



Decoding Intimate Suffering in Elsa Morante's *La Storia*

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Elsa Morante's *La Storia* (1) takes a unique perspective on the Italian Fascist Regime and World War II by focusing on the suffering of individuals excluded by society - people whose voices perhaps never seemed interesting enough to attract the attention of large audiences. This analysis will be structured into three phases. First, it will discuss the way individuals become aware of their intimate suffering, considering the reiterative aspects of distress as well as its cultural and social context. Oram's article, *Rapture and Revision: Visionary Imagery and Historical Reconstruction in Elsa Morante's La Storia* (2) will constitute the main theoretical framework for this discussion. Secondly, the article will analyse the need of individuals to share their distress when they become aware of it, focusing on the means employed to convey their experiences, making use of the 'moral community' idea developed by Regan (3) and resumed by Morris (4). This is followed by a discussion of the ways in which individuals who are unable to effectively communicate their distress to others, are able to cope with this need. In this way we will approach the notion of alternative moral communities and communicative and comprehension codes. This article emphasises the social value of literature and aims to establish new literary connections between the suffering endured during the Italian fascist regime and World War II, with an examination of the ways in which individuals become aware of it.

KEYWORDS: Italian Literature, Elsa Morante; *La Storia*; Italian Fascism; Intimate Suffering

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Novels, autobiographies, collections of letters and accounts of the Fascist years and World War II have been and are still flourishing on the Italian literary market, signalling that the dispute over Fascism is far from being a completely 'established' reality. Furthermore, the increasing political debate about revisionism and the Italian Resistance reinforces the case that Fascism still has unanswered questions. So far, the many literary works that have depicted the

horrors of the Holocaust, the Fascist repression and the Italian Resistance contain essential resources for the cultural representation of those tragic events. However, in the majority of the cases, these works and their critiques have focused on truces and representative events, neglecting, at least in part, the intimate suffering experienced by those individuals belonging to the lowest levels of society.

Conversely, Elsa Morante's *La Storia* deals with the story of Ida, an unassuming primary school teacher, who happens to live during the most difficult period of Italian history. Being half-Jewish, the protagonist experiences first-hand the suffering caused by racial discrimination, social homology, poverty, illness, rape, and death. Morante transforms Ida into a sacrificial victim, one

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of those marginalised individuals who have been neglected by official history. The protagonist continuously suffers, both physically and mentally. She is deprived of all that is good in her existence by the obscure forces of history. In Morante's work, love becomes rape, life becomes death, health becomes illness, and sanity becomes madness. Only at the end of the novel, does the author lead the reader to reflect upon whether history is really an abstract force or if it originates from the corruption of human morality.

1. Reiterated Suffering: A Paradoxical Method of Comprehension.

Whether the nature of suffering is physical or mental, individuals receive signals that alert them to their condition; however, this is not sufficient to guarantee their awareness. Analysing individuals' recurring behaviours and, in this specific case, the behaviour of the characters in *La Storia*, one must engage in the analysis of the exact process through which an individual, who is confused and perplexed about his/her condition, recreates their condition continuously in order to comprehend precisely what he/she experiences. It is through this that they attempt to retrace and review their steps to find where their distress originated, and how it has been developed, processed, and, in some cases, eliminated. These considerations help to identify the precise moment at which individuals realise their condition, producing an immediate response to it.

On various occasions in *La Storia*, Ida shows a predisposition to revisit traumatic experiences, and this is illustrated by the protagonist's obsession with events or circumstances that remind her of her distress. Morante's narration of Ida's story stresses four particular moments where her suffering is the main focus: her rape by a German soldier; Nino's death; the war and all its implications; and Useppe's sudden death. These four events represent the culmination of her suffering, the main points around which the entire novel is structured, and the ones during which the obscure force of history inflicts pain on Ida. In these circumstances, which occur at equal intervals apart within the text, Ida is violently affected by her trauma. Her awareness of it, however, does not materialise immediately and she falls into a deep state of obsession and paranoia, which allows her to ruminate upon distressful events and circumstances. This may be seen as the projection of a repressed narcissism, caused by an anxiety of emotional exclusion that the author herself experienced. According to Capozzi (5), who identifies this characteristic in Morante's works, 'narcissism is a central motif' (6). Sgorlon also

acknowledges 'Il perenne autobiografismo trasfigurato e una certa civetteria narcisistica della Morante' (7) [*A continuous transfigured autobiographism and a certain narcissistic coquetry in Morante*] (My translation) as a fundamental component in her narratives. He continues:

