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In 2015, H.J. Manzari and Amparo Alpañés from Washington & Jefferson College, together with Stefano U. Baldassari and Nienke Scholten from ISI Florence, and Angela Tumini from Chapman University, came together to organize the second Bridges Across Cultures: An International Conference on Arts and Humanities. The conference was held in Florence, Italy, from July 2nd-5th, 2015 at the historical Palazzo Rucellai. The "Bridges" conference originated as a vision and an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various arts and humanities-related fields from all over the world to come together and learn from each other. Over the years, the conference has served as a meeting place for scholars and experts with cross-disciplinary interests related to arts and humanities to interact with members within and outside of their own particular disciplines.

This edition is indebted to W&J's Emily Sterk who served as copy editor and made innumerable contributions to these ACTAS. It is my hope that the reader will be able to discover new and creative perspectives from which to study some traditional academic topics from the cross-disciplinary lens while reading the articles here presented. It is our wish to spark the reader's intellectual curiosity, and hopefully, to stimulate the reader to join the conversation.

H.J. Manzari

Pittsburgh August 2017

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“A Secret Language of our Own”: Intertextual Encounters in Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

Zeynep Z. Atayurt-Fenge

The Iranian-American author and academic Azar Nafisi’s first book, a critical study of Vladimir Nabokov’s novels, was published in 1994. Titled *Anti-Terra: A Critical Study of Vladimir Nabokov’s Novels*, the work was inspired by her doctoral studies. Several years after the publication of this critical study, she moved to the United States, and in 2003 she published *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, a confessional narrative about her experiences as a professor teaching literature in Iran. In 2009, she wrote another memoir inspired by her mother titled, *Things I Have Been Silent About: Memories*, and in 2014, she published, *The Republic of Imagination: America in Three Books*. Of all these works, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is the most successful, considering it spent time on the bestseller list and has been translated into thirty-two languages.

Reading Lolita in Tehran gives an account of a period of almost two decades, extending from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the subsequent rise of the Islamic Republican Party in 1980 to the late 1990s. Nafisi’s work mainly refers to the period under the rule of the Islamic Republican Party – a period during which Nafisi, upon the completion of her research degree in the States, returns to Iran and commences her academic career. However, because of the strict rules

imposed on intellectuals by the Republic, she resigns from her academic post, and in 1995 begins to run a reading group at her home every week to “discuss literature” (3). Nafisi’s confessional narrative has been viewed as a controversial work that reads more as a political commentary than a personal memoir. As Christine Grogan writes in her article, “*Lolita Revisited: Reading Azar Nafisi’s Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*,” the memoir has been criticized for “its alleged neo-conservative and pro-military messages” (54). In his article, “Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire,” Hamid Dabashi claims these messages are “at the service of the U.S. ideological psy-op” (Dabashi). Pointing critically to the repressed position of women in Iran after the Islamic Revolution, Grogan also criticizes the work for “providing a dangerously oversimplified depiction of women as nothing but victims,” and in doing so reinforcing “the stereotypes of Iran” (66). Whilst these political biases can be traced in Nafisi’s work, reading the book solely within a political frame would be an injustice to the poetics of the book.

In fact, Nafisi’s book is not the only work that deals with this subject matter. Marjane Satrapi’s highly acclaimed 2000 graphic novel, *Persepolis: The Story of an Iranian Childhood*, is yet another memoir that deals with the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and is inspired by the author’s childhood experiences. Although both works engage with similar issues, Satrapi’s graphic novel mainly tends to depict the effects of the oppressive regime on adolescents of the time (including herself), whilst Nafisi explores the impact of the Revolution on a relatively wider age group consisting of students and academics. As John Rachal explains, the book also “chronicles the ultra-fundamentalism of the revolution,” (744) by drawing a comparison between the world of academia before and after the Revolution. Although both texts can be read as political manifestos, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* [1] specifically uses the literary imagination as a medium to draw attention to oppressive ideologies. Indeed, Nafisi’s work is about literature, reading, and the liberating powers

of works of fiction within a social landscape that, as Nafisi writes in her memoir, “denied any merit to literary works” (25). Although the title of the work refers only to Nabokov’s *Lolita*, the book offers a multi-voiced intertextual appreciation of other literary works from Western and Eastern cultures and forefronts the notion of imaginative power embedded in fiction.

With a poignant portrayal of life under an oppressive regime, particularly the lives of the women in her social landscape, Nafisi’s work highlights the idea of fiction as a source of escapism from the harsh realities of the world, and more importantly, as a gateway to “liberate minds and peoples” (Nafisi, “Azar Nafisi”). In doing so, the text, as Kristine Huntley describes in her review of the memoir, “mixes literary analyses in with [Nafisi’s] observations of the growing oppressive environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran” (1443). Thus, her reading group, which lasts for only a couple of years before she eventually moves to the U.S. for good in 1997, serves as an exit from the restrictions of her social environment, and becomes a stimulating place for her with seven of her “best and most committed” (3) female students – Nassrin, Manna, Mahshid, Yassi, Azin, Mitra, Sanaz – to explore “the relation between fiction and reality” (6). Therefore, the room in her house where she holds her classes becomes “a place of transgression” (8) and “a space of [their] own” (12), rendering her female students the opportunity to communicate their different perspectives on the works they read. This experience, as Nafisi points out, enables these young women, albeit temporarily, to reclaim their subjectivity that was denied to them in the outside reality that intended to impose an indistinguishable appearance and mindset on women. As opposed to this restrictive environment, Nafisi’s reading group functions as a “wonderland” (8). It is a place to stimulate the power of imagination, where she and her reading group discuss works of literature in a free environment in “a secret language of [their] own” (21). In these classes, they also enjoy the experience of, as Nafisi puts in a literary fashion borrowed from Nabokov, “how the ordinary

pebble of ordinary life could be transformed into a jewel through the magic eye of fiction” (8). In her book, Nafisi emphasizes the way in which works of fiction provide “open spaces” as opposed to the “closed ones” that Nafisi and her students were “confined to” (19) during the Revolution, thus allowing them “to defy the repressive reality outside the room” (57). In her vindication of the empowering aspect of literature, Nafisi celebrates “every great work of art,” defining art as “an act of insubordination against the betrayals, horrors and infidelities of life” where “the perfection and beauty of form rebels against the ugliness and shabbiness of the subject matter” (47). Here, Nafisi refers to the power of works of art to communicate various situations of dismay and distress in a highly stylized fashion, steering the feelings of the reader towards an empathetic response for the characters constructed in these works.

Against Nafisi’s representation of an oppressive and repressive political landscape, her book, with its various intertextual encounters, ironically opens up a world of possibilities, alternatives, and even tolerance. These intertextual encounters uphold the “subversive” nature of imagination as a medium to challenge the monolithic dictates of a repressive political environment, as Nafisi explains in an interview entitled, “A Conversation with Azar Nafisi” (9). As a challenge to the one-eyed political ideology, Nafisi’s incorporates a polyphony of voices into her book, which is composed of four parts. Each part focuses on specifically one author’s work, and interprets that work within the political context of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. These parts, each constructed with lively interplay of ideas leading to provocative and heated debates, provide a stark contrast to the monolithic and “autocratic” mindset that Nafisi describes in “A Conversation with Azar Nafisi” (8). With this stylistic decision, Nafisi not only appraises the art of fiction with its formal and stylistic features, but also associates the power of fiction with an act of defiance, stimulating “a democracy of voices” (Nafisi, “A Conversation” 8). In this way, she encourages a

stylized political and cultural discourse by virtue of complex thoughts and viewpoints propounded variously in each literary text she examines in the context of her own society.

In her book Nafisi employs two main techniques: intertextuality and self-referentiality, through which a three-way intertextual conversation emerges:

- The dialogue that she establishes between herself and the texts of her choice – *Lolita*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Daisy Miller*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. This dialogue provides her with a shelter in which she can take refuge from the oppressive and over-controlling regime.
- The dialogue that she establishes between the texts and her students (both in her reading group and in her classes at the university), which encourages a democratic space for her students to voice their competing and contrasting insights into the texts studied.
- The dialogue that emerges from the ways in which these texts speak to each other within the context of their subject matters and, in particular, their engagement with the notion of imagination. This is a dialogue that tends to highlight the transgressive and liberating aspects of works of fiction.

This dialogic approach enables Nafisi to situate the political side by side with the personal and the imaginative. Thus, Bakhtin's dialogic imagination might provide a useful contextual frame to analyze these dialogues.

In *The Dialogic Imagination*, which was published in 1975, Bakhtin defined the canonised poetic genres – epic, lyric, tragic – as “monologic,” employing a single style and expressing a single world-view. He pointed out that the novel as a genre should be viewed as a heterogeneous entity, incorporating a medley of many styles and voices into the narrative. Thus, the multiplicity of voices enables the narrative to be “inherently dialogic” or in an alternative formulation “polyphonic” – or as David Lodge puts it in his book, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and*

Criticism, “an orchestration of diverse discourses culled from both writing and oral speech” (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 76). As opposed to the restrictive, monologic narratives, the polyphonic form consists of a diversity of voices, offering fluid and flexible points of view. Lodge argues that the “polyphonic novel” brings a variety of “conflicting ideological positions” to the forefront and situates them “both between and within individual speaking subjects” (Lodge, *After Bakhtin* 86). For Bakhtin, a polyphonic discourse could be facilitated by utilizing a “diversity of social speech types and individual voices” (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 262), a multiplicity of harmonious and discordant voices which he contextualised as *heteroglossia*. As Bakhtin stated, the term *heteroglossia* indicates a medley of “authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters” (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 263). In Nafisi’s text, heteroglossia is prompted by means of the multivocality of her narrative where the voices of her students comply and conflict with hers. Thus, Nafisi’s work offers a triple-layered dialogic narrative to intensify the effect of the polyphony of the voices, a tendency that could be read as her appraisal of the democratic quality embedded in this mode of writing, as well as her political response to the totalitarian regime which, with the hope of restricting critical thinking, banned books and sought to reinforce a monophonic viewpoint towards the arts and literature.

The polyphony of voices facilitated by the dialogic narrative includes, as Lodge has argued, “the relationship between the characters’ discourses and the author’s discourse (if presented in the text) and between all these discourses and other discourses outside the text” (Lodge, “The Novel Now: Theories and Practices” 154). The dialogic form obviously has a political implication in Nafisi’s book, where the author arrives at a poignant understanding of her repressed position within an oppressive political and cultural landscape through her various public and private interactions. However, in her book Nafisi also engages with the notion of polyphony of voices within a literary

context. By means of bringing several texts into the body of her narrative, she tends to construct her own “great tradition.” This phrase alludes to the British literary critic F.R. Leavis’ 1948 critical work on the novel where he focused on the ways in which the novel may potentially create a literary space where formal, artistic and moral concerns are voiced and debated. F.R. Leavis includes Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and later D.H. Lawrence into his great tradition as novelists whose works offer a true depiction of human nature.

Nafisi expands this list by including Vladimir Nabokov and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and tends to value the works of these authors’ not only for their realistic portrayals of the human condition, but also for the ways in which these authors had “faith in the critical and almost magical power of literature” (18). Here, she gives the example of Nabokov who, at the age of nineteen, did not allow anything, even the “bloody fights” (19) during the Russian Revolution, to distract him from his writing. Although Nafisi’s engagement with Nabokov’s controversial 1955 novel, *Lolita*, has been found to be problematic by some feminist scholars [2], Nafisi explains “the desperate truth of Lolita’s story is not the rape of a twelve-year-old by a dirty old man but the confiscation of one individual’s life by another” (33), and the novel, obviously “went against the grain of all totalitarian perspectives” (35). As she explained in a *Newsweek* interview with Carla Power, Nafisi believes that “Lolita was the most metaphorical situation in Iran” (58). She further states, “The regime was imposing its dream on us. As women, it confiscated our reality” (58). Drawing on this, it can be indicated that Nafisi’s incorporation of Nabokov’s text into her literary dialogue has a critical function to attack single-minded ideologies that are in the act of depriving individuals of their basic right to imagination.

In fact, Nafisi’s dialogue with the works of fiction begins not with the texts from Western literature, but with her discussion of the well-known Middle-Eastern collection of folktales dating

from the 9th century entitled, *A Thousand and One Nights*. In her memoir, Nafisi alludes to the main story in the book – that is the story of Scheherazade, the new bride of the Persian King. Perhaps the motive operating underneath this choice could be related to Nafisi’s desire to draw her students’ attention to the ways in which a woman could overcome the boundaries imposed on her through the power of imagination. As it is known, Scheherazade is the last virgin that the Persian King marries, and in order not to be executed the next day, she begins to tell the king a story without disclosing the ending. In this way, she exercises a certain kind of power over the king since she is the arbiter of her engaging stories, and therefore is able to protect herself against the cruelty of the king. Interestingly, as Nafisi points out, most of the other female characters in the story – the queen and the virgins – “tacitly accept the king’s public authority by acting within the confines of his domain and by accepting its arbitrary laws,” whereas Scheherazade, through the power of her imagination and the art of storytelling, manages to manipulate the King into postponing her execution (19). As Nafisi states, “Scheherazade fashions her universe not through physical force, as does the king, but through imagination and reflection” and it is through her “courage” and refusal to be silenced that she manages to secure her life (19).

Thus, by commencing the reading group with this text, Nafisi sought to revisit the idea that their present culture originated from a culture that valued the power of imagination and viewed it even as a survival skill, which is an appreciation that seems to stand in opposition to the oppressive regime exercising control over what people should or should not read. Viewed from another perspective, Nafisi herself could be associated with Scheherazade in that she indulges herself in the world of the literary imagination of writers such as Nabokov, Fitzgerald, James, and Austen, which acts as a form of escapism that enables her to cope with the restrictions of the outside world.

Following this text, which acclaims the virtue and power of imagination, Nafisi moves on to discuss Nabokov's *Lolita*. Nafisi's choice of Nabokov's work has a culturally and politically driven function; it prompts an exploration of, as she states, "how *Lolita* gave a different color to Tehran and how Tehran helped redefine Nabokov's novel" (6). As Nafisi further points out, reading the novel in a particular environment that "tried to shape others according to their own dreams and desires" the impact of Nabokov's text becomes greater since the novel could be read as a critique of "all solipsists who take over other people's lives" (33). Viewed in this light, Nafisi thus offers a reading of Nabokov's text in which she emphasizes imagination and the confiscation of imagination, which is an idea that is set out as a contrast with her discussion of *A Thousand and One Nights* – a text which highlights the notion of imagination as a subversive tool against oppressive ruling.

Through Nabokov's construction of Humbert, a character who destroys innocence, he epitomizes the exploitation of power by depriving a young girl of her childhood and, most importantly, of her joy of imagination. Nafisi uses *Lolita*'s character [3] to alert her readers to the situation faced by many young girls in her society who have become the objects of someone else's dreams. Nafisi expresses the analogy that she draws between Humbert and the patriarchal status quo in her country as follows: Humbert "fixes *Lolita*" like a "half-alive butterfly pinned to the wall" so that she would "become stationary" and "give up her life for the still life he offers her in return" (37). The image of the butterfly that Nafisi alludes to is also interesting since the image recalls *Psyche*, the ancient Greek goddess of the soul, who was typically portrayed with butterfly wings. Viewed in this context, it might be argued that by portraying *Lolita* as a half-alive butterfly pinned to the wall, Nafisi highlights the extent to which the young girl's soul is confiscated. Here, she refers to her culture after the Revolution in which "the age of marriage was lowered from

eighteen to nine” (27). Furthermore, the butterfly represents the notion of transformation, and thus relates to the predicament that both Lolita and the young girls find themselves in Nafisi’s society; a situation indicating the ways in which the patriarchal outlook hinders any chance for transformation by fixing young women into the image of their own desire, thus denying them mobility and free will, robbing them off their “childhood” and confiscating their imagination (49).

In her dialogic narrative, Nafisi revisits her experience of teaching F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1925 novel, *The Great Gatsby*, as a novel that speaks back to the repression of imagination and encourages the pursuit of dreams. More specifically, “a dream of power and wealth” (144) during the period of the Great Depression, in which “the increasing threat of fascism and the growing influence of Soviet Marxism” was present (107). Teaching a novel about the American Dream at an Iranian university at a time when anti-American propaganda was on the rise could be considered a daring attempt since, as Nafisi narrates, the novel was found “immoral” and that it taught the youth “the wrong stuff” since “it was representative of things American,” or the very things which the Revolutionaries opposed (120). It is interesting to note that Nafisi’s book was also criticized for similar reasons with her work being labelled as a text that replicates the policies of George W. Bush [4]. However, when examined closely, the book clearly reveals that rather than merely castigating the belief system in Nafisi’s own society, it casts a more general critical eye on the oppressive ideologies that turn human beings into automatons deprived of the right to choose. Thus, in her work, Nafisi engages with the power of fiction in relation to the ways in which it enables people “under an oppressive reality” to “create open spaces through their imaginations” (Nafisi, “A Conversation” 5).

