Missed conversations, unuttered words, and internal monologues are an intrinsic part of Tabucchi's fictional writing, creating a prose that, in Nathalie Roelens' words, 'ha la reputazione di essere ellittica, rarefatta, concisa e reticente, di eludere un indicibile'.1 Such coexisting dialogism and elusiveness stem from the author's striving for linguistic precision and 'vagueness' (in the Leopardian sense) at the same time, for 'una parola fluida, un po' indistinta e fluttuante',2 which suggestively reflects the hybrid nature of neo-standard Italian and the multiplicity and impermanence of contemporary thought. Moving from the microtextual analysis of the figures of silence, reticence and ellipsis in some of the author's most indicative texts, the present work intends to fill a gap in Tabucchi criticism in this specific area, which has mainly focused on macrotextual spatial and temporal gaps.

Tabucchi's use of silence, reticence and ellipsis can best be understood when inscribed within the notion of dialogism.3 Following the collapse of grand narratives, contemporary thought and literature increase their dialogic nature in a process of Verwindung and unending search (despite the awareness of the aim being unattainable), which makes the reader centre-stage by drawing them into the text. Tabucchi conveys this sense of flexibility and change through an original narrative voice and an extensive conversational mode, in direct speech and mostly free indirect speech.4 Dialogism and heteroglossia (Bakhtin) in his fiction result from the hybridisation of 'spoken' modes and literary language - as well as from the influence of non-literary media, especially theatre and cinema - creating, in Testa's words, 'uno dei risultati più sapienti (soprattutto sotto il profilo sintattico) di trattamento colto e letterario dell'oralità dell'ultimo ventennio' (341). From cinema, in particular, Tabucchi claims to have drawn the montage technique, and therefore the elliptic mode, that permeate his fiction both in diegesis and in mimesis, that is in the plot structure, and in the characters' speech:

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3. Ibid.
4. From Testa's words, 'uno dei risultati più sapienti (soprattutto sotto il profilo sintattico) di trattamento colto e letterario dell'oralità dell'ultimo ventennio' (341). From cinema, in particular, Tabucchi claims to have drawn the montage technique, and therefore the elliptic mode, that permeate his fiction both in diegesis and in mimesis, that is in the plot structure, and in the characters' speech.
Ho imparato più dal cinema che non dalla narratologia. Il cinema mi ha insegnato l'ellissi, che consente di saltare passaggi. [...] Anche il montaggio è molto importante. (Borsari 10; Gumpert 87)
Per dirla molto semplicemente il non detto per me ha la stessa funzione del montaggio nel cinema. [...] Credo che in letteratura questo lato oscuro che si crea tra il primo e il dopo [di una scena cinematografica] debba essere riempito dall'immaginazione del lettore [...] Il lettore deve partecipare attivamente con la sua intelligenza a ciò che il narratore racconta perché è solo lui che può colmare gli spazi vuoti. (Petri 69)

Tabucchi's textual omission are intrinsic to his discourse (both macro- and micro-structurally), as they are in cinema and in spoken interaction, where ellipsis is a common means of interaction, rather than a sign of incomplete sense (Mazzarino 190). They serve to trigger in the recipient inferring mechanisms for retrieving information, heightening the reader's dialogue with a text that is essentially questioning, disquieting, 'open' to multiple resolutions. Tabucchi's dialogism and technique of the gap, reticence and ellipsis clearly reflect his underlying idea of an intrinsically fragmented reality and a necessarily limited and ever-shifting vision, powerfully conveyed in the metaphor of the hedge of the horizon:

È molto difficile avere uno sguardo totalizzante, unitario su una realtà così composita e complessa e direi anche piena di buchi come la nostra [...] In questo mondo diventato assolutamente relativo anche la scrittura diventa relativa e anche la rappresentazione della realtà diventa relativa. ('Dibattito con Antonio Tabucchi' 155)