[...] However, the critic's suggestion that this interest in the self is a form of narcissistic coquetry seems inaccurate since the amount of suffering her alibis experience makes it difficult to view them in terms of their coquetry. Her alibis are all projections of an autobiographical narrator who, like a modern Sheherazade, seeks cathartic relief, self-therapy, and hope through her narration. (8)

Capozzi defines all Morante's characters as 'alibis', and each one of them as encapsulating the author herself; Morante confirms this, stating that 'The complete me can be found in my books' (9). The theme of suffering plays a major role in Morante's novels and it would be shallow to account for its reiteration as being due to a narcissistic coquetry, for this would completely dismiss the author's intentions regarding her characters and writing, namely to provide an account of ordinary people's suffering. Morante's commitment to recounting the suffering of the forgotten ones is not only encapsulated in the insertion of a passage from Vallejo's poem 'Por el analfabeto a quien escribo' [*To the illiterate for whom I write for*] (my translation), which opens the work, it is also recounted by Garboli in an interview where he recalls the author's words: 'Io non ho voluto scrivere un romanzo. Io ho voluto fare un'azione politica. Il mio romanzo è un'azione politica'. [*I did not intend to write a novel. I wanted to do a political action. My novel is a political action*] (my translation) (10). Similarly, the author reiterates suffering in her narratives in order to define it at separate stages and to improve its depiction progressively; her characters suffer repeatedly so as to acquire a gradual and clearer picture of their condition.

By setting her novel in a dark period of Italian history, Morante magnifies ordinary people's suffering and consequently transforms them from the weak, the poor and the ignorant to the strong - those with solid, human values. In order to do this, she upsets the power hierarchy by reversing it: those who inflict pain become cowards, while the victims and the innocents who suffer and die do so bravely. Thus, her victims gain salvation through suffering. Oram's interpretation of suffering clearly refers to the Christian conception, which originates with Jesus, who, humiliated and killed, is transformed into the glorious and omnipotent son of God, or, indeed, the Virgin Mary, who suffers for the

death of her son and is subsequently offered heaven as compensation for her distress (11).

For Ida, the death of Nino represents a shock that alters the fragile equilibrium she managed to build up despite being raped and the difficult circumstances that war, famine and poverty have caused. The distress that Ida experiences when she sees Nino's corpse is described by Morante as a laceration: 'una feroce lacerazione della vagina, come se di nuovo glielo strappassero di là' (12) [*On recognizing him, Ida immediately had a fierce lacerating sensation in the vagina, as if they were tearing him again from there*]. Morante establishes an effective relationship between the character's psychological suffering and her physical pain, once reunited. The loss of Nino makes Ida vulnerable, revives her obsession, and leads to more suffering. For instance, Ida convinces herself that Nino is in some way still on Earth and that:

[...] camminando lungo tutta la curva terrestre [...] forse avrebbe finito per incontrarlo. Per questo, in certe ore, come un Pellegrino che si butta alla perdizione, essa sortiva alla sua ricerca. [...] A momenti le pareva di riconoscerlo [...] E si dava affannosamente alla rincorsa, già in precedenza sapendo che rincorreva un miraggio. (13)

[...] walking and walking along the whole terrestrial curve [...] perhaps she would end up by encountering him. For this reason, at certain hours, like a pilgrim abandoning himself to the great unknown, she would set forth looking for him. [...] At times she thought she recognized him [...] And she hurried breathlessly after them, knowing in advance she was chasing a mirage.]