In line with this, Nafisi states that *The Great Gatsby* prompts “the sensual experience of another world” (110), a world that is essentially a dream. In her book she reflects upon why she

did not want to give up teaching the book simply because of its association with American ideals, so she decided to set a trial on *The Great Gatsby* with a prosecutor, a defendant, a defense attorney and a jury where the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran versus *The Great Gatsby* would be tried. For Nafisi, the novel presented some similarities with the political transformation that her country was undergoing at that time, saying the revolution “had come in the name of [their] collective past and wrecked [their] lives in the name of a dream” (144). Contrary to Nafisi’s views, her students’ response to the novel revealed polarized insights into the work: for most of the students, the text portrayed a dream that can only be attained through an immoral way of living, and for some others it was a critique of “the lack of empathy” of the wealthy upper classes (132). Her fundamentalist students heavily criticize the text for propounding a dream that can only be attained through the violation of morals, as the student, Mr. Nyazi, claims,

This book is supposed to be about the American dream, but what sort of a dream is this? Does the author mean to suggest that we should all be adulterers and bandits? Americans are decadent and in decline because of their dream. (127)

As opposed to Nyazi’s narrow allegations based on his own interpretation of the novel, another student, Zarrin, acting as the defense attorney, views the novel from a more critically-distant perspective, and states that the novel is thus a critique of the “carelessness” and “lack of empathy” of the wealthy upper classes (132). For Nafisi herself, the novel equates “imagination with empathy” since it is through empathy that the reader “can understand even the most monstrous individuals in works of fiction” (132). Perhaps, the triple-layered dialogic narrative is epitomized most clearly in this part of the book, where the polyphony of the voices tends to create a discursive space reminiscent of the Bakhtinian heteroglossia in which the different speeches compete and

clash with each other, opening a dialogic narrative between the author and the text, the students and the text, and the text and other texts. For Nafisi, the incentive of the text is not to give a moral lesson, but to show “the loss of dreams,” since once the dream is actualized, as in the case of *Gatsby*, it is no longer considered a “pure dream” (144). Therefore, the portrayal of a decadent way of living was not of critical value, but what mattered was the way in which the text invited “empathy” (132).

As with *Lolita*, *The Great Gatsby* is a novel that deals with imagination and dreams. In *Lolita*, Humbert destroys the “object of his dream,” whereas *Gatsby* “destroy[s] himself,” and becomes “heroic because of his belief in his romantic delusion,” and in this way the dream that he embodies is shattered (141-44). In fact, both works deal with “the complexities of life and of individuals” and “create enough space for all [the] characters to have a voice” (132-33). For Nafisi, the promotion of multiple voices, and perhaps even discourses in a narrative is the quality of a “good novel” (132). As Nafisi argues, these works achieve this quality with the polyphony of voices which, in turn, enables a democratic narrative space.

The political and literary significance of dialogism is further explored in the third part of the book where Henry James’ writing is discussed. In resonance with the previous part, the section on James draws upon Nafisi’s teaching experience at the university before she resigned from her post. In this part, Nafisi focuses on the conflict between the old and the new through her engagement with Henry James’ 1878 novella, *Daisy Miller*. During the discussion of the work with her students, the students seem incapable of reading the text closely and critically enough. They tend to be more concerned with Daisy’s moral disposition (i.e. is she ‘good’ or ‘bad’?) than what she potentially symbolizes. One of Nafisi’s students interprets Daisy’s death as poetic justice, “pay[ing] for her sins with her life” (197), since the student sees Daisy as “reactionary and

decadent” (195). For Nafisi, however, Daisy’s death is caused by “the tension between the old and the new” (213), an idea which symbolically speaks to the period of conflicts which took place in Iran during the Revolution. While some people initially supported the Revolution, they could not come to terms with the restrictive changes that happened after the Revolution. Nafisi was one who could not adapt to the rules that greatly restricted her life, and she took refuge in works of fiction to create, in her words, a “counter-reality” for herself to cope with her sense of feeling out of place (216).

Contrary to the restrictions of political life, Nafisi points out that works of fiction hold people together “when [their] personal and political differences [have] alienated [them] from one another” (172). Thus, the final part of the book returns to this embracing aspect of fiction, where the stories serve as a democratic space in which different viewpoints can coalesce within the body of the narrative, and thus encourage different interpretations rather than “pass[ing] an absolute judgment” (199). In line with this, returning to her experience with her reading group, she alludes to Jane Austen’s 1813 novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, as a text inviting different viewpoints. The fact that Austen’s novel is the last work that Nafisi’s memoir engages with has a symbolic significance, since her selection of a work by this novelist establishes a bridge between her own “Great Tradition” and that of F.R. Leavis. In her engagement with this text, Nafisi emphasizes the “multivocal” (268) structure of the novel, which tends to give the impression of “an eighteenth-century dance” (265), a situation where one interacts both with his/her partner while also interacting with others on the dance floor. For Nafisi, this structure intensifies the “variety of voices that [the novel] embodies” (268), and therein creates a dialogic narrative as opposed to the monolithic viewpoint. Nafisi states that in Austen’s novel, “There are so many different forms of dialogue: between several people, between two people, internal dialogue and dialogue through

letters. All tensions are created and resolved through dialogue” (268). Thus, it is this democratic narrative space employed in *Pride and Prejudice* that Nafisi draws her students’ attention to.

Another point that Nafisi brings up in her discussion of the novel is related to Austen’s construction of her female characters who, despite their “genteel and beautiful” (307) compositions, are “the rebels who say no to the choices made by silly mothers, incompetent fathers [...] and the rigidly orthodox society” (307). Here, Nafisi highlights the idea of “the right to choose” (307). As she ends her memoir, she once again puts emphasis on the relationship between “the right to free access to imagination” (338) and democracy, stating that “genuine democracy cannot exist without the freedom to imagine and the right to use imaginative works without any restrictions” (339).

To conclude, the polyphonic, multivocal structure of the novel can be read as Nafisi’s response to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. However, against the backdrop of an oppressive society, Nafisi emphasizes the power of works of fiction in their role as encouragers of the notions of imagination and empathy. She explains how the discussions of works of fiction offered a satirical sideswipe to her repressive environment, which opened doors to another world of “tenderness, brightness and beauty” (57) [5]. As Rachal writes in his review of Nafisi’s memoir, Nafisi’s discussions provided features that her society then lacked during the Revolution that “closed in on the relative freedom of thought” (744). Most importantly, she highlights the transgressive nature of art and literature, stating “every work of art [...] is a celebration, an act of insubordination against the betrayals, horrors and infidelities of life” (47). Through her transcultural engagement with her selection of various literary works, she creates a democratic space which allows a free space for many viewpoints to coalesce. Within the multivocality of this narrative, the reader is offered three different dialogues: the dialogue between the writer and the texts, the dialogue

between the students and the texts, and the dialogue between the texts themselves. Thus, with this triple-layered conversation Nafisi points out the empowering aspect of reading literature, celebrating the power of imagination as a unifying element across cultures.

NOTES

1. References to the work will be given in brackets.
2. For instance, Linda Kauffman argues that the book aestheticized the rape of a young girl. See Linda Kauffman's essay entitled "Framing Lolita: Is there a woman in the text?" published in *Refiguring the Father: New Feminist Readings of Patriarchy*. Eds. Patricia Yaeger and Beth Kowaleski-Wallace. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1989. 131-52.
3. In her engagement with the text, Nafisi refers to the actual name of Lolita, Dolores, which means "pain" in Spanish (36).
4. See Anne Donadey and Huma Ahmed-Ghosh's essay, "Why Americans Love Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*." *Signs* 33:3 (Spring 2008): 623-46. for an in-depth analysis of the political enunciations of Nafisi's text.
5. Here, Nafisi refers to Nabokov's *Bend Sinister*.

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**POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY OF INSTALLATION ART IN NIGERIA: VISUAL
MIGRATIONS AND CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION**

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Installation art consists of an entire room or similar space that is treated as a work of interactive art. Installation art can also include the placing of a work of art in a specific location, usually for a limited time. Space and object are the main essentials of installation art (Getlein, 2002). With installation art, an artist creates an environment for the viewer to enter, move around, investigate, experience, reflect upon and draw logical conclusions from. It is an art that plunges the observer into a mystery, and it can be theatrical. The observer is left to his or her own responses; the artist does not impose meanings. The focus of installation art is an experience, both for the artist and for the observer. To enact this experience, the artist creates an ensemble of images and objects consciously placed in a space in an evocative way. (Stewart, 2008)

Installation art became recognized in the 1970s, but defined itself fully on the global scene in the 1980s. In Nigeria, it has been a distinct art since 2000. According to the Wikipedia article, "Installation Art," Installation is a nomenclature for a specific art form that came into use as a document in 1969 ("Installation Art"). However, the history of installation art can be traced back to the 1910s when aspects of it were appearing in the works of artists who extended beyond painting and sculpture into Constructivism. German Bauhaus and Dutch De Stijl movements

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integrated fine art and craft into architecture and design with the intention of improving domestic environments. Other notable forerunners of installation art include American sculptors Louise Nevelson and Louise Bourgeois, who began to conceive their works as environments rather than as independent objects in the 1950s. In America and Europe, some collaborative installations brought together some dozens of artists over the course of the 1970s. For example, in 1972, American artists Judy Chicago, Faith Wilding and Miriam Shapiro collaborated with their students to create *Womanhouse* in Santa Monica, California. The project renovated a dilapidated mansion and turned it into a shelter for painting, sculpture, performance art and crafts centered around women. Another outstanding collaborative work was *Rooms P.S.I* (1976), which was located in New York City. Seventy-eight artists were involved in *Rooms P.S.I.*, including America's abstract sculptor Richard Serra and artist Dennis Oppenheim. These artists adopted and transformed a room in a New York City public school.

Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner are other important early figures of installation art. More recent mention is the work of Ann Hamilton, David Hammons, Judy Pfaff and additional artists who created *Pfaff's Cirque* in 1995, which permanently transformed the Pennsylvania Convention Centre in Philadelphia. Another work is the 1999 creation by Chinese artist Cai Guo Qiang titled *Venice's Rent Collection Courtyard*, which combined installation and performance art. In 1958, Allan Kaprow used the term, *Environment*, to describe his transformed indoor spaces. El Lissitzky, Marcel Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters all have produced prototypes of installation art. Many avant-garde art movements such as Constructivism, Supremacism, Dada, Surrealism, Futurism, Minimalism, environmental art, land art, conceptual art and performance art greatly influenced and contributed to the development of installation art. Installation art is mostly

ephemeral and movements such as land art, conceptual art, performance art and video art are precursors to its ephemeris. (“What is Installation Art?” 2010; Lucie-Smith, 1997; Getlein, 2002).

Several definitions have attempted to give boundaries to installation art. The Wikipedia article, “Installation Art,” describes the art as an artistic genre of three-dimensional works that are often designed and sited specifically to transform the perception of a space. Furthermore, the term is generally applied to interior spaces and considers exterior interventions as land art. These terms, however, overlap. In Encarta’s (2009) definition, the range of materials in installation art is limitless and the art crosses many stylistic categories. Getlein (2002) believes that the essence of installation art is the experience of one’s body in a space that contains objects; in this case, the body also becomes part of the space. Artists who create installations are simply more conscious of the space as the work of art. Goldner (2011) considers installation art as stylistically within Postmodernism, which is often described as a reaction to modern art. To her, “Postmodernism” is more about change and not static style. The hybridization of forms and styles is a disguising factor in this sense of the definition.

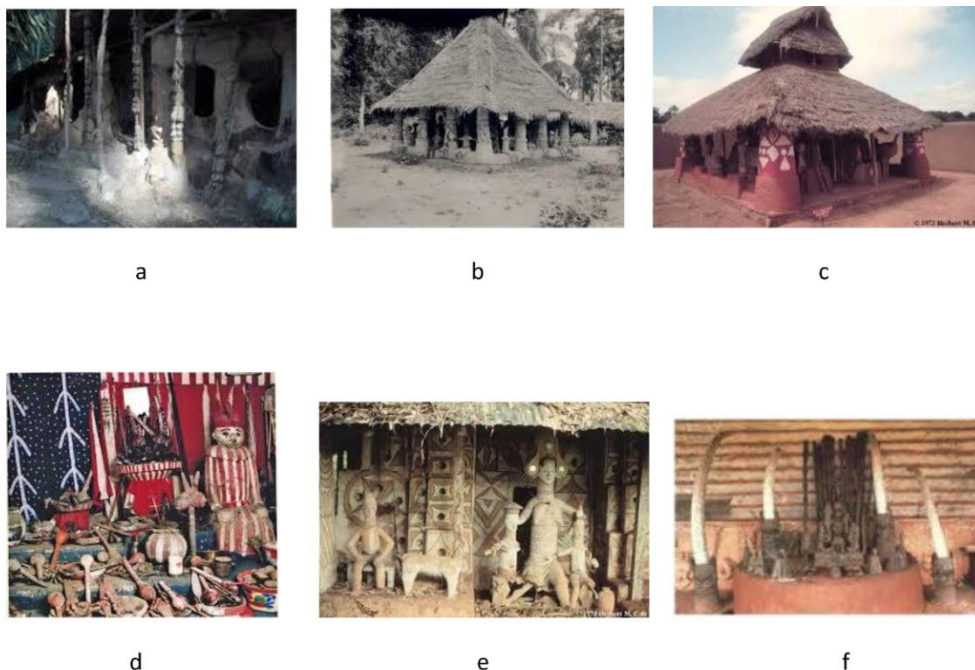
The hybrid forms include the transformation of materials, words, sounds, colour, light and objects into individual or fused forms that translate into art. Hybrids of abstraction, symbolism, figuration and other forms of expression have produced exotic installations. Often there is a blurring of variations such as bridging painting, sculpture, performance, architecture and film. Goldner (2011) explains that contemporary art is now more clearly defined by forms, styles, media, techniques and technology that encompass natural and physical sciences, industry, technology, popular culture, literature and the like. Diffusion of borders and divisions among countries, classes and monetary systems have dramatically affected art, often blurring differences within styles and movements. These changes have led to new art that, one hundred years ago, would not have been

considered art. Hamilton (1972) explains that artists always attempt to create styles appropriate for every aspect of contemporary life. Such art is one that is coherent, intelligible and complete in such a way that the definitions between art and life would eventually be erased when everything produced participates in a universal and intellectual harmony. This has been the case since the 1960s considering that globalization impacts contemporary art trends. Contemporary life is becoming more sophisticated by the day; technology is affecting all aspects of creative arts such as music, architecture, dance, fine art and fashion, and these are breaking away from the symmetrical sense of rules and turning to asymmetrical ones. Installation art is a genre that is within this conform. Rubin (1984) identifies a new generation of predominantly middle class, college trained artists who are sophisticated and self-conscious in art history, produce systems and process art that reject many of the premises of earlier modernism. Their intention is to make new and shocking art that may be difficult to accept. In fact, shock is an element of installation art.

Artists are always searching for new expressions and sometimes this leads to alteration of previous art. Alteration may occur in terms of styles, techniques, medium and presentation. Even though installation art became part of the contemporary art canon alongside performance art in the 1970s, earlier comparisons of installations are evident worldwide. Scare-crows, huts, naturally occurring sand-dunes and some categories of found objects are examples. The way a particular living-room is arranged, littered or cluttered can also be interpreted as installation, so far as it gives expression to the meaning of the owner and user of the space. However, these types of installations may not be strictly categorized as art forms because they are often not deliberately aesthetic in their creation. Aesthetic consideration is important in the inclusion of utilitarian objects within art. In Africa, particularly in Nigeria, some distinguished earlier traditional installations can be

considered as art forms though they were, and still are, largely utilitarian. Such examples are shrines, masquerades, ancestral screens and funerary beds.

Contemporary installation art as seen today is perceptibly Western and has developed from Western concepts and ideals; however, the art historical records of the form and content of African art reveal that installation art has always been part and parcel of the African environment. The aforementioned list of installations has unique origins in Africa and is still in existence. In most traditional societies, shrines (ancestral shrines, palace shrines and deity shrines) are age-long connotations of installation art. Common shrines in Nigerian settings belong mainly to religious or spiritual worship. These shrines require peculiar contents and arrangements within the space. The similarity of this traditional shrine to contemporary installation art was once projected in 1987 through Keith Nicklin's example of an *Anang* shrine from the Cross-River area of South-Southern Nigeria. The installations, mounted at the Hornman Museum in London, were made up of the major components of the *Anang* shrine. It was fifteen feet high with distinctive patchwork and appliqué textile, *Ibibio* wood sculptures, skin covered masks and pottery. (Nicklin, 1987). This work was a replica of the *Anang*'s impressive funeral shrines and memorabilia to the dead. Men's shrines are dominated by large patchwork and appliqué clothes called *Ngwomo* and women's shrines are mud wall structures decorated with murals called *Nduongo*. The significant colours are red, black and white. Such fitted out spaces like traditional African shrines are synonymous with contemporary installation art forms, expressions and gestures; colour and symbolism are common in both.



African Shrines from Nigeria

Source: Google Images/ African Shrines, 2015

Another traditional Nigerian installation is the masquerade. According to Kasfir (1988), African masquerades are vehicles of transmission apart from performance that involve ritual and play. They represent a cultural system, presented as objects of framed order and disorder and are symbolic. These masquerades are essentially sociological phenomena and are believed to be the representation of spirits that link earthly man with the spiritual world. Masquerades are the largest and the most varied of Africa's cultural symbols. In Nigeria, masquerades are found across ethnic and geographical regions. In the southwest, *Gelede*, *Egungun* and *Eyo* masquerades are very popular among the Yoruba ethnic group. In the southeast and south-south, masquerades such as *Ohworo* in Delta state, *Abua* in Rivers state and the *Ekpo* among the Efik of Cross-River state are very few but popular among the large number of existing masquerades. Among the people of North Central Nigeria, the *Jankai* from the Afizere people of Plateau state and *Ebira* from Kogi state are common. Borgatti (1988) describes the physical appearance of a masquerade using an *Anogiri*, a

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generic category of masquerade from Okpella in Nigeria. Items such as cowries, seeds, bits of mirror, metal balls and cloth make up the paraphernalia.

