aiolfo not only emotionally, but he also physically moves his life into the aviary to the point where "non usciva né di giorno né di notte" (Ibid.). If the fundamental core of physical survival can be based on reproduction and sustenance, although in this instance Aiolfo's move to the aviary involves no reproductive aspect, the body's need for rest and food were carried out by Aiolfo exclusively within the voluntary confines of his aviary. As to the former, Aiolfo did not sleep as the birds did on branches, but rather, he brought his mattress²⁶ to be able to sleep as he was accustomed. Aiolfo, although keeping company with his birds, likewise did not decide to eat bird food. Instead, the typical human fare for Aiolfo and birdseed for the birds were brought into the aviary through a window and not a door. Indeed, the significance of windows, and that particular window into the aviary, will be significant for reading the text. The shrike, which will be described in detail below, will return to Aiolfo

²⁶ The second ancestor the trilogy, Cosimo, from *Il barone rampante* [1957], despite all the animal attributions accorded to him, including from the aviary species, would also experience a similar dilemma in sleeping in the boughs of trees and having to also procure a mattress for himself - both for his own comfort and for his trysts: "L'ho incontrato una volta che correva per i rami con a tracolla un materasso, con la stessa naturalezza con cui lo vedevamo portare a tracolla fucili, funi, accette, bisacce, borracce, fiaschette della polvere" (Calvino 1991: 691-692). It is important to note briefly that Cosimo's loss of his mental faculties following Viola's second and final departure from his life manifests itself in a variety of ways, including his writing of various treatises for birds (cf. Calvino 1991: 734-738).

through that very window from the window of Medardo's apartments in the castle. While Aiolfo did have his meals in the company of the birds as they ate their birdseed, it is not that he *shared* his food with them, "condividere" in Italian, but that he poignantly *divided* it with them. It is arguably a poetic word choice that mirrors Medardo's physical and metaphysical condition: "divideva²⁷ ogni cosa con quelle creature" (Ibid.). Not only did Aiolfo divide the food, but as we will see shortly with his most beloved bird in the aviary, the shrike,²⁸ he would also divide and simultaneously share his affection with the bird. These interactions between the birds and Aiolfo would highlight Medardo, and his return to Terralba as il Gramo's, inability to comprehend such signs from human or nonhuman animals alike.

The language of birds' bodies as texts in Aiolfo's aviary is similar to the one Medardo had seen and not understood. Aiolfo, who had previously trained "uno dei suoi animali più cari," the shrike, to fly through the window of the aviary to the window of his son, Medardo's, rooms in the castle, sent the shrike out for a brief flight shortly before the return of Medardo's sinister half, il Gramo (Calvino 1991: 379). The shrike's return to the aviary had always been uneventful, however.

²⁷ As the first, *condividere*, is a compound of the verb *dividere*, it is interesting to consider etymologically that it comes from the Latin roots of "dis" "two, twice, double" and "vidō" which is not only "to separate," but the idea that the shrike will have seen too much is also similar in structure to the verb meaning "to see," "vidēre."

²⁸ Compare with the opening quatrain from Umberto Saba's poem, "Il fanciullo e l'averla," originally published in his 1948 collection of poetry entitled *Uccelli*: "S'innamorò un fanciullo d'un'averla. / Vago del nuovo - interessante udiva / di lei, dal cacciatore, meraviglie - / quante promesse fece per averla!" *Songbook: The Selected Poems of Umberto Saba* Eds. George Hochfield and Leonard Nathan. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 506.

Before analyzing the manner and the significance to the text of the shrike's return to Aiolfo that day, a brief zoological investigation would foster a more well-rounded discussion of the shrike. Some behaviors particular to shrikes not only help understand the bird's place within the text. They also recognize these creatures for their own nonhuman animal experiences and not just as a source of allegories and symbologies that can be appropriated to describe those of human animals. It is no accident that Aiolfo's most beloved bird is specifically a shrike and not some other species of bird. Shrikes' hooked beaks, predatory and territorial natures are well-known for not only devouring insects and small vertebrates but for how they impale their prey (Clancey 1991: 180). The shrike's rather violent nature seems to resonate, and "quasi preved[ere]" both his son Medardo's return to Terralba as well as the division of the essence of his being (Calvino 1991: 379). Although it is not necessarily intuitive, both halves of Medardo would turn out to be extremely violent and cruel, albeit in different ways. The bad half is the first one to return to Terralba, and his character is both "triste e selvatico" (Ibid.). While the sadness of il Gramo's character is confined mostly to the etymology of his name, the wildness and cruelty he inflicts on himself, and others are abundantly clear.

Upon sending out his shrike, Aiolfo nonchalantly returns to feeding his birds and imitate their calls (Calvino 1991: 379). For Aiolfo to not only blend in but also learn something from being within his aviary realm, he loses what some would consider being a critical piece of the human self. He, too, will substitute a human language based on the written word for one based on the bodies of nonhuman animals. Indeed, Aiolfo can read layers of meaning into their physical bodies (Ibid.). As recorded by Plutarch in his *Moralia* [c. 100 CE] the Spartan mothers' credo that their soldier sons should "come back with their

shield or on it,” so too does the shrike and his return demonstrate the consequences of his having become a physical, emotional, and linguistic replacement for Medardo in Aiolfo’s eyes (1931: 465). The reader is given less than subtle clues that it is il Gramo who has destroyed the shrike when his battle scars are practically reenacted on the unsuspecting bird’s body. The shrike returns to Aiolfo²⁹ first aurally. This is not by the shrike’s calls, but by the sound of the physical impact of the bird as it was flung against the aviary window. The collision was not the bird’s cause of death, however. Based on the shrike’s wounds - one wing was torn off, “una zampina era troncata come per la stretta di due dita,” and importantly an eye was gouged out³⁰ - Aiolfo realizes that the shrike’s death and dismemberment was purposefully placed within the purview of his vision by his son, il Gramo (Calvino 1991: 379). The grief and sadness from loving the shrike as a symbolic substitution for Medardo were too much for Aiolfo to bear.

After having brought the bird to his chest to embrace it once more, Aiolfo does not run out and drown himself in a lake or take a knife and gouge out his own eyes or tear his limbs. Instead, he goes to his death by putting himself to bed and never waking up again (Calvino 1991: 379). Since Aiolfo had locked himself in the aviary and hidden the keys from everyone else, he was voluntary physically confined and defined by his surroundings. On account of the chaotic, restless fluttering of the other birds’ wings in the aviary long

²⁹ A bird of prey has been killed once before in Calvino’s war stories, as we have seen with Babeuf when he was considered a safety risk for the partisan band in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* as we have seen on pages 24-25 of this dissertation (Calvino 1991: 116).

³⁰ This recalls the event of Ulysses’ gouging out the Cyclops Polyphemus’ one eye with the help of his men in Homer’s *The Odyssey* (1997: IX.295-415).

into the night, it is only the following morning that we see through Sebastiana³¹ the wet-nurse's gaze into the window that Aiolfo had died and had been safely ushered to the other side of life, his death, by his birds. As the shrike's foot was torn off, "troncata," that imagery is transformed into an icastic picture of the vessel that would ferry him to the other side. The birds were found sitting on his bed as if on a tree trunk, the "tronco," where they rested respectfully "tutti posati sul suo letto, come su un tronco galleggiante in mezzo al mare" (Ibid. 380). His father thus departed, the rest of the story of the return of the cruel right-sided half, il Gramo, will be carefully analyzed. Il Gramo's language based on human and nonhuman animal bodies will be returned to with regards to Pamela's first encounter with him in the penultimate section of this chapter. Presently, we will investigate carefully how il Gramo's complicated and upended the lives of other dualistic pairs of characters, such as that of Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo.

³¹ The name originally designated a person hailing from the Greek city of Sebastia, now Sivas, in modern Turkey. For her unjust treatment, Sebastiana, perhaps felt herself to be a bit like her predecessor from the Christian tradition, the St. Sebastian who was a martyr during Emperor Diocletian's persecutions of the Christians in the third century of the Roman empire. J. Madison Davis. *The Shakespeare Name and Place Dictionary*. (New York City: Routledge, 1995), 444.

2.2 Il Gramo's Impact on Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo

The importance of the perspective of our narrator, Medardo's nameless nephew, is also complemented by his being the first person to sight both halves of Medardo, il Gramo, and il Buono, upon their respective returns to Terralba. Although the narrator will be the first to sight il Gramo, it is the reactions of various species of nonhuman animals that demonstrate what the townspeople would like to express themselves upon his return (Calvino 1991: 377). It is poignant to note that upon il Gramo's arrival, "only the old viscount, Aiolfo, does not come to greet him; he is a recluse, an eccentric lover of birds" (Carter 1987: 32). Upon seeing il Gramo, the goats not only contort themselves and form geometric shapes with their bodies as unnaturally precise right-angles (Calvino 1991: 378). They moreover "osservavano il visconte con loro sguardo fisso e inespressivo" (Ibid). With regards to the goats' contortions of their bodies, Galileo's indication of the close relationship of nature to thought might provide some useful notes for a comparison between the two:

Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one wanders about in a dark labyrinth (Galileo 1957: 237-238).

With regards to the former, the goats' gaze recalls the discussion of Kim the psychology student turned soldier's gaze, and that of Derrida's cat discussed on page 55 to expose the viscount il Gramo's new halved self in all of its nakedness (2008: 3-4). The goats are not

the only species of nonhuman animals to help the townspeople realize the depth of Medardo's physical and moral divide.

In contrast to that of the goats, the pigs'³² reaction is such that the townspeople, upon seeing it in conjunction with Medardo's strange and new form, can no longer contain their worries and fears. As Medardo's nephew succinctly states: "i maiali più sensibili e pronti, strillarono e fuggirono urtandosi tra loro con le pance, e allora neppure noi potemmo più nascondere d'essere spaventati" (Calvino 1991: 378). Il Gramo's return home from the battlefield demonstrates the ability of the reactions of animals to affect, and reflect, the thoughts of humans. It is a concept that resonates across the boundaries of world literature. Calvino quotes in his 1958 essay, "Natura e storia nel romanzo," the following line from Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*: "The horses' terror infected the men"³³ (Tolstoy 2007: 980). Even though the townspeople do not speak with the nonhuman animals in language, the goat and pigs' bodies convey messages and emotions that both human and nonhuman animals alike were experiencing. Throughout art and history, "such an unspeaking companionship was felt to be so equal that often one finds the conviction

³² In George Orwell's *Animal Farm* [1945], the pigs become the leaders of the new communist society. This choice not only adds insult to injury of the human character, but pigs are also, at the same time, supposedly among the animals considered to be intelligent, more capable to learn, and yet they are the ones in *Animal Farm* who do not learn much when they only repeat the very same power grab as had been done in capitalistic societies. In doing so, the pigs show themselves to be made of the same substance as their predecessors and only repackaged on the surface. George Orwell does this using allegory to depict the leaders of Communism and its corruption as pigs, specifically starting from Old Major as a representation of Karl Marx whose ideas started the revolution, with elements of Lenin, and its degradation in interpretation by Stalin's pig counterpart, Napoleon. (Boston and New York City: Mariner Books, 2009).

³³ For the full citation in the original Italian translation Italo Calvino quoted in his essay, please follow the following citation: (Calvino 1995 (1): 29).

that it was man who could not speak to animals - hence the stories and legends of exceptional beings, like Orpheus, who could talk with animals in their language” (Berger 1980: 6). Although Aiolfo was able to mimic the calls of the birds in his aviary, it is Pamela, the shepherdess, who will not only be able to communicate with her nonhuman animals. She is also the one who can interpret the languages based on a syntax of nonhuman animals’ bodies that il Gramo and il Buono will display for her and Doctor Trelawney. Before that, il Gramo’s effect on the town and some of its prominent persons, such as Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo, should be discussed.

Following his father, Aiolfo’s demise, il Gramo subsequently inheritance of the title of count of Terralba. One of the new count’s first duties for the town was to serve as a judge regarding a crime of brigandage committed on his lands (Calvino 1991: 383). His disproportionate sentence to the crime, to have even the officers hanged for their inability to prevent the crime in the first place, will eventually involve the voluntary and involuntary participation of both the carpenter and saddle-maker Master Pietrochiodo, and Doctor Trelawney (Ibid. 384). Both Master Pietrochiodo and Doctor Trelawney will represent the tenuous, but fortifiable, relations between humanity to medicine and technology in wartime.

Since Sebastiana attempts to educate il Gramo about humanity against his own volition, it is not accidental that he has her cast out of his way. He does so poignantly by suggesting her burn scars are instead symptoms of leprosy. Doctor Trelawney³⁴ is called

³⁴ Based on established Calvino’s deep appreciation for the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Doctor Trelawney well owes his namesake to that of Squire Trelawney in *Treasure Island* [1883], who finances the excursion and procures a ship and a captain. Unfortunately, by his indiscretion he

upon by il Gramo to become an unwilling accomplice and confirm a false diagnosis of leprosy. Sebastiana is subsequently sent in exile to the lepers' colony in the Prato dei Funghi. Il Gramo knows he can manipulate the doctor into doing his will because he is well aware of the paradoxical essence of Dr. Trelawney. Namely, that Dr. Trelawney is pathologically afraid of the very thought of contagion, and in particular of leprosy, "come se la sola parola «lebbra» bastasse a metterlo a disagio" (Calvino 1991: 392). Doctor Trelawney can neither confirm the diagnosis nor challenge il Gramo. Instead, he will run from the viscount's castle into the woods and remain there for a week without any human interaction in order not to have to confront the consequences of his [in]actions which only aid and abet il Gramo (Ibid. 393-394).

Before il Gramo accuses Sebastiana of having leprosy, Doctor Trelawney's fascination with grasshoppers and will-o-the-wisps, or in Italian "fuochi fatui," are examples of textual evidence of his inability to practice medicine for the humans that need it. Doctor Trelawney's all too apparent ineffectuality is posed in direct contrast to Master Pietrochiodo's ability to design and execute the scaffolds and torture machines il Gramo will use to carry out injustice. Master Pietrochiodo's saddle making skills will serve a good and equally practical purpose. Yet his ability to construct terrifyingly effective scaffolds and instruments of torture with his carpentry skills gives him a crisis of conscience. The dynamic between the dual pair of Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo demonstrates how they are equally challenged to do their professions well, ethically, and effectively for both halves of viscount Medardo throughout the story. Before il Buono's reappearance in

also causes a mutiny, but does eventually win back the ship, the Hispanola, and shares the treasure with those worthy and able to make the trip back to England.

the tale, Il Gramo's interactions with both Doctor Trelawney and later Master Pietrochiodo need to be more thoroughly examined.

Doctor Trelawney forms only half of the pair of dialogically opposing, but related, forces on the battle for Medardo's autonomy and completeness of self. Doctor Trelawney represents the field of medicine and health and Master Pietrochiodo that of technology and weaponry. Be such weapons tangible, e.g., gibbets and catapults, or abstract but palpable, such as fear and hatred fueled by prejudice and rivalry, Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo are the textual embodiment of: "la scienza e la tecnica staccate dall'umanità" as Calvino would relate to Carlo Scalinari in the same letter from 1962 mentioned previously (Calvino 2000: 354). Doctor Trelawney is unable to help the townspeople of Terralba because he cannot even treat the human body professionally. Despite being a doctor, indeed, he even "al vedere un corpo nudo arrossiva" (Calvino 1991: 392). Furthermore, the doctor's fear of both blood and contagion makes treating his fellow human beings all but impossible for him to do at all, never mind excel.

While the reader had already been acquainted with Doctor Trelawney's character and his person at the beginning of the novella via his fascination with both fossils and a sporadic and specific disease that affects only grasshoppers, his newest obsession for will-o-the-wisps reveals Doctor Trelawney's inability to defend human beings and their bodies (Calvino 1991: 385). As these seemingly disparate anecdotes are juxtaposed on the same page, the viscount's nameless nephew narrator appears more than justified to call into question Trelawney's appellation and identification³⁵ as a doctor. Doctor Trelawney

³⁵ While Doctor Trelawney's case differs greatly, in that he acknowledges the plague so much as to be afraid of it, his character resonates with Don Ferrante from Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi*

showed more affection and scientific interest in “le bestie, specie per le più piccole, per le pietre, per i fenomeni naturali era pieno d’attenzione, ma gli esseri umani e le loro infermità lo riempivano di ripugnanza e sgomento” than for his fellow human beings (Ibid. 392).

Will-o-the-wisps, or “i fuochi fatui,” in the original Italian, are Doctor Trelawney’s latest passion and scientific fascination (Calvino 1991: 388, 393). Il Gramo ensures Doctor Trelawney that he will personally help augment the doctor’s studies of will-o-the-wisps, which, as legend maintains, are the spirits of dead bodies set free.³⁶ With this legendary fact in mind, what better place is there for Doctor Trelawney to set up his laboratory to study them but in a cemetery (Ibid. 393)? Il Gramo does not refer to the will-o-the-wisps

sposi and that character’s experience of the plague. The latter learned man seeks refuge in his vast library and does not see the inevitable sickness falling on those around him until he dies of the plague that has hit the city of Milan. Indeed, his life would not only be contaminated by the plague. His famous library would also meet a fate of dissemination, like the germs whose existence he refused to acknowledge as “dispersa su per i muriccioli” (2010: 688). Three other important works that revolve around the destruction and fear of the contagion of the plague include not only Boccaccio’s *Decamerone* [1351] from the Italian literary tradition, but also the relatively contemporary work to Calvino’s of Albert Camus’s *La peste* [1947], which interestingly takes place in the in-between city of French Algeria’s Oran, as well as the much later Turkish novel by Orhan Pamuk, *Beyaz Kale [The White Castle]* [1991].

³⁶ While the spirits from Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds* [1939] may not necessarily be connected to the world of the dead, death certainly is in the offing for the student-author’s creation of the other fictional characters, Dermot Trellis. Pooka is a spirit who is “a member of the devil class,” that carries the Good Fairy around in his pocket (2005: 1). When the three stories and their respective characters that the unnamed Irish student of literature is writing encounter one another, the spirits, such as Pooka, encourage his son write a novel in which Dermot Trellis could be tried, tortured, and subsequently put to death for his crimes of arrogance against his characters. Luckily, before Dermot Trellis’ son finishes writing his death, the unnamed Irish student’s success in passing his exams and reconciling with his uncle allows him to rewrite the third ending in which the manuscript of Trellis’ works are mistakenly tossed in the fire, so as the smolder out the existence of the characters he had created before they can finish his own life (Ibid. 232-236).

by their proper name in Italian, “fuochi fatui.” Instead, he rechristens them with a name from the insect and nonhuman animal realm as “farfalle notturne,” as nocturnal butterflies (Ibid. 389). The following morning il Gramo joins in discussion with the doctor and says that he too shares a fascination with these so-called nocturnal butterflies. Yet Il Gramo’s interest is not for will-o-the-wisps as a scientific or metaphysical passion. Instead, it is their origins from death and destruction that are of interest to il Gramo as a topic of study. When il Gramo is called upon a second time to judge a crime and administer a sentence, he serves another utterly disproportionate sentence to the offense to furnish Doctor Trelawney with more will-o-the-wisps by increasing the number of the dead (Ibid. 383-384). Trelawney feels so ashamed for his indirect involvement in this tragedy because he had been made yet again an involuntary accomplice to il Gramo’s cruelties. On account of that guilt, his self-confidence all but vanishes, which further cripples his ability to heal the human bodies his profession should allow him to be able to do well and honorably (Ibid.). Doctor Trelawney is not the only person in Terralba to experience a crisis of conscience upon il Gramo’s return, as Master Pietrochiodo’s case will also illustrate below.

On the other side of the spectrum of metaphysical quandaries when medicine and technology are ill-used in wartime, lies Maestro Pietrochiodo³⁷ [“Master Stone-nail”]. He is the man who brings into being the scaffolds and the instruments of torture commissioned and thought up by il Gramo. In addition to Master Pietrochiodo’s skill as saddle-maker, especially with his unique model for a divided, halved man such as the viscount, il Gramo’s many demands, unfortunately, provide Master Pietrochiodo ample opportunity to

³⁷ His name in structure very much resembles that of the Maestri from Carlo Collodi’s *Le avventure di Pinocchio* [1881], both Maestro Geppetto and Maestro Ciliegia, Master “Cherry” in Italian.

perfect his carpentry skills (Calvino 1991: 388). Master Pietrochiodo does this for il Gramo “con tanta abilità e passione,” but not without remorse (Ibid.). In conversing with our young nameless narrator, Master Pietrochiodo begs him, and by extension, the reader, to look at the gibbets and instruments of torture for their craftsmanship. He wants us to judge their architecture and structure, and see, read, understand their beauty in their form and not the objects’ purpose. Yet, the narrator tells the carpenter with a child’s frank honesty that he is unable to separate the cruelty of its purpose from the beauty of its frame to look at these pieces and not “vederci sopra i corpi straziati” (Ibid.). The carpenter’s crisis of consciousness will unfortunately not be alleviated by the arrival of il Buono and his requests for machines to be made by the carpenter further on in the text. Perhaps unexpectedly, the carpenter will be all the more aggravated. Il Buono’s unexpected return to Terralba will not only add to the dialectical tension between Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo. It will also reveal the problem of his divided self as it is manifested in both halves, and not just in il Gramo alone.

Messages from the human body and others’ abilities, or lack thereof, to interpret them will demonstrate that the role of bodies, human and nonhuman animals, in this novella is about to change. While the narrator and Doctor Trelawney were out in the fields, il Gramo called upon the doctor for a seemingly small but significant diagnosis. Il Gramo asks Dr. Trelawney’s professional opinion when he feels “come se la gamba che non ho fosse stanca per un gran camminare. Cosa può esser questo?” (Calvino 1991: 410). The attentive reader can guess, if not predict, that something unexpected is about to happen. Yet the nameless nephew narrator’s description of doctor’s reaction reveals only the depth of the doctor’s newfound engagement if not predictive details: “mai avevo visto in lui [Doctor

Trelawney] tanto interesse per una questione di medicina umana” (Ibid.). There is another page to be turned in our understanding of the humanity of Medardo’s divided self in the war story and especially how that understanding comes to him through languages based on human and nonhuman animals’ bodies. The unexpected survival and return of the good half of Count Medardo of Terralba as *il Buono* provides the other piece of the dual pair that keeps this chapter’s question in analytical tension.

2.3 Il Buono Encounters his Nephew, Constructs a Language for Doctor Trelawney, and Places Master Pietrochiodo in an Existential Crisis of Identity

The return of *il Buono*, the left side and the good half of Medardo, is not an appearance out of thin air, but rather, the significance of it can be critically analyzed. When *il Buono* reappears in the novella as a living breathing character, his interactions with himself and his nameless narrator nephew, Doctor Trelawney and Master Pietrochiodo, and Sebastiana and Pamela will revolve around their joint encounters with nonhuman animals and their bodies. As he had done so with *il Gramo*, his nameless nephew narrator will once again be the first person to encounter *il Buono* upon his return to Terralba. His encounter with the good half of his uncle is similarly endowed with nonhuman animal symbologies. The narrator fell asleep fishing for eels and was about to be stung by a poisonous red spider were it not for *il Buono*’s helpful intervention (cf. Calvino 1991: 402). *Il Buono*’s getting hurt by the spider will not only help the nephew narrator, and Sebastiana, understand that

he is not il Gramo, but that the other good half of Medardo must also have survived the battle (Ibid. 416). Il Buono will also be of aid to Doctor Trelawney, who manages to treat his halved human self from the spider bite successfully. He does this by constructing a language based on a syntax of nonhuman animals' bodies to help Doctor Trelawney regain his self-confidence (Ibid. 424). Il Buono does not miss an opportunity to engage with the other side of the dual pair Doctor Trelawney forms with the carpenter and saddle-maker Master Pietrochiodo. It is not until Pamela and Sebastiana's return to the scene that il Buono's overly positive and peace-loving nature will be shown as a problem that needs to be remediated by eventually reunifying both halves of his self, il Gramo with il Buono (Ibid. 421, 434). Pamela's own reading comprehension skills as they are juxtaposed to those of respectively il Gramo and il Buono will need to be discussed before Medardo can become whole again. His good half still has much to learn before that time.

His nameless nephew narrator encourages and helps il Buono learn from the moment of his return to Terralba when he saves the boy from a poisonous spider bite. Medardo's nameless nephew narrator fell asleep while he was fishing for eels in the early morning before il Buono's return to Terralba. The nameless nephew narrator does not go hunting for just any species of fish. Rather, he seeks a snake-like creature in appearance that inhabits the water and carries its mythological resonance across world literature. Specific examples from Italian, Irish, and American literature will be detailed below.

One of Calvino's favorite poets, Eugenio Montale, also from the region of Liguria, would write about this creature in his collection of *Ossi di seppia* [1924], entitled "L'anguilla" (cf. 2004: 262). The eel depicted by Montale is not related to war's involvement of Thanatos or Death. Rather, he calls the creature a "freccia d'Amore in

terra” (Ibid.). Calvino would indicate this poem by Montale, especially in his essay “Esatezza” from his 1985 Norton lectures specifically for its marriage of form to structure. Calvino wrote that it is “una poesia di una sola lunghissima frase che ha la forma dell’anguilla, segue tutta la vita dell’anguilla e fa dell’anguilla un simbolo morale” (1995 (1): 692). Other texts from Italian, Irish, and American literature that feature the eel and its symbolism are related here in a short but productive digression. The particularity of an eel’s movement makes its poetic appearance in Dante’s *Divinia commedia*: “là v’era il petto, la cosa rivolve, / e quella tesa, come anguilla, mosse, / e con le branche, l’aere a sé raccolse” (2005: *Inferno*.XVII.103-105). The American poet, Robert Lowell [1917-1977], who also translated Eugenio Montale’s [1896-1981] “L’anguilla,” would also write his eel inspired poem, entitled “The Dolphin” (1990: 125-127; 1976: 267). Seamus Heaney [1939-2013] speaks about how his poem “The Casualty” commemorates the Irish eel fisherman Louis O’Neill in an interview with Dennis O’Driscoll (2008: 194). Medardo’s nameless nephew narrator’s deep sleep could have indeed proved fatal had it not been for il Buono’s well-timed intervention.

Calvino has made use of the in-between space for its flexibility in this and other stories. The borderline between childhood and adulthood, animal and human, even the states of being asleep and awake – physically, spiritually, and mentally – will challenge the demarcations of such boundaries. The borderline’s uncertainty is useful but also problematic for Calvino’s male protagonists. Such states are not static, but rather show that “transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable” (Douglas 1966: 96). In the case of Medardo’s nephew’s sleep, there is no ambiguous “dormiveglia” state. The narrator is in one moment deeply asleep and then awake the next when abruptly “un rumore [lo]

svegliò” (Calvino 1991: 414). The verb “durò” used by Calvino in the *passato remoto* tense is significant. This tense rather than the imperfect indicative, which would have indicated a continuous state of being asleep, made our narrator’s falling asleep as sudden as his being woken up. While a noise awakened him, his fear upon seeing his uncle, Medardo, whom he assumed was il Gramo, only accelerated his alertness and return to consciousness. The narrator describes his observations by making use of synecdoche to understand the whole of the situation. We see from his observation of a part of Medardo’s body, his left hand that grasps a flaming red spider and the cloak that will become an inextricable part of il Buono’s halved body: “Apersi gli occhi e vidi una mano alzata sulla mia testa; e su quella mano un peloso ragno rosso. Mi girai ed era mio zio nel suo mantello” (Ibid.). The clothes envelop as much as they define the man’s halved body. The spider does not bite il Buono’s face or neck or stomach, but rather, his left hand. This indication will reveal the fact that Medardo has not only been wounded but split into two halves vertically.

The reader is already well versed in the symbologies of the spider in literature and folklore from our discussion of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*. What is striking about the spider’s reappearance in this text is that although our narrator was not harmed by any of il Gramo’s three attempts on his narrator nephew’s life earlier in the novella, in all three of those instances il Gramo was never harmed either (cf. Calvino 1991: 382, 387, 402, 414). Indeed, the third attempt on his nephew’s life also occurred when his nephew was fishing for crabs, and il Gramo was looking for octopuses. This third attempt can be juxtaposed to il Gramo’s nephew’s return to the seaside to fish for eels (Ibid. 402). This time, however, Medardo’s good half, il Buono, does get hurt. Indeed, our narrator feels reassured exactly because of the viscount’s state of personal injury: “certo ora quel ragno gli aveva morso e

la mano gli gonfiava” (Ibid. 414). To assist il Buono with the poisonous bite, the narrator turns to Sebastiana. She will be, once again, the one to recognize the return of the viscount’s good half when the narrator specifies that the count’s left hand, and not the right one, had been bitten (Ibid. 416). Medardo’s nameless nephew narrator in this instance, as will Dr. Trelawney and Pamela later in the novella, can discern a significant message from the differentiation between right and left, and not just in the viscount’s body. In this story of dualities that utilize dichotomous poles to expose the spectrum of the in-between, the narrator, Sebastiana, Doctor Trelawney, and Pamela’s cumulative interpretation of Medardo’s body is founded upon the conception of “the asymmetry of the human body [as] the anthropological basis for its semioticization: the semiotics of *right* and *left* are found just as universally in all human cultures as the opposition *top* and *bottom*. And the fundamental asymmetries of *male* and *female*, *living* and *dead*, are just as widespread” (Lotman 1990: 133). Both halves of Medardo must work together in narrative tension to foment a dialogue to break such dichotomies between humans and nonhuman animals as well as between childhood and adulthood, fiction and history, the real and the imaginary. While the narrator was asking Sebastiana’s advice about this strange version of viscount Medardo, il Buono would encounter another familiar face (Calvino 1991: 416). This one was more medically competent and knowledgeable than Sebastiana. If given the opportunity and the confidence, Doctor Trelawney does have the skills and capabilities to fully utilize and [re]discover the practice and the significance of the field of medicine. Il Buono’s reunion with Doctor Trelawney and the language he invents based on nonhuman animal bodies will be discussed below.

Doctor Trelawney's first encounter with il Buono brings to the fore two very important features of the plot of *Il visconte dimezzato*. In their first encounter, Doctor Trelawney regains the productive use of his medical knowledge by treating il Buono for the red spider bite. This [re]animates Doctor Trelawney both intellectually and socially. Secondly, it is from this encounter that il Buono's invention of a language based on nonhuman animals' bodies and other objects of nature will come into existence. In this case, Il Buono will be the sender with only Doctor Trelawney as the intended recipient. This is in direct contrast to the language il Gramo would assemble for Pamela based on nonhuman animals' bodies, which will be discussed on pages 119-126 of this dissertation. Although Doctor Trelawney practically jumps into the lake because of his fear upon seeing il Buono and mistaking him for il Gramo, il Buono pulls him out of the lake to save him (Calvino 1991: 417-418). This encounter mirrors in exact counterpoint il Gramo's bad offer of helping his nephew out of the lake by extending the blade end of the sword to his soaked nephew (Ibid. 402). Il Buono, instead, offers Doctor Trelawney his leg rather than his hand because of his injury (Ibid. 402). Il Buono spoke with Doctor Trelawney describes the manner of il Buono's discourse with him as: "pieno d'umanità e di cortesia" (Ibid. 416). It is from his observations that Trelawney can hint that he has a possible explanation for the narrator's confusion about the viscount's conflicting actions. Upon the narrator's return to the lake, the half of the viscount the narrator encounters there, il Gramo, refuses the medicinal herbs (Ibid.) He goes so far as to suggest that his nephew place them in the hole of a tree, which also contains a wasps' nest (Ibid. 417). The Doctor assures the narrator that the Medardo that attempted on the narrator's life for the fourth time with the wasps' nest was not the same Medardo of the red spider bite. Il Gramo was certainly not, as

Doctor Trelawney says: “quello che ho curato io” (Ibid. 418). In addition to his peaked interest at il Gramo’s prescient feelings of phantom limb pain after curing il Buono of his spider bite, Doctor Trelawney goes on to become not only an effective medical practitioner but also a proficient reader of texts. Specifically, in direct contrast to his previous readings on fossils, grasshoppers, and will-o-the-wisps, the doctor resumes “quell’inconsueta sua lettura del trattato d’anatomia umana” (Ibid. 418-419). With both this successful treatment of a human patient and new-found confidence in himself, il Buono will facilitate Doctor Trelawney’s treatment of other patients. Il Buono realizes this by inventing a language for Doctor Trelawney to understand not in books with written signs, but with the bodies of nonhuman animals and other beings from the natural world. Before delving into the various symbols, syntax, and significance attached to the construction of il Buono’s language for Doctor Trelawney as observed by the nameless narrator nephew, it must be kept in mind that for this story and in life there can be too much of a good thing, even with, or despite, the best intentions.

Within the span of two succinct pages, the reader is not only presented with il Buono’s imaginative language, but also the problem of his attempting to do too much good. Furthermore, il Gramo’s attempts to destroy il Buono’s language, and his good intentions, along with it, are unsuccessful. The destruction of the symbols from one language does not guarantee its utter erasure.³⁸ Il Buono will leave three distinct messages that are intended to help Doctor Trelawney overcome his fears and insecurities about treating human patients. We have seen earlier in the text, with the three attempts on the narrator’s life as but one

³⁸ Cf. the short story from *Le Cosmicomiche* [1964] “Un segno nello spazio” (Calvino 1992: 108-117).

example, that while the narrative and symbolic power ascribed to the number three is indeed commonplace in the Western tradition, it is not necessarily the case in all world literature. The power attached to the number three in folklore and storytelling is hardly universal, as, in many Native American tales, such power is ascribed to the number four and not three (Alexander 2012: 23). While this fact may not be under scrutiny in the study of Calvino's works specifically, the point is made to broaden the reader's awareness of the flexibility and relativity of so-called norms, be they social, cultural, or literary. What is of particular interest for this thesis is il Buono's use of nonhuman animals' bodies within two of those three messages he crafted for Doctor Trelawney.

Each physical message il Buono left assisted not only Doctor Trelawney. Each one also had the secondary benefit of helping the patient feel at ease and be better treated medically by the doctor (cf. Calvino 1991: 424). Each of the three messages il Buono leaves for Doctor Trelawney will be analyzed below. The first message involves pomegranates, which are a fruit that is an almost universal symbol of both fertility and abundance, that were wrapped in bandages. This image is formed based on the physical appearance of the fruit, as it resembles a mouth with an overabundance of aching teeth with its many seeds, rather than for its symbolic meaning in this case (Schneider 1945: 119-120). It is important to note that of all the three messages, this first one focuses on healing a significant part of the human body, the mouth. This part of the body is a place of both storytelling and functionality as "the ambiguous locus of two oralities: one articulates the voice, language; the other satisfies a need, the ingestion of food for survival first of all, but also for a pleasure that becomes juxtaposed with the value of nourishment" (Biasin 1993: 3). The mouth in need of healing to continue to tell stories as much as to eat is another

example of the convergence of human rationality and nonhuman animal biology in Calvino's war stories. The second and third messages more directly engage with fauna than with flora, which will be described below.