These lines support Ida's desperation given that she, although knowing it to be impossible, continues to deceive herself, thinking that she will be able to meet Nino once more. Her suffering throughout the vain search undoubtedly increases her frustration and, thus, her distress. The obsessive projection of Nino effectively rapes his mother, in a psychological way, similarly to the physical rape by the German soldier: '[...] fu come se lui le si fosse diviso in tanti sosia di se stesso, ciascuno dei quali la sevizava in diverso modo' (14) [*it was as if he had been divided into so many doubles of himself, each of which tortured her in a different way*]. Ida, however, finds this, if not palliative, at least a distraction from her real anguish through the replication of her traumatic thoughts and experiences: 'A questo modo procedeva fino a estasiarsi di stanchezza, e a smarrire il senso dei fatti, i nomi, e anche la sua stessa identità' (15) [*In this way she went on until she was rapt in weariness, and had lost all notion of facts, names, even her own identity*]. Reiteration, originated by the individual's

refusal to openly face the reality of suffering, acts as a placebo, giving the individual the illusory sensation of being able to manage their distress and momentarily prevent his/her fall into total desperation. As Morante writes, 'La madre non aveva assistito ai funerali; e anche dopo, mai più trovò la forza di portarsi al Verano, dove Ninnarieddu era stato messo, a poca distanza dal vecchio domicilio di San Lorenzo, dov'era cresciuto. [...] Essa non aveva nemmeno pianto [...]' (16) [*The mother hadn't gone to the funeral; and even afterwards, she could never find the strength to go to Verano, where Ninnarieddu had been laid, a short distance from the old house of San Lorenzo, where he had grown up. [...] She hadn't even wept [...]*]. At other times, she has visions in which 'an evil' Nino appears and argues with her:

Le si ripresentava uguale al giorno che lei lo aveva visto in barella, per il riconoscimento a San Giovanni [...] E con la bocca semichiusa in una smorfia d'odio, le diceva: 'Vattene via da me. La colpa è tua. Perché mi hai fatto nascere?!' Ida sapeva che questo Nino, al pari degli altri, esisteva ormai solo nella sua proprio mente alterata. (17).

[*He presented himself to her just as he had been the day she saw him on the stretcher, for the identification at San Giovanni [...] And with his mouth half-closed in a grimace of hatred, he said to her: 'Go away from me, It's your fault. Why did you make me be born?'*

Ida knew that this Nino, like the others now existed only in her deranged mind.]

Ida is aware that her visions are only a creation of her own mind, distorted by her intense suffering; however, apart from momentarily alleviating the effects of distress, they also offer the opportunity to understand it gradually.

2. Establishing Intimate Suffering within a Community: the Search for Communicative Codes.

Becoming aware of suffering may help an individual to deal with stressful situations as he or she becomes aware of what causes this distress; thus, the individual becomes able to target his or her reactions accordingly. Nevertheless, most of the time, the suffering that an individual identifies presents inevitable and unavoidable implications.

As Regan notes, all individuals belong to specific communities (18) and share beliefs, thoughts, experiences, feelings and emotions with other community members. Intimate feelings such as joy or suffering manifest themselves initially at a

personal level; subsequently, they are automatically projected into the community and, as a result, may acquire a collective value (19). Consequently, even if certain individuals manage to recognise their own suffering, they may still perceive such awareness as incomplete. In effect, in order to become explicit, suffering needs to be acknowledged both at a personal and a collective level. The aim of this section is to analyse how, whether and to what extent something as intimate as suffering can become intelligible to a community. This discussion will also develop a parallel perspective: the relationship between moral community and communicative and comprehension codes that individuals employ in order to interact. The main question to be addressed is to what extent interactions between members of the same moral community are able to determine an individual's inclusion or exclusion.

Morris affirms (20) that when an author expresses suffering explicitly – as in the case of testimonial literature – it is the subject who adapts his personal experiences to collective comprehension. Yet the contrary could also be argued: when an author decides to deal with suffering implicitly, it is the duty of the moral community addressed by this work to adapt and comprehend an intimate and unspoken reality. In either case, the adaptation of perspectives is essential as the personal realm cannot easily be comprehended by a community, and vice versa, due to their different nature.