Generally, all masquerades are assemblages that are products of techniques, processes and procedures similar to that of installation art. They are often made up of masks, headdresses and are most often covered with colourful and designed leather, textile, feathers, shrubs or raffia ropes. In 1987, Sokari Douglas Camp, a contemporary Nigerian artist in London, created a sculptural version of the Kalabari *Sekiapu* masquerades. She used metal as her medium and modern techniques of welding with modern idioms. Douglas Camp's re-enactment was an embodiment of all that made up most Nigerian masquerades. Kalilu (1991) and Aremu (1991) mention these as consisting of sculptural masks, elaborate and multi-coloured layered cloths, and often embellished with attachments such as horns, animal skulls, cowries and small wooden or metal sculptures. Today many such masquerades are characteristics of cultural adoptions, assimilations and modifications.

Ancestral screens and funerary beds also epitomize installation art in the traditional setting. Among the Kalabari of Rivers state in South South Nigeria, ancestral screens usually represent a lineage head or other prominent persons and are placed in shrines or used to create their own special spaces. These screens constitute a unique category of objects within Kalabari society. The screens are utilitarian and are considered more for their efficacy and fidelity; nevertheless, they are also carefully arranged aesthetically.



Masquerades from Nigeria

Source: Google Images/Nigerian Masquerades, 2015

Some art historians like Barley (1988) think that the Kalabari screens, like other similar utilitarian objects, are only considered art in the Western world; however, such suggestions are erroneous and misleading considering the concept of African art objects. If shrines, masquerades and screens are arranged without aesthetic consideration, there would not have been conscious choices in colour variations and distinctive artistic elements inclusive in the arrangements and presentations. Meaning is important in African art, but it is not its only essence. Kalilu (1991) refers to certain wooden embellishments on *Egungun* masquerades as secular; they are meant to satisfy aesthetic purposes and are not symbolic of any ancestral spirits. Apparently, these are traditional versions of installation art that contemporary Nigerian artists have built upon.

1960 marked a change in the political dispensation of Nigeria: British colonialism in Nigeria officially ended. Yet, the impact and effects of such colonialism is often beyond politics; it is often social, cultural, religious, economic and even environmental. The immediate concern

and call to Nigerians was nationalism and cultural restoration. Early post-colonial art was evident of that. Many new cultural arts emerged in the 1960s through art workshops and formal art schools, but despite the drive towards cultural revival, the outcome on the art scene did not revert completely back to traditional art; rather, a new type of hybrid art emerged courtesy of the influences of colonialism. Vogel (1991) concludes that African art today is replete with Westernisms, which are assimilations that are selective and meaningful and within the cultural framework of contemporary Africa.

Post-colonial African art changed during the twentieth century in scope and scale in profoundly different ways. Continuity and change is a most visible mantra. Vogel lists the following as responsible for the transformed artistic landscape: innovative repetition, verisimilitude, proliferation of art elements like colour and perspective and individual recognition. These have so far influenced the artistic and aesthetic intentions of Nigerian art. Post-colonial Nigerian artists have made several successful moves to develop art that could be identified as Nigerian and African; the nationalism of the immediate post-independence period promoted these moves. This new identity ushered in contemporary art. Creative independence combined with the urge to reinterpret and represent their traditional heritage are the hallmarks of the contemporary Nigerian artists; many of these artists also are formally educated and consciousness of global trends and world art history. Thus far what is considered as Nigerian contemporary art reveals a fusion of what may be considered as Western elements and traditionally African aesthetics.

Five contemporary Nigerian artists are discussed in this paper as artists who have ventured into and are producing contemporary installation arts. These five artists are Bruce Onobrakpeya, Olu Amoda, Sokari Douglas Camp, Yinka Shonibare and Peju Alatise. These artists are selectively chosen from different generations since 1960 until date (2015). Despite their different periods of

emergence and development as artists, they have delved into installation art and established a trend in their various practices. From research results, it is evident that these artists are inventive and, like other modern artists, they have been developing new forms and materials. They are all formally trained artists with broad socio-cultural, geo-political, art historical and global knowledge. Some other prominent contemporary Nigerian artists have also ventured at one time or the other into installation art. These include EI Anatsui, Kolade Oshirowo, Jerry Buhari, Ndidi Dike, Raquib Bashorun, Junkman, Burns Effiom, Peju Layiwola and Jelili Atiku.

Of all these artists, Bruce Onobrakpeya (b. 1932) is reputed to be the pioneer of contemporary installation art in Nigeria. Bruce Onobrakpeya, son of an *Urhobo* carver, is conversant with traditional beliefs and culture, even though he was raised as a Christian. He spent some period of his early life in northern Nigeria, where he saw many traditional shrines that influenced his present interest in shrines as installations. Onobrakpeya was trained at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria and was a founding member of the legendary *Zaria Rebels*. After three decades of successful art practice in printmaking and woodcarving, in addition to serving as a mentor to other artists, he started his ground-breaking venture into installation art in 1995 and has been working on it until date (2015). He started working with discarded scraps and found objects such as leather, foil, Jute, animal bones, plumbing pipes, bottles, chairs, engine plugs and plastics. A common material in his works is fabric. Patches of fabrics in different cool colours are often sealed in over lapping forms. Another feature in his work is pillars; he achieves this by using plumbing pipes wrapped with fabrics that are designed with African motifs. His use of space is enormous; in fact, most of his installations take over entire rooms. Some of his works are installed outdoor to fuse with landscapes. Onobrakpeya is among the most successful artists to have

emerged in West Africa during the later twentieth century with continuing and commanding influence on several generations of artists in post-colonial Nigeria.



a. Aro Egwere (*Hunter's muse*)



b. Aro Oguan 3



c. Akporod



d. Jubilee Dance

Bruce Onobrakpeya's Works

Source: Bode Olaniran, 2011

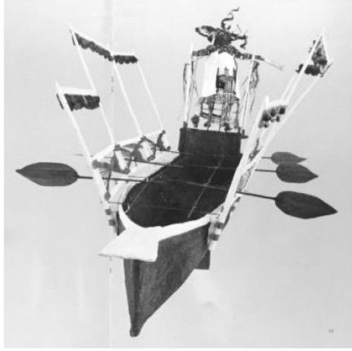
Olu Amoda (b.1959) was born to a goldsmith father and started working as a professional metal sculptor in 1984. He has also been a muralist, furniture designer, interior and exterior designer at various points in his life. His most recent installation works were produced in 2008. They are narrative and explore socio-political, technological, and economic themes and are focused on contemporary Nigerian life. Sometimes he reinvents folklore from memories of his childhood. The folktales help the metaphoric representation of his work. His medium is metal and his techniques include assemblage, screwing, nailing and gluing; yet, welding is the dominant technique in most of his works. The most interesting concept of Amoda's work is that it also includes utilitarian art, such as gates, doors, windows, dressing tables, beds and lockers. The utilitarian nature of these works allows full interactions as they form part of both the architecture of buildings and the interior design and decoration.

a. *Ram Series*b. *MFA exist, Georgia Southern University Statesboro*

Olu Amoda's Works

Source: Olu Amoda, 2009

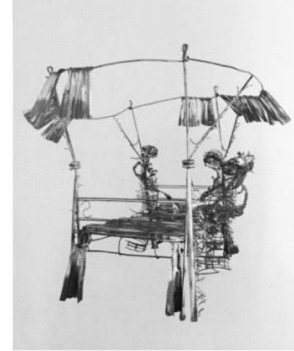
Sokari Douglas Camp (b. 1959) is an internationally acclaimed Nigerian artist based in England. After more than two decades of practice in metal sculpture, Douglas Camp's works are large-sized constructions, some of which are even motorized. In 1989, Douglas Camp's exhibition, *Echoes of the Kalabari*, was shown concurrently with the exhibition, *Kalabari Ancestral Screens: Levels of Meaning* at the National Museum of African Art in Washington D.C. This juxtaposition is a visual presentation that exposes art of different genres with similarities of style, purpose, meaning and function. Douglas Camp's themes focus on the Kalabari culture and people of the Niger-Delta, where she originates from. She has made installation sculptures that replicate Kalabari masquerades, dancers, boat regattas, funerary beds, ancestral screens and other very symbolic images representing the Kalabari social environment. As a Nigerian artist in diaspora, she has successfully and vividly kept the Kalabari world alive in the West, where she was educated and has been working. Her works represent an integration of contemporary Western art into her traditional origins. She uses sawdust, wood, steel, tin, cloth and plastic, moving from nailing and gluing to welding. (Trackman, 1989).



a. *Omu Aru*



b. *Sekiapu*



c. *Funerary Bed*

Sokari Douglas Camp's Works

Source: National Museum of Art. Smithsonian Institution, 2015

Yinka Shonibare is another Nigerian installation artist in diaspora. Born in 1962 in London, Shonibare spent 13 years in Nigeria from age three to sixteen and then he returned to England to be trained as an artist. Shonibare's works explore cultural identity in the construction of a hybrid identity; his dual nationality most likely influences the themes of his works. According to the Wikipedia article about Shonibare, he describes himself as a post-colonial hybrid and questions the meaning of cultural and national definitions ("Yinka Shonibare"). To him, colonialism and post-colonialism, within the present context of globalization, is concerned with the tangled inter-relationship between Africa and Europe and their respective economic and political histories. His installations reveal large sculptures in rooms and are dramatic. Characteristic of his works is his choice of brightly coloured African fabrics that are sewn into typically English and Victorian dresses. The intention of these interactive spaces is to evoke questions on the state of post-colonial Africa and the response of the world. Most of his human forms are headless, echoing the new image of a global man with cultural fusion or seamlessness.



a. *How to blow up two heads at once (ladies)*



b. *Scramble for Africa*



c. *Untitled*

Yinka Shonibare's Works

Source: www.shonibare.com/2015

Peju Alatise (b.1975) is a very recent artist. Although she received her formal education in the field of architecture, she presently practices as an installation artist. She is prolific and is based in Lagos, Nigeria. Her installations are vivid, sprawling and captivating. Her themes centre on women within the socio-political conditions of Nigeria and African philosophy. All her figures are therefore feminine in appearance. She uses traditional African stories and folklore to illustrate the meanings of her works. Her medium is mainly fabric, supported by wooden and metal frames. The works are either free-standing or relief placed in large spaces. She is narrative in her presentation. Like Shonibare, she uses Nigerian-design fabrics and her use of colour is very symbolic. Alatise also practices interior design, thereby making her work utilitarian. Some examples of her most outstanding works include her interior design at the popular Nigerian resort, Obudu Cattle Ranch, and the installation at the South African Airways head office in Lagos, Nigeria.



a. *Untitled*



b. *Blue Door*



c. *Orange Scarf goes to Heaven*

Peju Alatise's Works

Source: Lawal Jolaoluwa, 2013

In simple comparative analysis of both contemporary installation art and pre-existing art forms, there are common characteristics of both art forms. These include:

- (i) free expression of the artist
- (ii) innovativeness
- (iii) variety of imagery and forms
- (iv) repository and transmission of culture and history
- (v) symbolism of esoteric meanings
- (vi) elements of shock, either from being grotesque or comical
- (vii) narrativeness
- (viii) interactivensness

In conclusion, the type of post-colonial art in Africa that is discussed in this paper is often questioned for its originality. The authenticity of contemporary African art is challenged because it has transited from its traditional origins; however, all contemporary art worldwide has embraced

globalization. Globalization in the artistic realm allows for borrowing, adoptions and adaptations. For the Nigerian artists, the inventiveness arising from colonial and post-colonial contacts is positive. They have not abandoned the essential traditions, but resort to incorporation. The resultant art is exotic, often secular, even when they represent previously spiritual connotations. It is important to note that these pieces are strictly art; their functionality stays within the realm of art and creativity.

The intention of this paper is neither to debate Africa's origination of contemporary installation art nor is it an assertion or claim to total ownership or inspiration of the art style. Africa is not the only place where traditional altars and sacred groves inspired modern installation art. Aboriginal peoples in different parts of the world had such sacred places dedicated to deities. For example, the totem poles of Australian aborigines and Japanese *Ainu* altars decorated with *Inaw* (sacred devotional shaven willow sticks) can equal any contemporary installation art, if set in any modern gallery. However, Ikwuemesi (1999) cites the Senegalese artist, Fatou Kande, who insists that Africans have always lived with installation art as an integrated part of their physical environment. With the evolution of technology and the emergence of new materials and techniques, artists are exploring beyond their previous boundaries. Artists are going outside their limits into more experimental media and expressions. This paper's focus is to encourage the total inclusion of contemporary Nigerian artists, particularly installation artists in the ongoing globalization of art. Installation art is developing in Nigeria and is receiving a wide embrace from many modern artists, connoisseurs and audiences. Okpe and Ikpakronyi (2010) argue that this acceptance of the art form may be because of the possibility it offers for experimentation, exploration and creativity; nevertheless, its resemblance to previous and familiar traditions may be a vital contributor to its growth among the Nigerian audience, including those who may not

easily be swayed by similar and more conventional modern arts like painting, sculpture and graphic design.

Despite the increasing popularity, the ephemeral nature of installation art has been a negative for its patrons. Installations that are exhibited at art galleries can only be viewed during the exhibition, except for photographs. This is presently a limitation that can be revised by artists referring to the traditions of shrines, masquerades and ancestral screens. In the traditional setting, the objects may be updated and modified, but the space is often given longevity. If installations are presented in more permanent spaces, there may be an increase in the number of patrons and collectors of such art. A collaboration between installation artists and other professionals, such as interior and exterior decorators and architects, may provide the opportunities for artists to install more permanent spaces.

The pursuit of shock tactics as a new moralism is another threat to contemporary installation art that Lucie-Smith (1997) describes as “squeezing out aesthetic feeling and replacing it with arid aggressively moralistic didacticism.” This danger can be averted by contemporary installation art towing the path of traditional installations that have maintained relevance, meaning, continuous innovation, aesthetic revitalization and utility. Shrines, masquerades and art dedicated to ancestors, deities and the dead will continue to be an integral part of African society. Though ephemeral and transformational, these art forms will continue to evolve with the changes of the society and their artistic essence will always remain. Contemporary Nigerian installation artists can learn from that tradition.

Technological limitations have also hampered the rate at which Nigerian artists work. Most of the artists still produce almost all their works manually, with minimal and obsolete technological equipments. The dependence on physical labour could slow down the processes of production, BridgesAcrossCultures2015

especially for large spaces and objects. For this reason, Nigerian artists need to advance and embrace globalization in technology.

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Propositions for a Lasting Peace and Security in the Niger Delta: A Visual Perspective

Harrie U. M. BAZUNU

Abstract

Oil-induced environmental challenges are sources of inspiration to contemporary visual artists of the oil-suffused Niger Delta. For over fifty years, oil and gas related activities became the major set of events that have downturned the individual and collective life experiences of the people and Niger Delta environment socially, economically, politically and ecologically. Three set of people (the Nigerian government, oil companies and the indigenes) have established interests in the oil and gas pudding of the region. The clash of interests brought perennial and untold hardship on the indigenous people, thus labeling the region as a conflict zone of “Nightmare at Noon,” that till date, issues of security are on the top burner, and peace appears to have eluded the Niger Delta. What are the ways to a lasting peace in the region? Artists of the Niger Delta have made propositions, which are fixated in visual forms. Howbeit these propositions are often glossed over, misunderstood and read as mere decorative artworks when encountered. What environmental and human elements are present in the visuals? How do they point to the Niger Delta, oil exploration and a lasting peace and security in the region? Through the signs, symbols and forms embedded in these Niger Delta Visuals, and employing semiotic analysis, in-depth interviews and object-centered method of art historical studies, this paper attempts to unfix the artworks selected for this study in order to make plain the visual proposition for a lasting peace in the Niger Delta, as a way of bridging the gaps between the government, oil companies and the people. Findings reveal that the visuals suggest commitment, prayers, co-operation, trust and elimination of mutual suspicion among others.

Keywords: Proposition, Lasting, Peace, and Security.

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INTRODUCTION

From pre-colonial times to the present, the environment of the Niger Delta has had a huge impact on its visual artists' expressions. The experiences of the people, their needs, desires and aspirations are often expressed in the visual sayings of the artists, as Ojaide notes in, "How the Urhobo People See the World Through Art." He writes, "...the art and life of a people symbolically reflect each other. Their art communicate their beliefs, their worldview, and their understanding of human existence," (73). This art, like visual expressions, are thematically laden with issues of burning importance, whether traditional or contemporary. In the era of intra and inter-communal clashes, *Iphri* sculptures – a symbol of male aggression - played significant roles in the lives of the *Urhobo*, *Ijo*, *Isoko* and *Ibo* peoples of the Niger Delta (Foss 59-71 and Peek 120-125). According to Martha Anderson, who cites example of the *Ijo* "Bush Spirits" sculptures, "Numerous references to aggression persist in the region today," (92). These wood sculptures were believed to regulate the aggressive "voltage" of both the individual and the community; such that there were personal and community *Iphri* (Foss 59, 63). An individual/community embarking on a battle would serve (by way of making sacrifices) his personal/community *Iphri* to increase his aggressive impulse, embolden him, strengthen him, toughen him and make him fearless and enemy-blood thirsty. Upon returning from battle, the warrior(s) would head first to the *Iphri* shrine to be neutralized of the aggression, and render the individual, community-compliant and friendly. This is done so that the warrior(s) may live peacefully with members of his community.