In the attempt to render a complete though relative picture, Tabucchi has a special ear for silences, pauses, paralinguistic communication, since in many circumstances silence is much more effective than words. As Banfi reminds us, phonic void does not mean semantic void (36) but rather attests that 'the fundamental reason for hesitating is that speech is an act of creation' (Borsari 12) Following Dauenhauer, silence is intended here as 'an active performance' (14), as an act that needs interpreting, as recent linguistics has realised (Banfi 14). The task of the linguist—and of Tabucchi's reader—becomes the challenge of interpreting silence, which, as Banfi suggests, is not a monolithic phenomenon, but a multi-faceted one, with ambivalent functions, and opposite roles. Silence can indicate close, good relations, and have an affective function, but it can also express uneasiness and distance. It can be a means of self-knowledge, a sign for appreciation, and an acti-
vating function (mental concentration), as well as a negative signal, a means to express disagreement, and a sign of mental inactivity. In the study of silence we need to distinguish, with Banfi, between the lack of sound as a non-marked phenomenon, and as a marked phenomenon, which is functional to the communicative process, as well as silence with a structuring function of the exchange and silence occurring in between turns, which is not a communicative act in itself. The first type of silence, namely pauses within the turn, can be full (such as full of phatic sounds) or empty (that is completely void of sound); the second type of silence in between turns is called switching pause. All of these types occur in the reported exchanges of Tabucchi’s fiction, testifying the vividness of his reporting speech.

To analyse Tabucchi’s montage technique and textual omissions, I will also need to define reticence and ellipsis in linguistic terms. Ellipsis is a complex rhetorical figure covering a variety of phenomena of elision and suppression. It is defined as ‘omission of one or more words that are required by a grammatical construction’ (Il nuovo Zingarelli 640) or ‘suppression of one or more words that are not indispensable for the understanding of the sentence and that are considered easily recovered’. To better understand its nature it is easier, following Prandi, to contrast it with reticence: while ellipsis allows retrieving of the implied information (despite the gap), reticence entirely obscures the information. Indeed, the elliptic sentence does not constitute a void but a positive category, as an essential element to textual cohesion, lacking grammatically but not semantically, for the implied information can be inferred. In the case of reticence, instead, the implied element(s) is(are) not recoverable at all, and the gap cannot be filled through interpretation, as with ellipsis. Like every implicit reference, reticence is a powerful means in spoken interaction, for it allows the speaker to avoid taking responsibility for their utterance.

Its most explicit form, according to Prandi, is an abrupt interruption of the speech act, which breaks the grammatical flow of the sentence, and can be graphically rendered by suspension marks (225). Such hesitation can either create reticence, by leaving the referent obscure, or ellipsis, by giving hints for its interpretation, making it at times difficult to distinguish between ellipsis, reticence, and hesitation, as the discriminant is the speaker’s eventual inferring of the implied reference.

For the above features, ellipsis and reticence highly depend on the context; indeed their reference is mostly secured by non-linguistic context. Their use is paramount in spoken interaction, but also essential in written texts, especially in contemporary fiction, built on neo-standard Italian, which incorporates many features of spoken discourse, such as parataxis, repeti-
tion, discourse markers, focalisation. Tabucchi employs such discourse structure, and in particular the figures of ellipsis (as an apparently void yet full category), and reticence (even more powerfully demanding active interpretation) in order to involve the reader in decoding the texts. Reticence, ellipsis and silence will first be explored in some of Tabucchi’s early short stories, which best reflect insistent questioning and reticent answering, portraying the difficulty of human relationships. In particular, I will compare the rendering of male-female relationships in two stories, one from Donna di Porto Pim, and the other from I volatili del Beato Angelico, and then focus on the linguistic resolutions of the self-quest in the novels Notturno indiano, Il filo dell’orizzonte, and Sostiene Pereira.