The other two messages are more pertinent to this chapter on account of the participation of nonhuman animals and their bodies. In the second one, Il Buono ties three chickens to Cecco, the prior's, sunflower plant. The flower was known for being, in fact, "stento, che non fioriva mai" (Ibid). Fertilizing a flower that never grows would be an exercise in futility if the true objective were to make that flower grow. However, in its apparent illogical aspect, this message breaks open the space for Doctor Trelawney to notice that something is amiss, and of which should be taken note. The chickens'³⁹ overindulgence of food leads to their continual production of excrement, the icastic depiction of which all too closely mimics the prior's rather chronic case of diarrhea (Calvino 1991: 424). Il Buono's third message leaves a trail of snails, both the edible and "dal bosco" variety, on the elderly Gironima's front steps. He does this to make visible to the doctor that "il mal di cuore della povera vecchia era peggiorato e che il dottore facesse piano entrando, per non spaventarla" (Ibid.). The symbolic significance of snails' bodies will be purposefully delayed until our discussion of *Il barone rampante* on account of the essential involvement of that species in both Cosimo and Battista's respective rebellions (cf. Calvino 1991: 554-559). Il Buono's language, which was so carefully assembled and appeared to be effective for il Buono and Doctor Trelawney, would come to be trampled on

³⁹ Cf. Pin's chicken coop dreams in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (Calvino 1991: 50-51) and its connection to the much later dream of the editor and his books in a chicken coup in *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (Calvino 1992: 774).

by il Gramo. Il Gramo does not utterly obliterate the signs of Il Buono's texts. Rather, he succeeds in highlighting his attempts at destroying il Buono's messages. Il Buono's language had been of benefit to both Doctor Trelawney and his patients. Yet, when il Buono encounters Master Pietrochiodo, the good half of Medardo's best intentions are proven to be just as extreme as il Gramo's wickedness. Il Buono and il Gramo as separate halved men are shown to be "malvagità e virtù ugualmente disumane" (Calvino 1991: 436). In addition to the differences in il Gramo and il Buono's relationships with Doctor Trelawney, so too will the differences between il Gramo and il Buono be even more highlighted by the failed carpentry ideas il Buono will engage in with Master Pietrochiodo below.

In comparison to the terrifyingly effective gallows of il Gramo, il Buono's ideas for instruments and machines are unfeasible, even by the "ingegnoso Maestro" carpenter and saddle-maker, Master Pietrochiodo (Calvino 1991: 431). Il Buono's ideas for machines, "messi in moto dalla bontà e non dalla sete di servizie," are too complicated for il Buono to explain in words or for Master Pietrochiodo to then translate into a visual image, never mind construct into being (Ibid.). Il Buono's idea for a hybrid and multipurpose machine to help human and nonhuman animals alike would recall the butterflies that are not so dissimilar from il Gramo and Doctor Trelawney's will-o-the-wisps or as il Gramo calls them, nocturnal butterflies. Il Buono's nephew describes his good uncle's convoluted explanation as follows: "quest'organo-mulino-forno⁴⁰ doveva pure tirare l'acqua su dai

⁴⁰ Calvino's interest in hybrid machines and beings does not end with Il Buono's idealized machines. Rather, they reoccur in *La giornata di uno scrutatore* [1963] with the "ragazzo-piantapesce" from the sanatorium (1992: 63), and in Pluto, the Lord of the Underworld's, idealized cities

pozzi risparmiando la fatica agli asini, e spostarsi su ruote per contentare i diversi passi, e anche nei giorni delle feste sospendersi per aria e acchiappare con reti tutt'intorno, le farfalle" (Ibid.). Il Buono's unrealizable machines lead Master Pietrochiodo to an altogether different crisis of conscience than the one he had experienced earlier with il Gramo. Master Pietrochiodo questions whether there is something aberrant in his nature that makes him utterly unable to realize il Buono's seemingly good and helpful machines and yet so easily comprehend, visualize, design, and then construct those requested by il Gramo. Master Pietrochiodo calls into doubt, not just his self, but even the human condition, to the degree that he thinks "costruir macchine buone fosse al di là delle possibilità umane, mentre le sole che veramente potessero funzionare con praticità ed esattezza fossero i patiboli e i tormenti [...] Il Maestro s'angustiava: -- Sarà forse nel mio animo questa cattiveria che mi fa riuscire solo macchine crudeli?—" (Ibid. 341-342). Despite being aware of the miserable consequences of the machines he crafted on the lives of those around him, Master Pietrochiodo continues to construct the machines he can understand and make for il Gramo if not those of il Buono. Il Buono's naiveté is placed in direct contrast with both Master Pietrochiodo's awareness of his guilt and il Gramo's nonchalance towards the consequences of his actions.

While il Gramo appears to relish the effects of his acts of cruelty, in contrast, il Buono does not seem to be aware of the unfortunate consequences of some of his actions. Two opposed female figures, Sebastiana as the wet-nurse and maternal figure and Pamela, the shepherdess maiden, will not only reveal these consequences to il Buono. Rather, they

as "un corpo vivente-città-macchina" from Calvino's rewrite of one of his own *Cosmicomiche* stories "Il cielo di pietra" as "L'altra Euridice" in 1980 (1994: 1179-1180).

will work together to reintegrate il Buono in body, mind, and spirit as much as Doctor Trelawney would with his medical skills. Sebastiana reprimands il Buono for the consequences of both his and il Gramo's actions. Indeed, Sebastiana "non faceva gran conto della separazione di Medardo in due metà" and treated both halves of Medardo as one being despite their division (Calvino 1991: 434). Sebastiana relates the violent consequences one of il Buono's good deeds and proves it to be equally as reprehensible as il Gramo's outright cruelty. When il Buono gave away his walking stick to old Isidoro, il Buono was made an unintentional accomplice to Isidoro beating his wife. Il Buono's act of kindness, placed in the wrong hands, not only caused bodily harm to another but moreover inconvenienced himself in the process. Sebastiana does not hesitate to point out this disparity to il Buono: "Ora (Isidoro) l'ha rotta [la stampella] sulla schiena di sua moglie e tu giri appoggiandoti a un ramo forcelluto..." (Ibid.). She further re-inscribes the significance of his naiveté based on his bodily state: "Sei senza testa, ecco come sei!" (Ibid.). As Medardo is split in body and spirit, he is, in effect, without a whole mind or an entire head. Il Buono, as the left side of Medardo's body, is endowed with a heart, both in terms of anatomy and figuratively. Pamela and her strengths as both reader and craftsman of messages will bring out some sentimental reflections in il Buono, as she has already done with il Gramo. In the following section, Pamela's definitive encounters with il Gramo, il Buono, and both halves of Medardo at the same time, will be analyzed for their contribution to animals' bodily texts as a formative human characteristic in war stories will be analyzed.

2.4 Thrice at First Sight: Pamela Reads and Challenges il Gramo's Animal-Bodied Love Letters as well as both his and il Buono's Respective Philosophies of Love and Humanity

Pamela's strengths as a reader and crafter of messages are founded upon multiple points. She actively observes, participates, responds, and reflects on the layers of meanings in *Il Gramo* and *Il Buono*'s actions and messages. Calvino's description of her in his preface to the novella appears rather nonchalant as he barely refers to her by name and only then in parenthesis: "il personaggio della ragazza (la pastorella Pamela) è appena uno schema di concretezza femminile in contrasto con la disumanità del dimezzato" (Calvino 1991: 1212). However, Pamela's solidity as a literary character is different than that of Sebastiana. Although Sebastiana is also female, she will not be the regenerative force for viscount Medardo's eventual reunification. It falls to romantic love and not maternal nurturing to reform and reconstitute the two halves of Medardo for the better by making his mind and spirit coalesce before his body can be physically reunited.

The love interest subplot of the novella demonstrates another version of metamorphosis and border crossing transformation. The boundaries of the self are pushed to make room for new definitions to the degree that "against all evidence to the senses, the person in love asserts that 'I' and 'you' are one, and is ready to behave as if this were so" (Freud 2002: 3). Pamela will not only encounter both *il Gramo* and *il Buono*'s love philosophies, but she will also set forth her own as they are determined by her hopes, dreams, and expectations. A romantic subplot cannot detail merely an individual's transformation. Rather, it lays bare the transformative process of hybridization of both parties involved to create something beyond their selves. Against the background of a war

story in the form of a novella, the process of bridging the human and nonhuman animal divide is based on the

Fondamento del pensiero postumanista è l'ibridazione, che tuttavia non significa potenziamento dell'umano e semplice appropriazione di contenuti delle alterità bensì trasformazione del campo prospettico umano in un sistema in non-equilibrio e costruzione di carenza esattamente come l'innamoramento dà luogo al bisogno del partner (Marchesini 2014a: 154).

Long before Medardo can join his being and soul to Pamela's, he must first and foremost, a lesson to all of us, be complete in and of himself. Medardo's journey towards the reunification of his self and Pamela will be recounted through her meetings with il Gramo, il Buono, and both halves together in the same place before their reunification as the viscount Medardo.

Pamela meets viscount Medardo three times. She first meets each half of Medardo separately, first il Gramo and later il Buono. She later encounters both halves of Medardo at the same time. Her first encounter with il Gramo is circumscribed by the language he invents for her based on a syntax of nonhuman animals' bodies, which will be contrasted to that of il Buono for Doctor Trelawney. When Pamela later encounters il Buono, she will interpret her observations to try to understand il Buono's character, his intentions, and his physical reality as well as his life story. These two encounters are then followed by Pamela's first encounter with both halves together, which involves an intellectual and physical reading of a literary text, Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* [1581]. Subsequently, all three persons - il Gramo, il Buono and Pamela - will be active weavers of the plot toward Medardo's battle for his self. This struggle is contingent upon his ability to read and be understanding in and of the world around him. It is also enhanced by the marriage subplot towards a greater union of his entire self with the self of another, Pamela.

His nameless nephew narrator, Sebastiana, Doctor Trelawney, and Master Pietrochiodo, and even the Huguenots and the Lepers, have also contributed greatly towards Medardo's wisdom and experience as two halved men. Yet, the fragments of Medardo's divided self in body, mind, and spirit, will irrevocably come together to form and be formed by⁴¹ his attempts to be desirable to Pamela.

Although il Gramo's halved self has been analyzed earlier in this chapter, the intricate involvement of his language constructed specifically for Pamela based on a syntax of nonhuman animals' bodies occurs during Pamela's first encounter with il Gramo. Il Gramo's attraction and the subsequent declaration of love for Pamela is replete with nonhuman animals' bodies. Il Gramo's language for Pamela not only revisits his former whole self's inability to read the texts of the nonhuman animals' bodies at the battlefield. It also anticipates the one il Buono would construct for Doctor Trelawney and his patients' benefit. Although il Gramo's language is supposedly inspired by love and its kinder associations, the resulting texts are a "grotesque system of signification" (McLaughlin 1998: 37). The language based on nonhuman animal bodies il Gramo presents Pamela with seeks to not only communicate with her but, by doing so, also demonstrate "the erotic as

⁴¹ Compare with the following excerpt from *Le cosmicomiche* "La spirale" [1964]: "Dal momento che ci fu, questa conchiglia fu anche un luogo necessario e indispensabile per starci dentro, una difesa per la mia sopravvivenza che guai se non me la fossi fatta, ma intanto che la facevo non mi veniva mica di farla perché mi serviva, ma al contrario come a uno gli viene di fare un'esclamazione che potrebbe benissimo anche non fare eppure la fa, come uno che dice «bah!» oppure «mah!», così io facevo la conchiglia, cioè solo per esprimermi. E in questo esprimermi ci mettevo tutti i pensieri che avevo per quella là, lo sfogo della rabbia che mi faceva, il modo amoroso di pensarla, la volontà di essere per lei, d'essere io che fossi io, e per lei che fosse lei, e l'amore per me stesso che mettevo nell'amore per lei, tutte le cose che potevano essere dette soltanto il quel guscio di conchiglia avvitato a spirale" (Calvino 1992: 213).

one of those ‘inexpressible’ human experiences” (Gabriele 1994: 113). Il Gramo’s attempts to express his seemingly inexpressible halved human experience do reach their intended audience. However, they do not foster his expected outcome in winning Pamela. All of the messages il Gramo presented for Pamela’s reading comprehension skills will be analyzed for their inclusion of nonhuman animals’ bodies below.

Before il Gramo codifies his language for Pamela, his first sighting of her is also described with words associated with nonhuman animals. Il Gramo’s gaze on Pamela is not that of a human hunter, as we will see with Cosimo in the following chapter of this dissertation. Rather, il Gramo’s gaze resembles that of “un occhio di rapace,” like that of a bird of prey (Calvino 1991: 404). Il Gramo is not the only man to transform into a nonhuman animal at the chance of a lustful encounter in Calvino’s oeuvre. We have seen in our discussion of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* the efficacy of Pin’s distraction of the prison guard who changed into a cave-dwelling animal at the mere possibility of a picture of a beautiful woman that he sought out with “due occhi da animale cavernicolo” (Ibid. 44). Il Gramo appears to have killed his father’s shrike only to become a bird of prey himself. It is not surprising that il Gramo will transform from a hunter of nonhuman animals to focus on his hunt for Pamela’s affections (Ibid. 404). Pamela is not only a caretaker of nonhuman animals from the natural world. She is also on the brink of being immersed in that world herself with her shepherdess’ duties, which will be of concern from il Gramo and il Buono alike.

Our fair shepherdess will often be found and return to nature throughout the text (Calvino 1991: 404). While she was looking after her goats, she was “dormicchiando, parlando con le capre e annusando i fiori” (Ibid.) It is worthy of note that she was also

barefoot, which is rather an unexpected way to dress for human animals outdoors. Her choice not to cover her feet is striking because, apart from humans, most nonhuman animals do not need to protect their feet from nature, apart from the horseshoes humans provide horses with (Ibid.). Pamela's situation on the border between humanity and animality also comes to the surface when she speaks with her goats. Although Pamela may not hold a mutually intelligible conversation with her goats, her ability to communicate, to speak and be understood by her goats will not only mark her as unique in this story. It will also help her get out of trouble later in our tale (Ibid.). Before that time, il Gramo's pursuit of Pamela with nonhuman animals' bodies will bring out the discussion of il Gramo's considerations of himself as a species among human and nonhuman animals.

Upon seeing Pamela, il Gramo thinks to himself about how such a lonesome example of a unique species⁴² like himself, like a halved man, might be moved by a

⁴² Compare both il Gramo and il Buono's notion of the species apart, and especially of the "interi" in *Il barone rampante* [1957] and "L'altra Euridice" [1970]. Cosimo, before his infatuation with Ursula and his falling in love all over again with Viola, considers both himself and Ottimo Massimo, the basset hound, to be a species apart from their respective species of men and dogs: "e sui rami Cosimo era solo con i gialli occhi dei gufi, gli veniva da sognare l'amore [...] Ottimo Massimo, per nulla intimidito dal fatto d'esser l'unico bassotto d'Ombrosa, corteggiava grosse cagne da pastore, o cagne-lupe, con spavaldo ardimento, fidandosi della naturale simpatia che ispirava [...] Anche Cosimo, come Ottimo Massimo, era l'unico esemplare d'una specie. Nei suoi sogni a occhi aperti, si vedeva amato da bellissime fanciulle; ma come avrebbe incontrato l'amore, lui sugli alberi? Nel fantasticare, riusciva a non figurarsi dove quelle cose sarebbero successe, se sulla terra o lassù dov'era ora: un luogo senza luogo, immaginava, come un mondo cui s'arriva andando in su, non in giù. Ecco: forse c'era un albero così alto che salendo toccasse un altro mondo, la luna" (Calvino 1991: 667). In addition, the Spanish nobles would be called, poignantly the ones without land, upon their exile in the trees, as "desterrados" (Ibid. 679). This notion of who best understands the earth, inside and out, is demonstrated in "L'Altra Euridice" from Calvino's *Cosmicomiche* stories. In that text the so-called "extraterrestri" are marked out as others who do not understand the earth as they should because they only live on the surface of it. Pluto, in comparison, inhabits the core of the earth and therefore supposedly understands it more fully by living inside of it (Calvino 1994: 1178).

comparable powerful force. Whereas the “interi,” whole persons, are put in motion by the effects of love, il Gramo thought he might be able to define a similar but different feeling in himself. His internal thoughts relate: “«Ecco che io tra i miei acuti sentimenti non ho nulla che corrisponda a quello che gli interi chiamano amore. E se per loro un sentimento così melenso ha pur tanta importanza, quello che per me potrà corrispondere a esso, sarà certo magnifico e terribile»” (Ibid.). Il Gramo had taken matter-of-factly “i pensieri che egli aveva freddamente formulato” and made use of the *passato remoto* tense to show how almost instantaneously and instinctively, but at the same time, rationally and cogently: “decis[e] di innamorar[si] di Pamela” (Ibid.). What constitutes il Gramo’s unique definition of love and its expression as a halved man will be demonstrated by both his actions and through the language he creates for Pamela.

Based on his calculations about something as intangible an experience and its affects as love, il Gramo crafted the first of his messages to be understood by Pamela’s eyes with something from the natural realm that was not a nonhuman animal, but rather, plant matter. The following three messages with regards to flowers and vegetables will be briefly analyzed to better compare them to the texts comprised of nonhuman animals’ bodies il Gramo will leave following the plant-based ones’ ineffectiveness to awaken Pamela’s affectionate side for him. By leaving the message for Pamela at the exact spot where she would herd her goats, il Gramo made sure that Pamela would see il Gramo’s first message. He leaves her fields in which the daisies only have half of their petals (Calvino 1991: 405). While these halved daisies are not quite the customary bouquet, Pamela can understand that il Gramo had fallen in love with her. Despite Pamela’s distress at this realization, she undertakes to collect all the half-daisies, which she brings home to

dry and flatten between the pages of her prayer book. That same day, in the aptly named il Prato delle Monache,⁴³ or the “Nun’s Meadow,” following her placement of the natural daisies in a supernatural religious book, Pamela encounters a second message (Ibid.). When Pamela takes her ducks⁴⁴ for a swim, the parsnips that grow there meet the same fate as the daisies (Ibid.). The dandelions in the next field over will be split into two as well. The manner in which they were cut proves it was the handiwork of il Gramo, much like the shrike’s demise earlier (Ibid.) The flowers were not halved as if they had been cut with scissors. Rather, it was as if “qualcuno si fosse steso a terra a soffiarcì sopra da una parte, o con mezza bocca soltanto” (Ibid.). Pamela receives not merely one, but three bouquets as continual, even if they were unpleasant, reminders of il Gramos’s intentions throughout her trying day. The next day il Gramo leaves texts for Pamela that will leave the realm of flora

⁴³ While Suor Teodora, as she narrates Calvino’s *Il cavaliere inesistente* will, as well as Sofronia, provide some important nun characters throughout Calvino’s oeuvre, Battista, without being a nun, will be forced to wear more modest, and indeed monastic clothes after “la storia del Marchesino della Mela” in *Il barone rampante* (cf. Calvino 1991: 555). Please see pages 153-168 of this dissertation for more on Battista’s rebellion and its effects on her dress and culinary production.

⁴⁴ A familiar image of animals, and more importantly, bird allegories juxtaposed to onomatopoeic synecdoche appears when describing categories of men from Italian literature, as ducks, in the following excerpt from Leonardo Sciascia’s *Il giorno della civetta* [1960]): “- Io - proseguí poi don Mariano - ho una certa pratica del mondo; e quella che diciamo l’umanità, e ci riempiamo la bocca a dire umanità, bella parola piena di vento, la divido in cinque categorie: gli uomini, i mezz’uomini, gli ominicchi, i (con rispetto parlando) pigliainculo e i quaquaraquà... Pochissimi gli uomini; i mezz’uomini pochi, che mi contenterei l’umanità si fermasse ai mezz’uomini... E invece no, scende ancora più giù, agli ominicchi: che sono come i bambini che si credono grandi, scimmie che fanno le stesse mosse dei grandi... E ancora più in giù: i pigliainculo, che vanno diventando un esercito... E infine i quaquaraquà: che dovrebbero vivere con le anatre nelle pozzanghere che la loro vita non ha più senso e più espressione di quella delle anatre... Lei, anche se mi inchiederà su queste carte come un Cristo, lei è un uomo... / - Anche lei - disse il capitano con una certa emozione.” (Milano: Adelphi, 1993), 109.

and cede their place to the fauna that inhabits the near-by forest, meadows, and the town of Terralba.

Over the following days, even the home Pamela shares with her parents and their nonhuman animals will not be safe from a continual barrage of il Gramo's messages to be deciphered by Pamela. As a shepherdess, both Pamela's work and daily life are replete with nonhuman animals. When she returns home in the evening, her family's place is overflowing with various species of nonhuman animals, specifically: goats, ducks, bees, and ants. It is so crowded that the humans – Pamela, her mother, and father - do not sleep in bedrooms on mattresses. Instead, they sleep among their animals: "la mamma di Pamela dormiva nel pagliaio, il babbo dormiva in una botte vuota, e Pamela in un'amaca sospesa tra un fico e un olivo" (Calvino 1991: 405). The exact place her parents' sleep will be significant because il Gramo will place some of his messages in these same areas.

Although a halved flower cannot survive or live, it can still be considered beautiful and not disturbing to the eye of the viewer. Yet half of an animal, human or nonhuman, typically cannot. Medardo is the rare exception whose survival as two halved men provides the fantastic basis of the novella. The following series of four messages to be decoded by Pamela is constructed upon the halved bodies of nonhuman animals from the land, sky, and sea. All their lives were cut short, so they could form il Gramo's love letters for Pamela dripping with cruelty rather than affection.

The first two messages based on nonhuman animals' bodies include butterflies, jellyfish, and bats. All of these creatures appear to fly in their respective habitats, be they on land or in the sea. In the first message, il Gramo gives a perfectly halved butterfly to Pamela. With this first message, he seeks to defend his actions with a false case of self-

defense. He claims that the butterfly was about to sting him. Pamela is more than justified in her incredulity when she says: “Quando mai le farfalle hanno punto qualcuno?” (Calvino 1991: 405). Indeed, this first nonhuman animal carcass was not a message that required much interpretive work from Pamela. Rather it left an indelible mark of il Gramo’s presence for her and her parents to see.

The following morning, in the very place where Pamela would shepherd her goats and be first seen by il Gramo with a rapacious gaze in his eye, she finds a second message. Il Gramo had placed half a bat⁴⁵ next to half of a jellyfish on the rock where Pamela would normally sit (Calvino 1991: 406). As he had done previously with the flowers in the fields Pamela usually frequented, he had rightly assumed that this placement would make it impossible for her to miss them. While both the bat and the jellyfish are creatures of the sea and sky that fly or appear to in the water, the bat proves to be more symbolically poignant to our analysis of the novella. This is because it is an animal hunter of fruits and insects, such as butterflies, if it so desired (Nagel 1974: 439). Il Gramo’s hunt for Pamela’s affection is thus not only reflected in his actions but in the nonhuman animals’ bodies with

⁴⁵ Another protagonist from one of Calvino’s war novels, Agilulfo, from his 1959 *Il cavaliere inesistente* would also feature the presence of bats, as in the following excerpt in which the knight’s frustration is vented upon them shows:

La notte calma era percorsa soltanto dal soffice volo di piccole ombre informi dalle ali silenziose, che si muovevano intorno senza una direzione nemmeno momentanea: i pipistrelli. Anche quel loro misero corpo incerto tra il topo ed il volatile era pur sempre qualcosa di tangibile e sicuro, qualcosa con cui si poteva sbatacchiare per l’aria a bocca aperta inghiottendo zanzare, mentre Agilulfo con tutta la sua corazza era attraversato a ogni fessura dagli sbuffi del vento, dal volo delle zanzare e dai raggi della luna. Una rabbia indeterminata, che gli era cresciuta dentro, esplose tutt’a un tratto: trasse la spada dal fodero, l’afferrò a due mani, l’avventò in aria con tutte le forze contro ogni pipistrello che s’abbassava (1991: 963).

which he forms the language for Pamela's eyes. Our astute female reader was able to understand that this second text that "voleva dire: appuntamento stasera in riva al mare" (Calvino 1991: 405). Pamela does indeed show up for the rendezvous only to encounter il Gramo's philosophy of love as a destructive force of ourselves and nature:

—Io, Pamela, ho deciso d'essere innamorato di te, -- egli le disse. / -- Ed è per questo, -- saltò su lei, - che straziate tutte le creature della natura? / – Pamela, - sospirò il visconte⁴⁶ – nessun altro linguaggio abbiamo per parlarci se non questo. Ogni incontro di due esseri al mondo è uno sbranarsi. Vieni con me, io ho la conoscenza di questo male e sarai più sicura con chiunque altro; perché io faccio del male come tutti lo fanno; ma, a differenza degli altri, io ho la mano sicura (Ibid. 406).

Perhaps in being the right side of Medardo's body, il Gramo feels he has some advantage or the "upper hand," to win Pamela's affections. His actual ability to do so remains to be seen, however. Il Gramo will have to proceed to construct two more messages to meet with Pamela again based on nonhuman animals' bodies.

This third text will ask Pamela for another meeting with il Gramo. Once there, he hopes to propose she live with him in his castle. After Pamela tries to gather some fruit from the mulberry tree the next morning, she is confronted with another disgusting sight that has the handiwork of the viscount il Gramo figuratively written all over it. In a juxtaposition of its curtailed freedom and its associations with the dawn, a rooster was found by Pamela. Its carcass was being devoured by not just any species of caterpillar.

⁴⁶ Note the placement on the other side of the moon of the futility of lovers' sighs, or 'sospiri,' alongside the supposedly time wasted spent on gambling, among other curious artifacts of life, in Ludovico Ariosto *Orlando furioso*: "Le lacrime e i sospiri degli amanti, / L'inutil tempo che si perde a giuoco, / E l'ozio lungo d'uomini ignoranti, / Vani disegni che non han mai loco, / I vani desideri sono tanti, / Che la più parte ingombran di quel loco: / Ciò che in somma qua giù perdesti mai, / Là su salendo ritrovar potrai" (2012: XXXIV.75.1-8).

Instead of undergoing metamorphosis into peaceful butterflies, these caterpillars will eventually evolve into processionary moths, which are also parasites of pine trees (cf. Avci 2003). Two literary exemplars of the rooster's ability to awaken people physically from sleep and intellectually appear in two texts from Calvino's vast library of comparative literary texts. In the first, Homer will specifically note the rooster's absence in the realm of Somnus (1997: XI.593). In the second, Giacomo Leopardi's "Cantico del gallo silvestre" from his *Operette morali* [1827] translates the dialogue of a giant rooster from antiquity who would exhort people to wake up from their sleep, no matter how peaceful it was, to confront the day, no matter how many toils it might have in store for them (2014: 237-244). Joining Calvino's menagerie of birds within his war stories, the rooster's place offers a contrast on the threshold between wild and domesticated, night and day, life and death. The life of the rooster il Gramo used for his message has expired, however. Pamela interprets the meaning of this one as: "«Domani all'alba ci vedremo al bosco»" (Calvino 1991: 407).

Yet instead of winning her over, il Gramo's third nonhuman animal bodied text convinces Pamela to refuse to stay at the castle with the viscount. She prefers to keep her freedom in nature's open spaces rather than meet the same fate as the other halved creatures of il Gramo's language and be left to "rodere dai topi" within il Gramo's castle (Calvino 1991: 407). Walt Whitman's poem "This Compost" would also touch upon dead bodies becoming food for worms, if the actors are mice or il Gramo's cruelties (2005: 390-391). The viscount's violent reaction will give Pamela goosebumps, or as it is conveyed in the original Italian idiomatic expression to feel something with the skin of a goose: "si senti venire la pelle d'oca" (Ibid.). Nevertheless, il Gramo, despite his state as a halved man, cannot compromise with Pamela. Il Gramo will resort to another nonhuman animal bodied

message to persuade Pamela to comply with his wishes. As we will see below, Pamela's reaction and interpretation of this message by her and her parents will foment another series of messages involving bodies of both nonhuman animals and Pamela's loved ones.

The fourth nonhuman animal text will give Pamela a rude awakening from her peaceful sleep and enlighten her about the depths il Gramo will go to to convince her to be with him. In her lap, which in Italian is also the same word for womb "in grembo," Pamela wakes up the following morning to the following message (Calvino 1991: 408). This message would not be interpreted only by Pamela this time. Her parents' suggested interpretations appear unusually biased in favor of il Gramo, their daughter's tormenter, rather than for their own her daughter. Pamela wakes up to find half of a bleeding squirrel carcass on her lap, which surprisingly still has its "fulva coda intatta" (Ibid.). The untouched appendage of the squirrel leans her parents to interpret this message as the viscount's openness to a compromise with Pamela. Although he may be a halved man, her parents suggest that: "quanto [Pamela] ha[] di buono e di bello lui lo rispetterà" (Ibid.). Pamela is not convinced, however. Before going to bed, she cautions her father and mother that should they see il Gramo they would do better to uncover the beehives and tie and leave him on the anthills than be convinced by him. Before continuing our analysis of il Gramo's language based on a syntax of nonhuman animal bodies to win over Pamela's heart on the home front if not on the battlefield, let us take a brief note of some of the literary inheritance of some of these insects among the warm-blooded animals of Calvino's war stories.

While the reader is well acquainted with the spiders and the butterflies in Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and *Il visconte dimezzato*, let us now focus on the bees and the

ants. The bees are particularly important as they will return for a more in-depth discussion with regards to Cosimo and il Cavalier Avvocato's shared interest in beekeeping on pages 174-175 of this dissertation in the novel *Il barone rampante*. Calvino's short story from *Ultimo viene il corvo* [1949], "La casa degli alveari," provides an interesting comparison with regards to its narrator, who isolates himself from the realm of humanity in two different ways. Not only does he place beehives around his yard. Certain stories are also circulated about the mysterious disappearance of a woman on his land one fateful night, which further estranges him from the community of human society (Calvino 1991: 217-220). Beyond Calvino's works, a critical classical text that features bees, Virgil's Book IV of the *Georgics*, interweaves a precise description of the bees and their societies with the mythological story of Orpheus and Eurydice (cf. 2004: 72-105). The ant will also feature in other works of Italo Calvino as well as dialogue with comparative literary texts. Indeed, Calvino's *La formica argentina* [1952], about the effects of an invasive species of ant on the Ligurian coasts and its people, was published the same year as *Il visconte dimezzato*. Also published in the same year, Aldo Palazzeschi's chapter "«Quelle...»" from his *Bestie del 900* recounts how some ants decide to go to war against the butterflies, an insect that has featured throughout our discussion of nonhuman animals in Calvino's war novella (2006: 13-25). Before 1952, another short story from Calvino's collection *Ultimo viene il corvo*, "Un pomeriggio, Adamo," includes ants as one of Libereso's gifts that Maria-nunziata refuses (1991: 160). The young gardener Libereso's gifts to Maria-nunziata of animals that are usually considered repulsive puts into practice the concept that "il gioco dell'autore [Calvino] è qui di spezzare la retorica, col sostrato allegorico di ammissione della dignità di tutti gli esseri nel quadro globale della natura" (Bertoni and Ferraro 2003:

29). Branching away from twentieth-century Italian literature, we might also consider the well-known fable by Aesop of the ant's proactive nature in comparison to that of the grasshopper (1998: 177). Although Pamela thought she was proactive by coming up with a plan for the possibility of il Gramo's arrival, she was not prepared for his act of vengeance in response to her rejections of his entreaties.

The ants and bees Pamela suggested her parents use against il Gramo are instead used against all three of them. Pamela's sleep is interrupted that night when her parents discover that their sleeping places, the haystack her mother and the barrel her father would sleep in respectively, are decimated. Additionally, Pamela's very words had been turned on her parents by none other than il Gramo. He had not only saved himself but had also endangered her loved ones by leaving her mother to the fate of the bees and her father tied to the anthill. After Pamela frees her parents, instead of joining forces with their daughter against il Gramo and his cruelty, they attempt to trap her. Her parents' inattention to the presence of the nonhuman animals in the house - the ducks and goats - actually benefits Pamela. She, unlike Medardo, il Gramo, or il Buono, does have the power of language not only to interpret the viscount's signs, but also "sapeva parlare alle sue bestie" (Ibid.). It is the nonhuman animals who will turn out to be her rescuers as "le anatre la liberarono dai lacci, e a cornate le capre sfondarono la porta. Pamela corse via, prese con sé la capra e l'anatra preferite, e andò a vivere nel bosco" (Ibid.).

The nameless narrator nephew returns to the fore of the scene when he brings Pamela news and food from Terralba in the woods. Despite Pamela's successful escape to an Edenic place in the forest, il Gramo does not give up his language meant for Pamela's eyes only. Indeed, although he does not leave her animal carcasses or halved flowers, signs

of destruction and damage in her natural surroundings highlight il Gramo's presence and unwavering focus on Pamela:

Per il bosco passava alle volte mio zio, ma si teneva al largo, pur manifestando la sua presenza nei tristi modi consueti di lui. Alle volte una frana di sassi sfioravano Pamela e le sue bestie; alle volte un tronco di pino a cui lei s'appoggiava cedeva, minato alla base da colpi d'accetta; alle volte una sorgente si scopriva inquinata da resti d'animali uccisi (Calvino 1991: 410).

While Pamela's escape to the woods delays il Gramo's direct interactions with Pamela, it is there in the woods that Pamela will have her first encounter with Medardo's good half, il Buono.

While the aphorisms "love at first sight" and "you never get a second chance at a first impression" are common knowledge, Pamela will have the unique opportunity to meet Medardo three times as if for the first time. Once as il Gramo, once as il Buono, and both halves separate but side by side. We will now focus on her first encounter with Medardo's good side, il Buono. When she first meets il Buono Pamela not only has the chance to observe and interpret his actions towards herself and her nonhuman animals. She will also be introduced to il Buono's philosophy on life and love as a halved man. He does this by recounting the tale of how he was saved by a merciful act of love, courage, and understanding beyond the borders of the self, brotherhood, and religion on the battlefield. Each of these three key moments – il Buono's interaction with Pamela and her favorite goat and duck, his mini-lesson on understanding life better by being a halved man, and his philosophy of love – will all be analyzed below.