This point of view, however, only takes into account those works in which the depiction of suffering is already an 'established' reality at a textual level (be it explicit or implicit). Morris, in other words, only concentrates on the final products, and applies a retrospective analysis in order to understand what persuaded the authors to make their choices of adaptation. He rejects an analysis of those works that show awareness in progress and does not demonstrate, step by step, what type of process an author who has already become aware of his personal suffering undertakes in order to express it to the community. Furthermore, he does not study what sort of difficulties authors may encounter in doing so. Morris' perspective is doubtlessly enlightening, as it sheds light on an equally important aspect of suffering: the social one. However, his theory eventually proves itself too abstract to be applied without a clear reference to literary practice, which takes into consideration the different passages of collective awareness, which are similar to the personal ongoing and gradual process.

In *La Storia*, each character experiences suffering in a different way, and at different intensities; this implies, for obvious reasons, different ways of expressing this *scenario* at a social level. In the case

of Ida, one may argue that she does not express her distress publicly, tending to cover it up in order to hide it from the others. Morante recounts Ida's awareness of Usepe's death at the end of the novel: '[...] provò lo stimolo di urlare; ma ammutolì a un ragionamento immediato: "Se grido, mi sentiranno, e verranno a portarmelo via ..."' Si protese minacciosa verso la cagna: "Sss..." le bisbigliò, "zitta, non facciamoci sentire da loro..." (21) [[*Ida*] *tried the stimulus of shouting; but she fell mute, thinking immediately: 'If I shout, they'll hear me, and they'll come to take him away from him ...'* She bent threateningly toward the dog: 'ssh...' she whispered to it, 'hush, we mustn't let them hear us ...']. This indicates the character's unwillingness to explicitly show her distress to the community. It is true that Ida never talks about her distress to others; however, circumstances force her to approach other individuals belonging to her moral community diffidently.

Returning to Regan, it can therefore be deduced that Ida's moral community is not the Fascist Italian one, but rather that of all those unknown people who suffered the effects of dictatorship, war and poverty, all those people who never had the power nor the right to protest and oppose history – the innocent victims. According to Ravello (22), in her descriptions Morante adopts a peculiar perspective: 'una specie di adesione, di fede nel valore extraindividuale di [una] esperienza [...]' (23) [*A sort of adhesion, a faith into the extra-individual value of [an] experience*] (my translation). In adopting this perspective, authors are able to gradually shift the attention to the inner world of the character, so even if the community does not experience certain events first-hand, they feel the weight of trauma indirectly.

In some parts of the novel, Ida attempts to share her distress (directly or indirectly experienced) with others. However, in most cases, she does not succeed in doing so. The fact that she often goes to the Jewish Ghetto can be interpreted as an instinctive drive to share her personal suffering with a specific moral community. Despite the fact that Jews are victims of the regime and therefore have some elements in common with the protagonist, it has to be noted that Ida does not identify herself as a Jew. Indeed, she expresses her shame everytime she is obliged to admit her Jewish origins and is unable to accept the fact that she does not belong to the moral communities of the Aryans. Ida, in reality, is a stranger to both these communities – Aryans and Jewish.

Ida si fece coraggio; e appartatasi per un momento con questa donna, le chiese il suo recapito in un

filo di voce, pretendendo di chiederlo per conto di una parente che presto forse ne avrebbe avuto bisogno. Così parlando, era tutta arrossita in faccia, come si accusasse di un'indecenza. Ma Ezechiele, siccome Iduzza le era del tutto sconosciuta, accolse la sua richiesta come una cosa lecita e naturale. (24)

[Ida mustered her courage; and taking this woman aside for a moment, she asked her address in a faint voice, claiming she wanted it for a relative who would soon need her. Saying this, she became all red in the face, as if accusing herself of something indecent. But Ezekiel, since Iduzza was totally unknown to her, took her question as something licit and natural.]