The two short stories selected both revolve around a couple’s interaction, where the man’s initial leading role is ironically subverted by the woman’s perspective. ‘Piccole balene azzurre che passegiano nelle Azzorre’ (from the collection Donna di Porto Pim) is an interesting shot at a husband-wife conversation, during a boat trip in the Azores, as the woman reveals to him that she knows about his love affair. The man’s initial patronising attitude (opening the story in medias res with a declaration of power, reinforced by the use of cataphora, which implies the referent) is counteracted by the woman’s linguistic power, as she only can speak Portuguese, and by her adopting the strategy of reticence and vagueness (Le cose), despite the man’s request for clarification: “Le cose non sono sempre come ci sembra-no”, disse. “Quali cose?”, chiese lui. Lei fece un sorriso vago. “Le cose”, disse’ (22). The woman’s reticence succeeds in gradually undermining the man’s self-confidence—evident in his increasing hesitations (‘Oh, diciamo; ‘Oh be” 24)—when it is used, as Mizzau highlights, as a powerful tool to subvert implicitly discourse and relations.

A similar man-woman, elliptic power relation is explored in the story ‘Le persone felici’, from I volatili del Beato Angelico, where the couple’s psychology (he is a lecturer, she is a former student of his) emerges not simply from uttered words, but mostly from verb ellipses, silences and gestures. As in the above story, the male protagonist assumes a leading role in conversation, alternating a patronising mode with a silent and hesitant one, which equally grant him the floor. Two exchanges are particularly interesting in terms of reticence and ellipsis, as they ironically highlight the man’s self-confidence in answering elliptically or refusing to answer the woman’s questions. Notice also the marked use of verbal ellipsis, and the ‘spoken’ use of ‘niente’ in adjectival function in the last three turns:
‘Dialoghi Mancati’ Uses Of Silence, reticence And Ellipsis

‘Ho pensato anche a questo’.
‘Ma pensi proprio a tutto?’.
‘Modestamente’.
‘Il nome?’.
‘Niente nomi’. (69)

After a few more implicit lines, another extended question-answer exchange builds on reticence, as the woman discloses her pregnancy in minimal utterances:

‘Di quanto?’.
‘Due mesi’.
‘Perché me lo dici ora?’
‘Perché prima non mi andava’, disse lei con fermezza. (70)

Although the man’s confident attitude cannot be totally undermined, it is portrayed ironically by the narrator with an ambiguous concluding remark, involuntarily conveying his guilt at unwanted fatherhood: “La vita bisogna saperla prendere”, rispose’ (71).

The elliptic narrative technique used in the short stories, which powerfully picture instances of human relationships, is adapted to Tabucchi’s (short), which similarly build on omission, both thematically and micro- and macrostructurally, the most striking examples being Notturno indiano, Il filo dell’orizzonte and Sostiene Pereira. Notturno indiano builds extensively on silence, ellipsis and reticence, as an unsolved quest in India. The Western protagonist’s search for a mysterious friend (whose name and identity keep changing—Xavier, Rouxinol, Roux) stumbles on pervading metaphysical vagueness, revealing, through the clashing of Western and Eastern thoughts, the intrinsic impossibility of finding the truth.10 The plot unfolds through a montage of separate scenes, in a series of direct speech exchanges with different characters (one in each chapter). These negotiations, normally staged in full, repeatedly present the protagonist with indirect or implied information, preventing his reaching a final solution, as reality and fantasy merge, giving rise to increasing ambiguity. A first revealing encounter is that with the doctor at the Breach Candy Hospital in Bombay (second chapter). In the following extract the elliptical discourse marker (già) and the silent look convey the ominous sense of inevitability and chance, which deeply pervades Tabucchi’s fiction (Io dissi: “già”. E poi lo guardai, e anche lui mi guardò con un’aria assente da preoccupazioni, come se fosse lì per caso e tutto fosse per caso, perché così dovesse essere’ 23). From the initial negative tag question (“non è certo inglese, no?”)11 the atmosphere of uncertainty continues in the indi-
rect assertion of mistrust for the very possibility of communication, for words, as well as gestures, inevitably lend themselves to misunderstanding (‘Il medico fece un cenno come se significasse: basta così; ma non era quello che intendeva dire, naturalmente’ 23-24). Since true communication is impossible, information is either implied, or, when conveyed, remains obscure to the interlocutor, for the context is also unknown and leads to misreadings (‘Instintivamente mi alzai. Era venuto il momento di accomiatarmi, credetti, era questo che mi stava dicendo: che me ne andassi. Ma lui non parve accorgersene’ 27). The high degree of implication emerges in the paralinguistic context (which is always revealing in Tabucchi’s texts) but takes here even more centre stage, as the interlocutor (like the reader) is left to interpret silences, gestures, postures, thoughts, and elliptical and reticent phrases.