After she fled from il Gramo to live in the woods, nature took Pamela and her favorite duck and goat by surprise with a terrible storm. It is there that she encounters il Buono, but without realizing that it is he and not il Gramo. Much like her fellow

townspeople, Pamela is initially confused by this jarringly unexpected experience of the good side of viscount Medardo. Il Buono lets himself get soaked in the rain for the sake of Pamela as well as her beloved nonhuman animals. Pamela admitted that the goat and the duck could very well “prendersi anche l’acqua” (Calvino 1991: 420). Nevertheless, il Buono insists on covering all three with his black cloak. This article of clothing will help Pamela piece together the puzzle of il Gramo and il Buono as it had for Sebastiana and the nameless nephew narrator. As il Buono folds his cloak up against the rain, Pamela can identify him by recognizing a bodily difference. The Medardo in front of her with only one left hand could not be the right-sided one of il Gramo: “Pamela guardò la mano di lui che teneva il mantello, rimase un momento sovrappensiero, si mise a guardare le proprie mani, le confrontò l’una con l’altra, e poi scoppiò in una grande risata” (Ibid.). Pamela, although she has neither Sebastiana’s common sense nor Doctor Trelawney’s medical knowledge, continues this line of thought. She deduces that both halves of Medardo survived the battle and that Medardo is “un po’ buono e un po’ cattivo. Adesso è tutto naturale” (Ibid.). While il Buono mistakes her interpretation for kind words, she maintains that her discovery is true. Based on an amalgamation of deductive reasoning and the science of reading comprehension, Pamela replies: “Oh, è così, non è per farvi un complimento” (Ibid). Following this frank admission, il Buono begins to tell the story of the survival of his good self, which, as Pamela determined, was: “l’altra metà, che si credeva dispersa in guerra e ora invece è ritornata. Ed è una metà buona” (Ibid.). Before il Buono expounds on the improvement in his humanity through his lived experience as a halved man, he relates the tale of his retrieval and survival. This event in his life was based on a true act of humanity across the borderlines of war, religion, and identity.

The story of il Buono's survival is founded upon mutual respect and working in cooperation to heal his half of a human body. The reader already understands that il Gramo must be the half, which was "fu ritrovata dai raccoglitori di feriti dell'esercito: l'altra restò sepolta sotto una piramide di resti cristiani e turchi e non fu vista" (Calvino 1991: 420). The two hermits that passed through the battlefield are without absolute definitions of religion. Furthermore, they do not belong strictly to one camp or the other. Although it is not certain whether these hermits hailed from the Christian or the Ottoman camp,⁴⁷ their joint effort to help the war dead and wounded across the lines of battle demonstrates a humanity that reaches such heights as to border on divinity: "tentavano d'abbracciare insieme la Trinità Cristiana e l'Allah di Maometto"⁴⁸ (Ibid.). Their good deed to work together to heal the wounds of this halved man, il Buono, was done as an example of a "bizzarra pietà" (Ibid. 421). It is worthy of note that after il Buono tells his story, his reaction to Pamela's story is also considered to be an expression of, not a religious piety,

⁴⁷ A scene similar in which two military camps based on different religions are shown to be not all that different from one another comes to the surface in Calvino's *Il cavaliere inesistente* (cf. Calvino 1991: 960). An intriguing comparison before this apparent camaraderie across lines manifests in an altogether different manner in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* [1533]. The warriors, instead of highlighting the care for the wounded and dead, fall in love across so-called enemy lines of the Christian and Saracen [Muslim] camps, starting with Orlando with Angelica, Bradamante with Ruggiero, and Prince Zerbino with Isabella, among others.

⁴⁸ While I am not providing the following information to single out Italo Calvino himself, I would like to point out that there is a prevalent misconception that "Allah" is the name of some other deity, and not the one and the same monotheistic God of all three of the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Judaism, G-d's name is referred to as the tetragrammaton, יהוה, often transliterated as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" in English, or "HaShem." Indeed, much like many Jewish people refer to "God" in Hebrew as "HaShem" meaning "the name (of God)" because they believe that the name of God should not be said aloud for less than spiritual reasons, so too in Arabic does "Allah" mean "the One God" in comparison to the word for some other deity or god.

but just as strange a piety: “Al racconto di Pamela il Medardo buono si commosse, e divise *la sua pietà* tra la virtù perseguitata della pastorella, la tristezza senza conforto del Medardo cattivo, e la solitudine dei poveri genitori di Pamela” (Ibid., my emphasis). In comparison to the boundless tenor of the piety of il Buono’s rescuers, Pamela finds il Buono’s life philosophy and piety far more limited and conflicting.

Pamela is not convinced by il Buono’s philosophic meanderings on life or love either, which will be analyzed below. While il Gramo’s wholly evil nature was reproachable Pamela is the first to understand that il Buono’s wholly good nature was also deeply flawed: “siete un po’ troppo tenerello e invece di prendercela con l’altro nostro pezzo per tutte le bastardate che combina, pare quasi abbiate pietà anche di lui [...] Ma voi siete diverso [dal Gramo]; un po’ tocco anche voi, ma buono” (Calvino 1991: 421). Il Buono tries to justify himself and his piety towards il Gramo because of their shared states and fates as halved men.

Il Buono is the only other person who can relate to and sympathize with il Gramo’s physical and moral state. Albeit il Buono may be marginally more reflective and understanding than il Gramo, he does not recognize the equal weight of the consequences of his as much as of il Gramo’s actions. Although Medardo had reading comprehension difficulties at the outset of the novella, il Buono can describe his condition as a halved man from experiencing it and reading it like a text. While he recognizes that he is different from il Gramo, il Buono believes they both belong to a species apart from the “interi,” as halved men. Il Buono’s explanation of his understanding the world, and not just il Gramo, and how he feels he became a better person for being a halved man, will devolve into a bid for Pamela’s affections:

Io che so cosa vuol dire essere metà d'un uomo, non posso non compiangerlo [...] O Pamela, questo è il bene dell'essere dimezzato; il capire d'ogni persona e cosa al mondo la pena che ognuno e ognuna ha per la propria incompletezza. Io ero intero e non capivo, e mi muovevo sordo e incomunicabile tra i dolori e le ferite seminate dovunque, là dove meno da intero uno osa credere. Non io solo, Pamela, sono un essere spaccato e divelto, ma tu pure e tutti. Ecco ora io ho una fraternità che prima, da intero, non conoscevo; quelli con tutte le mutilazioni e le mancanze del mondo. Se verrai con me, Pamela, imparerai a soffrire dei mali di ciascuno e a curare i tuoi curando i loro (Ibid. 421-422).

The various examinations along the threshold in Calvino's works, between humans and non-human animals, history, and literature, also extends to include the age-old debate of the division of the body and the soul, which is so aptly considered in *il Buono's* speech above.

With each man and woman's "incompletezza," *il Buono* may not be just referring to that can affect all beings. He may also be referring to Plato's tale of the division of the soul into different bodies that can only be brought together by their other half, be they as a man and woman, two men, or two women (2008: 25-28). Unfortunately, as Pamela did not agree with *il Buono's* life philosophy, nor does she share his same vision of what love should be. *Il Buono* states succinctly that he believes that "fare insieme buone azioni è l'unico modo per amarci" (Calvino 1991: 422). While neither *il Buono* nor Pamela sees love as *il Gramo's* destructive force of nature, Pamela does not agree with *il Buono's* conception of love either. *Il Buono's* above and beyond good intentions will only lead him so far into Pamela's heart. From doing laundry for the less fortunate to *il Buono's* attempts to reconcile Pamela with her parents after their collusion with *il Gramo*, Pamela is far from wooed by either half of viscount Medardo, *il Gramo* or *il Buono*. Her first encounter with both halves of Medardo in the same time and place, which will be circumscribed by the power of reading and literature, will only further complicate her understanding of both

halves of Medardo before his reunification as a wholly human and nonhuman storied animal.

Il Buono's philosophy of love based on doing good deeds together was not as altruistic as it seems. Although he had brought peace and routine into Pamela's life in the woods with their sharing the good deed of washing clothing for those less fortunate, Il Buono also had another good but still ulterior, a motive for doing so. By giving Pamela this task to do with him, il Buono hoped he would be able to keep her from fully "becoming-animal" and lose her balance on the threshold between nature and humanity, where women, along with children and animals, are considered to precarious stand (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 303). It is interesting to note that, in comparison to Pamela's ever-closer communion with nonhuman animals by becoming a part of their natural habitat, no such alarm was made when Medardo's father, Aiolfo, had gone to a similar degree of proximity with his birds, which was discussed in this dissertation on pages 86-91. This defensive wall of nature among the camaraderie of nonhuman animals, for both a grieving father and an aggrieved young woman, is a refuge rather than a descent into the wilderness we had seen in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*. As Pin had witnessed, and disrupted, the community forming recitations of storytelling and reading, so too will il Buono attempt to engage not just one, but multiple strategies to touch Pamela's heartstrings and keep her from the brink of human animality. In addition to washing laundry, il Buono also read to Pamela daily from Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* [1581]. The importance of choosing this text to read to Pamela and her reception of il Buono's good yet misguided intentions will be discussed below.

The physical languages of both il Gramo and il Buono will encounter that of the written word when il Buono reads Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* to Pamela. This poem is a comparative literary addition to Calvino's library of written works that confront the examination of the contours of humanity in this novella: from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* to Carlo Collodi's *Le avventure di Pinocchio* to Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, among others. Tasso's sixteenth-century epic poem set during the First Crusade mirrors Medardo's situation within this novella of the battle for his self being set during the battle between the Christians and the Ottomans. Indeed, Carpanè would trace the literary echoes of Tasso within the whole of Calvino's text, and not just the passage in the eighth chapter that will be considered here (2009: 120). As Carpanè also notes, on account of Calvino's well-known predilection for Ludovico Ariosto, the appearance of Tasso's masterpiece instead is notable (Ibid. 119, 123). In surveying Calvino's oeuvre characters from Ariosto's *Orlando, furioso* appear not only in Calvino's own *Il cavaliere inesistente* [1959] and *Il castello dei destini incrociati* [1973]. They also feature in some of his essays and monographs such as *Orlando furioso di Ludovico Ariosto raccontato da Italo Calvino* [1970], "Ariosto: La struttura dell'*Orlando furioso*" and "Piccola antologia di ottave" (cf. 1991: 953-1064; 1992: 499-610; 2016; 1995 (1): 759-768; 1995 (1): 769-774). Il Buono is not reading octaves from Ariosto's poem, however.

Pamela's fateful encounter with both halves of viscount Medardo emphasizes her reception of il Buono's reading from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* to her as well as il Gramo's dramatic interruption of that reading. The tone of the poetics and content of Tasso and Ariosto's poems strike the reader from their respective opening lines. *Gerusalemme liberata* begins with "Canto l'arme pietose e 'l capitano / che 'l gran sepolcro liberò di

Cristo” (2009: I.1-2). In contrast, Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* begins with: “Le donne, i cavallier, l’arme, gli amori, / le cortesie, l’audaci imprese io canto” (2012: I.1-2). Despite treating similar themes of historical battles between Christians and Muslims, be they during the reign of Charlemagne or during the First Crusade, Ariosto’s action-packed and interest in the realm of the affections from the outset of his text is contrasted by the seriousness and religious fervor transmitted through Tasso’s poetics. Tasso’s poetics stands out all the more when juxtaposed to two more playful poems of the 1500s, which offer an idyllic woodland setting akin to Pamela’s current abode in the woods.

While Jacopo Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* [1504] was not contemporary to Tasso and Ariosto’s two Renaissance poems, all three texts reclaimed the pastoral mode that had been in use since antiquity. The setting of the pastoral mode will be significant for Pamela because of both il Gramo and il Buono. As has been discussed above, il Gramo drove her into the woods after she refused his proposal. Il Buono’s fear of her going deeper into nature beyond her shepherdess’s ways beyond humanity’s reach was also founded upon her relocation to the woods. Il Buono thus purposefully chose to read Tasso’s text with the “intento d’ingentilire i costumi della rustica ragazza” (Calvino 1991: 425). However, it is made clear that Pamela has no interest to interpret or digest the information of this particular text based on words in ink and paper.

Pamela’s apparent boredom from the reading will not only cause her to reconnect with the physicality of her body as a distraction from it. She will also involve her nonhuman animals in her private game of interrupting il Buono’s reading. As il Buono droned on ignoring and ignorant of the signs showing his love’s contrary feelings and desires Pamela “se ne stava sdraiata in panciolle sull’erba, spidocchiandosi (perché vivendo

nel bosco s'era presa un bel po' di bestioline), grattandosi con una pianta detta pungiculo, sbadigliando, sollevando sassi per aria con i piedi scalzi" (Calvino 1991: 425). In addition to using her own body as a physical and mental distraction from il Buono's recitation of *Gerusalemme liberata*, Pamela also involves her nonhuman animals. She even "incita la capra a leccare sulla mezza faccia il Buono e l'anatra a posarglisi sul libro" (Ibid.).

Pamela's goat and duck, unlike Ottimo Massimo, the basset hound who disrupts Cosimo's reading to convince his master to go back to hunting in *Il barone rampante*, are "involontari disturbatori dello *status quo*, [e] diventano quindi lo strumento del disvelamento del velo di ipocrasia" (Carpanè 2011: 389). Although with Pamela's aiding and abetting, the nonhuman animals can reveal the hypocrisy of the situation, it will take another character's sudden reappearance on the scene, il Gramo, to truly interrupt il Buono's recitation of Torquato Tasso's verses.

Il Buono, so absorbed in his recitation of the text, is unwillingly drawn into an action-filled plot. It was not caused by Pamela and her two animals' tactics to "spezzare la monotonia," but rather with the unexpected arrival of il Gramo (Calvino 1991: 425). Il Gramo's dramatic entrance brings the adventure story that Pamela is drawn to⁴⁹ to life (Piazza 2009: 61). He did not enter il Buono's recitation to Pamela in the woods quietly. Instead, il Gramo split the book of *Gerusalemme liberata* in half. When il Gramo's strike leaves "la costola," which in the original Italian means both binding of the book and "the

⁴⁹ Compare with the lines from one of Rumi's poems entitled, "An Empty Garlic": "Let yourself be silently drawn by the stronger pull of what you really love" *The Essential Rumi*. (Edited and translated by Coleman Barks. New York City: Harper Collins, 2010), 51.

rib,”⁵⁰ intact in il Buono’s hand, “i versi dimezzati” fly like birds into the air (Calvino 1991: 426). Both il Buono’s good intentions for Pamela and Tasso’s verses are rendered meaningless and figuratively bodiless: “senza capo o senza coda” (Ibid.). Pamela was lucky that she was not sliced to pieces instead of il Buono’s copy of *Gerusalemme liberata*. Whether the intertwined stories of Pamela, il Buono, and il Gramo will move forward towards good or ill tidings cannot be known for certain at this point in the novella. The decisive moment will be revealed during the duel that follows il Gramo, il Buono, and Pamela’s carefully laid wedding plans.

After both halves of Medardo have declared their love for Pamela, through written and non-written texts, their diverged fates will have the opportunity to come together again as they duel with each other for Pamela’s hand. Medardo’s separation into two monolithic beings opposed to one another in nature was an aberration. The viscount’s bodymind could be remedied by reunification with one another as a reconstituted whole before realizing a union with Pamela. Rather than working together to achieve their common goal, however, both halves of Medardo’s techniques of persuasion will not convince her to marry either one of them. On the one hand, il Gramo uses guilt and suspicion to manipulate Pamela’s mother into convincing her daughter to marry him. He hints that Pamela’s reputation is at stake if she does not marry il Buono. Il Gramo adds that if il Buono is as good by nature as il Buono himself and the townspeople believe him to be, then “se è un gentiluomo deve riparare” (Calvino 1991: 437). Il Buono, in contrast, speaks frankly and from the heart with

⁵⁰ See two stories from the Bible and compare, Genesis 2.22 when Eve is made from a rib of Adam, and Genesis 22.1-15 for the binding, or the sacrifice of Abraham’s most beloved son, who was either Isaac or Ishmael depending on the religious tradition, Judaism or Islam.

Pamela's father when he states that he would be willing to sacrifice his chance of personal happiness with Pamela not only for what he believes would be for the greater good of the town but also the good of il Gramo. Il Buono does not wish to see Pamela live out her life in the forest and to "tanarsi" there like a nonhuman animal (Ibid.). Rather, he would be happier if she embraced her destiny not only to live a good and noble life through marriage but that she also received a noble title and live comfortably, even if it would be with il Gramo and not with himself (Ibid.). Despite il Buono's and il Gramo's separate machinations, a unified Medardo has a great deal more to offer Pamela than either half alone. Although Pamela's capabilities to read written and non-written texts have already been proven, she will also become the active weaver of her story and reveal how it will become truly intertwined with those of il Gramo and il Buono as a reunified viscount Medardo.

Upon investigating the source of her parents' suggestions to marry the viscount, Pamela becomes the writer of her own story. She uses mirror symmetry⁵¹ to be figuratively one step ahead of both il Buono and il Gramo. She tells each half of Medardo, separately, that she will agree to marry il Buono if he speaks with her mother and if il Gramo comes to an agreement with her father (Calvino 1991: 438-439). It is worth pointing out that she sent each half to the opposite parent that they had originally approached with their proposal for Pamela's hand in marriage (Ibid.). The pure and idyllic shepherdess, having held out from their marriage proposals for this long in the narrative in actuality "non difende la sua verginità, difende la sua autonomia" (Milanini 1989: 76). The shepherdess's autonomy

⁵¹ For more on the mirror and its significance, one might consult texts such as Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* (2016: III.339-358) or Oscar Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Grey* [1890].

would have to be sacrificed, however, for the greater good of the town, her family, and viscount Medardo.

Marriage was the only remaining option to tame and humanize some of Medardo's worst bestialities. The night before the wedding the two halves of Medardo are still in upheaval and animal-like, however:

Dai boschi si levava ora una specie di grido gutturale, ora un sospiro. Erano i due pretendenti dimezzati, che in preda all'eccitazione della vigilia vagavano per anfratti e dirupi del bosco, avvolti nei neri mantelli, l'uno sul suo magro cavallo, l'altro sul suo mulo spelacchiato, e mugghiavano e sospiravano tutti presi nelle loro ansiose fantasticherie. E il cavallo saltava per balze e frane, il mulo s'arrampicava per pendii e versanti, senza che mai i due cavalieri s'incontrassero (Calvino 1991: 440).

Note the continued comparative literary exchange with Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote* [1611] on account of il Gramo and il Buono's respective mounts. Don Quixote's faithful, slow but steady barn horse, Rocinante, and Sancho Panza's donkey, Rucio, not only assist their respective riders. They also mirror il Gramo's horse and il Buono's mule, respectively. In Cervantes' text, Don Quixote's horse's name, Rocinante, is based on the word for a workhorse in Spanish, *rocín* (Ortiz Robles 2016: 34-35). Although neither il Gramo nor il Buono's mule and horse have names, the respective abilities of each species to either race at a gallop or plod about slowly and steadily will be significant. Specifically, the equids' speed or lack thereof will determine whether their respective riders make it to the wedding on time or not. When the nameless nephew narrator returns to the scene at this critical moment to ask Pamela which half, she thinks she will marry, il Gramo or il Buono, her answer with a question resonates with the predicted outcome of the wedding itself: "Andrà bene? Andrà male?" (Calvino 1991: 440)? Although the wedding

does not go as planned, it will provide the opportunity of il Gramo and il Buono to reunify their selves in a life-threatening and life-affirming duel for Pamela's hand.

2.5 The Duel for Pamela's Hand and viscount Medardo's Bodymind

The battle for Pamela's heart and her hand in marriage between il Buono and il Gramo reaches its apex when, on account of il Gramo's horse, he is unable to make it to the wedding on time, and Pamela is joined in matrimony to il Buono instead (Calvino 1991: 440). The slow and steady victory of il Buono's mule appears to reiterate the idea that it is better to be Aesop's tortoise than the hare (cf. 1998: 257). Il Gramo would not accept defeat, however, and his challenge of il Buono's marriage to Pamela results in a duel (Calvino 1991: 440). At this pivotal moment in the novella, all the key players of dualistic pairs return to observe, if not directly participate, in the duel, its consequences, and its happy ending. Our carpenter turned weapon technical assistant and specialist craftsman, Master Pietrochiodo, is called upon to construct a second leg for each half of Medardo so that they can stand firm during the duel. Galeotto, the leader of the leper community, was the judge of the arms to assure fair play and conditions. While two Huguenots were il Buono's seconds intriguingly, Pamela's father agrees to be one of the seconds for il Gramo. Even before the commencement of the duel, Doctor Trelawney is conspicuously over-prepared with ointments and bandages "come avesse da curare una battaglia" (Ibid. 441). The nature and the effects of the duel between il Gramo and il Buono will also resonate

with two passages from Cosimo's battle for the human-animal self during wartime and in storytelling in *Il barone rampante*.

Like Doctor Trelawney's hopes to effect a positive change through medical treatment of a wounded body, so too does la Generalessa provision her younger son, Biagio, with an overabundance of medical supplies after Cosimo's fateful encounter with the cat that would establish himself in the trees and as a hunter. Biagio, the narrator of that tale, relates: "Subito si diede da fare a preparare garza e cerotti e balsami come dovesse rifornire l'ambulanza d'un battaglione, e diede tutto a me, che glielo portassi senza che nemmeno la sfiorasse la speranza che lui, dovendosi fare medicare, si decidesse a ritornare a casa" (Calvino 1991: 600). While la Generalessa thought that Cosimo's wounds would make him see reason and return home against his wishes and inclinations, Doctor Trelawney's medical preparations and capabilities will recuperate Medardo as a whole being in body and soul. After having cited but a few of the present duel's participants, we can now focus on the effects of the duel on not only il Gramo and il Buono, but on the nonhuman animals that envelop this personal historical event.

Without il Gramo or il Buono's hand in the matter, the nonhuman animals will once again form meaningful texts with their bodies. Their texts will highlight the poignancy of both halves of Medardo coming to fight each other. Akin to the pigs and goats' contortionist signs upon il Gramo's return to Terralba, so too do the woodland animals that have become accustomed to Pamela's company vividly express their revulsion at the duel between il Gramo and Il Buono. Indeed, the nonhuman animals' reaction suggests that the upcoming duel between both halves of Medardo in a battle to the death is a crime against nature. As the duel starts at the blowing of Galeotto's horn, various species of nonhuman

animals surrounding the two halves are wrought with displays of existential turmoil at this unnatural battle between Medardo's divided selves:

i ghiri nelle tane affondarono le unghie nel terriccio, le gazze senza togliere il capo di sotto l'ala si strapparono una penna dall'ascella facendosi dolore, e la bocca del lombrico mangiò la propria coda, e la vipera si punse coi suoi denti, e la vespa si ruppe l'aculeo sulla pietra, e ogni cosa si voltava contro se stessa [...] Così l'uomo s'avventava contro di sé, con entrambe le mani armato d'una spada (Calvino 1991: 441-442).

The visual display of the animals at il Gramo and il Buono's duel will be analyzed comparatively and syntactically with the reactions of the nonhuman animals based on sound upon Cosimo's brief descent into insanity following Viola's departure in *Il barone rampante* on pages 215-217 of this dissertation in the following chapter (Ibid. 733). Unlike those of viscount Medardo, Cosimo's metaphysical wounds cannot be sutured or ripped apart by any tool or weapon or healing treatments, even those that Doctor Trelawney can provide.

It is at sword's point that il Gramo and il Buono would "[rompere] di nuovo tutte le vene e [riaprire] la ferita che li aveva divisi, nelle sue due facce" (Calvino 1991: 442). Doctor Trelawney would seize this unique opportunity, with both halves wounded at the seams, to use his rediscovered medical skills to heal and reunite both halves of Medardo as one whole human being (Ibid.). Both halves of Medardo are not only rejoined in sinews and tissues and veins and organs. Akin to his physical nature, the moral aspects of each half are recomposed to form one harmonious Medardo. With another poetical use of synecdoche in Calvino's prose each body part of Medardo's leaves the shores of extremity for a middle ground to form a holistic picture of Medardo's physical and soulful being: "alla fine Medardo schiuse gli occhi, le labbra; dappprincipio la sua espressione era

stravolta: aveva un occhio aggritolato e l'altro suppliance, la fronte qua corrugata e là suave, la bocca sorrideva da un angolo e dall'altro digrignava i denti. Poi a poco a poco ritornò simmetrico" (Ibid. 443). Thanks to Doctor Trelawney's handiwork, Pamela could have, at last, "uno sposo con tutti gli attributi" (Ibid.).

Without Pamela, there would be no duel to tear apart the two halves of viscount Medardo to make him whole again. His reunited self's marriage to Pamela also challenges the notion that "in most Western fairy tales the beast is male and can be disenchanting only by the love of a female" (Bettleheim 2010: 350). It is not merely Pamela's feminine essence that allows Medardo to reunite as a wiser and more experienced human being in tune with the natural nonhuman animal world around him. Rather, Pamela's reading comprehension of *il Gramo* and *il Buono*'s languages drawn from the unwritten worlds of nonhuman animal bodies is what gives the opportunity for Medardo's reunification to take place. Yet, Medardo's return to wholeness through his marriage to Pamela after the duel with a greater reading comprehension of nonhuman animals' bodies is not the whole story. Rather, the plethora of dualities and characters of the novella imply that viscount Medardo's life story is far more complicated than that.

There will be an improvement for almost every character, minor or major, that populated Calvino's novella upon viscount Medardo's reunification. Doctor Trelawney not only returns to the engaged and productive medical profession. He actively seeks the adventures of daily life as well as on the high seas. Indeed, he eventually leaves the narrator, Terralba, and the happily ever after of Pamela and Medardo.

As Medardo's nameless narrator nephew notes: "ma è chiaro che non basta un visconte completo perché diventi completo tutto il mondo" (Calvino 1991: 443). Viscount

Medardo's reunification and his happy ending with Pamela gives his nameless nephew narrator space to reflect on the manifold nature of storytelling. It is not only the protagonists but also the narrators of Calvino's war stories that demonstrate, reflect, and challenge

cos'è mai in definitiva una storia; cos'era stata quella particolare storia. Intanto il nascondimento di un piacere [...] Quindi una metamorfosi, un gioco di animazione [...] Infine, una vergogna [...] A questo punto è il libro stesso, come la vipera, a pungersi coi suoi denti, il lombrico che, prima di finire, si mangia la coda (Serra 2006: 170).

He appears to be self-deprecating as he relates his complicated understanding of the power and responsibilities of storytelling and life in the following:

Ero giunto sulle soglie dell'adolescenza e ancora mi nascondevo tra le radici dei grandi alberi del bosco a raccontarmi storie. Un ago di pino poteva rappresentare per me un cavaliere, o una dama, o un buffone; io lo facevo muovere dinanzi ai miei occhi e m'esaltavo in racconti interminabili. Poi mi prendeva la vergogna di queste fantasticherie e scappavo (Calvino 1991: 444).

His interest in storytelling will have practical implications on his life and the ending of the story. According to the narrator, he misses his opportunity to join Doctor Trelawney on the high seas with Captain Cook in a new action-packed adventure because he is telling himself stories of this hometown quotidian affair of his uncle Viscount Medardo and Pamela (Ibid.).

Perhaps there is some other adventure lying in wait for the reader as well as for viscount Medardo's nephew, however. His final words of the novella appear to reconcile storytelling with the reality of daily life: "in questo nostro mondo pieno di responsabilità e di fuochi fatui" (Calvino 1991: 444). *Il visconte dimezzato* is not the only example of this dynamic between storytelling and reality, the written and nonwritten worlds, being considered throughout Calvino's early period works. This discussion will be taken up again

but expressed differently in the role of human and nonhuman animals in war stories such as *Il barone rampante*, which is the subject of the third and final content chapter of this dissertation. The many answers, as well as questions *Il visconte dimezzato* has raised, deserve thoughtful reiteration before pressing onward through the continued examination of Calvino's war stories.

From the very opening six-word sentence of the novella, the reader is immersed in a war story that indubitably follows the injured viscount home: "C'era una guerra contro i turchi" (Calvino 1991: 367). Nonhuman animals are also an inescapable presence in this text. Various species of birds reveal Medardo's reading comprehension difficulties on the battlefield. Il Gramo's divided self in body and character is also re-inscribed with the symbolism of birds when he returns home to discover that his father has relocated to the aviary. Additionally, il Gramo and il Buono's languages based on nonhuman animals' bodies bring him closer to becoming a proficient reader, if not crafter, of texts. Even his nephew narrator, when he is not hunting for crabs or eels or with Pamela's goat and duck, is often found among nonhuman animals. The duel for viscount Medardo's right to marry Pamela is also complemented by nature's mirroring the effects of a man fighting against himself. The duel and the nonhuman animals' reactions expose the atrocities of not just war, but even civil war via the nonhuman animals' turning on themselves in revulsion at the sight. Viscount Medardo's nameless nephew may not have been the central figure on the brink of humanity and animality discussed in this chapter. Yet, his contributions over the course of the story, as well as his having the final word by juxtaposing storytelling with a concern for engagement, resonates with Calvino's "di scorcio" poetics.

If this thesis has aimed to expose the hierarchical and monolithic definition of humanity, then this chapter's analysis of human's understanding of language and nonhuman animals' bodies has added a significant piece to reconstructing that figurative puzzle. Viscount Medardo and Pamela's marriage upon his reunification demonstrates something towards which all people can and should strive. Namely, the constructive use of personal talents and skills to engage with humanity. The next chapter of this dissertation will investigate what is necessary to lead a life with conviction. Although also considered to be one of Calvino's fantastic texts, the questions investigated in the following literary case study of *Il barone rampante* are not a matter of escapist flight of fancy. Rather, through the relationships of human and nonhuman animals in the war novel and novella, the consequences of such a life choice are laid bare. Pin's coming of age, Kim's enlightenment through life experience and not just school books, as well as viscount Medardo's improvement as a reader of texts, will be contrasted to Cosimo's role as a hunter of nonhuman animals as he is sometimes hunted by his fellow human animals in *Il barone rampante* [1957].

CHAPTER 3:

Accoutered Hunters among the Nearly Leafless Hunted of Il barone rampante

Storytelling as a complicated but intrinsic part of an integrated human animality in Calvino's war stories will express itself through the clothing chosen or forced to wear in *Il barone rampante*. The protagonist Cosimo,⁵² his sister Battista,⁵³ and their step-uncle il Cavaliere Avvocato,⁵⁴ form and test the bonds of family, society, and amorous are reinscribed within the dynamics of power through their respective rebellions. Cosimo's

⁵² Cosimo's name reflects the symbolism of a reason-centered man from the Age of Enlightenment. In Ancient Greek, *Κοσμος* not only means "order" and "harmony," but also much like the *cosmos*, it signifies a universe. Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò does attempt to establish his utopia in the trees, which will not only aid his self but also his fellow townspeople as well.

⁵³ As it is Battista's rebellion that will set in motion Cosimo's, it is interesting that her given name reflects the idea of paving the way for a new path. The Christian ritual of initiation into the community of the Church, baptism, is inextricably related to the first person to perform and carry out the rite, which set a tradition for millennia, namely, St. John the Baptist after which Cosimo's elder sister is named.

⁵⁴ As Biagio and the other characters of the world of *Il barone rampante* refer to him as il Cavalier Avvocato and not by his given family names, Enea Silvio Carrega, so too have I followed in my analysis of the character in these pages. His given names both possibly originate from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Indeed, both the title character, Aeneas, and his son, Silvius, whose name in Latin refers to the woods, is no idle reference to the woodlands Cosimo will make his own (Virgil 2013: VI.763-766). His last name is not the same as his nephews because he was the illegitimate brother of Biagio and Cosimo's father, Arminio Piovasco di Rondò. Carrega in old Italian refers to a seat of power and authority. This might appear ironic as this character appears to lack such power and authority. Yet he is endowed with an agency of his own, which we will see as our critical analysis of this character unfolds. That both the characters of the novel refer to this man more often by his title rather than his given name is because, as Biagio relates, very much of il Cavalier Avvocato Enea Silvio Carrega's life was shrouded in mystery. What was not mysterious about him, however, was that he, and Arminio's, father had encouraged him to study law and awarded him the title of knighthood (Calvino 1991: 606).

initial rebellion sparked by a familial dispute becomes a life-long journey into the very depths of the core of Hamlet's question: "To be or not to be?"⁵⁵ in conjunction with Laertes' advice to his son Polonius: "This above all: to thine own self be true" (Shakespeare 1992: III.i.57, I.iii.79). When all each of us is given is this life how we can and choose to live it: with conviction and in a way that will render ourselves fulfilled and at peace or to be wasted constantly battling trivialities if we are not attentive, is what truly matters. The struggle for Cosimo's self⁵⁶ is, like those of Pin, Kim, and viscount Medardo before him, also placed against the backdrop of a historical war. If our narrator, who starts as a child and grows with his elder brother, Cosimo, Biagio's dates are correct, the story of his elder brother's life includes the Napoleonic wars⁵⁷ and the French Revolution, ranging from the years 1767-1820. Although Cosimo will feel the heat of the battlefield, his

⁵⁵ See also Italo Calvino's short story from *Tutte le Cosmicomiche* [1984], "L'implosione" for Calvino's take on Shakespeare's play (1992: 1268-1272).

⁵⁶ Cf. the actual philological origin and history of the multifaceted concept of *jihad*. Although it is often portrayed as solely a negative, destructive call for "holy war," in Arabic its original meaning also indicates the struggle for improving the self. "Jihad." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, edited by John L. Esposito, *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e1199> (accessed 02-Nov-2018).

⁵⁷ There is a plethora of classical works of world literature that immediately come to mind whose stories also unfolded against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars. The first is Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* [1869]. In fact, in a strange blurring of the lines between fiction and reality, Prince Andrej makes a cameo appearance and dialogues with Cosimo in *Il barone rampante* (Calvino 1991: 772). In addition, the following novels take place at differing periods of the Napoleonic era and its battles: Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* [1839], *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas, père [1845] [which was the novel Dritto was enchanted by its recitation in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (Calvino 1991: 76)], *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray [1848], *Shirley* by Charlotte Brontë (1849), *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo (1862), and *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky [1874], and "The Duel: A Military Story" by Joseph Conrad (1924), among others.

lifelong journey towards understanding his self and his place within the world of family, society, nature, and love will be just as rife with storytelling and conflict. This struggle of Cosimo's self manifests itself through shifts in the dynamics of power among the novel's characters on two interrelated planes. The first involves the realm of sovereignty and authority within the family, love, and society while the second analyzes the relationship between the hunter and the one being hunted. Rather than reinforcing dichotomies, Cosimo's struggle for his self will illustrate the tearing asunder of notions of hierarchy within both civilized society and nature. The [re]formation, establishment, and destruction of such lineages of power and their significance will live through the lives of the three principal characters of this study: Battista, il Cavalier Avvocato, and most importantly, Cosimo.

Their integrity, of their bodies as much as their ideas will be expressed and further symbolized by the articles of clothing they choose or are forced to wear. Indeed, clothing will form their costumes and masks of identity for themselves as much as for others. In the spirit of Shakespeare's words, the following avenue for a character-based approach to the novel will demonstrate how even in times of war on the battle or the home front: "all the world's a stage / and all the men and women merely players" (1997: II.vii.142-143). Calvino would note that although all three rebels' shared attributes of solitude, the expressions of Battista and il Cavaliere Avvocato of that solitude revolve "intorno a quell'unica maniera giusta che è quella del protagonista" (Calvino 1991: 1215). In contrast to Battista and il Cavaliere Avvocato, Cosimo's rebellion was sparked by ideals. He was affected and engaged with an all too real world in its entirety that included his hometown, his family, society, and his loved ones. In contrast, Battista and il Cavaliere Avvocato's

rebellions transgressed boundaries of family loyalty and honor with a more inward-looking goal of selfish fulfillment. Cosimo has an additional role as a hunter of nonhuman animals in the forest and as he pursues his romantic love for Viola.⁵⁸ As will become more apparent in Calvino's novel of *impegno* and protagonists who do and who realize his ideal poetics "del farsi," which Calvino would later expound upon in his unpublished essay from 1972 entitled "Lo sguardo dell'archeologo," Cosimo's actions are profound (Calvino 1995 (1): 327). Yet, it is Biagio's careful transcription and preservation of them that synthesizes storytelling as an integral component of our human animality even during wartime.