These lines clearly support Ida's shame in response to her strong desire to share her anxieties, even with someone not belonging to or only partially belonging to her own world. The protagonist secretly hides her pregnancy, and the thought of being discovered, especially by Nino, both obsesses and frightens her. At this stage of our discussion, the important aspect to highlight in the previous passage is the evident counter position that Morante emphasises. On the one hand, there is Ida, who knows that the woman she is talking to belongs to the Jewish moral community and somehow trusts her; whilst on the other hand, the Jewish woman totally ignores Ida's identity and her Jewish origins. This juxtaposition increases the narrative tension the author has established in Ida's secret, and makes evident the impossibility of Ida admitting her personal suffering through the daily growing fear that leads to obsession. This type of reaction on the part of the protagonist, however, only becomes plausible if we consider that this happens at the beginning of the novel, when Ida still does not fully understand her distress at a personal level.

When the Nazi threat becomes a real obsession for Ida, she starts wandering around searching for someone to share her distress with, someone who belongs to her moral community:

In realtà non sapeva più dove cacciarsi. Il suo dubbio notturno di essere ricercata dai Tedeschi andava crescendo verso una certezza paranoica nel suo cervello [...] "Signora! Signora Di Segni!" Ida la chiamò, affrettando il passo alle sue spalle, con una voce di sorpresa quasi esultante. E siccome quella non pareva sentire, immediatamente si prese Usepe in collo e la rincorse, smaniosa di raggiungerla. Senza nessun intento preciso, paventava di perderla, aggrappandosi a quell'incontro estraneo come un terrestre smarrito nei deserti della luna che si fosse imbattuto in un proprio parente prossimo. Coi però non si voltava, né le dava ascolto; e quando Ida le fu accanto la guardò a malapena, con l'occhio ostile e torvo di

un'alienata che rifiuti ogni rapporto con la gente normale. [...] "Signora", le disse d'un tratto, facendosi più che poteva vicino a lei, [...] parlando a voce bassissima, "io pure sono ebrea". Però la signora Di Segni non parve capirla [...]. (25)

[In reality, she no longer knew where to go. Her night-suspicion that she was wanted by the Germans was growing to a paranoid certainty in her weakened mind [...] 'Signora! Signora Di Segni!' Ida called, walking faster after her, with a voice of almost exultant surprise. And when the other woman didn't seem to hear her, she immediately took Usepe in her arms and ran after her, clinging to that alien encounter like an earthling lost in the deserts of the moon who has run into close relation. But the woman didn't turn or listen; and when Ida was beside her, the woman barely glanced at her, with the grim and hostile eye of a lunatic rejecting all relationship with normal people. [...] 'Signora', she said suddenly, getting as close to her as she could and speaking in a very low voice, as if to an intimate confidante: 'I'm Jewish, too. But Signora Di Segni did not seem to understand her.]

In this passage, the author emphasises Ida's courage and determination in sharing her distress. However, even if the character admits 'io pure sono ebrea', which should sanction her belonging to the Jewish moral community, Madam Di Segni completely avoids and ignores her. The Italian author specifies that Madam Di Segni did not look like she understood Ida; the use of the verb 'capire' [*to understand*] is crucial here and demonstrates what being part of a moral community implies. According to Morris: 'individual voices are always engaged in (often unnoticed) dialogues that link them to other speakers in the encompassing social network of language' (26). Therefore, in order to be understood, individuals need to adopt previously agreed conventions and comprehension patterns - which I call communicative and comprehension codes - that are established, clarified, and made explicit when one joins a specific moral community. Speech obviously represents only the most obvious method of communication. Belonging to a moral community, in addition, involves active participation in it. As for Ida, she does not participate in the Jewish moral community; she never contributes to it and consequently does not understand its intricacies. This is depicted by the Italian author as a further, subtle injustice against Ida as she is even denied, not only joy and freedom, but also the solace and comfort to be found in sharing her distress. The protagonist, in other words, does not possess the communicative codes to express herself or to be understood. Ida is, as Venturi affirms: 'la vittima sacrificale' (27) [*the sacrificial victim*] (my translation); that is, destined to suffer. Her distress