Masks, masquerades and other objects of art are used in festivals that promote social inclusion and integration, as explained in Odokuma and Bazunu's work entitled, "Urhobo Masking Styles: Origin and Influences" (49-58). Art and craft objects are also employed in rituals that are meant to chase away evil and negative spirits from homes and communities. This may give credence to

Anderson's view that Niger Delta people "...not only sited their villages with an eye to defense but barricaded them with sculpted sentinels, raffia curtains, and potent medicines," (92). Corroborating Anderson in the application of art and craft objects as a defensive mechanism, (all with a view to seek protection and achieve peace), Oghale Okpu is of the opinion that small fish traps are believed to have the power to protect people from witch-hunting and frequent deaths; these objects are tied on a wood that runs across the front of a compound and held in position by two sticks (17). Some other small art/craft objects are tied on the necks or bodies of sickly children as a form of protection to secure their lives from diseases that may be assailing them. This way, visual arts objects play security roles and encourage peaceful coexistence in the traditional Niger Delta.

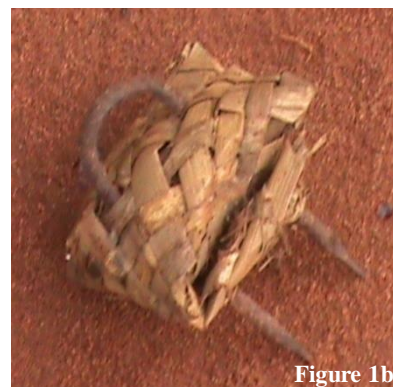


Figure 1a *Aban* (with cotton twine) **Figure 1b:** *Aban* (with woven mat) – Traditional protection charm from Evbonogbon Community (Camp 34), Orhionmwon Local Government Area, Edo State Nigeria. It is for Personal wellbeing; it can also be deployed for offences, if the need arises. Visible material: U-shaped nail, twine and or woven mat, (photo: Harrie Bazunu, 2013).

There are instances where objects, such as **figures 1a** and **1b**, are employed for personal, household and business premises' security both in the traditional and contemporary spaces. In fact, this security approach is still employed by some communities to deter supernatural invaders, observes Anderson (ibid.). Although these objects are sometimes deployed as offensive mechanisms when the need arises, they are essentially instruments of protection or defense against external

aggression. In effect, they can be said to have, and to a certain extent, secured lives and properties of the Niger Delta people who believe in them and put them to use.

The promise of financial turnaround, wealth, and development, which the discovery of petroleum oil and gas anticipated, appears not to have manifested in the lives of the majority of people of the Niger Delta, whose oil sustains the nation's economy. Yet oil companies, their staff, individuals in government, and political office holders, a select few in the Delta, and Nigeria at large, live in affluence. This paradox triggered the erstwhile dormant, laid to rest, aggressive impulse of the Delta youths, (as enshrined in *Iphri* and *Bush Spirits* sculptures), with the resultant effects of militancy and hostage taking and blowing up of oil wells, which robbed the region of its peace and quietness, and also dispossessed the nation economically. Other issues that have contributed to disturbing the peace and security in the region include:

- i. environmental pollution, as photographically told by George Osodi, (2006a; 2006b; 2007) and Dennison Yibowei in his paintings, (2009a; 2009b; 2010);
- ii. incessant petroleum pipeline fire disasters, which ravaged the people and their environment, visually treated by Peju Layiwola, (2002); Raymond Onodje, (2004); Tobenna Okwuosa, (2010); and poetically chronicled by Ifowodo, (1-17). To these, there have been numerous accusations and counter accusations between government, host communities and oil companies;
- iii. the Born-To-Kill, as narrated by Harrie Bazunu (85), and Kill-Them-All, as expressed in Ifowodo (22); being the attitude of the military officers and other Force Men, sent to keep the peace in the region;

- iv. mutual suspicion and distrust, antagonism and hatred, divisionism and discordant tunes on the part of multinational oil companies and host communities people, chronicles Edewor, (2008) and Godwin Oghre, (1+);
- v. deaths in the prime of many men, youths, women and children as visualized by Edewor, (1999), is either propelled by ii or iii above;
- vi. poverty and impoverishment in the view of Itoro Domobongse, (2006); and
- vii. seeming intransigent attitudes of past governments at handling oil associated environmental issues in the region, as lamented by Obasanjo (i-ii), in Alamieyeseigha, (2005), and Bazunu (2012).

It would appear, in the contemporary system, that *Iphri* and Bush Spirits sculptures are losing their grip on the people and their properties. Consequently, in their article, “Contemporary Sculpture and Security in Nigeria,” Bazunu and Onose explain that huge, heavily sculpted, iron doors and gates, high walls and electric fences of intimidating magnitude have taken over from the small art objects, and are playing significant security roles in private, public and commercial establishments in the Niger Delta (227-234). In spite of the huge sums of money spent on these gadgets in an attempt to buy peace and security by those who can afford them in the region, peace still appears to elude the region and its people. Individuals who can afford to buy the services of Force Men, (especially police officers), who escort them wherever they go and do their businesses. There have been instances where individuals, (living in the “maximum security” and safety of their homes), were abducted from their bedrooms; others from their offices or along the streets and highways. Yet others have been assassinated either with or right in the presence of their security aide(s). These appear not to have stemmed the security challenges and restored enduring peace to the Niger

Delta, especially in the wake of its over fifty-year-old oil and gas exploitation activities that have left unfillable holes in the lives and environment of peoples, “surviving” in a region, which was visually described in 2002 by Edewor as “Degraded Communities.”

Now that *Iphri* and Bush Spirits sculptures are apparently losing their grip on the issues of peace and security operatives seem to be failing to secure their assignments from assailants, artists of the Niger Delta, via their visuals, have proposed ways to an enduring peace and security with a view to bridging the gaps between the government, Multinational oil companies operating in the region and the people of the oil-suffused Niger Delta. This is what this paper discusses and brings to the fore.

Propositions, Lasting, Peace, and Security

Before looking at the visuals, it will be expedient to define or adopt operational definitions for the keywords: propositions, lasting, peace, and security. The word “proposition” is a proposal, which is a statement of intent on how an issue/something may be approached or tackled to achieve a result/solution. Microsoft Corporation (2009), sees a **proposition** as “an idea, offer, or plan put forward for consideration or discussion; a statement of opinion or judgment.” Propositions, in this paper, are therefore visual ideas, offers or plans, advanced through any of the visual genres, such as sculpture, painting, and drawing to mention but a few. It also covers meanings as may be read from the visuals, via the images, signs, symbols and forms embodied in them. **Lasting**, on the other hand, implies enduring or persevering. It is what is permanent and continuing for a very long time or indefinitely, opines Microsoft (2009). Peace and security are on the same side of one coin that has insecurity on its other side, opine Bazunu and Onose (228). **Peace** is about calmness,

quietness, absence of worries or anxiety. The presence of peace promotes growth and development. Peace is viewed by webdictionary as “harmonious relations,” while Microsoft presents it as “...calm and quiet, free from disturbances or noise; a state of mental calm and serenity, with no anxiety; freedom from conflict or disagreement among people or groups of people,” (2009). Microsoft defines **security** as a state or feeling of safety; freedom from worries of loss; something that gives assurance; safety: protection against attack from without or subversion from within; precautions taken to keep somebody or something safe from crime, attack, or danger (2009). Security is a controversial issue. Whether at the personal and individualistic level or collective, state or national, it is one and the same, but may be approached from two angles. In a Keynote Address presented recently, a professor of history stressed that security is about people (Ekoko 1). Ekoko presents two perspectives to security – **the military strategic** and **the non-strategic socio-economic**. According to him, the former “emphasizes power (*force*) as the main instrument for the preservation of national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity,” (4, italics added). Ekoko cites the definitions of two other authorities on security to buttress his view:

- i. the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, which presents security as “the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threat” and;
- ii. the political philosopher, Walter Lipmann, who says “a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war” (4).

The historian observes that the **strategic** approaches to security as presented above are **militaristic**, **conventional** and **hardline**. He concludes that they can only lead to high defense costs, military competition and undue emphasis on military technology and acquisitions. For

Africa, he emphasizes, “They present a vicious circle of mutual antagonism on the one hand or bilateral military cooperation against a mutual enemy on the other” (4).

Ekoko’s **non-strategic socio-economic** perspective of security is influenced by McNamara, a former US Secretary of Defense who later became president of the World Bank, and whom the historian describes as “the leading apostle of the alternative economic/developmental conceptualization of security” (5). He cites McNamara’s convincing argument (and emphasizes important phrases from his quote) that:

Security means development. Security is NOT MILITARY HARDWARE, though it may include it; security is NOT MILITARY FORCE, though it may involve it; security is NOT TRADITIONAL MILITARY ACTIVITY, though it may encompass it. SECURITY IS ABOUT DEVELOPMENT and without development there can be no security. “The root of man’s security does not lie in his weaponry; it lies in his mind.” (McNamara, cited in Ekoko 5).

The historian’s emphasis and conclusion from McNamara’s argument is quite pivotal to the operational definition of security, and consequently peace, in this paper. It states, “...if truly security is about Development, and Development is about people, then *ipso facto* security is about people. And if security lies in the mind of man, then Development also equally can only *grow* from the mind” (5). Ekoko’s choice of security, development, the human mind and growth are well attended to in the visuals under study. Development, whose synonym is growth, (and by implication, transformation, progress, advancement, enlargement, expansion, improvement, change, and increment) can only emanate from a calm, settled, cordial, peaceful, fertile, and secure

environment. Since only a well fed or nourished person can grow and contribute to societal building, Ekoko therefore opines, “Within the African context security must mean development and the upliftment of the social conditions of our people. Security is the absence of poverty and hunger. Nothing breeds insecurity and nothing is more threatening to the security of any nation than impoverished and hungry people” (5).

Therefore, if security is about development, and lies in the mind of man, these men (in government, oil companies, and the Niger Delta) need to renew their minds by developing a mindset of matrimony, co-habitation, love, acceptance, and forgiveness. The government must know and understand that the peace and security it seeks in the Niger Delta cannot be achieved through *MILITARY FORCE* and *HARDWARE*. The oil companies must come to the understanding that instigating strife among the people of oil-bearing and oil-impacted communities through divide-and-rule approach to compensations and further *INTIMIDATING* the people with security operatives will not yield a peaceful atmosphere for their oil business. The Niger Delta people must also come to a realization that the kidnapping of oil companies’ workers, *TRADITIONAL MILITARY ACTIVITY*, (adopting aggressive *Iphri* and bush spirit approach), and guerrilla approaches will not provide the much anticipated transformation of the region and its people. The Niger Delta environmental challenges are human-oriented and largely caused by human elements as a result of negligence and other fall-outs from oil exploitation activities. The artists of the visuals here presented have also adopted human-oriented approaches to peace and security in the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large. Only humans can make lasting propositions for peace and security and actualize them, *only if their minds are set on the goals*. Nothing is more human than the human essence in man.

Visual Interrogations

Until recently, the Niger Delta has been a boiling pot of largely human induced insecurity and violent activities that threatened to annihilate the people of the region and their means of livelihood. These insecure and violent activities have been tellingly expressed by visual artists in the region. In George Osodi's *Delta Conflict*, created in 2004, the artist photographically paints a picture of a fearful looking person peeking through the wall of a zinc-plated house that offers no protection, before and after it was slashed with machetes during a conflict between rival militant gangs in Buguma. *Ogoni III* presents a terrified and impoverished man who suddenly ages at gun point. This is Tobenna Okwuosa's 2010 visual interpretation of Ogaga Ifowodo's, poem "Ogoni." Osodi's (2006c), *Delta Rebel*, Kenneth Ewore's (2006), *Hostage Taking* and Charles Umoh's (2008), *The Militant (Kidnapping)*, tell vivid stories of militants' activities. Osodi presents a portrait of an armed militant, while Ewore argues that militancy is oil-induced, and that it was originally intended to draw the attention of Multinational oil companies, operating in the Niger Delta, and the Federal Government of Nigeria to the impoverished and deplorable living condition in the region. Its failure led to the abduction of the oil companies' expatriate workers. Umoh's visual is of the opinion that abduction has gone off hand, as it holds that even children became abductable. Johnson Uwadinma's *Memories* of 2010 avers that the masked faces of kidnappers leave an indelible signature on the victims' psyches, their families and the society at large.

In Kent Onah's 2009 piece, *The Temptress*, he argues that there is a moral laxity among young female adults from oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta. He also holds that the delinquency of these regional females is unmistakably oil-induced. In a 2006 painting titled *In Her Sister's*

Fashion, Igwe Iheanyi toes the line of a visual moralist as he warns that moral dereliction has transference of spirit or corrupting tendency, which is capable of transcending generations socially. He therefore admonishes parents and guardians to be mindful of images, habits and influences their wards are exposed to.

These were occasioned by several, avoidable and unchecked oil exploration and exploitation related challenges, which have taken large scale environmental dimensions, such as acid rain, (a result of gas flaring and other oil-related and automobile emissions). Osodi's (2006d), *Gas Flare at Night*, paints a graphic picture. Osodi, in his 2007 *Christmas Tree II*, visually narrates the genealogy of oil spills from wellhead and pipeline seeps. Yibowei continues the visual narrative in *The Day After: Oil Lilies?* (2009). In it, he describes how the seepage from *Christmas Tree*, spread via the Delta Creeks and Rivers, and how eventually, hydrocarbon travels far and gets deposited even in non-oil areas. Osodi picks up the chronicle again in *Ogoni Oil Spill*, a picture of a peasant farmer, who watches helplessly as oil spills take over her farm (2006a). Ifowodo's line, "When the house wife stood aghast by her plot – of cassava and herbs swallowed by slick," in "Memory was His Saviour and His Death" (67), aptly gives a verbal expression to Osodi's *Ogoni Oil Spill*. Okwuosa in *The Deluge* produced in 2010, bemoans how the flow of crude oil (wealth), over water (life), could result in death to aquatic life, which translates to joblessness, poverty, hunger, starvation, and eventual death to the Niger Delta peoples whose means of livelihood is fishing and agriculture. Yibowei, in his 2010 *Pollution: the Source*, blames the oil companies represented by SHELL for the oil-related woes of the Niger Delta. In the visual, Yibowei, describes SHELL as a puppet master, whose main interest in the region is profiting even at the expense of the people's lives.

Artists of the Niger Delta have not been silent; they have variously highlighted the ills that have disturbed the peace and security in the region, as shown above. Others have expressed a hope and a future; therefore, they have made propositions (which are fixated in visual forms) on the way forward. However, these visual propositions are often glossed over or misunderstood, and read as mere decorative artworks or pictures when encountered by viewers. This paper therefore attempts to unfix the selected Niger Delta Visuals (by exploring the signs, symbols and forms in them) in order to show:

- i. the human and environmental elements that are present in the visuals;
- ii. the signs and symbols that point to the Niger Delta, oil exploration and a lasting peace and security in the region, with the hope of bridging the gaps between the Trio – the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Multinational Oil Companies, and the marginalized people of the oil-bearing region.

Ways to a Lasting Peace and Security in the Niger Delta

1. Prayers and Supplication

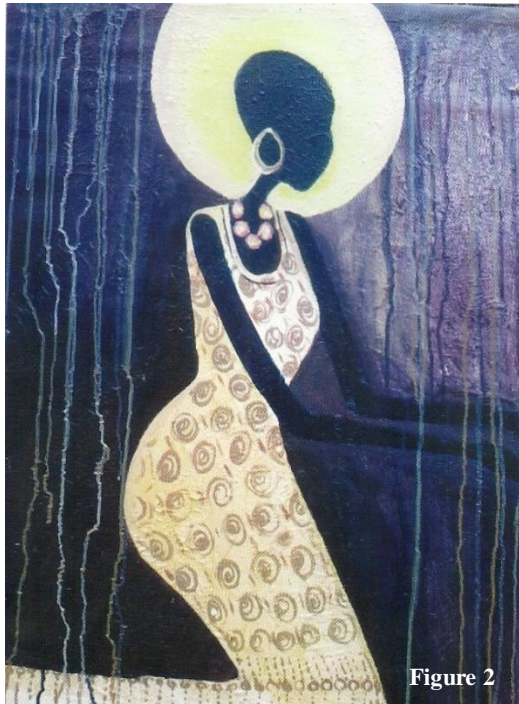


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 2: Millicent Okocha, (2014). *Submission*; painting: Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 36cm. culled from *A Step Forward*. An Exhibition catalogue of The Messengers, a group of contemporary artists, based in Rivers State. 2014: 7, used with permission.

Figure 3: Nelson Edewor, (2011). *Time to Pray*; sculpture: Bronze, 26cm height; photo: artist's collection, used with permission.

Figure 4: Nelson Edewor, (2011). *Supplication*; sculpture: Bronze, 18cm height; photo: artist's collection, used with permission.

Collectively, the delta people are very religious. This is shown in their numerous traditional shrines and groves that are ubiquitous in the region. The groves for *Agbassa Juju*, (deity of the *Agbarha* people of Warri), and *Okere Ojuju* (deity of the *Okere* people, also of Warri) still stand in the oil city today. *Ohworu*, deity of the *Uvwie* people, is another surviving testimony of traditional worship within the same axis. Even today, in the house of an Edo man in Benin City it is customary to see the traditional *Aro-Erha* (paternal ancestral shrine). This may be in addition to the man's *Ogun* shrine, and his wife/wives *Olokun* and *Isango* (Edo name for thunder and lightning deity). The *Igbe*, (a variant of *Olokun* – water and wealth deity), is still very vibrant in the Niger Delta.