The transformative power of love as integral to wholistic being will be at the fore of the story between Cosimo and Viola in particular. Indeed,

la crisi della conquista di una completezza umana e di una integrazione con la natura e con la storia era evidenziata anche da una donna amata diventata inafferrabile, così qui Calvino sembra affidare alla forma vivente femminile ammirata e desiderata, completamente indispensabile di una condizione *quasi* perfetta, il compito di rivelarne appunto carenze e incompiutezze [...] La donna, insomma, sembra porsi come [...] complementare nel processo calviniano di maturazione umana (Ferretti 1989: 104).

⁵⁸ In an amalgamation of sun and shade, *sol y sombra*, Cosimo self-made utopia, in the trees away from the town of Ombrosa, comes into being because of Viola's words. It is a pagan annunciation that becomes mistranslated for the better by Cosimo's being as we shall see in the following discussion of this chapter. Indeed, as Belpoliti describes it aptly: "Il nome del regno su cui domina Cosimo è Ombrosa, così come quello della donna amata è Viola, non a caso un colore. Viola è associata all'ora e al miele, ovvero a due versioni del colore giallo" (2005: 102). While Viola's name recalls the color purple, it might evoke the color of the violets of Fiesole from E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View* (1908). However, as the reader finds out later in the novel, Viola's official full name is: Sofonisba Violante "Viola" d'Ondariva (Calvino 1991: 706). Sofonisba refers to a princess from ancient Carthage, who, like Lucrezia, poisoned herself in order not to be humiliated or raped at the hands of the Romans during the Second Punic Wars. Nevertheless, Cosimo's love interest is almost exclusively referred to as Viola throughout the novel, which has been followed throughout the analysis of her character in this dissertation.

Rushing further notes that in Calvino's oeuvre, "the loss of a woman [i]s a kind of foundational moment, a marker of the subject's entry into history" (Rushing 2006: 45). In addition to Ferretti and Rushing's analyses, Kojève's categories of Animal and Anthropogenic Desire, which bestride the tightrope between animal biology and the human need for affection, and not just carnal fulfillment, will inform our literary analysis of how love and lusts incite rebellions in Battista, il Cavaliere Avvocato, and Cosimo (1980: 4-6). Each of these rebels' stories will involve comparative literary and multidisciplinary considerations.

In addition to the four species of nonhuman animals that will be discussed below, snails will be the catalysts or the expressions of rebellion for Battista and her younger brother Cosimo. Aesop's *Fables* and Collodi's *Le avventure di Pinocchio* will help contextualize these particular creatures (Aesop 1998: 127; Collodi 2002: 164-167). Birds will offer the opportunity to compare Cosimo's going insane and reversing his role from being a hunter into being the one who is hunted by dressing up like a bird with Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, which elaborates on the Irish King Sweeney who after the Battle of Meath would be transformed into a bird and spread poesy throughout the world (cf. O'Brien 2005).

The figure of the wolf will return with Cosimo's place in the trees engaged with, but on the margins of Ombrosan society through the story of man wearing a wolf's pelt to assimilate into nature in Homer's *The Iliad* and Italian folklore as recounted in Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, which Giorgio Agamben discusses as an example of the dynamic tension between *potestas* and *auctoritas* (1990: X.454-464; Levi 1946; Agamben 1998: 105). Peter Arnds recent monograph on the figure of the wolfman in German

literature will also provide an opportunity to revisit the Grimm's tale of *Little Red-Cap* discussed previously in the chapter on Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (Arnds 2015: 2; Grimm 2014: 85-87). These wolves will be juxtaposed to the role of the dog, specifically the ancient and continuous significance of the special relationship between humans, specifically men, and their hunting dogs as mentioned in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Homer's *The Odyssey*, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Italo Svevo's "Argo e il suo padrone" (Defoe 2003: 19; Homer 1997: XIII.396-438; Joyce 2000: 80; Svevo 1985: 96-113). In addition to wild and domesticated wolves and dogs, tigers and cats will also be nonhuman animals that develop the questions of the depths of humanity in war stories with regards to both Cosimo's struggle for survival and Battista's tigress-like sexuality that inadvertently sparked his rebellion. These texts include Jacques Derrida's analysis of the cat's gaze that was also mentioned in our study of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, the Italian and French fable of "Puss in Boots," as well as Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes" (Straparola 1927; Perrault 2002; Andersen 2008). Even though horses are not the war steeds we have encountered in *Il visconte dimezzato*, Viola's equestrian passions will evidence all that Cosimo cannot possess if he stays true to his life in the trees, including the woman he had fallen in love. Cosimo will have to reconcile his ideas with the world around him, including the actions of others. Specifically, with the volatile equilibrium-upsetting rebellion of his sister, Battista, Viola's Amazon-like and *femme fatale* qualities that made themselves manifest at a precocious age, and thirdly, with those of his step-uncle, il Cavaliere Avvocato.

Biagio, Cosimo's younger brother by four years, will be the reliable narrator and not a fellow rebel in the novel. Biagio does not remain an eight-year-old child narrator

throughout the entirety of the novel, in contrast to those previously discussed with regards to Pin from *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and Medardo's nameless nephew narrator of *Il visconte dimezzato*. The in-between space on the border of the human and the animal during wartime and battling for Cosimo's self is founded upon a related but different type of inter- and intrapersonal dynamics of family, love, and self. Many of the confounding notions of conflicting identities among Cosimo's family – of himself, Battista, and il Cavaliere Avvocato especially – will be reinforced by the language of articles of clothing and the power to impose or to subvert codes of dress and with them their human and nonhuman animal identities.

Apparel will come to help define as much as to complicate the identities of the three principal characters being studied in this chapter. With a particular interest in the original language of the text, that *living*, *attitudes*, and *clothing* [“abitare,” “abitudini,” and “abiti”] are related philologically underlines an important phenomenon at work in this novel. It also opens up space for a dialogue to take place between them. Cosimo will battle in this world and with his self to live with conviction and not merely reside within it. He will leave his mark on his family and on Ombrosa to demonstrate what Calvino would later relate with regards to the author's sense of place in an interview in 1980 with Ludovica Ripa di Meana: “*Abitare* [è] uno strano verbo a pensarci bene. Si associa agli *abiti*, e alle *abitudini*” (Calvino 2012: 385, my emphasis). As but one example of the importance of not only living and clothing but also habits, Cosimo will be able to realize something is amiss with his step-uncle, il Cavaliere Avvocato, because of his change of habits of rising early to going to bed late at night (Calvino 1991: 663). Cosimo's dress and habits, naturally, also change along with his venue of residence to the trees.

All three protagonists will see varying degrees in the success of their respective rebellions. Although Battista's rebellion for fulfilling her sexual appetite will be redirected to a socially accepted outlet of marriage, il Cavaliere Avvocato's inability to reconcile his dreams and aspirations with his current situation will result in his withdrawal from the world of family and friends long before his untimely demise. Even though Cosimo's rebellion was instigated by his refusal to eat Battista's revolting culinary concoction as an act of disobedience to his father, his will become more intractable on account of Viola's unexpected intervention on his life and story. Akin to Helen of Troy's abduction being the fateful spark of the wars recounted in Homer's *The Iliad* Viola's role in Cosimo's story will further accentuate the dynamic between the personal and the historical. Indeed, Cosimo's multifaceted struggle for his self is made manifest in "the first conflict (the old, aristocratic society versus Cosimo's new, arboreal society) [which] provides the basis for much of the confrontation of history and fantasy, while the second (the internal conflict of Cosimo's reason and emotion) gives the book a more personal and intimate dimension" (Carter 1987: 42). While not only Calvino scholars but literary critics might claim that "oneness with nature is frequently associated with withdrawal from life," Cosimo's ascent to the trees as traced throughout this chapter is not seen in that light at all, but rather, as actively engaging equally important considerations of perspective (Ricci 1990: 21). Cosimo's rebellion could not have come into being, however, without Battista's frustration at having hers suffocated by societal and gender norms, which will be detailed in the following section. The quest for finding the core elements of humanity begins perhaps at an unexpected place susceptible to not just one but two or three rebellions to spark. It is at the family dinner table where Biagio, Cosimo, Battista, il Cavalier Avvocato, the Baron

Arminio di Rondò, and la Generalessa partake of some bodily sustenance in community with one another that the beginning of all three rebellions will unfold.

3.1 Battista's Rebellion for Bodily and Aesthetic Satisfaction

Il barone rampante recounts the story of Cosimo's life, not from the moment he was born, but from the fateful dinner where his rebellion would emerge in reaction to Battista's rebellion. Before analyzing the various details of Battista's rebellion, some of the peculiarities of Cosimo's life story will be addressed. One voice is enough to encourage another and fan the flames of change. Change anywhere, even if not on a global scale, still shows its power: as the season changes, as a child grows into adulthood, or as any living part of the natural world comes to dust. Every person, fictional or real, comes to life as both the protagonists and the authors of their own story. *Il barone rampante* is a multifaceted work of literature. It is in part coming of age novel and palimpsest of eighteenth-century historical figures and artifacts, as well as a fictional biography thanks to Cosimo's younger brother Biagio's efforts as narrator.

The story and its "narrazione delle gesta di Cosimo è, e sarà condotta in prospettiva esterna da un narratore che dice io e che è, a sua volta, personaggio (secondario) della storia" (Adamo 2003: 12). The relation of the story as an amalgamation of reportage and fantastical biography offers layers of meaning to Cosimo's story with regards to the

tenuous equilibrium of family dynamics. Comparative literary and parodic aspects of the novel appear from its very first lines with a blend of styles, including the *bildungsroman*, “*conte philosophique*,” and Stendhal’s novel *The Red and the Black* [1830] (Ibid. 2-3). Furthermore, Biagio’s delineating the very day that this fateful dinner turned fiasco takes place paradoxically cements a myth-making event in Cosimo’s family life in a specific historical time and place: “Fu il 15 di giugno del 1767 che Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò, mio fratello, sedette per l’ultima volta in mezzo a noi. Ricordo come se fosse oggi” (Ibid. 10-11; Calvino 1991: 549). The day Cosimo’s life story truly begins is the day that he came into his own beyond the bounds of his father’s authority.

Cosimo’s life in the trees as an irrevocable expression of the core tenants of justice and engagement he upholds cannot be fully understood or appreciated in a vacuum. Rather, his rebellion must be contextualized with the rebellions of others around him, including that of his older sister, Battista, by eight years (Calvino 1991: 1335). Their father’s divergent reactions to both Cosimo and Battista’s rebellions suggests there is something intrinsically dissimilar in the character of their respective rebellions that they must be treated and punished differently. Before we put the proverbial horse before the cart with comparative and multidisciplinary literary criticism on the nature of Cosimo’s rebellion, let us investigate, or as might more aptly be said, dissect, the nature of Battista’s rebellion and then in comparison and as the catalyst of Cosimo’s rebellion.

The scene of Cosimo’s life-changing rebellion that would “separare la sua sorte” from that of his younger brother, his entire family, from Viola, from all of us perhaps will take place at the same dining room table where Battista’s frustration makes itself manifest in her revolting culinary concoctions (Calvino 1991: 550). Before Cosimo’s rebellion, their

father, the Baron Arminio's physical and authoritative position in the family and at the table as "capotavola" appears all but disintegrated when he permits Battista to inflict on the family the revolting dishes⁵⁹ that arise from her culinary outlet for her frustration (Ibid. 549). The event that would ignite her frustrations – culinary, sexual, and familial - will be related following a brief introduction to the contradictory notions of taste, sexuality, and family expectations surrounding it.

Battista's inspiration for concocting such unsavory dishes combine various elements from her life's story and her family's role in the course it takes. Like her mother, La Generalessa - who grew up on a battlefield with her father and did not feel at home in the kitchen - one would not expect Battista to be overly involved or enthusiastic with domestic pursuits such as cooking the family meal (Calvino 1991: 552-553). In addition to her newfound interest in cooking, Battista would stand out for her elaborate displays of poise and obedience simmering with anger under the surface at the dinner table. The imposition of a code of modesty and obedience on Battista is reflected in a restriction to both her dress and to confine her movements within the home. The strange juxtaposition of these competing natures demonstrates itself at the dinner table. Among all the members of the family, it was noted that "l'unica che si trovasse a suo agio era Battista, la monaca di casa, che scarnificava pollastri con un accanimento minuzioso, fibra per fibra, con certi

⁵⁹ It is important to note that before Viola pits the English and the Neapolitan sailors against each other to make Cosimo jealous is foreshadowed when as a child she promises to make two fruit thieves a cake that is not revolting in ingredients, but indeed rancid: "oppure si parlava anche di certe torte che lei aveva promesso a loro ripetute volte e finalmente dato, ma condite d'olio di ricino, per cui erano tutti stati a torcersi la pancia per una settimana" (Calvino 1991: 586).

coltellini appuntiti che aveva solo lei, specie di lancette da chirurgo”⁶⁰ (Ibid. 551).

Battista’s sentiments of self-soothing and frustration are not only infused in the dishes she prepares with her own hands. They also vividly demonstrate her peculiar relationship with food and nonhuman animals. The event leading up to Battista’s house confinement and experimentation in the kitchen is shaped by the language of hunting, desire, and the appropriation of nonhuman animal imagery and its complicated relationship to the essential question of humanity.

Battista’s rebellion is set into motion with indeed a story or the affair, as the Italian original lends itself to either translation, with the Marchesino della Mela (Calvino 1991: 555). In addition to his family name of apple [“Mela”], Biagio refers to il Marchesino della Mela as a freckled piece of Swiss chard: “quel bietolone lentigginoso” (Ibid.). The future leap to Battista’s culinary based rebellion is not idle but has its origins in her suppressed love affair. Indeed, “describing the Marchesino using these terms has the effect of rendering him doubly edible, and the implication is that Battista does indeed attempt to devour him rather as one might an apple, or even chard” (Tompkins 2015: 80). The ferocity of Battista’s advance on the young Marquis will not only be re-inscribed with culinary and nonhuman animal symbologies. It would also be punished with an imposition on her dress and limit her mobility outside the home. On the same night that Battista is found to be

⁶⁰ See also in Calvino’s much later novel of 1983, *Palomar*, in particular the story of “Il marmo, il sangue” with its description as much of the various cutting implements as the cuts of meat they would be used upon: “dietro il banco, i macellai biancovestiti brandiscono le mannaie dalla lama trapezoidale, i coltellacci per affettare e quelli per scorticare, le seghe per troncare gli ossi, i batticarni con cui premono i serpeggianti riccioli rosa nell’imbuto della macchina tritratrice” (1992: 937-938).

missing from the Piovaso di Rondò home the young Marquis from the rival della Mela noble family “fu trovato, dai servi accorsi insieme a nostro padre, con i calzoni a brandelli, lacerati come dagli artigli d’una tigre”⁶¹ (Calvino 1991: 555). Tompkins also indicates some comparative tiger-femme fatale characters from Italian and English literature: namely of Varia Nesteroff in Luigi Pirandello’s *Quaderno di Serafino Gubbio operatore* [1925] and Bertha Mason from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* [1847] (2015: 47). The insanity of the former dialogues with the perceived abnormal sexuality of Battista’s actions. Battista’s active female sexuality may have transgressed the bounds of acceptability for her family, but it could not be rewritten as if the young Marquis was the one responsible for tainting Battista’s honor and reputation and had to make amends by agreeing to marry her (Calvino 1991: 555). The resolution of Battista’s sexuality through marriage will not occur overnight. Rather it would be preceded by her trials on the home front as expressed by her subversion of the rules imposed on her dress and in assuming domestic tasks such as preparing the family meal in the kitchen.

⁶¹ Compare two other Calvinian tigers through song and in a child’s story. The first he wrote in 1962 for Laura Betti’s performance in “Giro a vuoto” in Rome as part of the Cantacronache movement of music in Italy starting in the summer of 1957 in Torino in the post-war period and the ‘economic miracle’ of the 1950s (1994: 650-654). The other appeared in his “I Disegni arrabbiati” [1977] where in counterpoint to Lodolinda’s typically male signifying bull, Federico would draw a typically female representing tiger in their drawing duel (Ibid. 347-351). Calvino could have drawn from other sources as a part of the symbolical emblemization of tigers, including that from his beloved *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling [1894]. William Blake’s poem “The Tyger” [1794] from his collection *Songs of Experience* offers another poetic rendering of the timeless significance of the tiger as inscribed in literature. Two of the following novels from the 2000s have certainly also grown out of this same literary tradition, particularly *The Tiger’s Wife* by Téa Obreht [2010] as well as Yann Martel’s *The Life of Pi* [2001].

With the solution of marriage not being available to remedy the situation at this juncture, the baron Arminio attempts to re-signify Battista's inner character by imposing a more modest code of dress. It would, however, prove to be of little to no avail: "così nostra sorella finì sepolta in casa, con gli abiti da monaca, pur senz'aver pronunciato voti neppure di terziaria, data la sua dubbia vocazione" (Calvino 1991: 555). Both Eugenio Bolongaro and Bridget Tompkins compare Battista's farcical nun-like tenure to that of Alessandro Manzoni's, Gertrude, "la monaca di Monza" from *I promessi sposi* (cf. 2010: 162-197). Bolongaro refers to Gertrude as a "dissolute nun" because although, like Battista, she too wears the habit imposed on her by her father, Gertrude indeed "è una monaca; ma non è una monaca come l'altre" (Bolongaro 2003: 94; Manzoni 2010: 155). Although "both Battista and Gertrude are depicted as strong-willed females forced into the role of nun by authoritarian fathers," Battista is not forced from the family home directly into a convent (Tompkins 2015: 45). Battista, therefore, is in a unique situation of appearing like a nun but not having to maintain the strict expectations of poverty, chastity, and obedience. After the unfortunate encounter with il Marchesino della Mela which initiated her father's imposed dress code the Estomac family comes to dine and Battista appears at the table dressed "con la cuffia da monaca, ma tutta messa su con nastri e gale, la cipria in viso, i mezzi guanti" (Calvino 1991: 616). Battista can circumvent her father's wishes by decorating her nun's habit in such a way as to "exhibit her rebellious streak by subverting his attempts to control her sexuality, for her ribbons and powder, indicate that, despite her nun's habit, 'she is not a nun like the others' and that she is sexually available" (Tompkins 2015: 46). How Calvino outfits his rebellious protagonists - Battista, Cosimo, and il Cavaliere Avvocato - will demonstrate one avenue of Calvino's interest in blurring the definition of humanity

and animality in the war novel. Each protagonist's garments not only dialogue with their respective selves and with one another. They also form a significant component of the comparative literary resonance of the novel beyond the time and place of its writing to elevate it as a classic of world literature.

The analysis of how clothing, covering, or uncovering the human body, has come to differentiate man from other nonhuman animals can be contextualized through a brief survey of primary and secondary texts spanning from the Renaissance to the twentieth century. The following texts will provide a solid comparative literary foundation to our analysis of the war novel based on the thematic importance of clothing as a characteristic of humanity that distinguishes them from other animals. These include the reappraisal of Jacques Derrida's soul-penetrating gaze of the cat that demonstrates humanity's dependence on clothing to separate them from nonhuman animals discussed in relation to analysis of *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, Aesop's fable of the mouse being able to help the lion, Andersen's fairytale of "The Emperor's New Clothes," as well as the Italian and French versions of the tale of Puss in Boots, respectively Giovanni Straparola's "Costantino Fortunato" and Charles Perrault's "Le Maître chat ou le Chat botté."

The clothing-related texts range in genre from fables to fairytales as well as secondary criticism. Both the sixteenth and seventeenth-century tales of "Puss in Boots" indeed center on a cat protagonist, which contrasts with Calvino's use of Battista's tiger-like sexuality and the cat Cosimo encounters in the woods as an antagonist. While Hans Christen Andersen's fairytale, "The Emperor's New Clothes," does not include a cat, the unveiling of the Emperor's nonexistent outfit is valuable for the discussion on the decentering ecocritical gaze of Derrida's cat and its lineage from Biblical times onward.

Texts that specifically relate to clothing a cat have been given precedence because they connect two important events involved with domestic and jungle cats in *Il barone rampante*. The first is when Battista's sexuality is re-inscribed as a tigress. The second is when the ferocity of a supposedly domesticated cat will be Cosimo's first task while he is being initiated as a hunter in the trees. This brief comparative literary interlude will further solidify considerations of a definition of storied human animals within Calvino's war novel.

Due to considerations of chronology, the juxtaposition of the cat and clothing in the fairytale of Puss in Boots will be discussed first. The Puss in Boots tale originates in both the Italian and French literary traditions. In both Giovanni Francesco Straparola's "Costantino Fortunato" from his *Le piacevoli notti* [1550-1553] and Charles Perrault's "Le Maître chat ou le Chat botté" [1634] the content of both versions of the story is similar. In each tale, a cat helps his master to win the princess of his dreams by convincing people and ogres alike, including his own master, to divest themselves of their clothing. The cat can do this only after his master honored this cat's request to outfit him with a pair of boots. The donning of footwear enables the cat to walk on two legs like a human and not on all fours like a cat. In the first instance, the notably female cat has his master takes off his clothes so that when the king and his daughter encounter him, his unfortunate situation, albeit staged by the cat, inspires sympathy in the king's daughter, which will blossom into a love for the cat's master (Straparola 1927: 500). In the second, this cat also manages to appeal to the ogre's pride by encouraging him to metamorphose into a creature the cat can not only defeat but also devour (Perrault 2002: 234-244). The cat's condescending notion that the ogre might be able to transform himself into a lion, but certainly not a mouse, incites the

ogre to prove that he can shapeshift into any creature great or small. The aspect of the mouse in the tale of Puss in Boots nearly correlates to the fable by Aesop in which a small mouse can help the great and powerful lion by removing the troublesome thorn from his paw (1998: 154). While the cat could not have defeated the ogre in his original form or if he had metamorphosed into a lion, like a mouse prey that cats typically eat, he certainly could. From that decisive battle, the cat could give the ogre's elaborate clothes and castle to his master and thus convince the king he possessed a noble lineage worthy of allowing him to marry his daughter. We have witnessed in fairytales and Calvino's novels that tidy and happy endings are not always guaranteed. Some stories have much to teach us without reassuring us of the heights that can be attained but rather do so by baring unpleasant truths about the depths that humanity, unfortunately, can also reach, such as in the following fairytale from Hans Christian Andersen, of "The Emperor's Clothes" [1837].

Clothes can be as indispensable to their wearers as to their weavers, as is recounted in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes." When a king hires two renowned weavers to craft the most astonishing suit of clothes ever in existence, he does not use any common sense but is instead blinded by his vanity and pride. The weavers convince the king that they have made ready a suit of clothes that will be invisible to those who are "too stupid" or "unfit for their position," and proceed to dress him for the occasion of a procession (Andersen 2008: 3-16). When the Emperor himself is duped into parading about the town nude, his ministers and the townspeople say nothing to help or to mock him. It falls to a young child devoid of social pretense to call the Emperor out on his folly and tell him that no clothes are enveloping his body at all (Ibid.). The shame the Emperor feels in being seen naked in front of his subjects and his ministers can be bridged by Jacques

Derrida's work of secondary criticism into the question of the animal around the human's need for clothes and hiding our nakedness as a defining characteristic of our species.

In his lecture series, "L'animal que donc je suis," Jacques Derrida poses the idea that a human's nakedness exposes the frailty of the socio-cultural construct of their superiority over nonhuman animals, which has been a theme inscribed in written texts from the Bible onwards. Through the cat's gaze and his discomfort upon witnessing it, Derrida has elaborated on the incongruity of how humans see themselves and how nonhuman animals see them when they are naked before nature as much as before their fellow man. When Derrida finds himself naked before his furry feline friend, clothing is shown to be not just a solely physical protective covering but also psychological and emotional. The wearing of clothes demarcates a boundary between humans who use and need them and nonhuman animals who do not. It is not so much the exposure of his skin to the elements and to the cat's gaze that arouses feelings of shame in Derrida, but rather:

It is as if I were ashamed, therefore, naked in front of this cat, but also ashamed for being ashamed [...] Ashamed of what and before whom? Ashamed of being as naked as a beast. It is generally thought, although none of the philosophers I am about to examine actually mentions it, that the property unique to animals, what in the last instance distinguishes them from man, is their being naked (2008: 4).

Derrida's analysis of the role of clothing as a distinguishing feature of humans from nonhuman animals does not perpetuate an anthropocentric gaze. Rather, it seeks to include animals and animality within the discourse of defining humans and humanity.

Acknowledging the existence of other perspectives is not enough to break new ground in complicating definitions of humanity and animality. The tenor of the discourse as much as that of the language used with it must change from being dichotomous and polar to integral and hybrid. Indeed,

As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called 'animal' offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say, the border crossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself (Derrida 2008: 12).

The idea of humans as above nonhuman animals hierarchically has been reinforced through language as well as society. Language is never objective but rather a demonstration of power when "the animal is a word, it is an appellation that men have instituted, a name they have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other" (Ibid. 23). Battista may not give her alimentary concoction a name to set down on a recipe card for future generations. Yet she does name the terms and establish the tone of the dinner table by wielding her snail soup as a figurative guillotine over the Baron Arminio's head. If autonomy and self-determination over her own body will not be tolerated without the protective and socially acceptable coating sanctified by matrimony, which will only happen later in the novel, then Battista has claimed this small island of authority for herself which the Baron does surprisingly tolerate.

Struggles for self-fulfillment and autonomy in *Il barone rampante* also dialogue with timeless animal symbologies to challenge the established order and hierarchy of authority, starting with Battista's quest for sexual satisfaction as she comes of age. Battista's efforts to channel her frustration sexual and social into a productive culinary outlet is far from benign, however. Instead, Battista takes it upon herself to prepare the main family meal where all her frustration and suppressed emotions could not help but lead to the outcome of the flavor and substance of the cooking. Furthermore, "Battista's cooking is sadistic (vis-à-vis both eaters and animals) because it emphasizes cruelty at the expense of nourishment" (Nocentini 1996: 23). While it is a dish of snails head pastries that

intriguingly resemble “uno stormo di piccolissimi cigni” that will spark Cosimo’s rebellion. Battista had previously served a variety of gruesome dishes such as horses’ hind legs, pigs’ tails pieces served like donuts, porcupines, cauliflower with rabbits’ ears and its fur coat for decoration, and a pig’s head with a red lobster grabbing it by the tongue, among others (Calvino 1991: 555). Battista may have a literary precedent for the cooking of snails in the Italian literary tradition as well as in Aesop’s *Fables*. Rather than snails as the main course in Carlo Collodi’s *Le avventure di Pinocchio* the Fairy with the Turquoise Hair has a lady snail maid, La lumaca. She serves some cardboard-like breakfast food for Pinocchio when she eventually reaches the fourth-floor room from the kitchen nine hours after he requested it (Collodi 2002: 164-167). One of Aesop’s fables depicts a young boy’s cruel side when he mocks the snails he is baking: “Hearing them sputtering, he said: ‘Stupid creatures! Your houses are on fire, yet you sing!’” (1998: 127). Battista’s snail dish was a far cry from any gourmand’s passion for *escârgot*. Rather her “opere di finissima orafiera animale e vegetale” were designed to appall all the members at the family dinner table (Calvino 1991: 555). Battista’s hideous amalgamation of inverse aesthetics and spite in her dishes are not meant solely to be observed. They are an act of rebellion and a grasp for self-expression and self-determination.

Both the narrator, Cosimo, and Battista’s younger brother, Biagio and the Calvino scholar, Bolongaro, emphasize the aesthetics as well as the transgression of them in Battista’s dishes. There is much more at stake than surface appeal in Battista’s “emphatic and theatrical transgression against taste [...] grounded in sensibility” (Bolongaro 2003: 93). Her hair-raising dishes are a form of protest against her house confinement and the imposition of the monastic dress. Through cooking, “il suo animo tristo s’esplicava

soprattutto nella cucina. Era bravissima nel cucinare, perché non le mancava né la diligenza né la fantasia, doti prime d'ogni cuoca, ma dove metteva le mani lei non si sapeva che sorprese mai potessero arrivarci in tavola” (Calvino 1991: 555). The variety, placement, and treatment of animal bodies in Battista’s dishes have already been mentioned above. The theatrical aspect of lifting the cover off of her main course to see their astonished faces, not from delight but disgust, demonstrates how “molta di questa sua orrenda cucina era studiata solo per la figura, più che per il piacere di farci gustare insieme a lei cibi dai sapori raccapriccianti” (Ibid.). Battista’s rebellion is in opposition to her father’s authority as much as Cosimo’s is in refusing to eat Battista’s snail heads, not once but indeed twice (Ibid. 558). It is interesting to note that there is also no textual evidence of Battista’s dishes as written recipes; each dish is rather an ephemeral and utterly physical performance for the senses in the present moment. The particulars of Battista’s dishes only survive in Biagio’s descriptions of them because Battista did not expect her dishes to have a future. As Calvino would write in his 1973 essay, “L’utopia pulviscolare”: “non si danno ricette per le cucine dell’avvenire: e perché? Una ricetta presuppone sempre delle cucine future: se no, non c’è bisogno di scrivere ricette, si fa cucina e basta” (Calvino 1995 (1): 310). While both Cosimo and Biagio will face the same punishment for not eating this first of Battista’s snail head dishes, their fates and life stories will diverge at their fateful reencounter of Battista’s snails at the family dinner table three days after their first refusal.

Battista’s first snail dish would not only spark Cosimo’s rebellion at the family table. It would also incite both him and their younger brother Biagio to attempt to dispose

of Battista's odious snail food supply. Unfortunately, both brothers are discovered on account of Battista's never-resting hunter's gaze⁶² while

quell'anima senza pace di nostra sorella Battista percorreva la notte tutta la casa a caccia di topi, reggendo un candeliere, e con lo schioppo sotto il braccio. Passò in cantina, quella notte, e la luce del candeliere illuminò una lumaca sbandata sul soffitto, con la scia di bava argentea. [...] Al chiaror delle torce tutti si misero a dar la caccia alle lumache per la cantina (Calvino 1991: 557).

On account of their defiant protests to the Baron's authority at the table and for their failed counterattack, Cosimo and Biagio were given little food and water for three days as punishment. The ox gristle, salad, and minestrone with some water given to them at this time were much more appealing to the boys than Battista's terrifying dishes (Ibid. 558). Yet the very first meal awaiting the brothers' return to society and the family table is a bowl of snail soup with snail heads as a side dish (Ibid.). Biagio begrudgingly, and like a hungry eight-year-old boy, eats the dishes without further protest. However, Cosimo "con l'ostinazione sovrumana che contrassegnò la [sua] vita" still refused both the dishes and the authority of his father to make him eat them (Ibid.).

Calvino's novel, in addition to the aspects mentioned above as *bildungsroman*, "conte philosophique," and the fantastic historical novel also culls elements from fairy tales. Namely that "two protagonists – usually brothers – stand for seemingly incompatible aspects of the human personality. The two usually separate after an original period of having been united and then have different fates" (Bettelheim 2010: 90-91). Calvino further relates in his "Nota 1960" to the post-facto trilogy edition of *I nostri antenati* that

⁶² Cf. with both J.R.R. Tolkien's never-closing eye of Sauron from the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* [1954] in addition to the Cyclops we have already encountered from Homer's *The Odyssey* (1997: IX.295-415.)

Biagio's existence in the plot creates the dynamic of "un personaggio di carattere antitetico a Cosimo, un fratello posato e pieno di buon senso" (Calvino 1991: 1218). Not only will Cosimo and Biagio go separate ways. Cosimo's rebellion will also separate the two older siblings, Cosimo and Battista, from one another. Cosimo's rebellion is perceived as more severe and more urgently in need of being squashed than that of Battista. Cosimo's questioning his father's authority "is based on a sense of injustice" and threatens to disintegrate the family hierarchy (Bolongaro 2003: 94). Unlike Cosimo's search for justice, Battista's battle for her sexuality is easily resolved with "a socially acceptable outlet for desire" when she is married off shortly after to the son of the count of Estomac for who she had decorated herself so ostentatiously (Ibid.).

Following the various culinary atrocities Battista exhibits in the kitchen, it is interesting that the count she will be married to with the family name, Estomac, while not the perfect example of an anagram, is startling close and reminiscent of the Italian word for stomach, "stomaco." While "Cosimo demands justice based on reason, Battista demands the right to sensual satisfaction" (Bolongaro 2003: 94). Her wants are considered transitory, temporal earthly needs, and desires in contrast to Cosimo's idealized enlightened transcendence to universal truths. Thus, Battista's rebellion is finished when she is joined to the count Estomac who "triumphs over Battista because as a 'stomach' he is an eater and not exclusively the thing consumed" (Miguel 1986: 59). Later in the novel – when Viola encourages Cosimo to stay in the trees at the tender age of twelve and secondly when they are reunited year later when they are in their sexual – Cosimo's high ideals will have to face the bodily and earthly realm, which hold their kind of reason and logic, as we shall see in the third subsection of this chapter. Indeed, tales of Cosimo's ascent into the trees is not

only colored by his success in various tests for survival – providing food, clothing, shelter, and protection for his self. Rather, his life in the trees will eventually expose “his animal sexuality [which] denies him complete utopian rationality” (Carter 1987: 44). As we pause our discussion investigation of Battista and the influence of her rebellion on Cosimo’s life, another rebellion must also be discussed.

Although that of *il Cavaliere Avvocato*, like Battista’s rebellion, was also instigated by physical passion, there was no easily realizable resolution to his because of its combined practical and altruistic natures. In comparison to Battista’s, Cosimo’s is a complete and all-consuming rebellion that alters the course of his life and transforms the core of his existence as a brother, a son, a member of the nobility, of the realm of Ombrosa, a citizen of the world, and in relation to human and non-human animals. *Il Cavaliere*’s rebellion takes place in the middle ground between the carnal rebellion of Battista and the primarily rational and idealized one of Cosimo. Indeed, Cosimo’s rebellion will continue to unfold on the threshold between the physical and the metaphysical argues for a more porous definition of human animality. While Battista’s rebellion ignited a reaction based on principles that would become the core of Cosimo’s existence, there is an additional player whose rebellion ushers Cosimo into adulthood from the threshold of childhood. In addition to Pin’s growing pains as a far-from innocent child among the world of adults like Cugino, Dritto, and Pelle, and the viscount Medardo’s nameless nephew’s trials and tribulations with Sebastiana and Doctor Trelawney’s helping hands, Cosimo too will encounter a mentor that will shape him in his step-uncle, *il Cavaliere Avvocato*.