Other suggestive encounters occur in two mirror chapters: chapter IV, with a man going to die at the Railway’s Retiring Rooms in Bombay, and chapter VI, with a member of the Theosophical Society, in Madras, which similarly introduces the idea of the human body as mere appearance (through the metaphor of the suitcase), setting the theme of absence and omission. Rather than a real interlocutor, in chapter IV the protagonist faces a voice, incredibly flat in tone, belonging to a meagre shadow. The presence of the other, and thus the possibility of communication, are here reduced to a minimum, mirroring the struggle for the quest through an unknown, foreign culture, such as India, clashing with the expectations of a Westerner, and producing comical misunderstandings. The protagonist’s quest in fact becomes an attempt to decipher utterly different signs and sounds (‘per me era impossibile decifrarlo. L’India era anche questo: un universo di suoni piatti, indistinguibili, indiscernibili’ 38). Continuous requests for rephrasing, due to lack of understanding (‘“come ha detto?”’ 39) are reinforced by recurrent comments on the absurdity of non-communication (‘Anche la mia era una domanda assurda, ma non meno della sua, certo’ 39). As the protagonist starts realising that his interlocutor is on an entirely different wave-length, he resorts to ellipsis, as the only means of dealing with another culture altogether (‘Io dissi: “Ah, certo” perché avevo capito che ora si riferiva al lamento che veniva da lontano’ 40), and eventually silence, which becomes the ultimate means of communication between the two (‘Restai in silenzio, le sue affermazioni non davano spazio a interlocuzioni’ 40).

The technique of reticence and ellipsis is also used to convey the protagonist’s doubts on the nature of his own pursuit. This becomes clearer throughout the novel as he admits the ‘weak’ nature of his search, focused on mere signs (‘cercavo solo delle tracce’ 41) rather than on finding his
friend Roux, whose identity becomes illusionary, and merges with his own. As the quest boundaries become blurred, opposites (yes and no) merge into the same entity ('Disse di no, o meglio di sì' 50; 'Non sono mai riuscito a stabilization se è per pessimismo o per ottimismo' 51). Concepts and words reveal their falsity and incongruence, as the search is exploded by recurrent (modal) adverbs, often accompanying verba dicendi, as an implicit and ironic narrator's comment on the utterance. In particular, adverbs such as practically and actually are clear examples of 'empty' categories, void 'traces', implying a meaning that cannot exist, as portrayed by ellipsis and reticence.

Chapter VI similarly stages an uncomfortable interaction,12 as the protagonists doubts again the validity of his own search, highlighting its remote and hypothetical nature. Such uneasiness is created by a suggestive silence that impregnates the scene from the very beginning ('Alzò la mano e fece un gesto vago' 53), a marked silence, showing the distance between the two interlocutors. Struggling to decode the signs of Eastern culture, which seem vague to those who lack knowledge of the culture, the protagonist's only possible response is equally vague ('Alzò il bicchiere pieno d'acqua come se fosse un brindisi. A che cosa?, pensai. E poi alzai un bicchiere anch'io e dissi: "alla luce e all'ombra" 53). After a renewed attempt at clarity ('Era necessario spiegarsi con chiarezza, con esattezza' 54), the protagonist soon realises the impossibility to account for his own search, due to its unreal nature ('Ma che cosa avevo da chiedere, dopotutto? Solo una remota notizia, una traccia ipotetica: un possibile aggancio verso Xavier' 54). The 'inferior' conversational role to which he is relegated by his reticent interlocutor (as in chapter IV) is powerfully rendered through a distancing silence ('Io annuì in silenzio, perché mi resi conto che stava conducendo la conversazione a suo piacimento ed era inutile continuare con richieste dirette e troppo esplicite' 55), and through an indirect, elliptic and reticent mode, as he realises the emptiness of discrete categories, such as the notion of a single truth. These silent interactions are revealingly located in time gaps—as the interlocutor seems to fall asleep (57), and as his watch comes to a standstill causing an absolute silence ('il mio orologio era fermo. Il silenzio era assoluto' 59). Such short sentences powerfully convey the theme of missed communication and metaphysical silence of an Indian nocturne, a search in the dark (in an unknown place) for the other, that turns out to be a quest for the self. The clear dichotomy of Western thought (opposing the I to the other, reality to fantasy), blurs in contact with the Eastern notion of coexistence of opposites (Mazzarino) and circular time, where identity is not fixed (reincarnation) and ends meet with beginnings. The only ways to express