The Christian religion has taken a sizable number of the Niger Delta population. Warri boasts itself of the International Gospel Centre – one of the biggest churches in the region. With its headquarters in Canaan Land, Ota in Ogun State, the Living Faith Church has numerous branches in the Niger Delta. The Catholic, Anglican and Baptist Churches also have a very strong presence in the region. There are other large churches where up to two or three services are held every Sunday morning. In these groves, shrines, churches and private houses, prayers and supplications are made to higher powers that various persons believe in to tame the mind/heart of man, which the Bible in Jeremiah 17 verse 9 says “is deceitful ...and desperately wicked.” The groves, shrines and churches are patronized by individuals in government, oil companies, and indigenes (including kidnapers and other vice-mongers) of the region. The artists believe that if this *Trio* (government, oil companies and the Niger Deltans, by extension Nigeria as a people), *genuinely focus their minds through prayers that will improve the lot of all*, (not selfishness), and also mentally and physically work towards achieving it;

- i. God will help them, as the Christian Bible puts it in “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land,” (2Chronicles 7 verse14).
- ii. God, himself *may not* be able to stop them, if they *commit their hearts/minds* to it, as expressed in (Genesis 11 verse 6), “...Behold, the people is one and they have all one language, and this they begin to do: *and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do*,” (emphasis mine).

Above, in figure 2, Millicent Okocha presents a kneeling female figure painted on a dark background that seems dripping with liquids. Okocha is a Delta State born, Pentecostal Christian. She is educated and lives in Port Harcourt; she has experienced the turbulences and crises in the region. Her heartfelt desire and hope is spelt out on the prayers she wrote beside the painting on her exhibition catalogue:

Our Father which art in heaven. In the stillness of the day and night, I loose my plea in total submission at thy feet. I complain not, yet lament affliction in the midst of abundance; not in your promise. Existence like a widow, yet married; not in your promise. Children without focus; not in your promise. Bombing one and killing ourselves; not in your promise. Life is become threnodeous, its fortuity is in its cruelty more than words can say. Yet we are the living words of our yesterday. My expectation therefore, that we seek thee where thou be found and call thee when thou art near, then shall we walk in thy light and salvation. (Okocha 7)

In *submission*, figure 2, a silhouette of a kneeling female figure (with arms, raised as though dropping something) against a dark background with what looks like dripping effects of liquids on the left and right side of the picture plane is seen. At the top-central part of the painting is a predominantly white circular shape, akin to a halo. The figure is adorned with an oval earring and necklace that takes the colour of her bright and decorated dress. Except for the silhouettes of its upper arm and the profile of its head, the figure is hardly noticeable. It almost completely blends in with the background. How is this painting typical of the Niger Delta? The darkened background symbolically represents the chaos, troubles and crises-ridden environment, which is further compounded by the fallouts of petroleum exploration activities, resulting in large scale

environmental degradation (pollution, acid rain, oil spillage, pipeline fire to mention a few). The environmental challenges are here represented by the dripping effect of liquids, which seem to be closing in on the figure from both ends of the picture.

In this composition, the figure ought to be the subject and most prominent form. It is, however, overshadowed by its costume/adornment of jewelry and the strong, dark background. Pictured against the Niger Delta, the artist says here that oil is a costume and adornment that will eventually wear out. But the “fever” of oil exploration, its politics, and attendant crises have overshadowed the people of the Niger Delta; hence, today the mention of Niger Delta resonates oil and violence. In spite of these huddles, Okocha declares, “There is hope when the people earnestly seek God and submit to him.” This is made manifest in the white halo shape that projects the silhouette of the figure’s head. Quoting James 4:7, Okocha admonishes, “When people submit themselves to God, and resist the devil, satanic influences will depart, then peace returns,” (Okocha, personal interview). The artist’s faith is unshaken as she quotes the Bible again: this time, Job 14:7-9, “...there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease...”

It is important to note that in her prayer above, Okocha uses the phrase, “like a widow,” which serves as a simile and an indirect comparison. The line, “Widow, yet married,” is an incongruous expression to describe the existence of her figure. If the figure in her visual is described as “a widow,” it may be implied that she is on her own as there is no one to see to her wellbeing. If the figure is a “widow, yet married,” it will seem that she is technically married, but in reality, she has no one to play the husband’s role of protection of her and her children. This leaves her vulnerable

to attacks from predators. Pictured against Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta and coastal communities, her "husband" – the Federal Government - appears either to have insufficiently played his role or disregarded it out rightly. For, it looks as if she has been deliberately and permanently dispossessed of rights to her most prized possession by his legislations, such as the Petroleum Decree 51 of 1969, now known as the Petroleum Act (Cap 350, Laws of the Federation, 1990) and entrenched in Section 44 sub-section 3 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, submits Darah (7). Consequently, she has been frequently harassed, intimidated, bruised, battered, assaulted and in some instances, violated and alienated, note Onobrakpeya (32) and Ifowodo in his poems "Odi" and "Ogoni." Hence her youth, like the children of an oppressed widow, anchoring their demands on what they perceived as decades of domination, exploitation, marginalization and closed opportunities by oil companies and past governments, spoke with several voices, concurs Obasanjo (ii). Lending his voice, Onobrakpeya in his poem and visual "Smoke from the Broken Pipes 3" opines, "The youths drink from the fonts—Their fighting spirits awakened—They vow to continue the struggle" (37). In *Submission*, a lonely figure is presented in the midst of seeming dripping liquids, giving credence to negligence and abandonment. This view of representing the Niger Delta as a negligible, free-for-all woman is corroborated by Onobrakpeya in *Rape of the Land*, and Yibowei in *Delta Lisa*. Despite all these, in her painting Okocha is quite optimistic: she believes that when the Niger Delta people submit to God and earnestly seek His face, there will be light at the end of the tunnel.

Edewor's *Time to Pray*, figure 3, is simply a standing figure with clasped hands. The bronze figure's eyes look focused on what is clasped within its palms. *Supplication*, figure 4, takes a sitting posture, with two open arms raised up. In the direction of its raised arms, the figure's head

is raised with eyes looking above, as if expecting something. With regards to their forms, both figures are predominantly elongated cylindrical forms. The cylindrical nature of the bronze forms bear semblance to oil-pipe formations, which situates them in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Another sign that may point these figures to Niger Delta is the linear scarifications on their heads. This is a common feature with traditional wooden three-dimensional forms (especially sculptures of Bush Spirits) from the region. The three visuals, (Okocha's *Submission*, Edewor's *Time to Pray* and *Supplication*), are thematically linked: each of them bringing to the fore the issue of prayer – presenting a request to a superior and soliciting his assistance as a way of finding enduring peace and security. “What you pray for, you focus on. What you focus on, you work towards. What you work towards, you eventually achieve,” submits Okocha in a 2014 interview (Okocha, personal interview). There is calmness, stillness, quietness, and peace that seem to surround figure 3, *Time to Pray*, which makes one believe that a lasting peace and security is inevitable and achievable for the Niger Delta.

2. The Power of Union or Collectivity

The idea of unity, collectiveness, togetherness and quest or pursuit (among others) as propositions to an enduring peace is prevalent in the next four visuals. Ogbami, in *The Search*, figure 5, presents the upward-looking heads of two figures with checkered backgrounds above their shoulders and blue colour above their heads and surrounding them. There is a black band that separates the picture into lower and upper halves. On the upper half, four symbols, in a picture-in-picture manner can be seen. They include:

- i. two figures linked together, and lying horizontally to the right-central corner of the picture plane;

- ii. a colourful bird in flight, slightly above the two figures, and situated approximately at the top-central section of the picture plane;
- iii. an outline of the shape of a bird's head, showing within it, the bird's eye that looks like a sun, shining over a calm settlement of three houses; a palm tree bending towards the houses; and a colourful background, laid like mosaic tiles. This can be seen on the left-central corner of the painting and;
- iv. a colourful area with signs akin to petals of flowers, located at the top-left section of the painting.



Figure 5

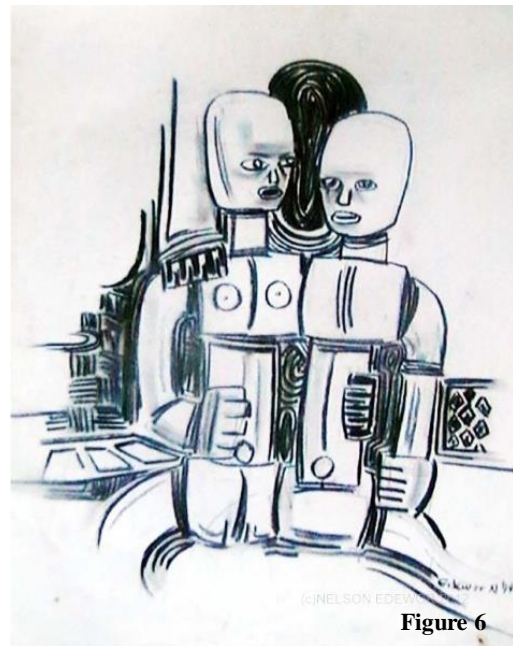


Figure 6

Figure 5 Alenosi Christopher Ogbami, (2011) *The Search*; painting: acrylic on canvas; 24cm x36cm; in the collection of Rumundaka Wonodi. Photo: artist's collection, used with permission.
Figure 6: Nelson Edewor, (1999). *Let's Take Oath Together*; drawing: charcoal on embossed card, 64cm x 64cm. Photo: artist's collection, used with permission.

The visual is titled “The Search.” With a bird flying (searching) over the **heads of the two figures** on the lower half of the painting, the artist indicates that the search must be a collective effort; it should involve all stakeholders in the Niger Delta, symbolized by the blue background. The collectivity and togetherness is further accentuated in the upper half – two figures linked together

and lying horizontally to the right-central corner of the picture plane, mentioned in i, above. What is the duo searching for? This may be indicated in the direction of the bird's flight – a mental image of peace, quietness, and secure environment as mentioned in iii, above. The duo appear selfless; they also value and seek the **company of others**, as suggested in the three houses. When the collective search does yield result, there will be flourishing and beauty, as signified by the colourful petals of flowers. There also would be abundance, as in one palm tree's capability of producing palm oil, wine, broom, fibre fuel for fire, palm kernels and palm kernel oil, and a host of others.

In an attempt to back-up his use of two figures and claim to collective responsibility, Ogbami opines, “The battles of life cannot be won alone. Therefore, if we desire progress, peace and security we must have a bird's eye view; we should be open, broadminded, and receptive. We should live, considering what will benefit, not only ourselves as individuals, but others as well... be concerned about other people's plights,” (Ogbami, personal interview). Ogbami's view is in tandem with Babatunde's suggested developmental approach to the Niger Delta. She opines, “There should be a people-centred development agenda grounded in the region's natural and human capital” (2014a 79).



Figure 7a

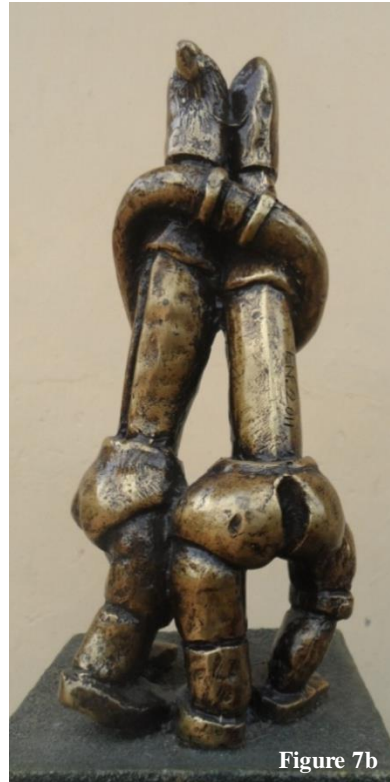


Figure 7b



Figure 8

Figure 7a: Nelson Edewor, (2011). *Commitment*; sculpture: Bronze, 24cm height; photo: Harrie Bazunu.

Figure 7b: *Commitment* (back view); photo: Harrie Bazunu.

Figure 8: Nelson Edewor, (2011). *Standing as One*, sculpture: Bronze, 24cm height. Photo: artist's collection; used with permission.

In 1999, Edewor made many charcoal drawings that gave visual interrogations and interpretations to the situations and conditions of the Niger Delta peoples. Some of these are covered in Bazunu's 2006 M.A. Dissertation entitled, "Edewor's Petroleum Visuals: A Study in Formal Reconfiguration." In one of the visuals, *Let's Take Oath Together*, the artist opines that the attitude towards oath taking and the commitment of oath takers are among the ingredients that give oath-mongers success in whatever they set out to do. By 2011, there were still oil-induced crises and environmental challenges that threatened the peace, resulting in economic, social, political, and environmental insecurity in the region. He therefore reinforces his commitment and belief in oath-taking as one of the ways through which oil-induced and environmental crises may be tackled with lasting result. He says, "...those who take oath for a course, stand in one accord, and are committed

to that course, because they see the oath as a binding and an unbreakable force that links them to the course,” (Edewor, personal interview). This belief led him to also produce *Standing as One* and *Commitment* in 2011. As in Edewor’s Petroleum Visuals, and his works discussed previously in this paper, *Let’s Take Oath Together*, *Standing as One* and *Commitment*, are redolent with cylindrical forms that resonate oil-pipe formations and scarifications inspired by traditional sculptures of the Niger Delta.

To achieve family security and peace, many modern families of the Niger Delta approach issues with double barrel or binoculars mentality. This mentality allows for inputs from both mother and father. Some families even operate joint financial accounts, making them collectively goal-focused. Beyond matrimony, togetherness, and collectivity, Edewor, in Figure 6, 7, and 8, proposes a Siamese or conjoined twin mentality as additional remedy for oil-related challenges, and the issues of peace and security in the Niger Delta. In a conjoined circumstance, the twins may have one or two heads, two or four legs, one or two stomachs, two or four hands as the case may be. Their survival and success depends on approaching the issues and challenges of life collectively and committedly. The conjoined approach recommended by Edewor reinforces his previously suggested oath taking stance, and also brings to mind the Akan symbol of a plural headed crocodile with a single stomach, which encourages approaching the challenges of life from multiple angles but with a single goal in mind. As a pastor, Edewor is adept at using Bible passages in backing up his choice of form, images and expressions. Explaining the significance of the power of two in his works *Commitment*, *Standing as One* and *Let’s Take Oath Together*, the visual artist cum priest is quick to quote a Bible verse, Deuteronomy 32:30: “...one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight”. “...you see there is power in two; agreement, unity, collectivity, commitment

and togetherness that yield multiple results; togetherness is pregnant with success,” (Edewor, personal interview).

Conclusion

Nigeria and the Niger Delta are in what may be called a matrimonial relationship as couple. In this kind of union, the female is beautifully endowed and attractive. Being the female, the *Niger Delta is pregnant, and she travails*. The *oil companies are the invited and paid midwives* who must do their job to ensure safe delivery and preserve the lives of both the mother and the baby. Being *the husband, the Nigerian government* must cater to his wife, feed her sumptuously, and pay her bills because when the baby is born it bears the father’s name – “Nigeria Oil” or “Nigeria economy.” This trio must be committed to peace and security of the Niger Delta and Nigeria at large.

By way of conclusion, let us consider one quality of bronze - its sheen. To maintain its luster, bronze is periodically re-polished. Apart from its strength, the re-polishing tendency of bronze increases its luster. This should be seen as a sign that Niger Delta, and indeed Nigeria, will have enduring peace and security only if the stakeholders, as humans with minds/hearts/consciences, will *re-polish* the region regularly through prayers, supplication, and commitment; standing as one, with oath-taking mentality. These are the visual propositions for a lasting peace and security by Millicent Okocha, Alenosi Christopher Ogbami, and Nelson Edewor, as ways of bridging the gaps between the government, oil companies and the people of the Niger Delta.

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Interviews

Personal interview with **Alenosi Christopher Ogbami**, in his studio in Warri, Delta State on 15 October 2014; and several telephone conversations in the course of writing this paper. Ogbami studied sculpture at the Delta State University Abraka. He is back in the institution for his MFA degree. In 2007, he won first prize in an art competition, "Let There Be Peace." He is a fast growing young Nigerian artist, whose works have been featured in the Nigerian art auction market. He is better known as a painter.

Personal interview with **Millicent Okocha** during the Messengers' Exhibition entitled, "A Step Forward," at Landmark Hotel, Port Harcourt, Rivers State on 26 September 2014. Okocha read theatre arts at the University of Port Harcourt. She has attended the Bruce Onobrakpeya's Agbarha-Otor Harmattan workshops. She is, however, more known as a painter, textile and fashion designer. Interview with Okocha also includes several telephone conversations and emails between September 2014 and February 2015.

I have had several contacts and discussions with Rev. Dr. **Nelson Edewor** between 1999 and 2015. He is an ordained priest of the Anglican Communion. Dr. Edewor is a visual artist and chair of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA) Delta State chapter. He obtained his B.A. and M.F.A degrees from the University of Benin. Edewor studied further at the Delta State University Abraka, bagging M.A. and PhD. degrees in art history in 2007 and 2009 respectively. He is also a senior lecturer in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts at Delta State University Abraka. He recently became the acting Head of the same Department in March 2015.