3.2 Il Cavaliere Avvocato's Rebellion against His Past and Present Selves

While Battista and her rebellion would play an inordinately important role in Cosimo's life, the very fate of his story would be altogether different if not for the presence of a foil-like character, il Cavaliere Avvocato. Biagio, as Cosimo's younger brother, might have been a candidate for a foil for Cosimo. Instead, he relates how il Cavaliere Avvocato came to fill that role because "[Cosimo] si portò sempre dietro l'immagine stranita del Cavalier Avvocato, ad avvertimento di un modo come può diventare l'uomo che separa la sua sorte da quella degli altri, e riuscì a non somigliargli mai" (Calvino 1991: 636). In this subsection, three fundamental components relating to il Cavaliere Avvocato's rebellion will be formative to Cosimo's story. First, il Cavaliere Avvocato's precarious position at the same dinner table where Battista's rebellion manifested itself mirrors his similar situation as a part of the family, and their home in Ombrosa, will be analyzed. His refusal to re-adopt the attire and custom of his native land and to continue to wear Turkish robes upon his return from somewhere unspecified in the East will be complemented his eclectic arsenal of languages, from the local Ombrosotto dialect and Ottoman Turkish to standard Italian. Second, after Cosimo's ascent into the trees, he and il Cavaliere Avvocato's common interest in the natural world, specifically apiculture and hydraulic projects, will also help them better understand one another. In the third and final subsection, a battle with il Cavalier Avvocato and some Ottoman pirates envelop Cosimo as well. This battle will reveal the former's complicated love story to Cosimo as much as the reader. Cosimo and il Cavalier Avvocato are both irrevocably shaped by being the ones to love, be they their beloveds, their families, or the nonhuman animals that become beloved companions. All

three aspects of il Cavaliere Avvocato's rebellion revolve around codifications and subverting identities through clothing and language. Before that battle for his self, Cosimo, Biagio, and the reader will be given some clues into the many facets of il Cavaliere Avvocato's rebellion, which also started at the dinner table.

The treatise *Galateo, ovvero de' costumi* [1558] by Giovanni della Casa initiated the Italian genre of *galateo* writing in which the norms of good manners, especially at the dining table, are written down for posterity. In light of a social, culture, and literary tradition of writing about table manners, il Cavalier Avvocato's quieter stances of rebellion become even more pronounced. Food and clothing, much like the reader have already experienced with Battista, will play a definitive role in il Cavaliere Avvocato's rebellion. Il Cavaliere Avvocato's life story and adventures abroad will be examined in greater detail further on in this section, particularly in the interest of his linguistic complexities in his identity formation. For now, it is enough to reiterate that il Cavaliere Avvocato is said to have spent time in the seat of the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople. Baron Arminio, a supposed bastion of authority, not only tolerated Battista's culinary atrocities. He also did not insist that his younger half-brother, il Cavalier Avvocato Enea Silvio Carrega, appear at the dinner table in familiar Western-style garments. Instead, Baron Arminio allows il Cavaliere Avvocato to "presentarsi anche a tavola in quelle fogge turche, e la cosa più strana fu che nostro padre, così attento alle regole, mostrò di tollerarlo" (Calvino 1991: 607). Il Cavalier Avvocato's Turkish robes is a visual demonstration of his composite identity as well as his tenuous position at the family table.

The Turkish-style robes, which include more folds and pockets than the family's traditional dress, also reveal a practical opportunity he could utilize to enjoy the food at his

leisure without the pomp and circumstance of the ceremonial family table. On account of this type of clothing's openings and folds il Cavaliere Avvocato could place

cosciotti interi sotto le falde della zimarra turca, per poi mangiarseli a morsi come piaceva a lui, nascosto nella vigna; e noi avremmo giurato (sebbene mai fossimo riusciti a coglierlo sul fatto, tanto leste erano le sue mosse) che venisse a tavola con una tasca piena di ossicini già spolpati, da lasciare sul suo piatto al posto dei quarti di tacchino fatti sparire sani sani (Calvino 1991: 551).

While Battista's wardrobe is imposed upon her to convey a false image of her character Biagio interprets that il Cavaliere Avvocato's deceptions actually indicate "il fondo d'animo falso" of Cavaliere Avvocato (Ibid.). Biagio's accusations may have been drawn perhaps on the fable that has become a proverbial turn of phrase to illustrate deception on the wolf dressed as a sheep in "Little Redcap" (Grimm 2014: 85-87). This fable, in particular, ties together an unexpected connection between food and clothing. While we have already discussed the fairytale concerning Pin's Fascist wolves in the first chapter of this dissertation, the folkloric importance of a human donning a wolf's pelt will resonate with our present discussion of il Cavalier Avvocato, as well as later with regards to Cosimo's, human animality.

The phenomenon of clothing a wolf is not strictly limited to "Little Red Riding Hood." Indeed, one of the earliest literary sources regarding this scene of a man donning a wolf's skin occurs in Homer's *The Iliad* when Dolon dresses in a wolf's pelt (1990: X.454-464). The following literary examples from Italian and Irish traditions will illustrate the concept of an animal's skin and clothes as being inseparable from the human it clothes. Giorgio Agamben mentions the critical role of women in folktales about werewolves from Basilicata with specific reference to Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* [1945]. The wife safeguards her werewolf husband from himself by choosing the exact moment when

she will open the door and allow her sleepwalking husband to re-enter the house and redon his human clothes. As Agamben quotes Levi's novel, the wife must wait until the third knock to let him back in the house for him to have fully regained his fully human self (Agamben 1998: 107-108). The consequences are severe if she did not wait, according to Levi's interlocutor, Giulia:

'Quando battono all'uscio la prima volta, la loro moglie non deve aprire. Se aprisse vedrebbe il marito ancora tutto lupo, e quello la divorerebbe, e fuggirebbe per sempre nel bosco. Quando battono per la seconda volta, ancora la donna non deve aprire: lo vedrebbe con il corpo fatto già di uomo, ma con la testa di lupo. Soltanto quando battono all'uscio per la terza volta, si aprirà: perché allora si sono del tutto trasformati, ed è scomparso il lupo e riapparso l'uomo di prima' (Levi 1946: 104).

A directly inverse dynamic unfolds in the Irish legend of the selkie maids in which the fisherman controls whether his seal bride will remain human or not. The hybrid maiden seals cannot become fully human and into a suitable bride unless a fisherman captures the seal's skin. If the fisherman can deceive the maiden and keep her away from her seal's skin, she will stay a human and not turn back into a sometimes seal, sometimes human hybrid being (Whyte 2011: 130). Thus, it is demonstrated that not all deceptions are for the worse of their intended recipient. However, each man is fathomless, unknowable in the depth and breadth of their character. Cosimo's journey into his human and animal self will be contoured by his discoveries of il Cavaliere Avvocato's life and past that affects their present. Cosimo and il Cavaliere Avvocato's shared interests in bees and hydraulics will form a bond between them. The tip of the iceberg of which Biagio perceived and hinted at the family table has more depth and is more multifaceted than either he, Cosimo, or the even Baron Arminio himself had dared to understand.

How *il Cavaliere Avvocato* came to adopt his attire of Turkish-style robes requires some investigation into the mysteries and stories that surround his life and especially his past. Unlike Cosimo, who will be able to successfully engage with his family and society from his place in the trees by incorporating the past into his present and future life, *il Cavaliere Avvocato* will struggle to find a place for himself perhaps because of his problematic relationship with his past. His past remains shrouded in mystery. From *il Cavaliere Avvocato*'s birth to his travels as an adult Biagio relates what little information has been collected:

Non seppi mai bene il suo passato, né chi fosse stata sua madre, né quali fossero stati in gioventù i suoi rapporti con nostro nonno (certo anche lui doveva essergli affezionato, per averlo fatto studiare da avvocato e avergli fatto attribuire il titolo di Cavaliere), né come fosse finito in Turchia. Non si sapeva neanche bene se era proprio in Turchia che aveva soggiornato tanto a lungo, o in qualche stato barbaresco, Tunisi, Algeri, ma insomma in un paese maomettano, e si diceva che si fosse fatto maomettano pure lui. Tante se ne dicevano: che avesse ricoperto cariche importanti, gran dignitario del Sultano, Idraulico del Divano o altro di simile, e poi una congiura di palazzo o una gelosia di donne o un debito di gioco l'avesse fatto cadere in disgrazia e vendere per schiavo (Calvino 1991: 606).

Il Cavaliere Avvocato's linguistic struggle upon his return to Italy also reflects his difficulty reintegrating with his family and Ombrosa. It is not merely *il Cavaliere Avvocato*'s "peculiar oriental lifestyle [that] has made it impossible for him to relate to other people" (Adler 1979: 76). Rather, his insistent attempts to recreate the lands of his past also inhibit reconnection with his family. What Biagio believes *il Cavaliere Avvocato* continually attempts to recreate is not just a replica of the irrigation works or the apiary work he experienced in the Orient. He can recreate neither the place nor "il solo tempo veramente felice della sua vita" in the past when *il Cavaliere Avvocato* was in the East (Calvino 1991: 635). *Il Cavaliere Avvocato*'s struggle with time and personal history will

not only affect but indeed mirror his difficulty with the two nature-related projects he undertakes, that of tending the bees and the other of starting an irrigation system. Not only does his troubled relationship with his past make the realization of these projects difficult. They are also entangled with linguistic confusion and varieties mutually intelligible only to himself.

Il Cavalier Avvocato's linguistic confusion, in addition to his particular combination of languages, complicates his ability to communicate effectively with others. While his variety of languages reinforces his multifaceted identity, they are not only the formative basis of his life story. They are also the crux of his inability to succeed in any of his new projects because he is unable to reintegrate linguistically back into his family and their society. Vacillating between resigned silence and inane babbling Biagio and others perceive il Cavalier Avvocato as "sordomuto, o che non capisse la lingua: chissà come riusciva a fare l'avvocato, prima, e se già allora era così stranito, prima dei Turchi. Forse era pur stato persona d'intelletto, se aveva imparato dai Turchi tutti quei calcoli d'idraulica, l'unica cosa cui adesso fosse capace di applicarsi, e per cui mio padre ne faceva lodi esagerate" (Calvino 1991: 605). Cosimo can, similarly to il Buono and il Gramo's animal-based languages, reunite with his half-uncle on account of the presence of insects they both were fascinated by, the bees. As he is actively seeking⁶³ il Cavalier Avvocato, Cosimo "finì per convincersi che la presenza del Cavaliere era collegata con le api e che per rintracciarlo bisognava seguirne il volo" (Ibid. 630). The bees will have both a scientific and a literary resonance within this novel.

⁶³ Compare with the line from the mystic poet, Rumi, "What you seek is seeking you" *The Essential Rumi*, edited and translated by Coleman Barks. (New York City: HarperCollins Books, 2004), 12.

The science behind bees' production of honey, nectar, and beeswax for sustenance and for building supplies for their hives will be intertwined with two of Aesop's fables about the complicated lives of bees. Bees utilize this honey byproduct when they bring in the pollen and make the nectar they need for sustenance. The beeswax is used to make the combs, which form the structure of the hive as a domicile for the whole colony, including the queen bee so that she can procreate new generations of bees. Two tales passed down through the ages from Aesop's *Fables* about bees carry forth ideas about how people should conduct their lives but also be cautious. The first has the air of a "«mito delle origini»" about how bees came to be able to sting those they perceived as enemies (Calvino 2012: 112). The fable also suggests a cautionary tale that relates how for those bees who choose to act upon this useful power, they would subsequently die upon doing so (Aesop 1998: 173). The second fable dialogues with the problematic distinction between "friend," "family," or "enemy," which will be blurred by Cosimo's relationship with il Cavaliere Avvocato. Aesop's second fable suggests that one must be both respectful of the positive actions people do for us and vigilant for those which they may do against us. In that fable, the bees mistakenly kill the very beekeeper who looks after them instead of the thief who had robbed them of their honey and destroyed their hive (Ibid.). Cosimo and il Cavaliere Avvocato form a new bond with one another thanks to the bees in "una collaborazione che si poteva pur chiamare una specie d'amicizia, se amicizia non sembrasse termine eccessivo, riferito a due persone così poco socievoli" (Calvino 1991: 633). While Cosimo's relationship with others will be examined in greater detail further on in this chapter presently il Cavaliere Avvocato's inability to either forge new connections or rekindle old familial ties is inhibited by his being multilingual in addition to his linguistic confusion.

While Cosimo knowledge of the forest's trees and il Cavaliere Avvocato's irrigation experience might seem a perfect match to help the town of Ombrosa, the latter's projects are never able to come to fruition on account of il Cavaliere Avvocato's amalgamation of various languages and dialects is often unintelligible to Cosimo. Rather than discussing his ideas with Cosimo "il Cavalier Avvocato d'ordinario parlava in dialetto, per modestia più ancora che per ignoranza della lingua, ma in questi improvvisi momenti d'eccitazione dal dialetto passava direttamente al turco, senza'accorgersene, e non si capiva più niente. [...] Corse a rintanarsi nel suo studio, a riempire fogli e fogli di progetti" (Calvino 1991: 634). Besides not being able even to discuss a project plan, il Cavaliere Avvocato would be further perplexed to find his projects did not fit the land he had in front of him of Ombrosa, but they rather resembled those of the Sultan (cf. Ibid. 625-636). Unless he could stop living in the past and try to recreate the lands of the Sultan against the backdrop of Ombrosa, il Cavalier Avvocato would continue to feel isolated and alone. Similar to Battista and Cosimo's rebellions, il Cavaliere Avvocato too, will stand alone. The consequences of his rebellion against the traditional dress and linguistic conformity will not only signify a component of his past. Identity, alliance, and the very meaning of family, love, respect, and honor will be challenged when il Cavaliere Avvocato's linguistic plurality is no longer an expression of his past but becomes an active and treacherous component of his present. The reasons and the story behind il Cavaliere Avvocato's invitation of Ottoman pirates to the port of Ombrosa will not only involve Cosimo in a battle for his family and the town. It will also provide some of the historical background of the novel which is set during the Austrian-Ottoman wars of the late 1700s.

Before Cosimo has to choose whether to engage his half-uncle in a battle against Ottoman corsairs or not, Baron Arminio will pass on his sword to his eldest son. This is a gesture that acknowledges Cosimo's right to rebel even against his father for the sake of justice, equality, and towards a better humanity. The Baron Arminio attaches great significance to both Cosimo's essential part in the current family unit and in assuring the continuance of the noble line, the honor of which lies not only in the name but in the deeds behind it. Cosimo has not only grown from rebellious youth to able-bodied soldier based on his experiences as a hunter and having to protect himself in the trees. With the bestowal of his father's sword now Cosimo would be more ably and confidently armed as the following conversation between il Barone Arminio and Cosimo suggests:

-Ricordi d'essere Barone di Rondò?

-Sì, signor padre, ricordo il mio nome.⁶⁴

-Vorrai essere degno del nome e del titolo che porti?

-Cercherò d'esser più degno che posso del nome d'uomo, e lo sarò così d'ogni suo attributo (Calvino 1991: 661).

In addition to the aspect of a *Bildungsroman* demonstrated so vividly in the lines above as but one of the many genres involved in the formation of this novel this story could also be considered "un libro in verde [...] verde da *vir*, ovvero uomo: virgulto, cioè che sta crescendo, cioè che è vivo" (Belpoliti 2005: 102). Cosimo will learn at the dining room table that the laws and hierarchy of the family, who has authority versus who holds power, are

⁶⁴ The importance of the name has already appeared in our discussion on Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* and is also prominent in the poetics of his later *Il cavaliere inesistente* [1959]. In the former the story of Lupo Rosso's battle name and its significance is recounted to Pin, as quoted in full on page 43 of this dissertation (Calvino 1991: 36-37). In the latter before Agilulfo's name and title of knighthood are put in jeopardy by the accusations of Torrismondo the inextricable ties between a knight's name and horse are made apparent throughout the entirety of the novel (cf. *Ibid.* 956, 961, 1027, 1043).

interrelated but also contestable as “*auctoritas* and *potestas* are distinct, and yet together they form a binary system” (Agamben 2005: 87). To become a man, Cosimo has had to assert his right to question and to live according to his own convictions, but not apart from the needs, wants, and aspirations of his loved ones around him. In the forthcoming battle, Cosimo will have to choose between helping his father, il Barone Arminio, and aiding his half-uncle, il Cavalier Avvocato. The latter has troublingly allied himself with Ottoman pirates who are the perceived enemies of not only Ombrosa and the Ligurian coast in Italian Christendom. They also pose a direct threat to the Piovasco family itself. In the following excerpt from the story of Cosimo’s life adventures, both Cosimo and il Cavaliere Avvocato’s true colors will be laid bare. They will highlight the very different paths fate had in store for each of them when both Cosimo and il Cavaliere Avvocato are given similar life obstacles of love and family relationships to face.

Cosimo will have to decide if he will be unable to turn a blind eye when he witnesses his half-uncle in the port of Ombrosa speaking to men unloading cargo from an Ottoman ship in the dead of night. Not only the suspect nature of the activity but its apparent contradiction in il Cavaliere Avvocato’s routine and character catches Cosimo’s attention. Myriad nonhuman animal symbologies will populate the description of this battle for Ombrosa between il Cavaliere Avvocato, allied with the Ottoman corsairs, and Cosimo. Il Cavaliere Avvocato was well known in a family of leisurely gentry for waking up and going to bed early like a farmer among his animals. Similar to the English phrase depicting that early time of day when one wakes up “with the crows,” hens appear in the original Italian: “era solito andare a letto con *le galline*” (Calvino 1991: 663, my emphasis). One night, Cosimo, “silenzioso per i rami coi suoi passi *da gatto*,” follows il Cavaliere

Avvocato on his nocturnal adventures (Ibid., my emphasis). These will not be the only instances of animal association or metamorphoses for either il Cavaliere Avvocato or Cosimo in the heat of what will become a fierce battle. Cosimo's cat-like associations will reappear in the final subsection of this dissertation with regards to his initiation into defending his arboreal realm and with regards to his nocturnal wanderings, as will be discussed in full on pages 192-195 and 207-208 respectively of this dissertation. In the following skirmish with the Ottoman corsairs, nonhuman animal imagery and its correlation to the language of pursuit and hunting will be further developed when Cosimo is forced once again into the crux of an existential dilemma by his half-uncle rather than by his elder sister Battista.

Cosimo must decide whether to prioritize his responsibility to his nuclear family or the greater good of his fellow Ombrosotti. As the reader has already witnessed in Calvino's *Il visconte dimezzato*, the present text will also dialogue with Torquato Tasso and Ludovico Ariosto's poems of battles between Muslims and Christians in the following skirmish. Upon discovering il Cavalier Avvocato that fateful night Cosimo chooses "una via di mezzo: spaventare i pirati e lo zio, per far sì che troncassero il losco loro rapporto senza bisogno dell'intervento della giustizia" (Calvino 1991: 665). Without the intervention of a third-party, which would be too unreasonably objective and dehumanized in this nebulous predicament for Cosimo, he will combine all the skills he has acquired in his short time in the trees to devise a plan.

These range from his semi-autodidact studies with the help of his reading and the Abbot Fauchelefleur's tutoring to Cosimo's life experiences in which he gained invaluable survival and hunting skills. Cosimo's plan is to single-handedly resemble an army of men

rather than just one person by firing off three or four rifles he had collected from his hunting needs in the woods and thus frighten the Ottomans and his half-uncle (Calvino 1991: 665). Indeed, “A sentire quella fucileria, pirati e zio sarebbero scappati ognuno per suo conto. E il Cavalier che non era certo audace, nel sospetto d’esser stato riconosciuto e nella certezza che ormai si vigilava su quei convegni della spiaggia, si sarebbe guardato bene dal ritentare i suoi approcci con gli equipaggi maomettani” (Ibid.). Indeed, il Cavalier Avvocato with his confused babbling and voluntary isolation from the family, may not seem so brave to Cosimo or Biagio. Yet, not every battle needs to be fought or won with the clamor of swords or the power of words; living each day through can be equally as much of a struggle and triumph, quiet though it may be. Whatever Cosimo thinks he knows about his half-uncle, be it his history or character, will soon be revealed as but the tip of an unfathomable iceberg due to the upcoming battle with the Ottomans.

A few nights later, Cosimo chances to see something he had not planned for nor expected. Namely, he witnesses il Cavalier Avvocato assisting the pirates in hiding their goods. Cosimo will have to decide at the moment what was unfolding before his eyes. The Ottoman pirates and tradesmen were not stealing but rather, to avoid having to subject themselves to the customs searches, “bisognava che nascondessero le mercanzie depredate in luogo sicuro, per poi riprenderle al ritorno” (Calvino 1991: 666). In a momentary assessment of the situation, a sleep deprived Cosimo mistakes what his half-uncle and the Ottomans were unloading for pirate’s treasure as if it had come to life out of the pages of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* [1883] (Ibid.). It is not out of selfishness that Cosimo decides to take the pirate treasure, which was later discovered to consist of dried fish and cheese, out of their hands. The hungry and poor Bergamaschi on the outskirts of

Ombrosa would consider these as priceless as the silver, and gold Cosimo first supposed the treasure to be (Ibid.). Although language barriers will not impede the continuation of the battle, the significance of clothing will reappear with regards to the implementation of strategy between so disparately trained opponents.

The pirates were accustomed to protecting their goods on the high seas while the Bergamaschi were laborers and coal miners. Despite their more sophisticated weapons and experience the Ottoman corsairs were found to be vulnerable fighters if not at their heads on account of their turbans because “con quei turbanti, ai Barbareschi ogni colpo arrivava attutito come su un cuscino; era meglio dar ginocchiate nello stomaco, perché avevano nudo l’ombelico” (Calvino 1991: 667). Towards the end of the small battle, nonhuman animal imagery resurfaces to focus on Cosimo and il Cavalier Avvocato. Indeed, throughout Calvino’s novel, most marginal characters are not reconfigured with nonhuman animal imagery. Yet pivotal characters of the narrative, if not the main ones discussed here in this dissertation, are described at the height of moments of tension and conflict with icastic nonhuman animal imagery.

Cosimo, whose life in the trees hinges upon fragile boundaries, will have to reconsider his self-imposed rules as open to interpretation when he almost falls from a tree. This unfortunate incident, as well as the rest of the battle, will illuminate some recurring nonhuman animal symbologies for both Cosimo and il Cavaliere Avvocato. Like a phoenix rising out of the ashes of possible defeat to resurge triumphant when Cosimo fell out of the tree, he “affondò la spada in petto ad un pirata che cadde fuori bordo. Svelto come *una lucertola*, risalì difendendosi con due parate dai fendenti degli altri, poi calò giù ancora e infilzò il secondo, risalì, ebbe una breve schermaglia con il terzo e con un’altra delle sue

scivolate lo trafisse” (Calvino 1991: 668, my emphasis). Cosimo’s bat-like ease of mobility is comparable to the artificial fixity il Gramo had imposed on half of a bat carcass to craft a message for Pamela, which was discussed on pages 120-121 of this dissertation (Ibid. 406). Cosimo finds little time to wonder in the heat of the battle if he has violated his own rules of never setting foot from the trees by grabbing hold of the mast on a boat in order not to drown. Linguistically possible in Italian Cosimo falls from one tree on land and manages to grab on to the mast, or *the tree of the boat* [“l’albero della barca”] (Ibid. 669, my emphasis).

While Cosimo has been fighting for his life and dexterously, in contrast, il Cavaliere’s cowardice is mercilessly depicted with a new addition to our discussion of symbologies of cats as being fear incarnate. As il Cavaliere Avvocato ventures onto the field just as the battle is ending, from the same grotto where Cosimo was, “saltò fuori scatenato come *un gatto* col fuoco sulla coda il Cavalier Avvocato, che era stato là nascosto fin allora” (Calvino 1991: 668, my emphasis). Although throughout the novel, Cosimo will be the character more often depicted with cats, in this instance, a cat is re-inscribed as a lasting image of il Cavalier Avvocato’s fright. The positive aspect of this reencounter face-to-face after the battle was that Cosimo is given an unexpected opportunity to converse with il Cavalier Avvocato, Cosimo, on the boat’s mast and il Cavaliere Avvocato rowing them hopefully to safety. Whether it was the tree on land or the tree of the ship both types of trees represent a “symbol of knowledge, the tree (the forbidden tree, the tree of promised immortality and sin), once planted in the heart of the earthly paradise, has been uprooted and now forms the mast of the Ship of Fools” (Foucault 1989: 19). This event is not the moment in the novel when Cosimo will, temporarily, lose his ability to reason, however.

Indeed, Cosimo's journey on the water will provide him with more understanding and knowledge about himself and his half-uncle's life story.

Cosimo and il Cavalier Avvocato's reunion will be complemented by the unexpected reappearance of a dear companion of Cosimo's, his faithful hunting dog Ottimo Massimo.⁶⁵ Ottimo Massimo will reinforce not only some of his hunting dog skills but also his special relationship with Cosimo in this scene of the novel. After rowing for so long, il Cavaliere Avvocato finally breaks his silence and commences a conversation with his eldest half-nephew. Not in dialect or standard Italian, but at the place where longing knows no language, il Cavaliere Avvocato reveals his reason for living. He starts crying and calling out one name in Turkish and Arabic with the hopes of seeing her one day: "Zaira,⁶⁶ insciallah" (Calvino 1991: 669). It is based on this one name and il Cavaliere Avvocato's emotional state of being overwhelmed and thus rendered unable to say anything else that "su questa Zaira, la mente di Cosimo cominciò subito a mulinare supposizioni" (Ibid.).

⁶⁵ Although not based on a literary or historical figure like il Cavalier Avvocato, Ottimo Massimo's name comes from the very words of the Latin language itself. "Ottimo" means "excellent," which is the superlative form of "good, better, and best." "Massimo," which is also a male given name in Italian, refers to "Maximus," as the utmost and maximum, which is of course another superlative. It is important to note that Ottimo Massimo was the name that Cosimo gave this hunting dog, but his previous owner, Viola, called him Turcaret after the ruthless protagonist of the comedy written by Alain-René Lesage [1668-1747] (Calvino 1991: 714).

⁶⁶ Zaira's name is the feminine form in Arabic of one of the ninety-nine names for God in the Islamic tradition. It stems from a complementary pair of divine attributes, *al-Zāhir*, or that which is "outward, manifest, apparent, and visible," in comparison to *al-Bātin*, or that which is "inward, concealed, obscured." Paulo Coelho's 2005 novel, *The Zahir*, details a man's obsession with his wife after her disappearance, and draws upon the short story by Jorge Luis Borges "El Zahir" from the collection *El Aleph* [1949]. In direct contrast to Coelho's conception of the zahir Borges shows how any object can hold an all-encompassing power and by extension that all objects and beings are endowed with significance, power, and strength.

Cosimo, without details from *il Cavaliere Avvocato*, considers the many possible forms of love that might have motivated the latter to agree to help the Ottoman pirates. Cosimo's fascination with storytelling and its ties to life seem to have blossomed from his half-uncle's revelation from which Cosimo can ascribe Zaira's identity to that of *il Cavaliere Avvocato's* lover, wife, or daughter. Cosimo associates Zaira with *il Cavalier Avvocato's* actions from his failed irrigation planning and subpar apiary tending to his treacherous act of assisting Ottoman corsairs because:

Se *il Cavaliere*, andando verso la nave pirata, intendeva raggiungere questa Zaira, doveva dunque trattarsi d'una donna che stava là, in quei paesi ottomani. Forse tutta la sua vita era stata dominata dalla nostalgia di questa donna, forse era lei l'immagine di felicità perduta che egli inseguiva allevando api o tracciando canali. Forse era un'amante, una sposa che aveva avuto laggiù, nei giardini di questi paesi oltremare, oppure più verosimilmente una figlia, una sua figlia che non vedeva da bambina. Per cercar lei doveva aver tentato per anni d'aver rapporto con qualcuna delle navi turche o moresche che capitavano nei nostri porti, e finalmente dovevano avergli dato sue notizie. Forse aveva appreso che era schiava, e per riscattarla gli avevano proposto d'informarli sui viaggi delle tartane d'Ombrosa. Oppure era uno scotto che doveva pagare lui per essere riammesso fra loro e imbarcato per il paese di Zaira (Calvino 1991: 670).

Fate and the machinations of this novel plot would not have *il Cavaliere Avvocato* live to see Zaira again. *Il Cavaliere Avvocato* – who was constantly struggling between two worlds, two languages, two loves – will meet his physically unpleasant and brutal fate without its description being overly graphic.

Il Cavaliere Avvocato's demise will not only affect Cosimo emotionally but will also reunify him with his hunting dog, *Ottimo Massimo*. After being taken forcibly aboard an Ottoman ship, “s’udi un urlo, un tonfo, poi silenzio [...] qualcosa galleggiava in mezzo al mare come trasportato da una corrente, un oggetto, [...] e vide che non era un oggetto ma una testa, una testa calzata d’un fez col fiocco, e [Cosimo] riconobbe il viso riverso del

Cavalier Avvocato” (Calvino 1991: 671). Cosimo, because he is equally unable and unwilling to leave the mast of the ship, sends his devoted Ottimo Massimo to fetch il Cavalier Avvocato. Cosimo admonished Ottimo Massimo to do this more gently than when he and Cosimo would work in concert on their hunting trips. This effort spoke to Cosimo’s hope that his half-uncle was not deceased like his felled prey, but rather, still alive. Alas, il Cavalier Avvocato was no more as the following description of the disappearance of il Cavaliere Avvocato’s body and his life with it attests:

-Per la collottola, Ottimo Massimo, ho detto! -insisté Cosimo, ma il cane sollevò la testa per la barba e la spinse fin sul bordo della barca, e si vede che di collottola non ce n’era più, non c’era più corpo né nulla, era solo una testa, la testa di Enea Silvio Carrega mozzata da un colpo di scimitarra (Ibid.).

Interestingly, Calvino would write in his 1960 “Nota ai *Nostri antenati*” that he intended originally to impart the awe and fear inspiring theatricality of Ottoman scimitars to his 1952 novel, *Il visconte dimezzato* (Ibid. 1210). Yet, it is il Cavalier Avvocato who would take that strike from an Ottoman scimitar, and not an enemy canon ball as viscount Medardo had. Calvino would in the same excerpt illustrate how he conceived a new but resonant war story after *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* with the writing of *Il visconte dimezzato*:

Dunque, da un po’ di tempo pensavo a un uomo tagliato in due per lungo, e che ognuna delle due parti andava per conto suo. La storia di un soldato, in una guerra moderna? Ma la solita satira espressionista era frita e rifrita: meglio una guerra dei tempi andati; i Turchi, un colpo di scimitarra, no: meglio un colpo di cannone, così si sarebbe creduto che una metà era andata distrutta, invece poi saltava fuori (Ibid.).

After *Il visconte dimezzato*, Calvino would continue engaging related themes of the definition of humanity in *Il barone rampante*, especially through the lives of those novels

and novellas' protagonists. Il Cavaliere Avvocato's demise would not mark the end of Cosimo's story or life. It was rather another formative milestone along his way.

While Battista's rebellion may have sparked Cosimo's, that of il Cavaliere Avvocato would determine the tenor with which the young baron would continue his life in the trees and whether a woman would be able to compete with or supersede the importance of that for him. Il Cavalier Avvocato's loyalty to Zaira caused him to betray his loyalty to his family and his native land. In contrast, Cosimo's loyalty to justice and commitment to his arboreal life as above all other loyalties demonstrate what Biagio would call Cosimo's obstinacy and "sovrumana volontà" (Calvino 1991: 558). Cosimo's life and story is crafted by what Calvino describes as the "spontanea interna propulsione a quello che è sempre stato e resta il mio vero tema narrativo: una persona si pone volontariamente una difficile regola e la segue fino alle ultime conseguenze, perché senza di questa non sarebbe se stesso né per se né per gli altri" (Ibid. 1213). As the story of il Cavaliere Avvocato's life and its intertwinement with clothes and language towards a definition of humanity to encompass nonhuman animals in wartime comes to a close, let us open the book's pages back towards the beginning. Cosimo's beginning as a rebel, a hunter, an inspiration and teller of stories, a leader, a son, and a lover will also combine the role of clothing with questions of language at the heart of a definition of storied human animals in Calvino's war novels and novellas.

3.3 *Cosimo's Hunt for Life, Love, and Justice with and without Viola*

The essence of life lies in the beauty of its multiplicity⁶⁷ equally of one's life adventures and misadventures as well as those of others who are inextricably a part of it. Cosimo's life and his story are no less textured, varied, and contoured by his learning and his experiences than in his defeats and triumphs. Cosimo's adventures include his hunting of nonhuman animals as well as a fortuitous encounter with a Spanish family exiled to living in the trees. Yet, most of all, Cosimo will come to understand better the creatures of the earth - human, animal, and plant - because of love in his pursuit, fleeting rapture, and loss of Viola, throughout his life. None of the above could have taken place if Cosimo had not taken to the trees, however. It is this arch of Cosimo's movements in life and story that will be traced more thoroughly in this section of the chapter, as well as his multifaceted conduits of knowledge, both experiential, affective, and logical.

Many of these critical lessons are discovered or understood in that in-between space, which allows for many transformations in Cosimo – spiritual, metaphysical, and intellectual. Cosimo's formative rebellious stance at the dinner table would evolve into something greater beyond one young man's expression to demonstrate a depth of conviction to ideals and to self that cannot be circumscribed. Indeed, all his family members had hoped Cosimo's stance would prove to be an isolated incident of freedom of expression and not something that had the power to shake himself and others to their core.

⁶⁷ Cf. Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*: “Ma il senso dell'esistenza, come quello dell'arte e del linguaggio e dell'amore, è molteplice, all'infinito” (1946: 108). See also Calvino's fifth Norton lecture from *Lezioni americane* [1985] “Molteplicità” (cf. Calvino 1995 (1): 715-733).

Only in this way could Cosimo's rebellion be easily dismissed and permit a chance for a return to normalcy by defining "un limite, una proporzione al suo atto di protesta" (Calvino 1991: 573). However, what began as an idea that Cosimo brought into action will only come more ardently affirmed based on his learning experiences among the trees.

Furthermore, what at the moment might appear to be mere child's play demonstrates the endurance of Cosimo's rebellion. The seeds of that were already apparent in Cosimo would only be encouraged by Viola and their difficult love story. It is only later that Viola will fully realize how groundbreaking Cosimo's ascent to the trees is and was. It is poignant that Cosimo's first battle for survival is framed by his encounters with Viola in the trees before and afterward. Almost all of Cosimo's life he will battle between his love for Viola and his love and adherence to his ideals. While the reader and this novel's writer might appreciate Cosimo's absolute adherence to his struggle in the name of great ideals like justice and freedom, being a leader can be lonely. Cosimo will have to confront his self and struggle to understand himself his whole life long. Yet, his lessons can inspire all of us and complicate the question of humanity and our place in the world and as a part of it and all its beings – human, nonhuman animal, and plant.