is out of time and eternal, given that: ‘il tempo è emblema di una condizione perenne e perciò irrilevante per la sua incidenza sul “reale” (28). La storia è il non-essere e in quanto tale non permette di rinvenire al suo interno un momento o un movimento positivo.’ (29). [*Time is the emblem of a continuous condition, therefore its incidence on reality is irrelevant. [...] History incarnates the not-being and, as such, it does not allow to find a positive moment or movement within itself*] (My translation). Therefore, when Ida (and Usepe) experiences suffering, her distress is destined to consume itself, and in the name of a symbolic sacrifice, she is called upon to submit for humanity.

3. Parallel Moral Communities: Alternative Communicative and Comprehension Codes.

Examples of suffering being effectively projected at a social level are to be found in *La Storia*, as seen in the relationship between Davide Segre and Usepe; however, this is restricted as it is shared between only two people. These are different from the previously cited cases in which the common elements among people belonging to the same moral community are general and somehow predictable (such as traditions, and cultural, social and historical backgrounds). In these cases, what is common is implicit but perhaps more powerful as it directly and more specifically refers to the intimate realms of each individual.

Morante exposes a more intimate, perhaps instinctive, communicative code between Davide and Usepe. The two characters establish their own moral community based on the understanding of each others’ distress and not, as in other cases, on a common cultural or social background. It is obvious that the two individuals in question are unable to share much in terms of common life experiences as Davide is an anarchist and Usepe is still a child. However, Morante remarks indirectly that communicative codes for individuals, and therefore moral communities, can also be based on more instinctive sensations and emotions rather than simply on language. She writes:

Fra tutti, Usepe era il solo che non ritenesse Davide ubriaco: lo sospettava, invece, ammalato, forse per poco mangiare. [...] Usepe fu il solo a notargli una macchiolina, di sangue sulla maglietta; e suppose nella sua ignoranza, semplicemente che quella piaga del braccio avesse ripreso a sanguinargli. (30)

[*Usepe was the only one who didn’t consider Davide drunk: he suspected, instead, that he was sick, perhaps because he didn’t eat enough. [...] Usepe was the only one who noticed a little dot of blood on*

his shirt; and in his ignorance, he supposed simply that the wound in his arm had started bleeding again.]

In the above example, the author highlights the comparison between the moral community to which Davide should belong for cultural and historical reasons and the one he is establishing with Usepe. Hence, the Italian author creates a parallel moral community, a stronger and more authentic one that is able to guarantee a proper and real interaction between the two individuals. The writer stresses expressions such as ‘era il solo’ or ‘fu il solo,’ which support the fact that Usepe is able to completely understand Davide. Moreover, by defining Usepe’s instinctive thoughts as ‘ignoranza’ [*ignorance*], Morante emphasises how unusual the parallel moral community between the two characters in question is, especially compared to the ones where previously agreed-upon conventions are the foundation of collective interaction. The child’s ideas, however, turn out to be far from ignorant and unrealistic; Usepe is, in reality, entrusted as the only depositary for Davide’s truth. Thus, in Morante’s narrative, the term ‘ignoranza’ acquires a new meaning; it refers to the child’s out-of-the-ordinary thoughts, which are rejected by the collective.

In turn, Davide is the only person, together with Usepe’s dog, Bella, who is able to understand the child’s distress expressed in his unconventional poetry.

“Dimmele anche a me, se te le ricordi”.

“No, nun me ne ricordo ... Io le penso, e subito me ne scordo. Sono tante ... però piccole! Però TANTE!! Io le penso quando sto solo, e pure quando non sto solo, certe volte le penso!”

“Pensane una adesso!”

“T”

[...] Davide, che lo aveva ascoltato con molta serietà e rispetto, gli sentenziò, convinto: “Le tue poesie parlano tutte di DIO!”. (31)

[*Say them to me, too, if you remember them’*

‘Mo, I don’t remember ... I think them, then I forget them right away. There’s a lot of them ... but little! LOTS, though! I think them when I’m by myself, and even when I’m not by myself, I think some sometimes!’