Sexual Pleasure in the Sonnet Tradition and in the *Dark Lady* Sonnets

Camilla Caporicci

Published in 1609, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are part of a long and rich tradition of sonnet sequences that were initiated in Italy by Francesco Petrarca before spreading swiftly through Europe and reaching a peak in England in the 1590s. Shakespeare places himself within this tradition, but achieves a radically original result. However, this innovative approach is not found equally throughout the *Sonnets*. The first section, dedicated to the *Fair Youth*, is close in style and meaning to the Petrarchan and neo-Platonic poetic model, while the section devoted to the *Dark Lady* emerges drastically in opposition to this poetic paradigm. The *Dark Lady*'s subversive figure challenges all the axioms upon which the Petrarchan ideal is based. Dark as night, she is physically as well as morally imperfect and, most importantly, she is endowed with a wild sexual appetite and is willing to satisfy it. This last aspect is particularly remarkable as it emerges as one of the most striking violations of the Petrarchan code. To appreciate the revolutionary value of Shakespeare's treatment of sexual passion in the *Dark Lady* sonnets, we will first need to clarify how carnal love was considered in the philosophy of the time (especially neo-Platonism) and, consequently, in the sonnet tradition.

“Band of all evils”: Sensual pleasure in the sonnet tradition

In neo-Platonic philosophy, the gratification of the senses through sexual intercourse is invariably stigmatized as vile and bestial. Marsilio Ficino, the father of Renaissance neo-Platonism, defines sexual desire as “*rabbia venerea*”: a loathsome and bestial impulse contrary to true love, in that it diverts man's soul from its research of Divine Beauty. The enjoyment of Beauty, Ficino says, “Solo alla Mente, e al vedere e allo udire si appartiene. Lo Amore dunque in queste tre cose si termina. E lo Appetito, che gli altri sensi seguita, non Amore ma più tosto libidine o rabbia si chiama” (17) [pertains to the Mind, and to the senses of vision

and hearing only. And the Appetite that follows the other senses is not to be called Love, but rather lust or fury]. Bembo, the renowned codifier of Petrarchism, tied the sonnet tradition to neo-Platonic philosophy and energetically reasserted the non-sexual nature of the Petrarchist true love. In *Asolani*, Bembo reaffirms the Ficinian idea that the fruition of beauty can only take place through vision and hearing and additionally states that to love properly, men must follow their reason and not their senses or else they will be transformed into vile animals. The body is an abhorrent and sinful prison, and sensual love is defined as a mere shadow of the true Divine love, condemning men to eternal suffering. With Bembo, the Christianization of Platonic love is thus completed.

The ideas expressed by Ficino and Bembo are at the base of most sixteenth-century love treatises. Betussi avows that he must praise only the soul's beauty because the body is merely a vain and worthless shadow. Cattani da Diacetto highlights the danger of the "sensual bait," while Equicola thunders against the dirtiness of the sexual act. Moreover, Tullia d'Aragona despises those vile men who desire to sexually enjoy the beloved, and whose aim "non è altro che quello degli animali brutti" (122) [is that of the brute animals"]. Similarly, Baldassare Castiglione, whose *Cortegiano* became one of the most famous and influential books of all Renaissance, writes that the perfect courtier should:

deliberarsi totalmente di fuggire ogni bruttezza dell'amor vulgare e così entrar nella divina strada amorosa con la guida della ragione, e prima considerar che 'l corpo, ove quella bellezza risplende, non è il fonte ond'ella nasce [...] non si può ancor in modo alcuno fruir la bellezza né satisfar al desiderio ch'ella eccita negli animi nostri col tatto, ma con quel senso del quale essa bellezza è vero obietto, che è la virtù visiva. (428)

[resolve entirely to run from the ugliness of sensual love and enter thus, guided by reason, the divine amorous path, and he should consider first that the body, where beauty shines, is not the source from which that beauty springs [...] in no way it is possible to enjoy beauty nor satisfy the desire that it excites though touch, but only through that sense whose real object is this beauty, that is, the sense of vision]

The philosophical concept of love dominant in the Renaissance appears, therefore, as essentially based on the refusal of sensual and irrational passion, which is stigmatized as bestial and sinful, in favour of the intellect as guide to the spiritual experience of Beauty.

These two conflicting forces, symbolized by the neo-Platonic two Venuses, are a perfect expression of the dichotomous system according to which the Renaissance universe was structured: a system in which good and evil, body and spirit, are clearly separated and hierarchically organized according to an ethical principle. These ideas, spreading along with neo-Platonism and Petrarchism, exerted great influence in France and England. In the famous *Anatomy of Melancholy* by Robert Burton, for instance, the neo-Platonic theory of the two Venuses is reaffirmed, and love is defined as a divine thing. He writes, “But if it rage it is no more Love, but burning lust, a disease, Phrensie, Madness, Hell” (III, III.II.i.ii, 48).

This philosophic concept of love began with Petrarch himself. The impossibility of reaching any sensual satisfaction is at the very base of the complex psychological dynamic operating in the *Canzoniere*; an impossibility that is perfectly expressed in Laura’s adamantine chastity and finds its *raison d’être* in the Christian, and particularly Augustinian, spirit that animates the sonnet sequence. Nevertheless, poetry is not philosophy and the strength of feeling that pushes the poet to the act of writing cannot be utterly silenced, not even in poetry that aspires to convey organic religious and philosophic thought. Neo-Platonic commentators undoubtedly found certain passages of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* troublesome, even if the desire expressed there is immediately crushed. Even though this work is intended to exemplify perfect spiritual love, some verses reveal contradictory passions and inappropriate desires:

Prima ch’i’ torni a voi, lucenti stelle,
 o torni giù ne l’amorosa selva,
 lassando il corpo che fia trita terra,
 vedess’io in lei pietà, che ‘n un sol giorno
 può ristorar molt’anni, e ‘nanzi l’alba
 puommi arichir dal tramontar del sole.

Con lei foss’io da che si parte il sole,
 et non ci vedess’altri che le stelle,

sol una nocte, et mai non fosse l'alba (22, vv. 25-33)

[Before I return to you, refulgent stars,
or come back into the amorous woodland
leaving my body changed to dry earth,
might I see pity in her, that in one day,
can revive many years, and before dawn
enrich me at the setting of the sun.

May I be with her when the sun departs,
and seen by no one but the stars,
for one sole night, and may there be no dawn]

The poet cannot avoid feeling and giving voice to a sensual and earthly desire: for an infinite night in Laura's embrace. But this dream will never be, and the poet knows it full well. He writes, "Ma io sarò sotterra in secca selva / e 'l giorno andrà pien di minute stelle / prima ch'a sì dolce alba arrivi il sole" (22, vv. 37-39) [But I will be beneath the dry wood's earth, / and the day will be full of little stars, / before the sun achieves so sweet a dawn]. Petrarch can describe the torment of sensual passion but, given the ontological unattainability of the beloved inherent in his philosophical ideal, this description will always remain an analysis of the tension towards the loved object, never of its enjoyment.

The same statement can be applied to most Petrarchist lyrics; often we read of excruciating passions and fierce desires that are followed by painful repentances. In England, in the wake of the triumphant neo-Platonism of the eighties and nineties, there is a strong tendency to clearly separate the "two loves." Fletcher, for instance, after defining the rightful love as "a Goddess [...] not respecting the contentment of him that loves but the virtues of the beloved, satisfied with wondering, fedde with admiration: respecting nothing but his Ladies worthinesse: made as happie by love as by all favours, chaste by honour, farre from violence" (79), goes on describing the opposing nature of sensual love:

the love wherewith Venus some hath injuriouslie made spoile of thousandes, is a cruell tyrant: occasion of sighes: oracle of lies: enemie of pittie, way of error: shape of inconstancie: temple of treason: faith without assurance: monarch of tears, murtherer of ease: prison of hearts: monster of nature, poisoned honey: impudent courtizan: furious bastard: and in a word, not Love. (79)

Here we turn to Philip Sidney, who as the initiator of the Elizabethan sonnet vogue deserves particular attention. The poet, whose philosophic reflection on love appears sometimes to be deeper in the *Certain Sonnets* than in *Astrophil and Stella*, rails violently against sensual desire:

Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen snare,
 Fond fancy's scum, and dregs of scattered thought,
 Band of all evils, cradle of causeless care,
 Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought;
 Desire, desire, I have too dearly bought,
 With price of mangled mind, thy worthless ware;
 Too long, too long asleep thou hast me brought,
 Who should my mind to higher things prepare. (*Certain Sonnets* 31, vv. 1-8)

This illicit desire, described as a fever – an infection that poisons the poet's entire being – crashes against the virtue of a beauty that does not cede and that is chaste and pure like the virgin Queen: “A woman's mould, but like an angel graced; / An angel's mind, but in a woman cast” [1] (22, vv. 66-67). In some sonnets, this beauty is elevated to metaphysical terms, envisioning the refusal of any earthly desire and a mystical fusion with eternal perfection: a fusion that is, neo-Platonically, death and resurrection in the divine beloved [2]. The sexual act appears, by contrast, as not only unattainable with such a virtuous beauty (and consequently indescribable) but also intrinsically wrong, and therefore to be suppressed. Sidney writes, “Within myself to seek my only hire / Desiring naught but how to kill desire” (31, vv. 13-14). The entire sequence appears to be permeated by the division, crucial to the essentially dichotomous Renaissance system of thought, between a higher, spiritual and

morally good reality, and a low, material and degraded one (the Augustinian opposition of *Civitas Hominis vs Civitas Dei*, we might say). In the last poem of the *Certain Sonnets*, Sidney tells us in a most clear way which of these two worlds is to be abandoned:

Leave me, O love, which reachest but to dust,
 And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;
 [...]
 Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see;
 Eternal love, maintain thy life in me. (32, vv. 1-2 and 13-14)

As for *Astrophil and Stella*, if we cannot completely agree with those critics who define it as a work primarily aimed at showing the passage “from the frustration of earthly desire to the ideal of heavenly love” (Parker 67), we can still affirm that the concept of lust emerging from the text is quite close to the traditional one. The poet’s desire is very present in this sonnet sequence; it is a hungry desire that claims its satisfaction by directly opposing virtue. He exclaims, “But ah, desire still cries: Give me some food” (71, v. 14). This lust, however, is immediately defined as wrong and, as Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass write, incompatible with true love. Sexual desire must be defeated by reason’s virtuous power. Lust remains a desire; it never turns into action. The poet cannot describe the sexual act because Stella forbids it; her love is a superior kind of love, intellectual, pure and always guided by reason’s light: “love she did, but loved a love not blind” (62, v. 6).

Sidney’s example had a deep influence on most successive sonnet sequences. The love described in the Elizabethan sonnets appears as an expression of the Petrarchist and neo-Platonic model, being, in Samuel Daniel’s words, a “chast desire” (XV, v. 2) that “hoovers with white wings” (XII, v. 1). The exceptions are few and often not in true contradiction with the Christian thought at the base of the sonnet tradition. Dedicated to the poet’s wife and culminating in an *Epithalamion*, Spenser’s *Amoretti* might appear, for instance, as deserving special attention in this context because it is the only sonnet sequence in which love is not only reciprocated but finds its satisfaction in a concrete, earthly union. Nevertheless, looking for similarities between Spenser and Shakespeare’s treatment of sensual love would be deeply

misleading. Spenser's idea of love is based on the concept of "matrimonial chastity" as found in the *Bible* and protestant texts, which resolutely refuse lust and sexual pleasure *per sé*. The *Book of Common Prayer*, many echoes of which we find in Spenser's sonnets (Hadfield), clearly distinguishes chaste conjugal love from sexual desire. God, the text affirms, has established the sacrament of matrimony for "the procreation of children" (177) and as a "remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication" (177), and it "is not by any to be enterprised [...] wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites" (177). Similarly, Spenser's love, based on the biblical teachings – "So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought, / Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught" (LXVIII, vv. 13-14) – is a kind of love that finds its satisfaction in the virtuous chastity, the "pure and chast desyre" (XXII, v. 12), of a relationship entirely "voyd of sinfull vice" (LXXVII):

Let not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre
 breake out, that may her sacred peace molest:
 ne one light glance of sensuall desyre
 attempt to work her gentle mindes unrest.
 But pure affections bred in spotlesse brest,
 and modest thoughts breathd from wel tempred sprites,
 goe visit her in her chast bowre of rest,
 accompanyde with angelic delights. (LXXVII, vv. 1-8)

To conclude, we can say that the concept of love at the base of the sonnet tradition springs almost entirely from the Christian and neo-Platonic paradigm dominant in the Renaissance period. The essentially dichotomous and hierarchically oriented separation of spiritual and material planes informs the idea of love, which appears to be founded on a radical refusal of the body and its desires. Lust can never turn into action.

The sonnets dedicated to the *Fair Youth*, though highly original in many respects, do not appear to defy this traditional negative view of lust. Contrary to the opinion of Pequigney, who considers "the interaction between friends being sexual in both orientation and practice" (1), I believe that in the first section of the sonnet sequence the poet is ontologically deprived

of any hope of physically enjoying his fair beloved. The sonnets seem, therefore, to situate themselves quite easily within that purely Platonic tradition that favored love between men, but only as far as it excluded any corporeal and sexual aspect. In fact, if it is true that, as many neo-Platonic authors affirmed, “Ad eccitare il disio amoroso dello intelletto giudicò Platone, e altri valenti uomini esser più acconcia la bellezza del Giovane, che della giovane Donna” (Nobili, 16) [Plato and other worthy men deemed the Youth’s beauty more apt than that of the young woman to excite the amorous desire], it is also true that homoerotic sexual intercourse was universally despised. Ficino defines it as an abominable act, Mario Equicola as an unnatural and horrible vice and Tullia d’Aragona as a filthy vileness deserving divine punishment. The influence of neo-Platonic philosophy, perhaps united to that of Montaigne’s *Essais* – where male friendship, an enduring and rational feeling free from carnal desire, was preferred to the fever of heterosexual passion – appears to remain active in the first section of the *Sonnets*. Despite the clearly erotic tension that animates the poet’s feelings towards the youth, the unattainability of the beloved is never seriously called into question, as in sonnet 20, where the poet highlights the impossibility of a sexual union with the young man:

nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing:
 But since she pricked thee out for women’s pleasure,
 Mine be thy love, and thy love’s use their treasure. (20, vv. 10-14)

The relationship with the youth is destined to remain an eternal and platonic “marriage of true minds” (116, v. 1) that excludes the earthly body and its desires to celebrate the spirit, “the better part” (74, vv. 7-8) of the poet.

“Lust in action”: Sexual pleasure in the *Dark Lady* sonnets

The *Dark Lady* sonnets represent a revolution in terms of the treatment of sensual passion, shattering the boundary between “licit” and “illicit” love. In fact, as Clark writes, the second section of Shakespeare’s sonnets is of an “emphatically post-consummation nature” (41). By

giving in to the poet's and (even more scandalously) her own desire, the *Dark Lady* allows lust to become the object of deep reflection, which hides nothing of that tenebrous abyss that is suddenly thrust open:

Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action; and till action, lust
 Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
 Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight;
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated as a swallowed bait,
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.
 All this the world well knows, yet none knows well
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell. (129)

In this sonnet, as Alessandro Serpieri writes, “The word itself seems to function as image, icon, of the violent passion, exhibiting its body in a chaos of aggregations and frictions” (743, trans. mine). And if it is true that the woman's body is not mentioned in the text, it remains nonetheless, as Melchiori writes, a looming presence, implicitly evoked by the verbs referring to the coitus (“Had, having, and in quest to have” (v. 10), by the identification of lust with the desired object in “hunted,” “had” and “hated” in verse 6 and 7, and by the ambiguous term “bait” that aims to evoke the physical presence of sex, or the “thing” itself. The linguistic and semantic aspect of this complex sonnet has been analyzed by more than one critic (suffice it to think of the twelve pages of notes Stephen Booth dedicates to it in his edition of the *Sonnets*, or Giorgio Melchiori's acute analysis of the text's structure in *L'uomo e il potere*), and I do not mean to replicate their efforts. Instead, I shall consider the

philosophical base of this sonnet, to show how innovative Shakespeare's treatment of sensual love is. The sonnet's first part seems consistent with the Christian and neo-Platonic paradigm of the time: it describes lust through a list of terrible adjectives that appear to locate the brutal and animal part of man's nature in earthly desires. In this sense, this discourse could remind us of what we call a "Pichian paradigm," according to which men must repress their most animalistic part to elevate themselves to their true and divine nature. Shakespeare's discourse, however, does not stop here. In the eleventh line, we begin to perceive a change: the verse opens with a term in complete opposition to the semantic field of sinful negativity that has characterized the sonnet so far: "bliss." Certainly, sexual passion can lead to "a very woe" but the poet, through a provocative use of a term endowed with specifically religious nuances, acknowledges that it is also "a bliss in proof." In the following verse, we find that lust is not only a bliss in the moment of actual sexual consummation, but it is also sought after as a "joy." Then we have the final couplet, which is often a key to the interpretation of the entire sonnet. Now the poet gives us his truth. Despite its violent nature, lust is part of our lives and therefore it cannot be denied.

The poet never shows any intention to make amend for his sensual pleasure, nor does he intend to renounce the earthy passion that gives him the most proud and vital joys:

Love is too young to know what conscience is:
 Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?
 Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
 Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove;
 For, thou betraying me, I do betray
 My nobler part to my gross body's treason;
 My soul doth tell my body that he may
 Triumph in love; flesh stays no further reason,
 But rising at thy name doth point out thee
 As his triumphant prize, proud of this pride:
 He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
 To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.