When Cosimo stumbles upon Viola's family's garden at the outset of his initial arboreal adventures, and they begin talking, Viola makes a game out of Cosimo's decision. Yet by his words and his actions, Cosimo shows her the depth of his self-assurance as well as the strength, fortitude, vigor of his internal compass. Even before they can discuss the borderlines of his new realm, Viola sees through Cosimo's lie that he is a fruit thief, and not the son of a nobleman, based on his clothing. Viola and Cosimo are already trying to see the essence and truth of one another long before they become lovers later in the novel:

La ragazzina bionda scoppiò in una risata che durò tutto un volo d'altalena, su e giù. – Ma va'! I ragazzi che rubano la frutta io li conosco! Sono tutti miei amici! E quelli vanno scalzi, in maniche di camicia, spettinati, non con le ghette e il parucchino! -- Mio fratello diventò rosso come la buccia della mela. L'esser preso in giro non solo per l'incipriatura, cui non teneva affatto, ma anche per le ghette, cui teneva moltissimo, e l'esser giudicato d'aspetto inferiore a un ladro di frutta, a quella genia fino a un momento prima disprezzata, e soprattutto lo scoprire che quella damigella che faceva da padrona nel giardino dei D'Ondariva era amica di tutti i ladri di frutta ma non amica sua, tutte queste cose insieme lo riempirono di dispetto, vergogna e gelosia (Calvino 1991: 564).

The feelings of spite, shame, and jealousy that fill Cosimo from Viola's words at the tender ages of twelve and eleven respectively will continue in the rumors he hears about her when they do eventually become lovers. While their diverging definitions of love will cause a permanent rift in their relationship later in the novel, their initial agreements on a definition of Cosimo and Viola's territories would temporarily bring them together.

After Viola's insult to his station, his person and his dress Cosimo does get the chance to explain the bounds of his territory, however. If he can move from tree to tree without touching the ground, he considers this the definition of his new arboreal realm. Viola, on the other hand, argues that she has her own set of rules, which Cosimo will consider only a pale afterthought to his expectations of himself. Viola states: "io posso salire nel tuo territorio e sono un'ospite sacra, va bene? Entro ed esco quando voglio. Tu invece sei sacro e inviolabile finché sei sugli alberi, nel tuo territorio, ma appena tocchi il suolo del mio giardino diventi mio schiavo e vieni incatenato" (Calvino 1991: 567).

Cosimo does not take the bait when Viola tries to trick him into pushing her on the swing, which would cause him to plant his feet on the ground to have the necessary force to propel her and her swing off the ground, or to take a ride on it himself. Indeed, he does not fall for any of her words or fall physically from the trees or the swing. As he states for her and the

reader clearly and succinctly: “No, io non scendo nel tuo giardino e nemmeno nel mio. Per me è tutto territorio nemico ugualmente. [...] Io non vado a terra perché non voglio” (Ibid. 567-568). Cosimo only runs a real risk of breaking his own rules when, instead of following his reasoning, he allows himself to be persuaded by Viola. She proposes the opportunities for Cosimo to leave his territory solely for her amusement and lets his decision to stay in the trees become the basis of a game by inciting him to play with an inclusive and suggestive “giochiamo” (Ibid. 568). The place where this charged game takes place is an attempted Fall of Cosimo’s ideals as the very outset of his rebellious convictions conveys “la riminiscenza biblica della scena. Il giardino proibito, l’uomo, la donna, l’albero, la mela, l’inganno: con la differenza (importante) che Viola sembra personificare contemporaneamente due personaggi: Eva e il serpente” (Bonsaver 1995: 239). It is important to note that when Viola dreams of Cosimo later, it will be of him in the trees and not solely because it was in a certain time and place that she met and knew him. Rather, perhaps it also stems from a “longing for the lost paradise [as] the reason why children love nothing so much as a seat high in the fork of a tree up to which they can climb, retire from this world of worries and daydream” (Eisler 1951: 43-44). Viola and Cosimo were never fated to be truly joined in either an Edenic or a terrestrial world. Nevertheless, their stories would converge throughout their lives despite the sour note this first encounter would give the tenor of their relationship from the outset.

Even at this tender age, there is evidence that the pair will not be able to stay together. Viola and her life story are still dependent on her parents and their decisions, which is demonstrated when she was forced to move with her family away from Ombrosa. Before she was forced to depart from Ombrosa, Viola will patronizingly dismiss Cosimo’s

depth of conviction with nonhuman animal imagery. Cosimo's attempt to join the fruit thieves' band to please Viola is not only not a failure. It also leaves him vulnerable to becoming the one who is hunted and not the hunter. Cosimo's skills in tree walking will help the fruit thieves escape the farmers' wrath, but the young baron cannot escape his station in a noble family. Their flight through the trees foreshadows Cosimo's 'bird-brained' metamorphoses later in the novel when he is driven mad with jealousy at Viola's definitive departure from his life (cf. Calvino 1991: 735). The farmer's dogs can do little in the trees to help catch the young boys whom they saw escape their grasp "per l'aria come uccelli. Li inseguirono, correndo insieme ai cani latranti, ma dovettero aggirare la siepe,⁶⁸ poi il muro, poi in quel punto del torrente non c'erano ponti, e per trovare un guado persero tempo ed i monelli erano lontani che correvano" (Ibid. 582). For all the positive associations of a bird's freedom and mobility in flight, Cosimo, unlike other birds, can never gather worms by plucking them out with his beak with his feet touching soil. Viola shows him that he is confined by his own decisions and not free when she says ironically to Cosimo "con un tono gentile: -Ah, sì...Bravo merlo!" in response to his delineation of all he had done in the trees thus far (Ibid. 590). Viola manages to undermine Cosimo's life decisions, triumphs, and skills with a few cutting words by comparing him to a bird. Afterward, he will have to defeat a cat, a bird's typical enemy, to reassert his place in Viola's eyes.

⁶⁸ Cf. The opening lines from Giacomo Leopardi's "Infinito": "Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle, / E questa siepe, che da tanta parte / Dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude" *Poesie*. Edited by Rolando Damiani and Mario Andrea Rigoni. (Milano: Mondadori, 1987), 47.

Viola sees Cosimo's rebellion and the foundation of his arboreal realm as Biagio and his family do as merely "a way for Cosimo to prolong his childhood and to liberate himself from strict rules of an aristocratic family" (Mazurkeiwicz 2012: 49). Cosimo's ascent to the trees does much more than that for Cosimo personally and humanity at large. Cosimo continues his path, not only intending to pass the time or merely to survive. He cultivates in the trees an avid passion for reading and develops hunting skills after a battle for the fittest between Cosimo and a fierce and feral cat. Early in Cosimo's arboreal adventures, Biagio informs the reader about Cosimo's innermost struggles. Specifically, about Cosimo's dissatisfaction with himself and how he tries to funnel his energy into productive outlets such as:

quel bisogno d'entrare in un elemento difficilmente possedibile che aveva spinto mio fratello a far sue le vie degli alberi, ora gli lavorava ancora dentro, malsoddisfatto, e gli comunicava la smania d'una penetrazione più minuta, d'un rapporto che lo legasse a ogni foglia e scaglia e piuma e frullo. Era quell'amore che ha l'uomo cacciatore per ciò che è vivo e non sa esprimerlo altro che puntandoci il fucile; Cosimo ancora non lo sapeva riconoscere e cercava di sfogarlo accanendosi nella sua esplorazione (Calvino 1991: 598).

Not only will the following battle with the cat initiate as well as solidify Cosimo's position in the trees. In his explorations of his new realm with encounters good and bad, he will succeed in "letteralmente creando lo spazio del racconto" (Serra 2006: 177). Let us see how Cosimo's life will unfold in the next installment of his story replete with adventurous and amorous moments.

The following detailed battle with the feral cat is one of Cosimo's first tests of survival and bravery in the trees. Significantly Cosimo does not grapple with a jungle cat or a bear. Rather, an undomesticated wild cat will threaten his life. While the dynamic between domesticated and wild animals among one species has been analyzed in Calvino's

work with regards to wolves and puppies in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, we can now examine a similar dynamic at work in *Il barone rampante* between wildcats like Battista's tiger sexuality and Cosimo's battle with a cat on the threshold between wild and domestic. Furthermore, the interrelated triangle between dogs, cats, and birds, as allies and enemies in the web of prey and predator, will resonate throughout the novel. Cosimo's link with cats is an integral part of his connection with nature as much as society. Presently Cosimo's first feline encounter will be engraved in his mind as the very picture of fear. More terrifying is the devil that does not wear horns or the evil that lulls you into a false sense of security with apparent familiarity or docility, as shown in the case of this cat. The dexterity and intelligence of Cosimo's survival, hunting, and strategic battle skills will be imbued with the disparity of the appearance of the struggle to its intensity.

As Biagio will go on to narrate the cat Cosimo encounters was no ordinary cat.

Both its body and

l'immagine del gatto, appena vista scostando il ramo, restava nitida nella sua mente, e dopo un momento Cosimo era di nuovo tremante di paura. Perché quel gatto, in tutto uguale a un gatto, era un gatto terribile, spaventoso, da mettersi a gridare al solo vederlo [...] tutto questo gli fece capire di trovarsi davanti al più feroce gatto selvatico del bosco (Calvino 1991: 598-599).

Nevertheless, Cosimo does battle this fierce cat and succeeds. Cosimo initially outmaneuvers the cat by stepping down to a lower branch as the cat leaps towards him. Yet, in repeating this move, Cosimo eventually finds himself trapped on the lowest branch of the tree. Figuratively stuck between a rock and a hard place, Cosimo is forced to choose either his life or his principles, which are integral to the core of his very being and his life. Or he must find a middle road while

in lui si scontrassero due istinti – quello naturale di porsi in salvo e quello dell’ostinazione di non scendere a costo della vita – strinse nello stesso tempo le cosce e le ginocchia al ramo; al gatto parve che fosse quello il momento di buttarsi, mentre il ragazzo era lì oscillante; gli volò addosso in un arruffio di pelo, unghie irte e soffiò; Cosimo non seppe far di meglio che chiudere gli occhi e avanzare lo spadino, una mossa da scemo, che il gatto facilmente evitò e gli fu sulla testa, sicuro di portarlo giù con sé sotto le unghie. Un’artigliata prese Cosimo sulla guancia, ma invece di cadere, serrato com’era al ramo coi ginocchi, s’allungò riverso lungo il ramo. Tutto il contrario di quel che s’aspettava il gatto, il quale si trovò sbalestrato di fianco, a cader lui (Ibid. 559-60).

Cosimo used his instincts and his intelligence to conquer the nonhuman animal attacking him. In doing so, he was able to stay true to himself and his beliefs and to live to fight another day. Not only is Cosimo triumphant, but as a sign of both Cosimo’s victory and his integration with nature, he will make his first of many animal-skin hats from the cat he conquered.

The significance of clothing as a part of identity formation, as it has been for Battista and il Cavaliere Avvocato, has touched upon Cosimo’s life story as well. After winning the battle Cosimo assimilates his new arboreal self with the cat he has defeated by making the cat’s skin into a hat for himself. He does this to display and further affirm his courage, masculinity, and victory as much to himself as to others:

[Cosimo] era salvo, lordo di sangue, con la bestia selvatica stecchita sullo spadino come su uno spiedo, e una guancia strappata da sotto l’occhio al mento da una triplice unghiata. Urlava di dolore e di vittoria e non capiva niente e si teneva stretto al ramo, alla spada, al cadavere di gatto, nel momento disperato di chi ha vinto la prima volta ed ora sa che strazio è vincere, e sa che è ormai impegnato a continuare la via che ha scelto e non gli sarà dato lo scampo di chi fallisce (Calvino 1991: 600).

In the Darwinian scheme of a “struggle for existence” based on “natural selection,” there is a winner and a loser in the competition for existence (2008: 62-80, 81-132). Cosimo showed himself and others his accomplishment by reinvigorating the cat and its body with

purpose when “se ne fece un berretto. Fu il primo dei berretti di pelo che gli vedemmo portare per tutta la vita” (Calvino 1991: 602). Cosimo’s donning of the skin of the cat he has just defeated speaks to two important but different ideas about codes of dress. The first is in a figurative and symbolic sense of integrating within the natural animal world by assimilating an animal mask from his conquered enemy. The other is a practical matter of essential physical survival when exposed to the elements. This timeless battle between man and beast exhibited by Cosimo and the cat here would be the initiation of Cosimo’s greater communion with nature. Cosimo’s donning of animals’ skin as clothes resonate with the study of werewolves we have discussed previously. Although “no subhuman animal makes or wears clothes [...] the characteristic transformation of ‘man into wolf’ is affected through man ‘aping’ the beast of prey by donning [...] the pelt of a wolf” (Eisler 1951: 38). For Cosimo to follow the life path he has chosen, he must not only defend himself from the danger of wild or domesticated animals and the elements. He must also clothe and feed himself by honing his hunting skills. These will be greatly improved by the advantageous and serendipitous arrival of a faithful hunting dog, which is a creature that embodies man’s best friend and a cat’s arch-nemesis simultaneously.

Following his triumphant victory over the cat in the woods, Cosimo further develops symbiotic relationships with various creatures as he further develops his hunting skills. In addition to the fruits and vegetables graciously given by or traded with the neighbors, Cosimo was even able to garner other types of comestibles from two amiable creatures, a goat and a hen. These creatures, in particular, recall Pamela’s own beloved goat and duck from *Il visconte dimezzato* (cf. Calvino 1991: 420). Without having to leave his arboreal realm Cosimo

beveva latte fresco ogni mattino; s'era fatta amica una capra, che andava ad arrampicarsi su una forcella d'ulivo, un posto facile, a due palmi da terra, anzi, non che ci s'arrampicasse, ci saliva con le zampe di dietro, cosicché lui sceso con un secchio sulla forcella la mungeva. Lo stesso accordo aveva con una gallina, una rossa, padovana, molto brava. Le aveva fatto un nido segreto, nel cavo d'un tronco, e un giorno sì e uno no ci trovava un uovo, che beveva dopo averci fatto due buchi con lo spillo (Ibid. 620).

Despite these domesticated and civilized exchanges between farmers and nonhuman animals with Cosimo, the urban legend that Cosimo was becoming or resembling an animal such as the cat he had defeated continued to be propagated. As he had recognized the wild cat by its eyes, so too were Cosimo's eyes said to have "diventati luminosi nel buio come i gatti e gufi" (Ibid. 621). Cosimo's acquisition of a hunting dog does not tip the balance towards his total integration with nature. Rather, it would keep Cosimo in touch with both human civilization and the natural animal world. By not having his feet on the ground but in the trees, hunting proved to be a challenge since Cosimo could neither find nor pick up the prey on his own. Cosimo's inability to hunt autonomously was compounded by the idea that "un necessario complemento umano gli mancava, nella sua vita da cacciatore: un cane" (Ibid. 623). His younger brother, Biagio, describes how poor a substitute he tried to make for a hunting dog for Cosimo. In his own words, unlike a devoted hunting dog, Biagio could not abandon his family responsibilities to help his older brother as he relates: "le lezioni con l'Abate, lo studio, il servir messa, i pasti coi genitori mi trattenevano; i cento doveri del viver familiare cui io mi sottomettevo, perché in fondo la frase che sentivo sempre ripetere: «In una famiglia, di ribelle ne basta uno,» non era senza ragione, e lasciò la sua impronta su tutta la mia vita" (Ibid.). Auspiciously for Biagio and Cosimo, the nonhuman animal that could be Cosimo's devoted hunting partner fortuitously appears on the scene.

Ottimo Massimo is a dog who will not only help Cosimo hunt, and, as we have previously discussed in this chapter, will also come to his aid during the battle against Ottoman pirates. This dog is also a four-legged farrier and messenger who will lead Cosimo back to Viola. Ottimo Massimo does not come easily to Cosimo, however. First, he does not even appear to be a dog when Cosimo first spots him: “fendette l’erba uno che veniva a salti *più da pesce che da cane*, una specie *di delfino* che nuotava affiorando un muso più aguzzo e delle orecchie più ciondoloni *d’un segugio*. Dietro, *era pesce*; pareva nuotasse sguazzando pinne, oppure zampe *da palmipede*, senza gambe e lunghissimo. Uscì nel pulito: *era un bassotto* (Calvino 1991: 624, my emphasis). Comparing the agility of a fish or a dolphin or a web-footed waterfowl in the water illustrates the basset hound’s ease on land. How this basset hound will become Cosimo’s hunting dog, and companion is not easily apparent either because of an ethical dilemma that circumscribes the significance of their very first encounter as a human and a hunter. Namely, Biagio relates that Cosimo asked himself the following:

ma si poteva sparare a una volpe levata da un cane altrui? Cosimo la lasciò passare e non sparò. Il bassotto alzò il muso verso di lui, con lo sguardo dei cani quando non capiscono e non sanno che possono aver ragione a non capire, e si ributtò a naso sotto, dietro la volpe. [...] Il bassotto gli riportò la volpe. Cosimo sparò e la prese. Il bassotto fu il suo cane; gli mise nome Ottimo Massimo (Ibid. 625).

It is only through action in conjunction with giving him a name, the pact of which reveals a mutual depth of commitment, that Cosimo and Ottimo Massimo come to belong to each other equally. As in all relationships – familial, friendships, romantic, platonic, professional –connections are forged and constantly reaffirmed by language. Between Cosimo the hunter and his hunting dog Ottimo Massimo there indeed was a:

continuo tra la terra e i rami correva dall'uno all'altro un dialogo, un'intelligenza, d'abbai monosillabi e di schiocchi di lingua e dita. Quella necessaria presenza che per il cane è l'uomo e per l'uomo è il cane, non li tradiva mai, né l'uno né l'altro; e per quanto diversi da tutti gli uomini e cani del mondo, potevan dirsi, come uomo e cane, felici (Ibid. 627).

Before, Cosimo Ottimo Massimo did have a master that he was equally devoted to, namely Cosimo's neighbor, Viola. How Ottimo Massimo will bring the two youths together along the fault lines of humanity and animality and logic and imagination will be discussed below.

In finding Ottimo Massimo Cosimo's identity and place in the world as a human being is reaffirmed. This symbiotic relationship between a human and nonhuman animal does not reaffirm a power hierarchy. Rather, Cosimo's humanity reaches greater heights for his partnership with a nonhuman animal. While man and beast work together to combat a common prey, their relationship causes Cosimo's humanity to flourish as a being considerate of human and nonhuman animals alike. Disorienting to his family and townsmen though they may be, Cosimo's hunting excursions accompanied by Ottimo Massimo do not make him appear more physically human. In fact, with Ottimo Massimo's dutiful assistance and companionship, Cosimo and his body become even more incorporated into nature and his arboreal environment. Biagio and others perceived Cosimo's immersion in the natural setting from Ombrosa with negativity and detrimental effects in a similar way that Pamela's retreat to the woods following il Gramo's unreciprocated advances would cause il Buono to worry about her rustic nature becoming only more pronounced if she were to stay in the woods. While Pamela does not undergo such a metamorphosis, perhaps on account of her being a shepherdess amid nature all of her life, Cosimo's life story would be different. As the eldest son of a noble family,

Cosimo's choice to live in the trees would not only change his perspective. Nature would determine what clothes he would wear and how this would reflect his character. The townspeople and Biagio were under the impression that Cosimo

avesse ormai sensi e istinti diversi da noi, e quelle pelli che s'era conciato per vestiario corrispondevano a un mutamento totale della sua natura. Certo lo stare di continuo a contatto delle scorze d'albero, l'occhio affisato al muoversi delle penne, al pelo, alle scaglie, a quella gamma di colori che questa apparenza del mondo presenta; e poi la verde corrente che circola come un sangue d'altro mondo nelle vene delle foglie: tutte queste forme di vita così lontane dall'umana come un fusto di pianta, un becco di tordo, una branchia di pesce, questi confini del selvatico nel quale così profondamente s'era spinto, potevano ormai modellare il suo animo, fargli perdere ogni sembianza d'uomo (Calvino 1991: 628).

While Cosimo may no longer have resembled the ideal of a young Italian nobleman, his companionship with Ottimo Massimo would accentuate a profound spiritual depth to his humanity, if not in outward appearance. The relationship between Cosimo and Ottimo Massimo, the hunter, and his dog, has both a literary precedent and lineage in Italian and world literature. The praise of that relationship in ancient Greek, contemporary Italian, and Irish literature, which will be discussed below, may well undermine the criticism of Cosimo's human countrymen.

Spanning in forms from the classical epic to the novel, the short story, and the postmodern novel, as well as in authors from Homer to Daniel Defoe, Italo Svevo and James Joyce, each of the following comparative literary texts engage the dynamic between a hunter and his dog. We begin chronologically with the misadventures of Odysseus in Homer's epic poem. After twenty years of Herculean tasks and battles, despite the clever disguise Athena had outfitted him with, Odysseus will be recognized first by his faithful hunting dog, Argos, even before his wife, Penelope, or their son, Prince Telemachus (1997: XIII.396-438, XVII.291-317). Indeed, after Odysseus's long-awaited return, the old

hunting dog goes in peace to his final resting ground (Ibid.). In this poetic act of utter loyalty to the end, Odysseus would shed a tear for Argos and not for any other person or creature he would become reunited with after all his travels and travails. As Ortiz Robles comments Cosimo's role as a hunter upon his ascent to the trees speaks to the literary "hunting plot – one of the oldest, if not the oldest, plot of all – [which] traces the relation between hunters and hunted as a special relation that sometimes blurs the distinction between humans and animals" (2016: 21). These blurred boundary lines are reinforced by the analysis of the outer garments masking and unmasking Odysseus and Argos alike.

Their encounter

is also one of mutual recognition: not only has Argos recognized Odysseus in spite of his disguise; Odysseus has also recognized Argos, a dog he had known only as a puppy, and who, now neglected, abandoned, and tick-infected, is also something of a beggar [...] Odysseus and Argos thus mirror each other, warriors now come to resemble beggars, each on the outside looking into the household they once reigned (Ibid. 58).

Yet, not all hunters have such an unbreakable bond with their hunting dogs, as we shall see in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

This text is a rather pertinent piece of comparative literary criticism as well in this chapter on account of Viola's exclamation upon her return to Ombrosa when Ottimo Massimo leads her back to see Cosimo still in the trees: "Sembri Robinson!" (Calvino 1991: 710). Although nonhuman animals are absent from Calvino's analysis of Defoe's novel in his 1957 essay, "Defoe: *Robinson Crusoe*, il giornale delle virtù mercantile," Calvino would describe Defoe as "il poeta della paziente lotta dell'uomo con la materia, dell'umiltà e difficoltà e grandezza del fare, della gioia di vedere nascere le cose dalle nostre mani" (Calvino 1995 (1): 834). While there are many aspects of the seventeenth-

century text that could apply to the present discussion, we will continue to focus on the specifics of the role of the hunter and his hunting dog. This understanding between master and his hunting dog is purposefully and starkly disconnected in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* [1719] when the captain's dog is unable to do Crusoe's hunting. Although Crusoe wishes the dog to hunt for food and is unable to protect Crusoe from the wild animals of the island, such as the goats because he is afraid of them (2003: 119). Ortiz Robles indicates a hitherto unexplored avenue of literary criticism with regards to Defoe's text:

Critics have read Defoe's novel as an allegory of the foundation of political sovereignty based on the concept of colonial protestant individualism, but little attention has been paid to the fact that Crusoe's process of reinvention is entirely premised on the domestication of animals—goats, cats, a parrot—and the use he makes of them for food, clothes, shelter, and companionship (2016: 4).

This break with the literary and social precedent of a hunter and his dog presents a terrifying upheaval of what the reader assumes about Crusoe and raises the following question: "Was Robinson Crusoe bored?" (Derrida 2010 (2): 2). We can better situate Derrida's query in dialogue with Agamben's critical analysis of Heidegger's philosophy.

Specifically, Agamben summarizes Heidegger's philosophy as being "dedicated first to a broad analysis—around two hundred pages—of 'profound boredom' as a fundamental emotional tonality, and then immediately after to an even broader inquiry into the animal's relation with its environment and man's relation with his world" (2004: 49-50). Agamben, building upon Heidegger's analysis, marks another line of demarcation between humans and animals by arguing that the temporary condition of boredom is a uniquely human characteristic that nonhuman animals do not experience. Whether Robinson Crusoe was bored or not, it was certainly a motivating force for Cosimo to live and learn more about life. Cosimo's boredom stems from his disappointment with both

reading adventure novels and telling the story of his battle-like adventures, which will be discussed presently in this subsection of the chapter. Cosimo and his arboreal utopian realms relate to that of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* as both novels involve and differ in their "long discussion between Robinson [or Cosimo] and so many beasts. And the theater of that discussion is, indissociably, a theater of solitary sovereignty, of the assertion of mastery (of self, over slaves, over savages, and beasts, without speaking — because the point is precisely not to talk about them — without speaking of women)" (Derrida 2010 (2): 28). Although women may be largely absent in Defoe's novel, Cosimo's tenuous autonomy in his arboreal realm comes under threat when he tries to include women in it, especially Viola. Nonhuman animals, such as the goat, hen, and Ottimo Massimo, only enrich and improve Cosimo's life in the trees. Ottimo Massimo's special place in the novel can also be compared to two other hunting dogs of Italian and Irish twentieth-century novels.

The relationship between the man and his hunting dog is continued in twentieth-century literary re-visitations of Argo and Odysseus. In the tome by James Joyce, *Ulysses* [1922], the honorable hunting dog Argos is given only a brief nod to as Old Rudolph Bloom's dying request is that he begs Ulysses to look after his dog Athos (2000: 80). In contrast, in the short story by Italo Svevo, "Argo e il suo padrone" [1934], the entire text celebrates and complicates the seemingly imperfect language of gestures through which a hunter and his dog come to understand each other, which is a concept Calvino has made such rich use of in his *Il barone rampante* (cf. 1985: 96-113). Another nonhuman animal narrator of a story such as Svevo's Argo has been introduced and discussed concerning Leo Tolstoy's "Kholstomer. The History of a Horse" in the chapter on *Il visconte dimezzato*. It

is not only this companionship in arms between man and dog against nature that is celebrated in literature.

These stories also present the problem of the essence of hunting as having evolved over millennia from being a necessity for survival into a sport. Reacquisition of some of hunting's original purpose has been recovered by Cosimo's return to the natural world without breaking away *tout court* from civilization. This disconnect between need and diversion sparks "the issues of hunting [a]s, therefore, a microcosm of that larger philosophical debate between 'other-regarding' and 'self-regarding' people and organizations" (Thomas 1983: 1). Cosimo does not seek superiority over Ottimo Massimo, the birds in the trees he shares his living space with, or over his family, friends, and lovers, but rather, over his former self. This notion will foment Cosimo's growth as a human being and in his capabilities as a conscientious hunter that will integrate him more fully with humanity and animality. Cosimo's development as a hunter of animals and a pursuer of justice based on his principles, even in the face of war, will also complement his pursuit of love. While Cosimo's battle against his half-uncle il Cavaliere Avvocato has already been discussed the love of storytelling it instills in Cosimo will cause him to realize that, despite the depth of his adherence to his ideals, his life in the trees, his bravery on the contested field of battle, all of those mean little to nothing without love.

Cosimo's telling and retelling before crowds of his fellow townspeople his feats of bravery in the battle against the Ottoman corsairs do not assuage a yearning in his soul. Perhaps the young baron was inspired by the last words of his half-uncle, the name Zaira when he realized that living, battling, and storytelling are found wanting without love to imbue them with meaning. No matter how many times he changes and embellishes the

story of that night for different audiences, Biagio relates that Cosimo feels: “Ma in tutta quella smania [di raccontare/fantasticare] c’era un’insoddisfazione più profonda, una mancanza, in quel cercare gente che l’ascoltasse c’era una ricerca diversa. Cosimo non conosceva ancora l’amore, e ogni esperienza, senza quella, che è? Che vale aver rischiato la vita, quando ancora della vita non conosci il sapore?” (Calvino 1991: 676). Love will not only preoccupy his thoughts during the daytime. Cosimo would become animal and also look at animals to try to understand something of love: “A notte, quando nelle case s’accendevano le luci e sui rami Cosimo era solo con i gialli occhi dei gufi, gli veniva da sognare l’amore. [...] Allora, per vincere il pudore naturale dei suoi occhi, si fermava a osservare gli amori degli animali. A primavera il mondo sopra gli alberi era un mondo nuziale” (Ibid. 677). It is when he chances to observe Ottimo Massimo as he engages in small love affairs that Cosimo realizes that he is not just a man apart, but a species unto himself (Ibid.). Only later will Cosimo leave the sidelines and his scientific observations to actively participate in love’s knowledge, as we will see upon Viola’s return to Ombrosa: “Si conobbero. Lui conobbe lei e se stesso, perché in verità non s’era mai saputo. E lei conobbe lui e se stessa, perché pur essendosi saputa sempre, mai s’era potuta riconoscere così” (Ibid. 713). Until that time, however, Cosimo’s life path would be pulled into a detour that will ultimately guide him back to Viola. Only after his quest for knowledge takes him to foreign lands will he be initiated into a lover’s knowledge as well. Interestingly, the place he travels to is where Cosimo both is and is not the only human ever to choose to live in the trees.

Cosimo's journey to Spain was hinted at indirectly in a story long before he heard about the tree-inhabiting Spanish nobles of Olivabassa. Biagio, in describing the physical and figurative boundaries of Cosimo's place in the world, relates the following tale:

non so se sia vero quello che si legge nei libri, che in antichi tempi una scimmia che fosse partita da Roma saltando da un albero all'altro poteva arrivare in Spagna senza mai toccare terra. Ai tempi miei di luoghi così fitti d'alberi c'era solo il golfo d'Ombrosa da un capo all'altro e la sua valle fin sulle creste dei monti, e per questo i nostri posti erano nominati dappertutto (Calvino 1991: 577).

Indeed, the name of both Cosimo and Biagio's native Ombrosa, the shadowy or well-shaded place because of its abundant tree cover, and that of this new place in Spain, called Olivabassa, the low-hanging olive or olive tree, are definitive for such an arboreal-centered novel. A good comparison is based on both similarities and differences. Cosimo will find that although this family lives in the trees as he does, unlike him, they do not do so willingly.

From the very outset, Cosimo would not find the sense of community with these tree-inhabiting Spanish nobles for which he had hoped. Rather, he is once again seen as strange and an outsider, even to their society. Indeed, the very language these Spanish noblemen use to describe themselves has centered around the idea that their being in the trees is but a temporary condition and not a permanent state in their lives. The Count that Cosimo meets calls him and his family "*desterrados*" – those without land beneath their feet (Calvino 1991: 679). The interpreter also transmits the Count's wondering if Cosimo, too, is "un esule" – an exile (Ibid.). Cosimo responds to the reason why he "compie questo itinerario" (Ibid.) For him, living in the trees is indeed neither a punishment imposed by others nor is it idle amusement. Rather, it is on account of something deeper that speaks to Cosimo's soul. He "pens[a] [gli] si addica, sebbene nessuno [glie]l'imponga" (Ibid.).

After Cosimo encounters the Spanish girl, Ursula,⁶⁹ he decides to stay with the noble family and help them with his expertise and knowledge about living in trees. Cosimo and Ursula cannot stay together once their bond forged in the trees is broken, however. When her family is invited back from their exile, Ursula must go with them and cannot stay with Cosimo in the trees either in Olivabassa or in Ombrosa (Calvino 1991: 689). Cosimo would learn only much later that, although Ursula was obedient to her father's wishes for her to come back with her family once they were free of the trees, she never married either. Cosimo was informed long after their parting that Ursula "è morta in un convento" (Ibid. 745). The Count, Ursula's father, who had eagerly hoped for Ursula and Cosimo's engagement at the time, misunderstood Cosimo's refusal for cowardice. Yet, Cosimo's "rootedness" serves to elaborate a paradox: Cosimo's life becomes an example of utter mobility and intense communal concern" (Jeannet 2000: 23). Cosimo shows himself to be steadfast in his defiance. This time he is not rebelling against the Spaniards or their fatherly figure of authority. Rather, he continues to be true to himself in the face of any obstacles, even romantic and affectionate ones, in addition to the previously mentioned ones of familial relationships. Cosimo declares: "Io sono salito quassù prima di voi, signori, e ci resterò anche dopo! – Vuoi ritirarti! – gridò El Conde. – No: resistere, - risponde il barone" (Calvino 1991: 690). No one seems happier at this outcome than the ever-faithful Ottimo

⁶⁹ Cosimo's other brief love interest, Ursula, quite possibly takes her name from the tenth century virgin martyr St. Ursula. Scott B. Montgomery. *St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne: Relics, Reliquaries and the Visual Culture of Group Sanctity in Late Medieval Europe*. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

Massimo who, with his “abbaio festoso,” will go on to shape, and not just assist, Cosimo’s life and his journey towards love and infatuation again (Ibid.).

Upon Cosimo’s departure from Olivabassa and return to Ombrosa, his journey to his self would not be complete without taking up his quest to find love once again. Cosimo’s ideal of love is indeed intertwined with “his animal sexuality [...] [that] denies him complete utopian rationality” (Carter 1987: 44). Cosimo’s high ideals of justice and dedication are not undermined but rather become more firmly grounded when he acknowledges and includes his human-animal and carnal desires in that space. The construction of a utopian narrative space can deconstruct and reconfigure ideas that “permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the fabula” (Foucault 1970: xvii). Cosimo’s arboreal realm gives him a physical and spatial vantage point as well as a new metaphysical perspective to see what the creation of such a space can and cannot do. It is according to Calvino’s second essay on Fourier published in 1971 and entitled “L’ordinatore dei desideri” that there is a

contraddizione tra i due modi d’*usare* l’utopia: considerandola per quello che in essa appare *realizzabile*, come il modello di una società nuova che possa crescere in margine alla vecchia per eclissarla con l’*evidenza* dei nuovi valori, oppure per quello che in essa appare *irriducibile* a ogni conciliazione [che dà] una rappresentazione totale che ci liberi dentro per renderci capaci di liberarci fuori (Calvino 1995 (1): 281).

The stories of Cosimo’s “becoming animal” in his arboreal utopia with new physical features of owl or cat-like eyes and nonhuman animal fur hats to adorn his head are soon followed by stories of his arboreal trysts (Deleuze and Guattari 2000: 303). Indeed, Cosimo’s transitional state stems from an ancient transformation of not just of his physical but also his psychological self. The latter can be seen as “una rappresentazione del rapporto

tra ciò che è conscio (la decisione di Cosimo di vivere sugli alberi come forma di protesta sociale consapevole) e ciò che è inconscio (si è notato sopra il desiderio di metamorfosi, di regressione verso il primordiale)” (Bertoni 1993: 69). Cosimo’s quest for love would symbolize his self as a male cat in search of a female, physically and aurally. Especially on

le notti di luna quando egli girava come *un gatto*, per gli alberi di fico i susini i melograni attorno all’abitato [...] e si lamentava, lanciava certe specie di sospiri, o sbadigli, o gemiti, che per quanto lui volesse controllare, rendere manifestazioni tollerabili, usuali, gli uscivano invece dalla gola come degli ululati o gnaulii. E gli Ombrosotti, che ormai lo sapevano, colti nel sonno non si spaventavano neppure, si giravano nelle lenzuole e dicevano: -C’è il Barone che cerca la femmina. Speriamo trovi, e ci lasci dormire (Calvino 1991: 694, my emphasis).