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such culture clash and intrinsically split identity are reticence, ellipsis, and ultimately silence. The open ending of *Notturno indiano*, revealing that ‘dietro l’ultima maschera, il Sé si mostra assente’, confirms that the goal of searching is in its very process.¹³

On the same line of *Notturno indiano*, *Il filo dell’orizzonte* is impregnated with ellipsis, reticence and silence, which most powerfully convey its paramount theme of death. The nature of the detective is taken to an extreme by the protagonist, Spino, who, in the attempt to unveil the mystery of the dead boy’s identity (as well as his own), becomes increasingly obsessed with reading every single sign. The whole narration (as commonly happens in Tabucchi’s fiction) turns into an exploration of the characters’ interactions, not just through words, but also through gestures and silences, as in the following example of *switching pause*:

‘Stanotte è morto il poliziotto’, ha detto, e ha fatto un gesto con la mano, di taglio, come a significare: pari; oppure: fine della storia. C’è stato un lungo silenzio, e Corrado si è messo a sfogliare un fascicolo, come se l’argomento fosse esaurito. (50)

In the effort to counteract everyone’s indifference about the death of the young man (suggestively named Carlo Nobodi, and strikingly resembling Spino), the protagonist embarks on his own private quest, despite his friends trying to dissuade him. His thirst for the truth is maintained by remaining firm in his secret idea, and minimising verbal contact with the others. Spino internalises the external role of the detective, who normally interacts with other people in order to gain information, and turns it into his own spiritual, metaphysical search. Being all caught up in his quest, his utterances are kept to the minimum through ellipsis, reticence, and silence, and are often reduced to a single word, like a discourse marker (*già*)¹⁴ (*poi Pasquale ha detto che era una triste storia e Spino ha risposto “già”* 33). Following Spino’s internal sense, his answers often remain cryptic to the interlocutor, as in conversation with the priest (*‘Li ha guardati negli occhi con insistenza come a volte fanno i preti. “Perché vuole sapere di lui?”, ha chiesto. “Perché lui è morto e io sono vivo”, ha detto Spino’* 46). Alternatively, and most revealingly at chapter ending, Spino leaves his turns blank, suggesting the impossibility of reaching an answer, as when Sara suggests his resemblance to the dead man (*‘Con la barba e vent’anni di meno, potresti essere tu’, dice. Lui non risponde, come se fosse un’osservazione senza importanza’* 32). On the same line, chapter VII ends with Spino’s unanswered question (*‘Ma cosa vai cercando’, bisbiglia Pasquale, “perché ti interessa tanto sapere*
Chi è?" (40), which is echoed, at the end of chapter IX, by Corrado’s similarly unanswered question ("Ma tu cosa vai cercando?", gli ha detto spingendolo fuori' 52). Such silent missed communications between Spino and his interlocutors contribute to creating the uneasiness and openness of the text, turning the reader into an accomplice of its creation.