No want of conscience hold it that I call
 Her 'love', for whose dear love I rise and fall. (151)

In this highly ambiguous sonnet, clearly permeated by an erotic innuendo, the poet highlights the fact that his lady is as guilty as himself. In doing so, he defies one of the cornerstones of the Petrarchan ideal, which had always been based upon the purity of the perfect beloved. But the meaning of the sonnet runs deeper than this. Accompanied and exalted by the powerful and triumphal rhythm of the poem, sexual pleasure emerges here as a vital and sovereign power, independent and superior to a value system based on moralistic principles. The poet faces the implicit accusation to which the sonnet seems to be answering – an accusation that, we can suppose, might ideally come from that “English Genevian puritie” (Fletcher, 75) [3] that opposed the love sonnet because of its illicit content, and is targeted at the poet’s sensual attachment to his lascivious dark lover – by proudly claiming the rightful nature of his desire for the dark lady. It is not for a moral defect, for “want of conscience,” that he loves his lady. By calling her “Love,” he vindicates for a concept of love that no longer separates sentiment and sensual appetite. The justification of the love the poet feels towards his beloved no longer coincides with the moral elevation proper to the chaste Petrarchan lovers, but instead with erotic passion, which the poet experiences with authentic pleasure and which he expresses through the evocative terms “rise” and “fall.” In fact, not only the use of these terms in the final verse is clearly aimed to convey an erotic innuendo, as both Duncan-Jones and Booth point out [4], but the entire sestet seems to revolve around this powerfully allusive up-and-down movement. In verse 9, the flesh is said to be “raising” at the name of the lady and “point out her,” which is a clear reference to the tumescence of the masculine sex. Similarly, the “stand” and “fall” we find in verse 12 are evidently intended to evocate the sexual act. Sensual pleasure becomes thus a crucial element to the idea of love celebrated in this sonnet.

This innovative concept of love and pleasure is intrinsically linked to the revolutionary figure of the *Dark Lady*. As Eve Sedgwick points out, feminine sexuality is evoked in the sonnets dedicated to the *Fair Youth* only as a passive instrument used by men to recreate a likewise masculine image. It is deprived of its autonomy and assimilated into the Christian and Lutheran paradigm in which sex is tolerated in its instrumental function only – for “the procreation of children” (*Book of Common Prayer*, 177). The appearance of the *Dark Lady*

brings a very different idea of desire to the fore. By presenting us with a feminine object of love who refuses to accept the passivity of her role, and claims instead a sensual pleasure independent from the social and religious “function” traditionally attributed to it, Shakespeare seems to affirm that pleasure needs no “justification,” and makes it the cornerstone of a novel concept of love. The determined character of the woman’s hungry desire is expressed in a word which resounds constantly through the *Dark Lady* sonnets. *Will* refers at the same time to the name of the subject/object of this passion (William), to desire itself and to the sexual organs through which this desire can be satisfied, as in the highly erotic sonnet 135:

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
 And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in overplus;
 More than enough am I that vex thee still,
 To thy sweet will making addition thus.
 Wilt thou whose will is large and spacious
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
 The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
 And in abundance addeth to his store:
 So thou being rich in *Will* add to thy *Will*
 One will of mine to make thy large *Will* more.
 Let no unkind “no” fair beseechers kill;
 Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*. (135)

The obscene vastness of the *Dark Lady*’s genital organ coincides with the insatiable infinity of her sensual appetite, which attracts and absorbs all male desires/genital organs (wills), inserting them into a pleasure dynamic that ends by reinforcing, or “enlarging,” her appetite and the sexual organ that is its objective counterpart. It is thanks to this desire, which is also a precise “will” of the *Dark Lady*, that the poet can finally, triumphantly, satisfy his “will” filling up hers. He exclaims, “Will will fulfil the treasure of thy love, / Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one” (136, vv. 5-6).

This love, based on a self-justifying pleasure principle, finds its physical expression in the powerful figure of the *Dark Lady*. Shakespeare never sets the brand of infamy on her sensual body, which is open to the pleasure of sex, On the contrary, it is that exciting body and the pleasure that derives from it that become the yardstick of the new concept of love we find in the *Dark Lady* sonnets.

ENDNOTES

[1] In this poem, “The Seven Wonders of England,” the angelic woman who is described as the last and most splendid wonder of England is a clear reference to Elizabeth I.

[2] See for instance the beautiful poem 25, whose theme appears strictly connected to neo-Platonic philosophy, and which ends in a litany somehow reminiscent of Christian mysticism. It reads, “When to my deadly pleasure, / When to my lively torment, / Lady, mine eyes remained, / Joined, alas to your beams, / With violence of heavenly / Beauty tied to virtue [...] / They to the beamy suns went, / Where, by the death of all deaths, / Find to what harm they hastened; [...] / Yet, yet, a life to their death, / Lady, you have reserved; / Lady, the life of all love; / For though my sense be from me, / And I be dead, who want sense; / Yet do we both live in you; [...] / Thus do I fall, to rise thus; / Thus do I die, to live thus; / Changed to a change, I change not. / Thus may I not be from you; / Thus be my senses on you; / Thus what I think is of you; / Thus what I seek is in you; / All what I am, it is you” (25).

[3] The act of writing love sonnets was connected to immorality by the extremist wings of both Catholic and protestant factions, namely, the Jesuits and the Puritans. As Robert Fletcher writes in the dedicatory letter of his *Licia*, sonnet writing is unjustly accused and the poet is obliged to suffer a most undeserved reproach. He writes, “Our English Genevian puritie hath quite debarred us of honest recreation” (75). It is in order to avoid this accusation that, in his *canzoniere*, the love he describes is absolutely chaste and his lady, as he explicitly affirms, appears as endowed with a “more-than human” and allegoric nature: “If thou muse, What my LICIA is, take her to be some DIANA, at the least chaste; or some MINERVA: no VENUS, fairer farre; it may be shee is Learnings Image, or some heavenlie wonder: *which the Precisest may not mislike*: perhaps under that name I have shadowed Discipline. It may be, I meane that kinde courtesie which I found at the Patronesse of these Poems; it may be some Colledge; it may be my conceit, and portende nothing” (79-80, emphasis mine).

[4] Katherine Duncan-Jones writes that these two terms refer to “tumescence and detumescenze” (151). Similarly Stephen Booth, by quoting Seymour-Smith, affirms that “the raising and falling is singularly appropriate to the poem’s theme of involuntary lust; the point is that it is not a metaphor” (529).

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The Howard Beach Killing: an Incident Revisited by *The New York Times*

Marie-Christine MICHAUD

In the 1970s, the economic crisis plunged many Americans into hardship and triggered increased competition among the members of the working and middle classes who were the most likely to be affected by the worsening of life conditions. Many Whites blamed the coloured minorities for the deterioration of their standard of living as they were competitors and seen as privileged by the measures the government had recently taken. Thus, these white communities witnessed the renewal of self-defence mechanisms, ethnocentrism, and even racism as forms of social protection since these Americans had the feeling that their status was challenged. Such a context reveals that it was difficult to establish “bridges across cultures” and communities.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the legacy of this community protection amounted to an ethnic revival and the resurgence of bias crimes. For example, in June 1982, in the Gravesend section of Brooklyn, three black men were assaulted, and one of them, Willie Turks, was beaten to death. The assailants belonged to the Italian-American community, and the incident was said to be racially motivated. In 1986, in Howard Beach, located in South Queens, New York, three Blacks were attacked by a dozen Italian-American Whites. One of the black men was killed. *The New York Times* extensively reported the incident, focusing on the motivation of the assault and then on the trial of the assailants. This incident was considered as the epitome of racial violence, even hatred, among the different communities in New York City.

A hate crime?

According to the definition given by the FBI, a hate crime is a criminal offense committed against a person, property, or society, which is motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a given race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity/national origin [1]. The issue is to establish whether the incident in Howard Beach was a hate crime that is to say, whether the assailants, who were white teenagers and who were mostly Italian Americans, were motivated by racism. In other words, was this incident a street fight among teenagers or was it a bias crime that echoed the tensions prevalent in the context of the 1980s?

In the United States, whiteness was a prerequisite to prove people's inclusion in the dominant group for a long time. Until the adoption of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution in 1868, only Whites could be American citizens, and until the Civil Rights Movement, coloured people had been segregated, especially in Southern states. Today, in spite of the recognition of their rights as citizens, Blacks still suffer from discrimination, as their rate of poverty, unemployment, and their social status as a whole testify [2]. Hence, one means available to individuals to affirm their core group affiliation was to distance themselves from Blacks and, even more, to oppose them. In addition, as racial identity was related to social status, people had to adopt the social characteristics and values attached to whiteness to assert their dominant group affiliation.

When Italians massively migrated to the United States at the end of the 19th century, they were not seen as white because they stood at the bottom of the social ladder and often worked and resided with Blacks; in addition, they came from a country close to Africa (Guglielmo and Salerno

1-23). They were called “wop,” “guineas,” “dagoes,” and “white niggers” -- appellations that emphasized their inferior status. Thus, they wanted to be seen as white as their social mobility was conditioned by their acceptance into the white core society. They progressively took to adopting the values of the Whites to secure their mobility. By the time of the Second World War, they had distanced themselves from coloured people by improving their social status and copying the American way of life. Then, they even chose to oppose them; they adopted a racist attitude towards Blacks in order to be seen as part and parcel of the mainstream.

In the 1970s, when the crisis dramatically affected the working class, Italian Americans turned to conservatism and drew a sharper colour line between themselves and coloured minorities, although they had been on friendly terms with Blacks as they had shared the common experience of an exploited labour force and had been the victims of harsh discrimination from 100% Americanism supporters until the 1930s (Connell and Gardaphé 48). Then, by the time of the Civil Rights Movement, they tended to oppose the new legislation, such as busing, affirmative action, and welfare programs, since they were seen as reforms that favoured coloured minorities whereas white workers, including Italian Americans, were accustomed to toiling or relying on family solidarity when necessary and not governmental assistance. The Italian Americans considered that their possessions were acquired through hard work, yet Blacks could obtain even more through the sheer fact that they were coloured and protesting. Jealousy and resentment – and racism – grew among the Italian-American working and middle classes who turned to the Republican Party. They considered that the Democrats who passed the reforms were transforming the United States into a nation hostile to the white working class values. Thus, the Italian Americans became aware that class and race were linked. They intended to defend their “race,” meaning their group and whiteness, in order to assert their social status even if they could not improve it.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of Italian Americans belonged to the working and middle classes. The elderly, in particular, were severely hit by the crisis as they generally had no high qualifications and were likely to be plunged into poverty. They depended on family solidarity and resented the new social reforms that helped the Blacks, whom they considered as a welfare population. The Italian-American youth were raised with this feeling of unprecedented resentment towards Blacks who were seen as competition for jobs and housing, in particular. This reaction is what Jonathan Rieder calls “populist conservatism” (338). It is based on distrust toward others, confidence only in one’s own community, and the eagerness to protect one’s group interests. It is expressed through the persistence of racial cleavage, a conservative political orientation, and racist behaviours.

In addition, the notable population change in New York City during the 1970s made the Whites afraid of losing their status. The number of Blacks increased by 7% and the number of Whites decreased by 25% throughout the city. Consequently, the Whites felt that it was necessary to protect themselves and their neighbourhoods against Blacks and new minorities as a whole. This situation may explain the racial tensions between the Italian-American community and the coloured ones in New York City, and generally speaking, the rising number of hate crimes. In 1989, the police reported 577 hate crimes in New York City alone (Luconi 63). In Queens, throughout the decade, the Black population rose by 37%. In 1980, the number of Whites decreased to represent “only” 62% of the total population of the borough. The districts where Italian Americans, about 42,950 in total, were the most numerous were Howard Beach, Ridgewood, Clearview, Ozone Park (Battistella; Papademetriou).

Howard Beach was a poor insular community near JFK Airport where 98% of the population was white, mainly Italian Americans. As described by *The New York Times*, for the

residents, it was a seaside-facing enclave where one could expect to live in peace, far away from the rest of the city (Freedman B4). There, they could feel “at home,” far from the confusion of Manhattan. However, confronted by the demographic and social changes that had occurred for about 10 years, the Howard Beach dwellers felt that they were losing ground and power in their own neighbourhood. They tended to think that the peacefulness of “their” enclave was disappearing. Consequently, they were ready to protect it against external forces that would disturb the community order, even if in reality, Howard Beach was a rather poor, unattractive area.

Once upon a time in Howard Beach

On the night of December 19, 1986, three black men, Michael Griffith, Cedric Sandiford, and Timothy Grimes, happened to be walking in Howard Beach, Queens. Actually, there were four of them, but Curtis Sylvester decided to remain in the car to watch it, while the others left. Their car had broken down, and the three men decided to walk to the train station to go back home and find some help, which led them to walk through Howard Beach.

They first stopped at a pizza restaurant where they encountered some white teenagers who set on them as they wanted “to get [them] out of the neighbourhood [since] they did not belong here” (Hynes and Drury 5). A few minutes later, the white teenagers went back to the birthday party that they had been attending and convinced some of their friends to join them to “kill the niggers” (McFadden, “3 Youths” A1; Fried, “Attacker Describes Death” B1). Eventually, it was a group of a dozen white teenagers, among whom some were drunk and others infatuated with the presence of girls, who decided to chase the three black men to give them a lesson and make them understand that they had nothing to do in “their turf.” The “lesson” lasted some 20 minutes. As

Michelle Napolitano, one of the girls who was at the birthday party, declared, “We’re a strictly white neighbourhood. They had to be starting trouble.” As he was trying to escape the mob after being beaten up, Michael Griffith was run over by a car on the highway and died. Cedric Sandiford was badly injured with a base-ball bat while Timothy Grimes managed to run away.

As soon as the story was revealed, the authorities mobilized to have the case’s circumstances cleared up. The mayor of New York City, Ed Koch, as well as the governor, Mario Cuomo, were afraid that the incident would provoke further upsurge and contribute to deteriorating race relations even more deeply; thus a new prosecutor, Charles Hynes, was nominated. Black leaders, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton among others, reacted promptly too, denouncing the blatant racism that the black community was victim of. Quickly, the racial factor was put forward in explaining the motivation of the assault by the white teenagers. Suspicion against Blacks was commonplace in Howard Beach, as the words of one construction worker interviewed by *The New York Times* testified, “Whenever I see a [Black man] in the neighbourhood, I know he’s up to no good. [...] They come in the neighbourhood and rob everything” (Gross A1).

As the investigation proceeded, a question that was frequently asked by the inhabitants of Howard Beach, by the police, and by the defendants’ lawyers was, “Why were they in Howard Beach?” as if, as Charles Hynes suggested, a permit or a passport were required to go from one place in New York City to another. The crime raised the ethnic and racial awareness of the different communities who regarded one another as competitors in employment, housing, education, social and welfare reforms. Howard Beach was a rather poor neighbourhood, and Blacks were likely to settle within or in the periphery of the Italian-American enclave, which was resented by its dwellers.

The incident was more than a street fight among teenagers, as the image of Italian American youth was associated with street violence, gang life, and organized crime. There was a “code of the streets” (Fagan and Wilkinson 67-68). The street was the place where young men could show their strength, their power, and their masculinity. Their neighbourhood was their turf, and they had to defend it. The fear of being dispossessed of their enclave along with the “code of the streets” engendered hostility towards Blacks; young men felt it was their duty and a chance to prove their strength to oppose any attempt from coloured people to move closer. Thus, violence was frequent and could be seen as a social means of achieving recognition and asserting one’s power in a given area. In the particular context of the 1980s, it went along with the frustration that Italian Americans felt facing the new social reforms from which the coloured minorities benefited. During the investigation, the police noted that they could not obtain information and testimonies easily. Howard Beach was an Italian-American neighbourhood, and its structure depended on some traditional practices (Hynes and Drury 35). The clannishness of the community led individuals to distrust public institutions and rather depend on community solidarity and the mafia system, for instance. So, Italian Americans were not used to communicating with the authorities, especially the police, which prevented the investigation from progressing quickly. Another consequence of the reluctance to cooperate with the police was the delay of results and the intensification of tensions between Blacks who expected justice and Whites who asked for greater understanding.

This situation called for public attention. For the mayor, it was “the kind of lynching party that existed in the Deep South” (Gross A1), “the most horrendous incident in [his] nine years in City Hall,” and a “tragedy” (McFadden, “3 Youths” A1; Purnick, “A Break with the Past” B1; Koch A27). For Charles Hynes who wanted to denounce racism in American society, it was an “American tragedy” (100); for *The New York Times*, it was “a traumatic experience, very violent.

. . with aggravating factor as the Blacks did not provoke the Whites” (Fried “Prison for Howard Beach Victim” B4). Such statements led to the mobilization of public opinion [3]. The lawyer of Jason Ladone, one of the defendants, argued, “These young men were the scapegoats of a nation that [had] neglected its minorities.” Even if these words can be said to have been governed by the lawyer’s job to find some justification to his client’s deed, this kind of view reinforced the belief that the Howard Beach incident could be considered as a bias crime (Hynes and Drury 299), therefore creating a social and racial issue in addition to a criminal case.

Though the events in Howard Beach could be seen as an “example” among many others in the plethora of racial incidents during the 1980s, it encapsulated the tensions that had intensified between Italian Americans and Blacks since the 1960s. Black witnesses acknowledged that they avoided going to Howard Beach as they were victims of intimidation if they happened to walk there. In addition to the self-proclaimed citizen patrol group named “The Guardian Angels,” who watched the neighbourhood (Mc Fadden, “3 Youths” A1), the residents adopted a hostile attitude towards strangers coming to their place, which made Howard Beach even more turned inward, self-protected, and “ethnic.” The residents showed solidarity; during the investigation, no one in the neighbourhood suggested that the teenagers’ violence was biased. One of the leaders of the community even stated that “racial violence [was] not part of the fabric of life in the neighbourhood” (Freedman B4). Revealingly, the Howard Beach residents strove to make sure that the assault was regarded as a street fight and not as an illustration of bigotry. They maintained that it was a “sort of prank” and that the teenagers were not “bad boys” (Wicker A19). The credibility of the entire Italian-American community was at stake. The Howard Beach residents had already shown they could stand together when they felt that the well-being of the community was endangered. They mobilized to defend their “turf.” For example, they had fought against the

nuisance of the airport nearby through petitions and demonstrations, and against the decision to make the area a garbage dump (Freedman B4). Hence, they mobilized against the image of blatant racism. It was as if the incident strengthened their clannishness by reinforcing ethnic and residential self-segregation.