‘Think one now!’

'Ess'

[...] Davide, who had listened with great gravity and respect, declared to him firmly: 'Your poems all talk about GOD!']

In these lines, the author emphasises Davide's interest in Useppe, who is initially too ashamed to speak. This is a crucial moment in *La Storia*, as the two characters discover that they both employ the same communicative code and, therefore, belong to the same moral community. Useppe listens carefully to Davide's deliriums and Davide, in return, listens to the child's poetry and stories in fascination. Morante remarks on the two characters' atypical features and reflects this in the stories and poetry they tell one another. Davide is an anarchist who, rather unusually, believes in God; whilst Useppe recites incomprehensible poems in which words, adjectives, verbs and meanings follow neither conventional poetic nor semantic rules. Subsequently, it becomes clear why other characters, such as Scimò, are unable to understand Useppe's poems and also why the child keeps on using a peculiar way of speaking during the course of the entire novel; this incomprehension may also explain Davide's loneliness and exclusion from society. Useppe and Davide do not need to understand each other's language in order to interact; they create their own communicative code that allows them to extrapolate the essential message from words in order to offer each other solace. In communication - not necessarily language-based communication - lays the real meaning of *La Storia*, and Ravello affirms that Morante's novel:

[...] non vuole essere una consolazione nei confronti della morte ma un insegnamento ad amare di più la vita, a comprenderla in tutta la sua ricchezza capace di annullare la morte. Solo chi ama la vita, come Useppe, può sentire "tutte le voci e le frasi e i discorsi, a migliaia, e a migliaia di migliaia" sensazione "multipla", "semplice, rapida [...], sperimentata nella realtà presente e non rinviata ad un futuro extraterreno. (32)

[does not claim to be a way of consoling one of another's death but a lesson to love life, to understand it in all its richness which is, on its turn, able to nullify death. Only who loves life, as Useppe, can listen to 'all the voices, sentences and discourses, thousands of them, and again thousands of thousands of them', multiple sensations, simple and rapid ones [...], that one may experiment on the present reality and not in an hypothetical extraterrestrial future.] (My translation)

Morante's message, therefore, is encapsulated in her words, and expresses itself through characters, conversations, events, poems, songs, and even suffering and death. Communication becomes the medium of what is generally defined as madness or ignorance, but in Morante it becomes the only true reality. Characters such as Ida, Useppe, Davide, and even Bella are considered mad or mentally ill. However, they are the only ones who manage to grasp the real meaning of life. Morante, consequently, decides to put them in privileged positions by elevating these figures as depositaries of the truth.

6. Conclusions.

This article has analysed the process required for the individual to recognise intimate suffering in Morante's masterpiece. First of all, the mechanisms of awareness have been established, paying special attention to their importance for the suffering individuals coming to terms with their distress. Reiterated suffering assists the identification of the nature and origin of distress, which constitutes the fundamental step towards subsequent attempts to cope with it. Secondly, the issue of searching for communicative codes in order to express personal trauma has been explored, demonstrating that individuals need to be fully integrated into a specific reality and for it to accept their intimate experiences. Finally, the unusual resolution certain individuals find in order to 'free' themselves, at least partially, from their anguish has been discussed. This included creating alternative moral realities based on their own communication and comprehension codes.

The latter two points of this study are particularly significant as they require the active participation of the suffering individual to come to terms with their trauma. Personal awareness of suffering does not involve explicit comprehension of the nature of one's distress; it involves other factors such as the projection of personal suffering onto a collective level, which is an ongoing process. However, problems arise when the methods by which such projection takes place are discussed, as they can adopt different forms that, at first glance, might confuse the reader. Nevertheless, it is evident that becoming explicitly aware of one's own suffering is a complex and gradual process.

In conclusion, this article has illustrated the complexity of this literary masterpiece, its hidden messages and mechanisms, as well as showing how the Italian author is able to depict subtle and

sometimes implicit psychological behaviors within and between human beings.

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