Continuing on the line of the ‘reticent’ quest (together with the renewed interest for political commitment), Sostiene Pereira presents another paramount example of missed communication. The novel immediately strikes the reader for its title and its recurrent refrain (sostiene Pereira’), which aims at giving the impression of witnessing a testimony. As a matter of fact, Pereira’s contributions are moulded in ellipsis, reticence, and ambiguous silences, which leaves the reader in the position of the detective/judge in search for Pereira’s true identity. The protagonist’s tendency for omission conveys his non-commitment in social/political affairs, as well as his lack of self-confidence, emerging in his thoughts as much as in his utterances, namely the things Pereira would have liked to say, but never utters (through free direct and indirect speech). His hesitant mode is apparent from his recurrent repetition and rephrasing and the abundance of discourse markers denoting change of plans (‘ma’; ‘almeno’; ‘no’; ‘ebbene’...) and hesitation (‘beh...’), conveying the protagonist’s dialogue with himself (87). The phrase that best characterises him, the ever-repeated ‘beh’ (often uttered to the portrait of his latest wife) summarises his whole character. A few extracts will suffice here to portray his character and show the extent of the text’s implication. Pereira’s effort in uttering his first question to the young Monteiro Rossi, is underlined by reporting the thought process that precede his actual utterance:

E fu tutto quello che pensava che gli diede il coraggio di fare una domanda diretta, tanto per aprire la conversazione, e senza pensarci più di troppo chiese a Monteiro Rossi, questa è una festa della gioventù salazarista, lei è della gioventù salazarista? (93)

Similarly, when confronted with a first direct question by Marta (Monteiro Rossi’s girlfriend) (lei crede nella rivoluzione francese? 96), Pereira’s reply conveys his split identity, juxtaposing theory and practice by means of those empty adverbs which have been a matter of ironical debate elsewhere (‘La frase che segue è falsa’ 42):

Teoreticamente si, rispose Pereira; e si pentì di quel teoricamente, perché avrebbe voluto dire: praticamente si; ma aveva detto in fondo quello che pensava. (96)
Pereira’s exchange with his friend Silva, as they meet at Coimbra station, presents another symptomatic example of reticence, which will plant the seeds of Pereira’s final action (also as a belated reaction to his friend’s impudent support of the regime). Here the use of repetition heightens Pereira’s minimal collaboration in the exchange (indicating his non-commitment), as he simply answers the questions as ‘yes/no’ alternatives (‘così, così’; ‘vivo solo’), omitting any comment and concluding with his most typical reply (‘beh’):


With his reticent attitude Pereira is the epitome of non-commitment, which is used by the author to portray political silence. His silences or minimal utterances are then expanded in the report of his thoughts, which, despite the protagonist’s clearly hesitant character, makes the text much more explicit than the previous ones. The following novel, La testa perduta di Damasceno Monteiro, is rather plainer, more devoid of the implied character I have underlined so far. In the rest of Tabucchi’s fiction, though, ellipsis, reticence and silence are clear means of conveying the dysfunctional communication and unsolved quest that ground his narrative, both at discourse and sentence level, equally built on structural omissions. Such discursive and thematic choice of the unsaid reflects the author’s stated preference for ‘creature zoppicanti esistenzialmente, con una vita fatta di desideri’ (‘Dibattito con Antonio Tabucchi’ 151), which best mirror the contemporary existential situation. Their incomplete nature, as their incapacity of communicating successfully (but through missed dialogues), though, does not prevent them from searching; on the contrary, it sets both protagonist and reader on a continuous quest for an ideal complete text and whole identity, despite being aware of their non-existence.

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'Dialoghi Mancati': Uses Of Silence, reticence And Ellipsis

NOTES

1 'Quello che si insegue sembra sfuggire irrevocabilmente e il silenzio si fa sempre più rumoroso, l'assenza sempre più presente ed irriducibile' ('Dibattito con Antonio Tabucchi' 146-66, 147).

2 Si consideri l'autore: 'Quando scrivo, cerco di trovare un lessico adeguato, che evochi senza imporre, che suggerisca senza costringere. Credo che il lettore meriti una sua libertà di interpretazione, della quale ho bisogno anch'io quando leggo. Il lettore deve poter partecipare, costruire e intervenire' (Borsari 12).