Despite his cat-like noises, Cosimo’s hunting dog companion, Ottimo Massimo, will remain loyal to him. He also leads Cosimo back to Viola, whose spiteful and obstreperous play had cemented Cosimo’s life in the trees.

Cosimo’s other half might be considered his hunting and life companion, Ottimo Massimo, rather than Viola for all the disruption and rupture she brings to Cosimo’s life. It is in Cosimo’s observation of Ottimo Massimo more so than the major life events, such as Biagio or Battista’s respective marriages or his parents’ deaths, that display his aging so vividly to Cosimo. Rather than first seeing the changes within himself, Ottimo Massimo’s physical decline equally in his hunting expeditions as in his canine trysts showed that Cosimo, too, would someday grow older. Ottimo Massimo “stava diventando vecchio e non aveva più voglia di unirsi alle mute dei segugi dietro alle volpi né tentava più assurdi amori con cagne alane o mastine” (Calvino 1991: 701). Despite these signs of aging and the indifferent passage of time to life, Ottimo Massimo is suddenly brought back to his youthful, vivacious, spirited senses when he discovers his previous owner had returned to

Ombrosa too. Before this reencounter, it had not been revealed that Ottimo Massimo's previous owner before Cosimo was indeed Viola.

When Cosimo and Viola came together again after many years apart, they had many stories to share. Although their life experiences had greatly diverged, their relationship remained founded upon the very same qualities that had initially brought them together. Although Viola is not seen as overt a rebel as Battista, the description of the young widow Viola's skirt and blouse as "quasi monacale" when she joins Cosimo in the trees for their first sexual liaison is ironic (Calvino 1991: 710). She and Cosimo's reunion also entails relating events from their lives' stories during their separation. Viola relates an incident following her family's move away from Ombrosa, in which she was thought to be too flirtatious. Unique to the Italian language, nonhuman animal symbologies of an owl are related to flirting. This is demonstrated when Viola tells Cosimo how her parents sought to marry her off as soon as possible because "dicevano che facev[a] la civetta" (Ibid. 711). The image of the owl here is not based on its association with the Greek goddess Athena's wisdom, but for their nocturnal habits and big eyes. Interestingly, when Cosimo was described with the eyes of a cat or an owl, it was not to demonstrate a fear of promiscuity. Rather his owl-like eyes reaffirmed a hunter's prowess by embedding himself in nature. Although the owl may have become Athena's symbol according to Ovid, "that owl was once Nyctimene. Haven't you heard the story, known through the whole of Lesbos, of how she corrupted her father by incest with him? For sure, she's a bird; but her guilty conscious drives her to shun the eyes of men and the glare of the daylight" (2016: II.590-594). Viola's lifelong pleasure in inflicting jealous outbursts from her male admirers will be responded to by Cosimo's tales from his life in the trees.

Once again, it is based on Viola and her words that Cosimo feels he must justify his actions and choices whose greatness and significance must be reflected in the narration of his life. As if Cosimo's steadfastness to himself and his convictions did not already show his time in the trees to be something worthy, nevertheless, Cosimo still feels he justify them with other words: "Oh, ne ho fatto delle cose [...] sono andato a caccia..." (Calvino 1991: 711). Without Ottimo Massimo to complete the ideal image of a hunter, the extracted essence of Cosimo's life story might have been easily undermined. Through the appearance of Ottimo Massimo Cosimo's rekindling of his courtship with Viola can be compared to the predicament of a hunting dog, Nino, trying to convince a refined female housedog, Luly, to join him in the woods in Aldo Palazzeschi's short story "Via Veneto: 21 marzo." In the following lines, Nino maintains that his hunting skills combined with his love will be able to give Luly a good life with him: "sono un cacciatore formidabile, non temere, sei abituata al lusso della vita facile e piena di mollezze, alle cose inutili che per te sono divenute necessarie, ma io procurerò di non farti mancare di nulla, e il mio amore ti compenserà di qualche piccola rinuncia" (Palazzeschi 2006: 122). Cosimo does not realize that, like Nino, he too will soon face the predicament of either adapting his lady love to his arboreal realm or leaving his arboreal realm to pursue his love for Viola. He cannot have both. Cosimo is not only cognizant but grateful for Ottimo Massimo's pivotal role in his reunification with Viola as he tells her: "Se non era per lui [Ottimo Massimo], non t'avrei ritrovata! È lui che ha fiutato nel vento che eri vicina, e non ha avuto pace finché non t'ha cercata" (Calvino 1991: 714). From Cosimo and Viola's reunion ignites a passionate affair between two childhood neighbors. Yet Cosimo's convictions will be put to the test once again by a trial and retrial of love upon Viola's return. Although the canine Ottimo

Massimo has helped to bring them together, another kind of animal, horses, and especially Viola's equestrian passions, would indeed rip her and Cosimo apart and definitively this time.

Viola's love of horse riding signifies an essential piece of her life and soul that, if Cosimo stays true to his decision to live out his life in the trees, he will never be able to give her in the trees or share with her on the ground. What begins as a bone of contention metamorphoses into something irreparable when Viola eventually manipulates this to instill even greater feelings of jealousy in Cosimo (Calvino 1991: 720). When Viola's freedom of movement takes her to Paris, Biagio attempts to warn Cosimo of Viola's flirtations abroad by showing him the handkerchief she wanted Biagio to pass along to Cosimo, which echoes a potentially tragic handkerchief caper akin to that between Shakespeare's Othello and Desdemona (Calvino 1991: 723; cf. Shakespeare 1993: III.iii-iv). The unlikelihood of her complete innocence is highlighted even more by the ironic explanation for her absences from Paris as a retreat "in un convento, a macerarsi nelle penitenze" (Calvino 1991: 723). Biagio not only displays the handkerchief but tells him through the language of the physical sense of smell: "ma dicono che questo profumo venga aspirato da molte narici" (Ibid. 724). In addition to her horseback rides to places near and far away from Cosimo's arboreal realm, Viola strikes up a flirtatious contest between an English and a Neapolitan sailor for her affections that further rifts Cosimo and Viola apart.

Viola's childish but cruel jealousy ploys resurge when she pits two sailors – one English, Sir Osbert Castelfight, and the other Neapolitan Don Salvatore di San Cataldo di Santa Maria Capua Vetere – against each other right under Cosimo's nose (cf. Calvino 1991: 725-731). Poignantly, although her horseback riding symbolizes not only the

terrestrial world Cosimo had forsaken but an essential component of Viola's character "Cosimo, a non averla più con sé sulle piante, a non sentire l'avvicinarsi del galoppo del cavallo bianco, diventava matto, ed il suo posto finì per essere (anche lui) davanti a quella terrazza, a tenere d'occhio lei e i due luogotenenti di vascello" (Ibid. 725). Not only does Viola pit the Englishman and the Neapolitan against each other, but she appears to enjoy fanning Cosimo's rage as well. She demonstrates her particular philosophy of love as consisting of acts of submission that Cosimo does not agree with, as will be discussed below. Although Viola apparently had no intention of being with either the Englishman or the Neapolitan, their desertion from their respective naval forces is laid bare for Cosimo to decide what he would do to reconquer Viola's affections with the exclamation: "- Loro hanno disertato! – annunciò trionfalmente Viola a Cosimo. – Per me! E tu..." (Ibid. 731). These crises only affirm a deeper fear Cosimo already has beyond the fear of jealous suspicions being confirmed. Rather, Cosimo knows too well that if he becomes too attached to Viola and becomes jealous beyond his "sovrumana" ability to control himself, his loyalty will lie with her more than to himself and his decision to live in the trees (Ibid. 558). Prioritizing Viola over his pursuit of justice would be unacceptable to him if he truly thinks that "his love and passion for Viola will eventually cause him to renounce the arboreal life which is fundamental to him" (Weiss 1993: 53). Well before Viola's games with other men, Cosimo sees one root of his problem in the natural world through horses.

If he were to have and be connected to Viola truly, she must have her equestrian pursuits, and Cosimo must be able to have his trees. It is this realization that shows Cosimo that he cannot have both his arboreal life and his amazon, Viola, in equal proportions and

live happily. Yet, he would make an attempt. Cosimo's amazon, Viola, will not, and if she was to be true to herself, indeed cannot forsake her horse rides on land because

anche nell'andare a cavallo ella esprimeva una forza amorosa, ma qui Cosimo non poteva più seguirla; e la passione equestre di lei, sebbene egli molto l'ammirasse, però era per lui anche una segreta ragione di gelosia e rancore, perché vedeva Viola dominare un mondo più vasto del suo e capiva che non avrebbe mai potuto averla solo per sé, chiuderla nei confini del suo regno. La Marchesa, da parte sua, forse soffriva di non poter essere insieme amante e amazzone; la prendeva alle volte un indistinto bisogno che l'amore di lei e Cosimo fosse amore a cavallo, e correre sugli alberi non le bastava più, avrebbe voluto correrci al galoppo in sella al suo destriero (Calvino 1991: 720).

During their childhood, there might have been a glimmer of hope for Viola and Cosimo to share similar perspectives and grow together. Yet, "la salita sugli alberi di Cosimo consiste proprio nell'acquisto di una diversa postura dello sguardo," which cannot be reconciled with that of Viola (Serra 2006: 178). Not only do they differ in opinion and personality on matters of life. Although Cosimo and Viola can "share physical needs and spatial games, their concepts of love are too different" to keep them together (Carter 1987: 44). While they may not share the same ideas of justice and ideals, neither will their respective concepts of love ever coincide. On the one hand, "Cosimo is a pragmatist and an empiricist whose reason is affectively nourished by a controlled lyrical empathy with natural phenomena. Viola, on the other hand, strives for totality and, therefore, for transcendence" (Bolongaro 2003: 105). Opposites may attract, but whether opposite perspectives can coexist together is a horse of a different color. With two succinct lines, both Cosimo and Viola summarize their philosophies on love and so seal their fate apart from each other for good. Viola criticizes Cosimo by saying: "-Tu non credi che l'amore sia dedizione assoluta, rinuncia di sé...," and Cosimo responds that Viola was correct in her observation (Calvino

1991: 732). She understands that the ideal of love he is looking for is not the same as hers when he says: “-Non ci può essere amore se non si è se stessi con tutte le proprie forze” (Ibid.). Their parting is not a matter of mutual recognition and accord. Rather, new and old nonhuman animal symbologies will reemerge to describe their final separation as much as it had their previous reunion. Nonhuman animals such as birds, monkeys, and jungle cats like tigers and jaguars will reappear at the center of the following turn of events in Cosimo and Viola’s relationship.

Although Viola’s departure from Ombrosa and the page may be swift, both the nonhuman animal images in her dreams and Cosimo’s animal replete case of temporary insanity are not fleeting expressions of separation from the beloved. Their parting is conveyed through the symbolism of various nonhuman animals and their confusion about who is the hunter and the hunted for both Viola and Cosimo. The fact that Cosimo and Viola’s life stories take place within the genre of a war novel is not to go unnoticed. Indeed, their different experiences of the effects of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars in their respective settings, Viola in England and colonial India and Cosimo in Ombrosa are set against the backdrop of the encroachment and overlap, like a horse’s galloping legs, with which “gli avvenimenti storici *s’accavallarono* alla sua volontà” (Calvino 1991: 733, my emphasis). While Cosimo will eventually be pulled back from the brink of insanity by the experience of the war against Napoleon in Ombrosa, Viola’s experience of the same historical events would be but a backdrop to situate the continuation of her life after leaving Cosimo. Viola, despite her voluntary departure, will lay bare her heart’s true desires with the nonhuman animals that populate her dreams:

nella nebbia di Londra, durante i lunghi anni delle guerre contro Napoleone, sognava gli alberi di Ombrosa. Poi si risposò con un Lord interessato nella Compagnia delle Indie e si stabilì a Calcutta. Dalla sua terrazza guardava le foreste, gli alberi più strani di quelli del giardino della sua infanzia, e le pareva a ogni momento di vedere Cosimo farsi largo tra le foglie. Ma era l'ombra *d'una scimmia, o d'un giaguaro* (Ibid., my emphasis).

The nod, once again, to Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and *The Jungle Book*, based on Viola's encounter of the nonhuman animals of India in her dreams, is poignant. The tale of a monkey that could travel from Ombrosa to Spain through the trees that Biagio elucidated before Cosimo's formative journey to Spain resurfaces in Viola's dreams of the love she could not make a tangible reality. Cosimo's reaction to their separation instead of dreams would be manifested in a combination of written texts, storytelling, and nonhuman animal bodies.

For Cosimo, however, his and Viola's parting of the ways is not an emotion deprived exercise in logic, but rather, a matter of the heart. He not only seems to lose a firm hold on human language upon her departure. His physical resemblance to his neighboring birds will be reinforced by a textual production about birds that will highlight his temporary loss of sanity. In a similar vein to *il Buono* and *il Gramo*'s search for self-hood as it was fomented by the creation of their respective languages that were constructed with nonhuman animals' bodies that of Cosimo would cause Calvino to reflect in a letter to Paolo Valesio in 1971 about

il problema d'una rappresentazione sia iconica che linguistica della pazzia. È chiaro che sono andato per tentativi: al capitolo XXIV c'è una regressione iconica all'animale (penne d'uccelli) (e insieme all'esotico: indiani d'America), c'è un passaggio a una comunicazione extralinguistica (rebus di oggetti) peraltro fallita; ma la sola via d'uscita è la pazzia linguistica alla fine del capitolo XXII [...]: Cosimo

tenta un linguaggio babelico accozzando parole di tutte le lingue moderne e antiche,⁷⁰ su motivi di lirica (Calvino 2000: 1135-1136).

Although Cosimo's metamorphoses into a bird would illustrate his loss of sanity upon Viola's departure, his earlier regression into a pre-Babelic linguistic state actually depicted his becoming madly in love with Viola. One multilingual example of Cosimo's exclamations occurs upon his happy reunion with Viola: "Yo quiero the most wonderful puellam de todo el mundo!" (Calvino 1991: 719). Following her departure, however, Cosimo is seen as returning to a childlike state before intelligible language through crying. Cosimo's humanity is not lost but rather all the more pronounced by defining language as a pivotal point of no return along the border between human and nonhuman animals. Cosimo's cries signal "the disappearance of human language, and its substitution by mimetic or sonic signals [which is] comparable to the language of bees" and other nonhuman animals (Agamben 2004: 10). Together Cosimo's cries and those of the nonhuman animals form an anti-music that although terrible to hear do resonate beautifully with Cosimo's love pains:

Cosimo restò per lungo tempo a vagabondare per i boschi, piangendo, lacero, rifiutando il cibo. Piangeva a gran voce, *come i neonati*, e gli uccelli che una volta fuggivano a stormi all'approssimarsi di quell'infallibile cacciatore, ora gli si facevano vicini, sulle cime degli alberi intorno o volandogli sul capo, e i passeri gridavano, trillavano i cardellini, tubava la tortora, zirlava il tordo, cinguettava il fringuello e il lui; e dalle alte tane uscivano gli scoiattoli, i ghiri, i topi campagnoli, e univano il loro squittii al coro, e così si muoveva mio fratello in mezzo a questa nuvola di pianti (Ibid. 733, my emphasis).

⁷⁰ Reading poetry by Emilio Villa [1914-2003], who also blended modern and ancient languages to create something of a prehistorical language within his own poetics, would be a very fruitful point of comparison. One of my colleagues at Trinity College Dublin, Bianca Battilocchi, finished her dissertation on this author and assembled a critical edition of one of his unpublished collections, *The Tarots* (c. 1980s).

Furthermore, Cosimo's hold on reality comes away completely on account of his loss of the company of not only his beloved Viola but also that of his hunting dog Ottimo Massimo: "per alcune settimane si tenne nel bosco, solo come mai era stato; non aveva più neanche Ottimo Massimo, perché se l'era portato via Viola" (Ibid. 734). Cosimo's temporary insanity will not only be illustrated by the problem of language as a dividing line between human and nonhuman animals. Cosimo's temporary loss of his rational faculties will also be complemented by his tenuous place between nature and society through his choice of clothing and how those costume changes will reflect aspects of his inner self as well as his textual production.

Cosimo's choice of clothes has already been touched upon throughout his life in the trees. Specifically, by Viola's deductive reasoning that he could not be the fruit thief, he said he was on account of his noble dress, and secondly, by his initiation of a long tradition of animal fur hats from his hunting excursions. The birds he had hunted would perceive the change in the former formidable hunter and come close to him in his time of need, as Aiolfo's birds had done before in *Il visconte dimezzato* (cf. Calvino 1991: 380). According to Biagio, Cosimo's family and the townspeople of Ombrosa thought that Cosimo's donning of bird-like dress, and not the fur-lined necessities and hunting trophies of years past, demonstrated that

Cosimo era diventato matto davvero. Se prima andava vestito di pelli da capo a piedi, ora cominciò ad adornarsi la testa di penne, come gli aborigeni d'America, penne d'upupa o di verdone, dai colori vivaci, ed oltre che in testa ne portava sparse sui vestiti. Finì per farsi delle marsine tutte ricoperte di penne, e ad imitare le abitudini di vari uccelli, come il picchio, traendo dai tronchi lombrichi e larve e vantandoli come gran ricchezza (Ibid. 735).

The mention of the *lombrichi*, or earthworms, recall not only the nonhuman animals that appeared to eat its tail and thus revolt against nature at the sight of il Gramo and il Buono's duel against each other and their very selves (Ibid. 441). Like Liberese would claim his less than appetizing gifts to Maria-nunziata as beautiful in one of Calvino's short stories from the 1949 collection *Ultimo viene il corvo*, "Un pomeriggio, Adamo," Cosimo would be confident not only in his colorful feathery displays but also in the very earthworms he would procure from the tree trunks for all to see (Ibid. 152). If Cosimo's return to nature is seen as a simultaneous ascent to the trees physically and a regression psychologically, here his losing his mind from love lost will bring him to the brink of losing his reason and cause him to embrace his animality, which will incidentally and unexpectedly cause him to recoup his reason. In terms of cultural history, the fears humans have superimposed have also

given the animal world its familiar strangeness, its menacing marvels, its entire weight of dumb anxiety. Yet this animal fear which accompanies, with all its imaginary landscape, the perception of madness, no longer has the same meaning it had two or three centuries earlier: animal metamorphosis is no longer the visible sign of infernal powers, nor the result of a diabolic alchemy of unreason. The animal in man no longer has any value as the sign of a Beyond; it has become his madness, without relation to anything but itself: his madness in the state of nature. The animality that rages in madness dispossesses man of what is specifically human in him, not to deliver him over to other powers, but simply to establish him at the zero degree of his own nature (Foucault 1989: 69).

When Cosimo appears to most to be at his weakest, at this "zero degree of his own nature," he will resurface from it to face his greatest act of strength to confront with an opposing force more dangerous than his psyche. Yet, at the moment when Cosimo seems to be irretrievably receding into the life of birds and the trees, he does not lose the power of communicative speech and storytelling that make him just as human.

Cosimo's hard-fought status as a respected hunter in the trees is ironically juxtaposed by this sudden reversal of his character to become and resemble the prey he had once hunted, which is shown both in his dress and in his treatises in defense of birds. Cosimo not only adopts clothes and feathers that make him resemble a bird. He also utilizes the birds' presence to illustrate them like living museum pieces to elaborate his speeches in defense of birds:

Pronunciava anche delle apologie degli uccelli, alla gente che si radunava a sentirlo e a motteggiarlo sotto gli alberi: e da cacciatore si fece avvocato dei pennuti e si proclamava ora codibungolo ora barbagianni ora pettirosso, *con opportuni camuffamenti*, e teneva discorsi d'accusa agli uomini, che non sapevano riconoscere negli uccelli i loro veri amici, discorsi che erano poi d'accusa a tutta la società umana, sotto forma di parabole. Pure gli uccelli s'erano accorti di questo suo mutamento d'idee, e gli venivano vicino, anche se sotto c'era gente ad ascoltarlo. Così egli poteva illustrare il suo discorso con esempi viventi che indicava sui rami intorno (Calvino 1991: 735-736, my emphasis).

While Cosimo's love of storytelling has been mentioned with regards to the battle against the Ottoman pirates, his lifelong passion for reading and writing texts had already been hinted at with the episode of Gian dei Brughi's reading companionship as well as Cosimo's brief correspondence with Denis Diderot. Cosimo had written, with a nod to Giacomo Leopardi's own *Zibaldone* [written between 1817-1832], "uno zibaldone d'avventure, duelli e storie erotiche" about the utopian Repubblica d'Arborea entitled: "*Progetto di Costituzione d'uno Stato ideale fondato sopra gli alberi*," which he sent to Diderot signed "Cosimo Rondò, lettore dell'Enciclopedia" (Ibid. 695-696). Upon Viola's abrupt departure from his life, however, he is no longer portrayed as a thoughtful reading intellectual figure. Instead, his writings reveal his descent into madness on account of love pains.

Although perhaps counterintuitively, nonhuman animals feature prominently in Cosimo's new writings as we have seen how Calvino, as well as others, have written about

the use of written language as one of humanity's highest achievements and definitive characteristics. Even the titles of the newspapers Cosimo begins to print while in the trees include: "*Il verso del Merlo*," "*I Dialoghi dei Gufi*," and "*La Gazzetta delle Gazze*" (Calvino 1991: 736). Nonhuman animals do not only inspire the content of Cosimo's creative production. From his position in the trees, akin to the importance of nonhuman animals' bodies to construct a physical language as discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, the overlap of nature and the real three-dimensional world into Cosimo's writings is made apparent in the physical printing of these newspapers. Often

alle volte tra il telaio e la carta capitavano dei ragni, delle farfalle, e la loro impronta restava stampata sulla pagina; alle volte un ghiro saltava sul foglio fresco d'inchiostro e imbrattava tutto a colpi di coda; alle volte gli scoiattoli si prendevano una lettera dell'alfabeto e se la portavano nella loro tana credendo fosse da mangiare, come capitò con la lettera Q, che per quella forma rotonda e pedunculata fu presa per un frutto, e Cosimo dovette incominciare certi articoli *Cuando e Cuantunque* (Ibid. 736-737).

The eventual return to equilibrium of Cosimo's sanity is also demonstrated in one of his texts being entitled first "Il Monitore dei Bipedi" and after his sanity-saving battle against the wolves subsequently changed to "Il Vertebrato Ragionevole" (Ibid. 741). Before we can investigate further the nature of Cosimo's eventual recovery within the novel, some literary texts from Italian and Irish traditions of a man gone mad will provide some useful comparative analysis.

Some of the comparative literary aspects to Cosimo's temporary insanity because of love pains include texts from the Renaissance, such as Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* as well as contemporary Italian and Irish texts. The latter include the nonhuman animal imagery of birds juxtaposed to warfare, love, and sanity and reason. Bolongaro has noted that this part of Calvino's novel could be aptly renamed as a chapter in his life as "Cosimo

furioso” (2003: 117). While bird imagery does not appear in the Italian Renaissance text, Cosimo’s integration with the birds resonates with ancient and contemporary Irish literary texts. Irish folklore recounts the tale of Sweeney’s Madness or *Buile Shuibhne* as “the king who went mad in battle, threw a saint’s book into the lake and fled the North, transformed into a bird aloft over the fields of Ireland, voicing his pain and his pleasure in terse, beautiful poetry” (Kiberd 1995: 597). The tale not only delineates the king’s being cursed to become a wandering bird after having killed a saint (O’Brien 2005: 64). It also includes Sweeney’s becoming naked when his wife tries to stop him from leaving the house, which resonates with not only the theme of clothes and human animality observed throughout this chapter but also other tales such as “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” among others (cf. Andersen 2008). The almost lifelong pursuit of justice from Cosimo’s father’s authority and later upon Viola’s departure illustrates Cosimo’s laying aside “the madness of battle to seek a different kind of exposure - to nature, to the poetic quarrel with the self rather than the political quarrel with others” (Kiberd 1995: 595). The figure of King Sweeney reappears in two works of contemporary Irish literature. The first was Flann O’Brien’s 1939 novel *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Not only does the student of Irish literature narrator and author incorporate the stories of Irish legends such as King Sweeney’s departure from the Battle of Mag Rath and Fionn mac Cumhaill [Finn McCool]. The novel’s title pays homage to the place name, “Snámh dá Én” (“Swim-Two-Birds”), which denotes in Middle Irish the place on the ford of the River Shannon where Sweeney is said to have visited after becoming a bird (O’Brien 2005: 68). The second text was Seamus Heaney’s rewrite of the medieval legend in verse in his 1983 *Sweeney Astray*.

Italo Calvino's interest in classical texts is well established, and like Seamus Heaney, he would engage in a similar task of revising Ludovico Ariosto's Renaissance epic poem *Orlando furioso* in the form of his 1959 novel, *Il cavaliere inesistente*, as well as publish in 1970 his *L'Orlando furioso di Ludovico Ariosto raccontato da Italo Calvino*. While King Sweeney may never have had the chance to regain his fully human and fully reasonable form, like Charlemagne's paladin, Orlando, Cosimo would eventually regain his sanity. Cosimo does not have a compatriot like Astolfo undergo a trip to the moon to find lost things such as an ampule with "Senno d'Orlando" inscribed on it (Ariosto 2012: XXXIV.75.i; *Ibid.* XXXIV.83.viii). Instead, Cosimo would be drawn into a battle to fight off the wolves surrounding Ombrosa and, from that event, regain his reasonable and combined human and nonhuman animal self.

With the icastic image of a wild versus a domesticated dog, an invasion of wolves to the lands of Ombrosa will bring Cosimo out of his temporary insanity and back to his former engaged, productive self. He "ridiede prova delle sue virtù migliori" by coming out victorious once again in battle and saving others from harm (Calvino 1991: 738). In continuing our exploration of the role of the satisfaction of biological needs for food, clothing, and shelter define Cosimo's humanity, it is interesting to note that their hunger instigated the wolves' sudden appearance in Ombrosa in the Alps (*Ibid.*). When the alarm for the wolves went around, the Ombrosotti lamented how Cosimo had fallen from his active and proactive self on account of his love pains. They noted the reversal of fate: "Ah, Barone, una volta saresti stato tu a farci la guardia dai tuoi alberi, e adesso siamo noi che facciamo la guardia a te" (*Ibid.*). The townspeople need not have worried because Cosimo did respond and have a plan that would save them all.

Cosimo's response, although it strikes the townspeople as but a continuation of his insane babble, is an improvement on his initial experience in fighting a cat. Cosimo says: "Le pecore. Per cacciare i lupi. Vanno messe delle pecore sugli alberi. Legate" (Calvino 1991: 738). The hungry wolves would be tempted towards Cosimo's trees by the smell and appearance of the sheep tied high up in the trees. Yet, akin to how Biagio would come to think of il Cavaliere Avvocato's dress being but a show to hide his true character, Cosimo's idea is to also dress himself up as a sheep and hunt down the wolves from his turf-less territory (cf. Calvino 1991: 551; Grimm 2014: 85-87). Not only is Cosimo's plan vividly depicted. This stroke of genius concurrently circumscribes it as being perceived as yet another brick in the case of Cosimo's supposedly irrevocable insanity:

Cosimo volle che portassero delle pecore o degli agnelli e li legò lui stesso ai rami, vivi, belanti, ma in modo che non potessero cascar giù. Su ognuno di questi alberi nascose poi un fucile caricato a palla. Lui pure si vestì da pecora: cappuccio, giubba, brache, tutto di ricciuto vello ovino. E si mise ad aspettare la notte al sereno su quegli alberi. Tutti credevano che fosse la più grossa delle sue pazzie (Calvino 1991: 738-739).

If only Viola could see Cosimo now in a costume from head to toe of a sheep in comparison to when she had made fun of him at their first appearance for his young nobleman's attire (cf. *Ibid.* 564)! The "giubba" or tunic that Cosimo wears to do good deeds resonates with the clown's despair at having to put on his costume and act out the play of a cuckolded husband knowing his actress wife is making him one in real life, as recounted in the famous opera aria "Vesti la giubba" (Leoncavallo 2000: 20). The townspeople and anyone doubting Cosimo were about to be proven wrong, however. For indeed,

quella notte calarono i lupi. Sentendo l'odor della pecora, udendone il belato e poi vedendola lassù, tutto il branco si fermava a piè dell'albero, e ululavano con

affamate fauci aperte all'aria, e puntavano le zampe contro il tronco. Ecco che allora, balzelloni sui rami, s'avvicinava Cosimo, e i lupi vedendo quella forma tra la pecora e l'uomo che saltava lassù come un uccello restavano allocchiti a bocca aperta (Calvino 1991: 739).

Cosimo's plan was not solely to stupefy the wolves with his seemingly hybrid fantastic self as a bird-like human sheep, however. While his success will be examined in detail, the scene of "questa caccia ai lupi" is also intriguing because, unlike the rest of the novel, it is not narrated by his younger brother Biagio, but by Cosimo himself (Ibid.).

Despite the many versions of the event of the battle with the Ottomans that Biagio collected, it is in this scene that Cosimo first takes the floor as both the protagonist and narrator (Calvino 1991: 739). Although Cosimo did not narrate his initial battle for survival against a wild cat in the woods his present narration of how he not only defeated but outwitted and outmaneuvered the last three remaining wolves has overt echoes. Cosimo, despite his ample hunter's arsenal, found himself not only with a rifle without ammunition and gunpowder. His last gun was out of his reach because of the wolves' position. Without human-made technologically advanced weapons, Cosimo's hunt reaches a more equitable level among all parties. Cosimo relates how he managed to dispatch all three wolves without the advantage of a hunter's rifle. With regards to the first wolf, Cosimo uses once again laws of physics to deceive the wolf, which is a nonhuman animal that is often depicted as deceptive. As Cosimo relates:

Ero su di un ramo secondario e un po' tenero, ma sopra di me avevo a portata di braccia un ramo più robusto. Cominciai a camminare a ritroso sul mio ramo, lentamente allontanandomi dal tronco. Un lupo, lentamente, mi seguì. Ma io con le mani mi tenevo appeso al ramo di sopra, e i piedi fingevo di muoverli su quel ramo tenero; in realtà mi ci tenevo sospeso sopra. Il lupo, ingannato, si fidò ad avanzare, e il ramo gli si piegò sotto, mentre io d'un balzo mi sollevavo sul ramo di sopra. Il lupo cadde con un appena accennato abbaio da cane, e per terra si spezzò le ossa restandoci stecchito (Ibid. 739-740).

The power of a fall of a soon to be dead wolf's body resonates with the closing lines of Dante's fifth canto from *Inferno*: "E caddi come corpo morto cadde" (2005: *Inferno* V.142). Not only will the laws of physics also come to Cosimo's aid with the demise of the second wolf. It is also notable that Cosimo unmask his non-sheep self in the process. As Cosimo's narration in the first person elucidates:

mi tolsi giubba e cappuccino di pel di pecora e glieli gettai. Uno dei due lupi, a vedersi volare addosso quest'ombra bianca d'agnello, cercò d'afferarla coi denti, ma essendosi preparato a reggere un gran peso e quella essendo invece una vuota spoglia, si trovò sbilanciato e perse l'equilibrio, finendo pure lui per spezzarsi zampe e collo al suolo (Calvino 1991: 740).

Although Cosimo is not as naked as Derrida before his cat our protagonist's sudden removal of the thick woolen coat causes him to give a sneeze so powerful as to scare the third wolf, who would fall to his demise as he would tell the story of "la sua notte di battaglia" (Ibid. 740). In this case, it is the physical element of surprise and noise of his sneeze that disrupts the wolf. It is not a reappraisal of sneezing as a symbol of one's ability to be moved to tenderness as it was for Collodi's puppet master, Mangiafuoco, in *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (Collodi 2002: 52). Perhaps it is on account of the conjoined effect of engaging in battle and Cosimo's telling the story of it that he would regain his sanity. Furthermore, Biagio relates that after the battle, "fatto sta che [Cosimo] non fece più tante stranezze" (Calvino 1991: 741). Cosimo's anguish would be set aside for the greater good to become a fearful hunter and leader once again. Although the birds had allowed themselves to be lulled into a false sense of security because he was no longer hunting, Cosimo would have to take up that mantle again to help his kindred and townspeople to drive out the wolves. In Cosimo's triumph over the wolves, he embodied a dual identity

along the threshold of the human and nonhuman animal as a temporary werewolf state of being.

Cosimo has proven himself an effective hunter of nonhuman animals. He has also been himself hunted by farmers trying to rid themselves of the fruit thieves, among others. The symbolism of Cosimo's position in Ombrosa and the trees, between society and nature, mirrors "the symmetry between the sovereign beast and the persecuted *vargr* [which] reflects the world in his dual perception of the powerful hunter versus the hunted pest" (Arnds 2015: 2). Cosimo shares with the wolf the liminal position between society and nature. He demonstrates this when he can subvert the power structure of the nobility of Ombrosa as well as empower himself and other human and nonhuman animal members of that community. The unexpected correlation between birds and wolves is not unprecedented. Indeed, Derrida notes that despite their differences, doves and wolves are linked:

What the dove's footsteps and the wolf's footsteps have in common is that one scarcely hears them. But the one announces war; the other silently orders peace. [...] One cannot imagine animals more different, more antagonistic, than the dove and the wolf, the one rather allegorizing peace, from Noah's ark, which ensure the future safety of humanity and its animals, the other, the wolf, just as much as the falcon, allegorizing of hunting and warfare, prey and predation (Derrida 2010 (1): 4).

For all Cosimo's perceived eccentricities and strangeness throughout the entirety of his life, his fellow man beyond his family circle had only ever thought him helpful. They did not think of him as a predator to his fellow man as a "Homō hominī lupus" (Hobbes 1998: 3). The Ombrossotti did not mind his hunting as long as it did not impact themselves or the world negatively. Indeed, the figure of the werewolf that Cosimo borders on

becoming resonate with his engaged self-exile. Where the important role of clothing in folkloric tales of werewolves has already been hinted upon, when Cosimo becomes

a monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city – the werewolf – is, therefore, in its origin the figure of the man who has been banned from the city. That such a man is defined as a wolf-man and not simply as a wolf (the expression *caput lupinum* has the form of a juridical statute) is decisive here. The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city. It is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup-garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely neither man nor beast, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither (Agamben 1998: 105).

As it has been iterated and reiterated throughout this dissertation while the margins may typically be a source of fear and uncertainty, they are essential for Calvino to discuss and not cement the lines of demarcation between humanity and animality in war stories.

Cosimo will have the opportunity to confront what it means to be human and animal when the effects of the French Revolution and Napoleon's bid to build an empire is laden with battles and skirmishes that touch close to home. The atmosphere of discontentment among the people of Ombrosa and that they are ripe for revolutionary changes is demonstrated by Cosimo's attempt to not only share news of the revolution in France with his fellow Ombrossotti. He also tries to recreate the experience of potent symbols of the revolution, such as the Liberty Tree or the books of grievances. In the year of the French Revolution, it was also the year in which the tithes were collected from Ombrosa for the Republic of Genoa that governed this [fictional] town (Calvino 1991: 749). Ever his active and interactive self Cosimo would share whatever news he knew about the ongoing French Revolution with his townspeople by both explaining and acting it out: "*speigava e recitava tutto saltando da un ramo all'altro*" (Ibid. 750, my emphasis). In

addition to his self-appointed role as town crier, Cosimo suggested that the townspeople also construct one of these then popular books of grievances or “quaderni di doglianze” (Ibid. 749).