3 Dialogism may be defined as the presence of writer and reader in the text, which can emerge through direct address to the reader, spoken features of discourse (such as simplified syntax), and great use of reported speech. A non-dialogic text would imply a single, undisputed authorial voice.

4 Tabucchi claims to be very concerned with the question of narrative dialogue, on a formal and stylistic basis. In Testa's words, 'Tabucchi [...] elimina virgolette e trattini per delimitare il discorso diretto e li sostituisce con la semplice virgola. Prospettando così, attraverso la mediazione della narrativa novecentesca (José Saramago in primo luogo), un andamento della scrittura che recupera, dalla sponda di un'esibita letterarietà, le novem- zee del parlato' (Testa 330).

5 Consider also Tabucchi's words in Livorni 432. The technique of the gap aims at producing displacement in the reader, since 'non solo il protagonista si interroga sulla realtà, ma il testo stesso' (Brizio 103).

6 Mazzarino interestingly contrasts the Western and Eastern tradition, underlining that fact that in the West the double has always been associated with suspicion, whereas in India such a notion does not apply (300).

7 Encyclopedìa universale Rizzoli-Larousse. Paris: Larousse, 1964; Milan: Rizzoli, 1967. 'Elliptic structures are sentences containing gaps which are interpreted under an identity condition with some other constituent, not necessarily in the same sentence' (Reinhart 409). Linguistically, there are two general types of ellipsis. The first type, in which the gap corresponds to a constituent of surface structure, such as verb phrase (VP) or sentence (SS); the second type (GAPPING), where the missing nodes do not usually form a syntactic constituent.

8 This can be used, as Mizzau points out, to direct discourse ideologically without stumbling into taboos. 'Sfruttando la possibilità dell'implicito di 'dire qualcosa senza per questo assumersi la responsabilità di averla detta' (Ducrot 20), 'si può orientare ideologicamente il discorso senza dover incorrere in tabù' (Mizzau 46).

9 Another interesting story for hesitation and ellipsis is 'Paradiso celeste', Il gioco del rovescio, where a number of suspension marks render the difficult social relations between two members of the upper class, Monsieur Huppert and Monsieur Delatour (see 122). I will omit the analysis of the novel Requiem, for its gaps are mostly macro-structural rather than micro-structural (such as ellipsis and reticence), and of Dialoghi mancati, for it is a different genre, namely a theatrical piece.

10 The duration of pauses depend on the toleration rule which vary according to different cultures (Banfi 22).

11 This utterance seems to be structured on the model of English tag questions, which suggests this is the language in which the exchange is conducted.

12 The protagonist clearly underlines his own 'disagio' (uneasiness) (56, 59), and 'malessere' (malaise) (59) caused by the vagueness of the situation, which risks to explode into 'collera' (rage) (56).

13 'La frase che segue è falsa. La frase che precede è vera', I volatili del Beato Angelico 46. Through a similar elliptic and reticent tone, this story dialogues with Notturno indi-
ano by reporting the correspondence between the member of the Theosophical Society (chapter VI) and Tabucchi himself, thus blurring the boundaries of fiction and reality, as true and false exist at the same time (52), and testifying to the impossibility of reaching a definite answer.

14 Compare Spino’s conversational attitude with Pereira’s minimal utterances and use of the discourse marker ‘beh’.

15 Other evidence of Pereira’s reticence in conversational exchanges is in his use of exophora, referring to something external to the communicative situation. In this case, he refers to what has been going on in his mind (and is starting to put into words), thus projecting his own context as a shared context, while addressing his friend Silva, which necessarily leads to misunderstanding: ‘Cominciarono a mangiare in silenzio, poi, a un certo punto, Pereira chiese a Silva cosa ne pensava di tutto questo. Tutto questo cosa?, chiese Silva. Tutto, disse Pereira, quello che sta succedendo in Europa’ (108).

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