In a community fashion, people did come forward to write their pieces in the book. Yet, by itself, it was such a depressing text to read and share with the townspeople. To remedy the situation, Cosimo asked that everyone “scrivesse la cosa che gli sarebbe piaciuta di più” (Calvino 1991: 750). Not only is an iota of positivity and hesitant optimism restored to the town and its people by writing, sketching, and painting. With it, Cosimo’s hopes and desires are revealed: “tutto quanto c’è di buono al mondo veniva scritto nel quaderno, oppure disegnato, perché molti non sapevano scrivere, o addirittura pitturato a colori. Anche Cosimo ci scrisse: un nome: Viola. Il nome che da anni scriveva dappertutto” (Ibid. 750-751). The two poles of grievances and desires were no longer disparate and unbreachable entities. They were brought together as a truer to life picture of a spectrum rather than that of a polarized world view under the new title of: “il quaderno della doglianza e della contentezza” (Ibid. 751). There was no higher body to send the fruit of their verbal and visual acts to, however. It remained on one of the town’s trees until its unfortunate demise. Once exposed to rain, the text began to “cancellarsi e a infradiciarsi, e quella vista faceva stringere i cuori degli Ombrosotti per la miseria presente e li riempiva di desiderio di rivolta” (Ibid.). There was more than just an air of revolution. Cosimo and the people of Ombrosa were about to propel into world military history. Napoleon was moving with his army towards the Italian peninsula along with the army of the republic of Genoa to collect their owed tithes (Ibid.). How the Ombrossotti’s revolt is joined together with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era will be detailed below.

The subsequent revolt and the battles that sprung from it will not only be a formative part of Cosimo's life post-Viola. They will also welcome back Battista, his older sister, to the scene of war. Biagio admits to the reader how easy it is to miss the forest through the trees, or to overlook other equally interesting details in one's quest to highlight one particular aspect of a place, a story, or a research question. Indeed, he narrates how because of Cosimo's ascent to the trees, the grapevines, which will rear its head during the revolt, have been there all along, but unsung: "Ombrosa era una terra di vigne, anche. Non l'ho mai messo in risalto perché seguendo Cosimo ho dovuto tenermi sempre alle piante d'alto fusto" (Calvino 1991: 749). The collection of the tithes for the republic of Genoa coincided with Ombrosa's wine harvest, *la vendemmia* in Italian, which catalyzed the townspeople's revolt and Cosimo's aid for them from the trees. The battles in the town, aided by Cosimo's hunting rifles, are depicted as a chaotic and cohesive mass of humans, nonhuman animals, and plant matter reminiscent of what viscount Medardo had witnessed in the Austrian-Ottoman wars: "Per tutte le vigne ci fu un muoversi di gente. Non si capiva più quel che era vendemmia e quel che era mischia: uomini uva donne tralci roncole pampini *scarasse* fucili corbe cavalli fil di ferro pugni calci di mulo stinchi mammelle e tutto cantando: *Ça ira!*" (Ibid. 753). Indeed, the atmosphere after the town's supposed victories was light, as Biagio notes while they were erecting their Liberty Tree:

Erano tutti in gran daffare a preparare feste. Misero su anche l'Albero della Libertà, per seguire la moda francese; solo che non sapevano bene com'erano fatti, e poi da noi d'alberi ce n'erano talmente tanti che non valeva la pena di metterne di finti. Così addobbarono un albero vero, un olmo, con fiori, grappoli d'uva, festoni, scritte: «*Vive la Grande Nation!*». In cima in cima c'era mio fratello (Ibid. 754).

The people's victory was short-lived, however. Having overthrown the yoke of the Republic of Genoa, other interested parties would soon join in the land-grab and go to war

to do so. These included the Kingdom of Sicily in the Austro-Sardinian alliance against the impending French army.

Upon the people of Ombrosa descends the wrath of the Genoese hoping to collect their tithes still and to maintain the region's neutrality, as well as the Kingdom of Sardinia to ward off the French threat. As Biagio tells it: "s'era sparsa già la voce che i giacobini d'Ombrosa volevano proclamare l'annessione alla «Grande Nazione Universale» cioè alla Repubblica francese" (Calvino 1991: 754). Cosimo's mother, La Generalessa, now deceased, did not only instill a cool, calm, and collectedness in times of war in her elder son. Her eldest daughter, Battista, who, with her husband, the Count of Estomac, makes a poignant reappearance in the novel at this juncture with a level-head as well. Together with the Austro-Sardinian troops, the count of Estomac and Battista had recently emigrated from Paris (Ibid.). Rather than regaling her younger brother with stories of salons and the latest fashions, as Viola had for Cosimo, Battista instead "passava le serate raccontandoci le ultime esecuzioni capitali di Parigi; anzi, aveva un modellino di ghigliottina, con una vera lama, e per spiegare la fine di tutti i suoi amici e parenti acquistati decapitava lucertole, orbettini, lombrichi ed anche sorci" (Ibid. 754-755). Battista's interest in slicing and dicing appears to have been merely partially remediated by her matrimony. At least she is not called upon to cook for what remains of her family during this visit. Cosimo's experience of these battles remains to be told, however.

Cosimo's experience of the war, despite its lack of effect on his clothing, will round out the discussion of the role of nonhuman animals in Calvino's early war novels. As Cosimo's experience of the battle against the Ottoman merchant pirates and his battle against the wolves was also told in part by himself, so too will his experiences of the

French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars be told in the first person. How he would assist the French Republican army with the aid of nonhuman animals' bodies and languages would be further complicated by his encounter with the poet-lieutenant with the family name of "butterfly" in French, Agrippa *Papillon* (Calvino 1991: 757, my emphasis). Biagio, perhaps on account of his being holed up inside with the rest of the terrified nobles from the townspeople's political awakening, graciously cedes the floor to Cosimo to recount his experiences of the battle (Ibid. 756). Even before his helpful alliance with lieutenant Papillon Cosimo would demonstrate his use of other nonhuman animals to help fight off the Austrians, including his comical throwing of felines in their way. Cosimo relates the story thus: "Ricorsi allora a una famiglia di gatti selvatici: li lanciavo per la coda, dopo averli mulinati un po' per aria, cosa che li adirava oltre ogni dire. Ci fu molto rumore, specialmente felino, poi silenzio e tregua. Gli austriaci medicavano i feriti" (Ibid. 757). When Cosimo does meet Papillon, he must reassure the startled Frenchman that although he resides in the trees, he is indeed a member of the human species and not a mythological creature such as a son of a Harpy or a birdman (Ibid. 758).

Indeed, Cosimo responds by pointing out that he is not only human but contains a military lineage from his mother's side while he uses his father's sword: "- Sono il cittadino Rondò, figlio d'esseri umani, v'assicuro, sia da parte di padre che di madre, cittadino ufficiale. Anzi, ebbi per madre un valoroso soldato, ai tempi delle guerre di Successione" (Calvino 1991: 758). When he decides to collaborate with Lieutenant Papillon, his use of bird calls such as those of partridges or owls is less violent than his throwing of cats or wasp nests but equally effective in helping the Frenchman rout the Austro-Sardinian forces (Ibid. 759). As a pursuer of justice, liberty, fraternity, and equality,

although Cosimo engages in warfare, he is more than adamant about maintaining his independence of movement as well as of thought. Cosimo recounts his hesitancy to believe too much in an ideal realization of his convictions through the language of hunting, which is a role he has participated in the trees throughout his life: “Diventai un prezioso collaboratore dell’Armata repubblicana, *ma preferivo fare le mie cacce da solo*, valendomi dell’aiuto degli animali della foresta [...] Con l’Armata francese cercavo d’aver a che fare meno che potevo, perché gli eserciti si sa come sono, ogni volta che si muovono combinano disastri” (Ibid. 759-760, my emphasis). For any army, their actions of death and destruction are not always enough to win the war. Inaction, however, seems to be a far-worse blight which will affect their ability to be successful or not. Cosimo, an active participant in life throughout this novel, will once again involve less than savory nonhuman animals, fleas, to help achieve his goals.

Cosimo suggests the introduction of nonhuman animals, specifically fleas, into the poet-lieutenant Papillon’s soldiers camp in the hope that the soldiers will regain their strength as an active fighting force by having to confront the carnal aspect of their humanity. Indeed, the inaction of the soldiers is in direct contrast to Cosimo’s ideal of mobility, even while being rooted in the trees all his life. As Biagio had noted about his brother earlier in the novel during Cosimo’s brief moment as a member of the Freemasons, Cosimo’s personal touches to the ritual “massoneria all’aperto” was a symptom of Cosimo’s chaffing against fixity and stasis: “perché di tutti i mestieri avrebbe potuto prendere i simboli a ragion veduta, tranne quelli del muratore, lui che di case in muratura ne aveva mai volute né costruire né abitare” (Calvino 1991: 746, 748). While Cosimo’s aversion to spiritual or physical rootedness is a matter of personal choice, the consequences

of such physical and mental rootedness for the soldiers involve matters of life and death. This was to such a degree that they were on the verge of becoming embedded in their natural surroundings:

Infatti, al plotone comandato dal poeta, l'immobilità del fronte minacciava d'essere fatale. Muschi e licheni crescevano sulle divise dei soldati, e talvolta anche eriche e felci; in cima ai colbacchi facevano il nido gli scriccioli, o spuntavano e fiorivano piante di mughetto; gli stivali si saldavano col terriccio in uno zoccolo compatto: tutto il plotone stava per mettere radici (Ibid. 760-761).

While partisans' carnality revealed itself in their "rari e corti" dreams of hiding leftover pieces of bread to ensure they would not go hungry the next day, like dogs would with their bones, or even more rarely, of naked women, in *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, here, Cosimo will not concern himself with the poet-lieutenant's soldiers having a full stomach or sexual fantasies to shake them from their immersion in nature (Ibid. 78). Rather, he will suggest that the presence of fleas, *pulci* in Italian, will bring them back to their human senses (Ibid. 761). Although the soldiers of the French army did not have fleas Cosimo was able to supply the poet-lieutenant with enough to reignite their human awareness and attentiveness to their duties through their bodies:

il prurito delle pulci riaccese acuto negli usseri l'umano e civile bisogno di grattarsi, di frugarsi, di spidocchiarsi; buttavano all'aria gli indumenti muschiosi, gli zaini e i fardelli ricoperti di funghi e ragnatele, si lavavano, si radevano, si pettinavano, insomma riprendevano coscienza della loro umanità individuale, e li riguardavano il senso della civiltà, dell'affrancamento dalla natura brutta. In più li pungeva uno stimolo d'attività, uno zelo, una combattività, da tempo dimenticati (Ibid. 762).

With this renewed humanity, the French soldiers are so successful in their engagements that they overturn the Genoese and the Austro-Sardinian forces. With the Republic of Genoa and the Kingdom of Sardinia brought down, the people of Ombrina were happily caught up in the spirit of the French Revolution and Napoleon's victories and content with

French control, for a time. Cosimo confronts the vast discrepancy between the reality of the French armies occupation of Ombrosa and what he had hoped the fervor of revolutionary ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality through nonhuman animals and some literary figures that are well known in world literature from the Napoleonic era.

The war Cosimo fought so hard in does not usher in the desired changes he had wished. Much like the utopic treatise he had shared with the encyclopedist Diderot entitled “*Progetto di Costituzione d’uno Stato ideale fondato sopra gli alberi,*” Cosimo would take up his pen again to propose a “*Progetto di Costituzione per Città Repubblicana con Dichiarazione dei Dritti degli Uomini, delle Donne, dei Bambini, degli Animali Domestici e Selvatici, compresi Uccelli Pesci e Insetti, e delle Piante sia d’Alto Fusto sia Ortaggi ed Erbe*” (Calvino 1991: 695, 764). Instead of the hoped-for realization of revolutionary goals Cosimo watches corruption and greed tear them asunder. Rule under the French empire was proving to put the town in far dire straits than had the tithes of the Republic of Genoa before it. The French soldiers “requisivano maiali, mucche, perfino capre. Quanto a tasse e a decime era peggio di prima. In più ci si mise il servizio di leva. Questa d’andare soldato, da noi, nessuno l’ha mai voluta capire: e i giovani chiamati si rifugiavano nei boschi” (Ibid. 764-765). He who had once fought off Ottoman pirates disturbing his fellow townspeople Cosimo is torn between being all too aware of the disaster unraveling around him and to committing to the side he had chosen and fought for. As Biagio relates it more eloquently,

Cosimo faceva quel che poteva per alleviare questi mali [...] Insomma, cercava di difendere il popolo dalle prepotenze, ma attacchi contro le truppe occupanti non ne fece mai, sebbene a quel tempo per i boschi cominciarono a girare bande armate di «barbetti» che rendevano la vita difficile ai Francesi. Cosimo, testardo com’era, non voleva mai smentirsi, ed essendo stato amico dei Francesi prima, continuava a pensare di dover essere leale, anche se tante cose erano cambiate ed era tutto diverso da come s’aspettava (Ibid. 765).

Calvino's crafted the novel to not only revolve around Cosimo's story but also as "un «pastiche» storico, un repertorio, d'immagini settecenteschi, [...] un paesaggio e una natura, immaginaria sì, ma descritti con precisione e nostalgia" (Calvino 1991: 1215). The spirit of a pastiche of eighteenth-century society and literature is alive and well in Calvino's novel when Cosimo, despite the abuses of power the French soldiers inflict upon the townspeople, meets not only Emperor Napoleon, but also Leo Tolstoy's Prince Andrej from *War and Peace*. Both of these encounters involve articles of clothing and comparative literary approaches to this novel.

Although Cosimo will encounter both a historical and a literary figure, Napoleon and Prince Andrei respectively, his encounter with Napoleon is also inscribed in literary terms by directly parodying the encounter of Alexander the Great and the philosopher Diogenes. When the town hears of emperor Napoleon's imminent arrival, they decide to put Cosimo as the "«patriota in cima agli alberi»" on the program of parties, monuments, and local rarities (Calvino 1991: 765). The appearance of the tree where Cosimo would be exhibited to Napoleon, as much as his characteristic hunter's garb, was a focal point for preparations:

Si scelse un bell'albero; lo volevano di quercia, ma quello meglio esposto era di noce, e allora truccarono il noce con un po' di fogliame di quercia, ci misero dei nastri col tricolore francese e il tricolore lombardo [...]. Mio fratello lo fecero appollaiare lassù, vestito da festa ma col caratteristico berretto di pel di gatto, e uno scoiattolo in spalla (Ibid. 765-766).

In addition to the setting, the time of day at which their encounter took place would be crucial in its depiction of a reversal of Plutarch's description of the meeting of Alexander the Greek with Diogenes. When Napoleon arrived late, at high noon rather than in the

morning, he “guardava su tra i rami verso Cosimo e aveva il sole negli occhi” (Plutarch 2008: 323; Calvino 1991: 766). When Cosimo sees the Emperor is uncomfortable and asks him, “Posso fare qualcosa per voi, *mon Empereur?*”, this moment reminds the Emperor of something he has seen or heard before (Ibid.). Cosimo can clarify, based on his reading of the classics, that what Napoleon was remembering was not the Emperor to have the sun in his eyes, but the philosopher, “era Alessandro a domandare a Diogene cosa poteva fare per lui, e Diogene a pregarlo di scostarsi...” (Ibid.). The distorted parallel is brought full circle with Napoleon’s departing words to Cosimo: “- Se io non era l’Imperatore Napoleone, avrei voluto ben essere il cittadino Cosimo Rondò” (Ibid. 767). Upon Napoleon’s routing from the Italian peninsula, Cosimo will encounter a less historical, but equally icastic, figure of the Napoleonic era, Leo Tolstoy’s Prince Andrei.

Cosimo even speaks a little Russian to his newfound acquaintance and is informed that: “Napoleone è venuto a far guerra al nostro Zar, e adesso il nostro Zar corre dietro a Napoleone” (Calvino 1991: 771). Yet, a reader of the Russian tome understands the dramatic irony of Cosimo’s encounter with a melancholic and disquieted Prince Andrej because “eppure era un vincitore” (Ibid.). When Cosimo tries to console the Prince, he is met with the following miniature metaphysical explanation on the problems of war when Prince Andréj says: “*Vous voyez... La guerre... Il y a plusieurs années que je fais le mieux que je puis une chose affreuse: la guerre.... et tout cela pour des idéals que je ne saurais presque expliquer moi-même...*” (Ibid. 772). Cosimo in response compares his decision of seeking the trees to reach his ideals to the engagement of a war: “- Anch’io, - rispose Cosimo, - vivo da molti anni per degli ideali che non saprei spiegare neppure a me stesso: *mais je fais une chose tout à fait bonne: je vis dans les arbres*” (Ibid.). Their poignant

conversation is cut short, however, when the Prince gives Cosimo his name, but not his surname because of the sound of “il galoppo del cavallo si portò via il cognome” (Ibid.). As Cosimo had promised his father, he has stayed true to his name through many trials of survival and battle and love. He would even eventually face the last task of life, death, from his stance in the trees as well.

A man, with and without his animality, can journey far in life. After being cared for in the trees at the time of his illness, sixty-five years after ascending to the trees, Cosimo would hitch a ride on a passing hot air balloon. As Biagio would describe that ride: “così scomparve Cosimo, e non ci diede neppure la soddisfazione di vederlo tornare sulla terra da morto” (Calvino 1991: 775-776). Not only would the knight of Calvino’s *Il cavaliere inesistente* also vanish into thin air at the end of the novel when the knight Agilulfo takes off his armor and bequeaths it to his rival/protégé Rambaldo (cf. Calvino 1991: 1056-1057). Both Cosimo and Agilulfo’s disappearances resonate with the man of smoke of Aldo Palazzeschi’s *La codice di perelà* who, like Perrault’s “Puss in Boots,” once he takes off his powerful boots he too can dissolve up the chimney and leave the novel and life as swiftly as he had come into being (cf. Palazzeschi 2008: 252). Perelà and the cat’s boots, like Agilulfo’s suit of armor, made their existence and permeability within society, possible. Once removed, they no longer had their defining container to provide a fixity to their respective smoky, nonhuman animal, or non-existent natures. Cosimo did not have a garment that made him exist as he was. Instead, it was his life itself and the story of his time in the trees that could not be severed from him, even in death. On the family tomb, they would write the following eloquent epitaph that so succinctly fits the course of Cosimo’s life: “«Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò – Visse sugli alberi – Amò sempre la terra –

Sali in cielo»” (Calvino 1991: 776). That essential core of being and the “grappolo insensato di parole idee sogni” that lives on through Cosimo resonates with all people who dare to challenge the boundaries of their humanity and sincerity and no longer refuse to deny their stories and the connection of their selves with the natural world (Ibid. 777). Yet Cosimo’s story is inextricable from the natural world in which he lived, thrived, and engaged.

Staying true to himself, Cosimo will leave the world without ever having touched the ground with his feet again, not even as he was dying. His “passo leggero da codibugnolo” will leave an indelible mark on perspective, on the bounds and depths of character amid the greatest battles in existence – within history and for the self (Calvino 1991: 738). Biagio’s narration of Cosimo’s life story is embedded in both a love of literature and a love of nature. The closing of Cosimo’s story marks the end not only of his life but also of the town of Ombrosa as he and his brother had known it. The trees were disappearing from the landscape, which would have made Cosimo’s life there intolerable and untenable. Indeed, “il paragone tra Ombrosa con i suoi elementi (semi, rami, foglie) e la scrittura con le sue componenti (segni, frasi, parole, idee, sogni) offre al lettore una chiave importante per una migliore comprensione del testo. Ombrosa è finita così come è finito il ricamo testuale, ossimoricamente labile e forte ad un tempo, costruito dal narratore” (Adamo 2003: 17-18). Despite the importance of the written word and storytelling, which has been iterated and reiterated throughout this dissertation as well as this chapter, Biagio is fully aware that the chasm between the written and the non-written worlds is bridgeable. Yet, both must be lived and experienced to the fullest, or else there is nothing to hold them together. Upon Cosimo’s demise Biagio ruminates on this and more:

Ora che lui non c'è, mi pare che dovrei pensare a tante cose, la filosofia, la politica, la storia, seguo le gazzette, leggo i libri, mi ci rompo la testa, ma le cose che voleva dire lui non sono lì, è altro che lui intendeva, qualcosa che abbracciasse tutto, e non poteva dirla con parole ma solo vivendo come visse. Solo essendo così spietatamente se stesso come fu fino alla morte, poteva dare qualcosa a tutti gli uomini (Calvino 1991: 773).

Like the comedy's final act of *I Pagliacci* with the famous heart-wrenching last line of "la commedia è finita," Biagio's narration of the end of Cosimo's eventful life asserts the exact opposite (Leoncavallo 2000: 31; Calvino 1991: 777). Forever preserved in narration, Cosimo's story may end with the turning of the last page, but his legend lives on beyond the apparent dissolution of his story.

The story and experience of Cosimo's life on the page have demonstrated how thin the line is between humanity and animality. Rationality can be reconciled with the wonder of storytelling as can a human being's carnal physical nature with its intellect. In this chapter on Battista, il Cavaliere Avvocato, and Cosimo rebellions, humans' donning of clothes has proven not always to be a direct indicator of a person's personality. Rather, the choice and display of certain types of apparel may be purposefully masking or overtly challenging the rigidity of a dichotomous understanding of identity and sense of belonging. Although Battista obeys her father's command to wear a nun's habit after the story of the contino della Mela she adorns it with ribbons on the night her future fiancé is to dine at her father's house. Il Cavaliere Avvocato would reveal his struggle between his own identity as well as loyalty to his family and his love bridge not only through his Turkish robes, but as this was further compounded by his Babel-like confusion of languages: Italian, the local dialect, and Turkish. Although Cosimo's rebellion would be instigated at the family dining room table on account of Battista's suppressed desires and complemented by il Cavalier

Avvocato's subversion of the established table etiquette, the expression of his rebellion would revolve less around food than around ways in which to bridge ideals of justice with practical engagement. The role of Viola in Cosimo's life's story fleshes out his human nature that would have to reconcile with his superhuman will and ideals. His love of books and storytelling complements the skills Cosimo learns in nature – hunting, planting, pruning. Nonhuman animals' role in shaping Cosimo's story is more than utilitarian. The presence of horses, birds, cats, dogs, wolves, and fleas in the novel, and all of the many helpful and harmful contributions they make to his story, would be indispensable to understanding Cosimo's situation between humanity and nature as a way to appreciate what both have to offer the world in which we live. The historical and local battles that sweep through Cosimo's vast arboreal backyard contextualize the idea that not only can *Il barone rampante* be considered a war novel because of the Napoleonic wars fought through the town of Ombrosa. It is also just as much a novel about doing war with one's self. Yet, the story of Cosimo's life cannot, and indeed must not be read in a vacuum, but as it reverberates in and among spaces where humanity and animality converge in both Calvino's written and non-written worlds.

CONCLUSION

According to the story arcs of Italo Calvino's male protagonists in war novels and novellas, to be human is not to be quantified as an aforementioned "political animal (Aristotle); a promising animal (Nietzsche); an animal with soul (Descartes); a time-keeping animal (Heidegger)" (Ortiz Robles 2016: 3). The textual evidence within these war stories demonstrates that the defining figure of humanity for Italo Calvino is anything but singular and uniform. The stories of the lives of Pin and Kim, viscount Medardo, and Cosimo, establish that it is not even enough to be considered an animal with language or a preoccupation with clothing that distinguishes us as humans apart from the other animals. Instead, the case studies based on three of Italo Calvino's works of fiction indicate that the essence of being truly human is to be able to admit that we are animals at all. Calvino does acknowledge that there is a unique aspect to our humanity that was also the crux of the much later scholar Jonathan Gottschall's writings (1995 (1): 678; cf. Gottschall 2013: xi-xvii). Although both humans and nonhuman animals utilize communicative functions of language, the centrality of storytelling appears to be a unique facet of human life.

To review, the main question under literary investigation throughout this dissertation initially sought to encounter one or several defining traits or skills that demonstrate humanity's character – its breadths and heights, as well as its depths in war stories. The conception of human so-called "high" culture with its purported monopoly on language, rationality, storytelling, and civilization, was counterbalanced by an undercurrent of the natural and the nonhuman animal world in which humans unquestionably find themselves. Italo Calvino's texts, be they a novel or a novella in form, have challenged

hierarchical notions among human and nonhuman animals in favor of approaching and genuinely celebrating the integration of understanding in and of the “*anima mundi*” (Calvino 1995 (1): 706). Any of the following supposedly defining characteristics and questions analyzed throughout these pages – the threshold between humanity and nonhuman animality, discussions of language, and of masking and unmasking the human body with clothing – could have been the sole focus of this thesis. Yet, as Calvino would write in his 1985 lecture on “*Molteplicità*,” these pages sought to provide a variety of pathways through which to explore that idea as well as to point out that such a question does not lend itself to one definitive answer (cf. *Ibid.* 715-733). Although it is a disproportionately anthropocentric question, this thesis has never purported to augment the troves of biological information about nonhuman animals, be they birds, cats, dogs, or horses. Nevertheless, some biological functions and behaviors unique to each species, be they domestic or wild, added to the discussion of how the symbolic weight of nonhuman animals makes itself felt in Calvino’s exploration of our humanity through storytelling.

The stories of the literary lives of Pin and Kim, viscount Medardo, and Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò have not only encountered and engaged with many species of nonhuman animals. Through these creatures’ shared placement on the page, they have revealed the complexity of being and defining humanity in wartime through storytelling. Each literary case study focused on one or two specific attributes of that definition, such as humans’ utilization not only of language’s communicative functions but especially its ability to convey stories, as well as the wearing of clothes to cover the animal nakedness of humans’ bodies, among others. Yet, any of these case studies encourage further discussion and inquiry into other preconceived notions of humanity and animality that should be torn

asunder. The concept that humanity cannot be defined by just one characteristic, skill, or trait has been demonstrated throughout this dissertation by both Italo Calvino's original literary texts as well as secondary criticism. When the primary and secondary texts are thus brought together, this dissertation argues for the acknowledgment of examining human and nonhuman animal relationships as thresholds without the prejudices of hierarchies (cf. Calvino 1991: 3-148; Ibid. 365-444; Ibid. 547-778; Marchesini 2014b: 136; Berger 1980: 5). From Pin's threshold stance on the cusp of child and adulthood, Kim's ruminations on irrational love amid Ferriera's complaints that Kim is too scientific to notice the repercussions on the real world of his idealized experiments with the human-animal partisan men, to viscount Medardo's divided selves along monolithic lines of good and wicked that figuratively cannot stand, and with the realization that Cosimo would not only be a human hunter among the forest of nonhuman animals, but would experience being the hunted prey vulnerable to animals and his fellow human beings, each male protagonists' literary life story reexamined in the light of these concepts has reinvigorated as well as challenged the concreteness of such definitions in favor of fluidity, flexibility, and understanding.

Indeed, Italo Calvino's exploration of the essence of humanity during wartime includes an essential reclamation of humanity's animality and our inextricable ties to the natural world, regardless of the technological advances, inventions, and construction of civilizations that appear to have allowed human animals to relegate such an integrated conception to the background of our thoughts. The permeability nodded to in the stories among human and nonhuman animals is indicated not only in Calvino's "di scorcio" poetics (Calvino 1991: 1191). Polarization has become all too securely ingrained in our

lives and our thinking to the degree that it permeates the literature that we produce. Although the eels, bees, frogs, spiders, ants, among other creatures, contributed to these tales, species of nonhuman animals such as dogs, cats, horses, and birds were studied in greater detail throughout the discussions of all three primary texts. The focus was on the latter species of nonhuman animals rather than the former because they offered a more direct interaction with these male protagonists. Indeed, these particular species' have been close to human society in one form or another for millennia (cf. Ortiz Robles 2016: 19). Dogs, cats, birds, and horses also presented the dynamic between wild and domesticated nonhuman animals, which begs the questions as to why there is not such a distinction for human animals, except for *the enfant sauvage* that Pin borders on (Ibid. 21). Other species of creatures within Calvino's vast oeuvre could also be studied in the future. Yet the nonhuman animal relationship proximity to humans presented here opened up the possibility for future discussion of the topic. The willingness to recognize our preconceived notions is the first step towards moving beyond our limitations as readers, writers, academics, and people.

Calvino's "di scorcio" poetics also manifests itself through the advancement of interconnectedness among all beings – humans, nonhuman animals, plants, and even minerals and cities that recur throughout the entirety of Calvino's oeuvre, and notably not solely in war stories (Calvino 1991: 1191). Some of the texts in which hybrid beings occur are detailed in the footnote 40 on pages 109-110. The role of hybrid beings in Calvino's oeuvre, as opposed to separate human and nonhuman animal entities, is but one of the questions that came to the surface but could not be included within the tight parameters of this study. Another is the role of female protagonists in Italo Calvino's war novels and

novellas, which would naturally have been exemplified in his *Il cavaliere inesistente* [1959] with the combined narrator and warrior woman, Suor Teodora-Bradamante (cf. Calvino 1991: 953-1164). Hopefully, in the future, such avenues, among others, can be given the investigative depth and breadth they deserve.

Different research questions would require different approaches to both the original as well as the critical texts. The character-based approach to these three novels and novellas was imperative to refocus on how each male protagonists' life story contributed or refuted an overlooked aspect towards a conceptualization, if not a definition, of humanity. Although discussion of the settings or excerpts from particular dialogues enriched the present examination, tracing the role of the nonhuman animal encounters and in some cases, relationships, that formed as well as affected the arc⁷¹ of the male protagonists' life stories as well as of those of the texts' plots was more prominent. In comparison to the overambitious attempt to include multiple avenues of human knowledge through the utilization of multidisciplinary studies such as Literary Criticism, Psychology, Philosophy, (Zoo)anthropology, and Ecocriticism, this dissertation might have been better served by a more in-depth focus on one field, such as literary-critical and comparative literary studies. Yet to write about a definition of humanity and its relationship to nonhuman animals

⁷¹ Cf. with Marco Polo and Kublai Kan's conversation on the importance of stones and especially *arches* in Calvino's *Le città invisibili*:

Marco Polo descrive un ponte, pietra per pietra.

-- Ma qual è la pietra che sostiene il ponte? -- chiede Kublai Kan.

-- Il ponte non è sostenuto da questa o quella pietra, -- risponde Marco, -- ma dalla linea dell'arco che esse formano.

Kublai Kan rimane silenzioso, riflettendo. Poi soggiunge: -- Perché mi parli delle pietre? È solo dell'arco che m'importa.

Polo risponde: -- Senza pietre non c'è arco (Calvino 1992: 428).

through storytelling with only such literary fields would have kept such an open-ended subject ensconced in a written world that neither Italo Calvino's own writings nor this researcher would encourage.

Nevertheless, future researchers can offer their unique perspectives by building upon this study's findings in a variety of ways. The unconventional analysis of the theme of war novel or novella in Italo Calvino's forty-years of writing across the line of demarcation based on the genre has also been utilized recently in Sica's article mentioned above on the role of the man on horseback (cf. 2017). Roberto Bertoni and Kathryn Hume have written monographs in which they analyze Calvino's thematically rather than chronologically, the method of which could provide fruitful insights into previously undiscovered or rediscover paths of intellectual inquiry in Calvino criticism (cf. 1993; cf. 1992). Providing an in-depth study of Calvino's Neorealist period – by contextualizing his articles, fiction, and nonfiction writing – as Lucia Re does with her monograph is an invaluable addition to Calvino criticism as a whole (cf. 1990). Yet, this dissertation has sought to demonstrate the merit of also encouraging studies to dare to question established confines and boundaries of the canon, between Calvino's primary texts and within secondary criticism of his works. Even Milanini and Lollini's articles mentioned above do not demonstrate that in between the years of Calvino's participation in the partisan resistance and his Neorealist writings of the late 1940s and his essay in commemoration of the Liberation Day on April 25th, 1975 with the piece "Ricordo di una battaglia" published in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, he would write a plethora of stories and prose about war (cf. 1997; cf. 2006). They do not recognize the reality that for Calvino, the man and the author, war's significance did not cease upon the end of the Second World War.

Instead, it remained a part of his life and writings throughout his life. Calvino would engage both his memories and recollections of those past experiences as well as, and it cannot be emphasized enough, contemporary conflicts such as the Korean War, the start of the Cold War, and the brutal suppression of the revolt in Hungary in 1956 by the Soviet Union, among others. The literature review provided in the introduction of this dissertation traces the role of war and nonhuman animals in his oeuvre and Calvino criticism. It can be utilized as a starting point for both an in-depth treatment of nonhuman animals throughout his forty-year writing career as well as of Italo Calvino's war writings. Rather than merely anthologizing all of these various works -- short stories, novels, novellas, songs, letters, autobiographical pages, caricatures and drawings, essays, newspaper articles, songs, among others -- their compilation could be enriched with socio-historical context and provide hitherto undiscovered insights into Italo Calvino's thoughts about war and nonhuman animals. While academic researchers have focused primarily on Calvino's literary and critical texts, he was inarguably a multifaceted person. Italo Calvino was a writer, folklorist, scholar, intellectual, editor, husband, father, son, and a soldier with a life story as intricate and complicated as any of the protagonists he crafted.

Italo Calvino was able to playfully challenge a variety of so-called uniquely human characteristics, such as having language, wearing clothes, and especially human's contestable place in the hierarchy above nonhuman animals, among others that could not be elaborated upon in these pages. This dissertation has come to fruition from a desire to contribute positively with a literary researcher's skills to our world. Yet, beyond its goals of presenting research, the value of this dissertation should also be measured by its aspiration to encourage a variety of skills and capabilities to confront pressing topics that

affect human and nonhuman animals alike. As Calvino put it succinctly in his 1973 essay, “L’utopia pulviscolare” it is true that: “Vedere un possibile mondo diverso come già compiuto e operante è ben una presa di forza contro il mondo ingiusto, è negare la sua necessità esclusiva” (1995 (1): 309). If we are ever to dare to hope to consign war and its atrocities to the annals of history to become the material of myth and legend, then we must start first with coming to see our very selves as interconnected beings. Our goal as citizens of this one planet Earth should be, with whatever skills and strengths are at our disposal, to make Calvino’s statement found among his handwritten papers dated in 1951 into a rousing battle-cry for positive change and action: “Guerra, fame, sbirraglia non scompariranno dalle nostre pagine finché non saremo riusciti a farli scomparire dalla faccia del mondo” (Calvino 2012: 5). Akin to Calvino’s fictional texts and essays, these pages that are coming to a close seek to and wholeheartedly advocate for the construction of a bridge between written and nonwritten worlds in a conjoined poetics of action and reflection about the relationships both figurative and spatial among human and nonhuman animals as much as in wartime as in peacetime.

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