A Black vs. White issue

The outcome of the incident was closely followed by the media and *The New York Times*, in particular. This liberal newspaper has an extensive circulation and as such, it can be seen as a reference to epitomize the impact that the Howard Beach incident had on the opinions of the urban public and on community relations in the New York area at least.

The articles in *The New York Times* can be divided into two categories: the articles dealing with the revelation of the incident and the investigation, and those dealing with the trial one year later. In all cases, the paper tried to promote deeper understanding of the situation. Though it strove to remain objective by providing statements from a diverse group of witnesses, the coverage of topics related to the event to explain the circumstances (such as violence, racism, poverty) revealed its anti-discrimination position.

The paper quickly raised a controversy about the nature of the incident: was it a bias crime or not? Depending on the answer to this question, sentencing would be different and so would the impact on the population; tensions between the different racial communities could be exacerbated or appeased. The wide circulation and the influence of *The New York Times* played a decisive role in the framing of group relations.

The paper reported statements of community leaders in such a way as to present the different views in opposition to one another, thus fuelling the debate over the nature of the incident. Nevertheless, the titles of the articles (especially those dealing with the incident rather than the trial one year later) appeared to signal that the incident involved community issues rather than individual attitudes. Some of those headlines included: “Area is an Insular Community” (21 Dec 1986 44), “In Howard Beach, Pride and Fear in a ‘Paradise’” (Fried B4), “Queens Group Seeks to Improve Race Relations” (James 26), “How to Overcome” (19 Jan 1987 A16), “Fear, Crime, Prejudice, Fear” (19 Jan 1987 A17).

When he heard about the Howard Beach incident, the President of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) from Jamaica, Queens, declared, “You can’t believe you’re not talking about South Africa” (Freedman B4). The references to the apartheid regime in South Africa in some of *The New York Times* articles (Freedman B4; Smothers, “1,200 Protesters” 1; Erlander E7) emphasized that race tensions had been endemic to the American system and that American society, like South Africa, was being divided. The dominant white group adopted an attitude designed to keep Blacks apart from the mainstream. The welfare measures adopted by the Democratic Party in the 1960s, which made many working and middle class Whites resentful, and the general deterioration of the standard of living in the 1980s deepened the gap between Whites and Blacks and constrained their mutual acceptance. Thus, how could people maintain that the American society of the late 1980s was multi-ethnic and multiracial if so much violence was motivated by prejudice, or even racism, and if the nation felt so deeply divided?

Black people gathered at the local church to pray for the black victims and to deliver “a message of freedom from bigotry and hatred” (Uhlrig 26). Rather than being a victim of teenage street violence, Michael Griffith appeared as the victim of a system that imposed a racial hierarchy

and seemed to sustain racist behaviours. *The New York Times* covered the marches that were organized to denounce racism. These events, however, turned into displays of tensions, insults, and taunts between the Whites of Howard Beach and Blacks – from Brooklyn, where the victims came from, and Queens, where the incident took place. On December 28, 1986, 1,200 Blacks demonstrated in Howard Beach while a crowd of 200 Whites summoned them to get out of “their streets” (Smothers, “1,200 Protesters” 26). In response, Blacks decided to boycott white businesses and pizzerias (Meyers A27).

For their part, the residents of Howard Beach maintained that the bias motivations of the incident were exaggerated by the media. They said that journalists displayed an unfair image of their neighbourhood (Ravo B6). Witnesses repeatedly declared that when Blacks came into the area, it was mostly with criminal intentions, and that the teenagers were just trying to protect their turf (Purnick, “Koch, Seeking Racial Talk” A1, B3; Gross A1; Freedman B4; McFadden, “The Howard Beach Inquiry” 1, 26; Beatty A 23; Ravo B6). Such declarations were issued by the Italian-American residents so often that they seemed to promote some kind of “populist conservatism,” as if the assault had actually been motivated by social prejudice and community arguments. The inhabitants of Howard Beach were forming an ethnic bloc in order to protect their neighbourhood that they considered to be endangered by the proximity of coloured people.

In any case, *The New York Times* presented the assault as a racial one, a White vs. Black incident, but without insisting on the ethnic ancestry of the white teenagers. While covering the event, the paper also reported other incidents, hence presenting the Howard Beach assault as an additional racist incident in the multitude of racial riots that broke out during the 1970s and 1980s, thus underlining the tensions between the different communities. Not surprisingly, the incident gave rise to further racial tensions in New York State throughout the year (French E6). For

example, three days after the incident, a white teenager was assaulted by a group of Blacks after school in Jamaica, Queens, as they chanted, “This is for Howard Beach” (Hynes and Drury 99). In another part of Queens, in response to Black marches, 10 Whites assaulted two Hispanics, and on the following day, 30 cars of Blacks drove to the place where the incident took place and people shouted, “We shall overcome,” as a clear reminder of the Civil Rights movement anthem (McFadden, “3 Youths” A1; “In 2 Other Assault Cases” B3). Within two weeks after the incident, some 20 other racially or ethnically motivated incidents were reported to the police (Purdum 27). The number of bias murders had dropped by 23% in 1986, but after the Howard Beach incident, this number increased dramatically for a few weeks – the Police Department Bias Incident Investigating Unit reported about 10 incidents per week (McFadden, “Racial Bias Incidents” 32). The number of bias incidents then doubled in New York City and reached 419 in the first 11 months of 1987, compared to 209 for the corresponding period in 1986 (Roberts B4). The incident was so significant in the evolution of race relations in New York City that 10 years later, the paper still referred to the Howard Beach incident as a symbol of racial hatred and “urban bigotry” (Fried, “Mother Still Mourns” B3).

The New York Times kept pointing out the division between Blacks and Whites; the confrontations highlighted that the nation was divided, and racial prejudice was deeply rooted in American minds, as the Kerner Commission had stressed in 1968. The American Congress had asked the Commission to report on the causes of the wave of race riots that had erupted in the 1960s and suggest recommendations to avoid additional conflicts. The Commission had concluded that urban violence was the result of white racism and recommended reforms in housing, education, and social service policies, which would provide better equality of opportunities. No measures were implemented, however, and tensions had kept intensifying.

This backdrop can explain why the incident was so mediatized; Griffith's death appeared as the reflection of the racism that had been rampant in the United States. Ed Koch, in spite of his efforts to show compassion and his calls for tolerance, was shouted down by the black population who accused him of being insensitive to the situation of Blacks in New York City. For example, he had already been blamed by the black community for ignoring their suffering from violence when Willie Turks, a 34-year-old black man, was killed in 1982 and then in 1985 when he supported Bernhard Goetz, a white man, who was charged with shooting four black teenagers who were allegedly robbing him on the subway (Purnick, "A Break with the Past" B1). For their part, Whites blamed him for being too sympathetic to Blacks (Farber B1; Koch A17). The mayor insisted that racism could be found everywhere, and the best way to fight it was to face it and discuss it; thus, to denounce the extension of racism in the city, he likened the situation of Whites going to Harlem at midnight with that of Blacks going to Howard Beach. The residents of Howard Beach still refused to be seen as a racist community, and Blacks maintained that they were the victims of prejudice and that Michael Griffith had died because of the neglect of the American society (Purnick, "Koch, Seeking Racial Talk" A1-B3).

The legacy of the incident was significant. A new coalition of 35 black and white associations was formed to condemn violence and hatred (McFadden, "3 Youths" A1-B4). Programs to foster the improvement of race relations were introduced by black and white leaders. George Russo, an Italian-American lawyer and one of the leaders of the coalition, called for dialogue, and Rev. Irving Bryer, another leader of the coalition and spokesman for the black community, acknowledged that honest people lived in Howard Beach (James 26; Meyers B1; Weinstein 27). Though the incident sharpened race relations, it also promoted the need for prevention through education. It raised race consciousness and simultaneously the will to establish

bridges between communities. One third of the New Yorkers declared to *The New York Times* that they considered that racism was rampant in the city and that the incident could have occurred in their own neighbourhood (Verhovek 1), which showed that race relations were highly stratified and that prejudice was endemic to the social system.

The New York Times endeavoured to explain the situation and pinpoint the causes of hate crimes. In referring to the mayor's denunciation of "Race, Crime, Prejudice and Fear" (Koch A17), the paper linked the living conditions of Blacks and their poverty to the suspicions aroused among Whites. Though admitting that poverty does not cause criminality, the paper implied that Blacks were more likely to be delinquent than Whites, partly from the legacy of slavery, years of oppression and frustration, their lack of good education, well-paid jobs, and their social marginalization. To say that all Blacks are delinquent would be akin to saying that all Italian Americans are associated with the mafia, which the paper explicitly rejected. The fact that the mayor resorted to this comparison and that *The New York Times* cited him is indicative of the tensions between the groups involved in the incident even if, in general, the articles introduced an opposition between Blacks and Whites without mentioning the ethnic origin of the teenagers (Koch A17). For example, a bank guard testified that he had seen a mob of "*white* youths running like a whole posse as they chased a *black* dude" near the pizza restaurant (Fried, "Guard" B28 – italics mine). Similarly, during the trial, the prosecutor recalled that "a gang of *white* teenagers, yelling racial epithets in a night of fists, fear, terror and hatred, chased a *black* man into a 'chasm of death' during an attack on him and two other *black* men in Howard Beach, Queens" (Fried, "Night of Hatred" B3). The comparison established by the mayor, however, directly associates the Italian-American community with the incident.

The divisions of the American society were founded on prejudice, but all Whites were not racists. It is a mistake to generalize, considering it can lead to separatism and extremist attitudes instead of promoting better relations and justice, since prejudice can promote “inflammatory racial protest” (Meyers A27). This is why the paper condemned Sandiford’s reluctance to help the police. Sandiford was not well treated by police officers; hence, he first refused to cooperate with the police though he was a crucial eye-witness, which made the investigation linger. *The New York Times* also supported the decision to call a new prosecutor, Charles Hynes, who was known for his neutrality, honesty, and ability to dispense justice.

The paper presented the incident as a Black vs. White issue. Surprisingly, *The New York Times*, though its view tended to support the hypothesis of a hate crime, hardly referred to the Italian-American origins of the inhabitants of Howard Beach to emphasize the racial motivations of the assault. It gave their names, though, which made obvious their belonging to the Italian-American community: among others, the teenagers were Scott Kern, William Bollander, Jon Lester, Jason Ladone, Michael Pirone, Salvatore De Simone, Thomas Farino, James Povinelli, Thomas Gucciardo, and John Saggese. Their names indicated that their families came from Southern Italy.

During the trial, *The New York Times* reported that in Ozone Park, another Italian-American neighbourhood in Queens, two young men were also charged with racial harassment on the day following the Howard Beach incident; the names of the defendants were Joseph Aprea and Arthur Biazzo. Their Italian-American community membership was not mentioned, but through their names it is clear that it was a confrontation between Blacks and Italian Americans, an echo of the Howard Beach assault (“In 2 Other Assault Cases” B3).

In the meantime, the paper focused on the confusion that characterized the investigation (Verhovek B5), and early in 1987, it devoted a large part of the articles published to the efforts of the two communities to condemn bigotry, racism, and violence. It highlighted the “positive thing in the beating . . . the hope it raised of rejuvenating a multiracial civil rights movement in New York City” (Meyers A27).

The coverage of the paper emphasized the emergence of race consciousness and the need to find a remedy to racial tensions (Davidoff 27). Thus, the question of race relations was turned into a social, political, and urban issue, leading to the establishment of a commission to study hate crimes and disparities in New York State. The commission proposed new programs to fight “the evil of racism” and introduce a new legislation that would impose harsher punishment in cases of bias crimes; such legislation was already being implemented in other states such as Pennsylvania and Maryland (Koch A27; May B1; Schmalz B1-B4).

The legacy of the incident

The trial took on symbolic significance because the message that the judiciary system would deliver would consequently impact the treatment of bias crimes. It is also revealing to recall that a special prosecutor was nominated by the governor to make sure that justice was dispensed fairly. At first, it seemed the investigation had been poorly conducted; Sandiford, in particular, who had been beaten during the incident, was treated as a criminal and suspected of being an assailant by the police, which was pointed out by his lawyers and black leaders, such as Al Sharpton, to stress the existence of prejudices in everyday life and within American institutions. Hence, the judicial and political authorities took unprecedented measures to prepare for and

conduct a trial beyond reproach, one that would be an example of fair justice. This is what Charles Hynes points out in his book: his mission was to respond to the willingness of the governor, the mayor, and the judge to secure a fair trial as they knew that race relations and public order were at stake (21-35). As Governor Cuomo acknowledged, “This is a special episode that has lifted tensions to a special level. It requires a special response” (Hynes and Drury 88). This “special” situation also explains the extensive coverage by *The New York Times*.

After a one-year investigation, the trial took place. The composition of the jury raised the question of its impartiality. The prosecution wanted a few Blacks to sit in the jury to be sure that the victims would be understood; the defence preferred to have Whites to give more chance to the teenagers to be acquitted. Eventually, the jury was multiracial.

In fact, two trials took place. In September 1987, the first trial assessed the responsibility of four of the teenagers for second-degree murder and assault: Scott Kern, Jon Lester, Jason Ladone, and Michael Pirone received sentences that went from 5 to a maximum of 30 years of imprisonment. During the second trial, which was held a few weeks later, the role of the other teenagers was evaluated. They were charged with attempted murder, assault, and inciting riot. The paper pointed out the case of Lester, who was one of the leaders of the party (Fried “Howard Beach Defendant” 1). Judge Demakos, who was in charge of the case, received a considerable number of letters pleading for leniency towards the Howard Beach teenagers. However, he refused to show tolerance towards Jon Lester because the latter had shouted racial insults, brandished a base-ball bat, and attacked Griffith and Sandiford and had expressed “no remorse, no sense of guilt, no shame, no fear.” Lester even shouted in the courtroom that he would be acquitted on appeal. He received a minimum of 10 years of prison before being eligible for parole because, as Judge Demakos stated, “His callousness toward the life of another human being must not go

unpunished.” The insistence of *The New York Times* on this particular case (placed on the front page of the 23 January 1988 issue with the headline, “First of Three Youths to Be Sentenced Is Criticized by Judge for ‘Savageness’ of the Attack” and continued on page 32) highlighted the position of the paper, which supported the judge’s view and was seeking an exemplary sentence to condemn racism.

At the end of the first trial, the black community was partly satisfied by the verdict because the assailants were sentenced to prison, even if some people expected harsher punishment. For example, they had been disappointed by the decision to change the indictment of murder and manslaughter to second-degree murder and assault, which lessened the defendants’ responsibility (Smothers, “Blacks React with Disappointment” B2). For Ed Koch, it was “a reasonable verdict,” and for the governor, “the rule of law operated without fear or favour” (Fried, “3 in Howard Beach Attack Are Guilty” A1). However, in spite of efforts from some community leaders, it is impossible to say that the trial and the resulting sentencing improved the relations between the two groups or solved the problem of prejudice and racial categorization in New York City. Furthermore, for some black leaders, and especially the next mayor, David Dinkins, who was then the Manhattan Borough president, it “had split the city along racial lines” (Hevesi B5). In any case, it meant that everyone had lost something. Griffith was dead, some teenagers were sent to prison, families suffered from disruption, the whole neighbourhood went through trauma, the city experienced another human crisis, and ethnic and racial communities had to face deeper prejudice. For *The New York Times*, what the Americans gained was the awareness of the necessity to reduce violence and improve race relations in the supposedly multicultural, multi-ethnic and multiracial American society. This is one of the reasons why *The New York Times* articles extensively quoted the declarations of the community leaders and the legal figures (judge, prosecutor, and lawyers),

because, as Demakos declared, “The message loud and clear must go forth that racial violence by any person or group, whatever their race, will not be tolerated by a just and civilized society, and that, when it does occur, it must be appropriately punished” (Buder B3).

Joseph Fried, who was one of *The New York Times* journalists who covered most of the incident, delivered a clear message, too, by choosing to extensively cite the witnesses and by regretting that the very end of the trial, the appeal procedure in 1990, was not covered by the popular media, and TV in particular, as if the question of race relations in New York City had become commonplace and deprived of interest (Fried, “Faithful Few” 33).

Conclusion

As stated by the Kerner Commission in 1968, American society was divided: “[The] nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal,” and bias murders such as the incident in Howard Beach in 1986, the killing of Willie Turks in Brooklyn in 1982, and the death of Yssuf Hawkins in Bensonhurst in 1989, are some of the most famous examples of the persistence of racial violence in New York City. These crimes illustrate the recurrent and endemic tensions that reached a new climax in the 1980s due to the social and economic situation that endangered the well-being of the working class, upsetting the Black and Italian-American communities. Some black leaders condemned the Reagan administration for intensifying race tensions, as if Blacks were responsible for the deterioration of the conditions of living of the American population as a whole (Jackson A27). Placing the blame on scapegoats is a characteristic of crises, but in this case, in addition to a difficult social situation that might trigger more tensions,

it is the inherent nature of the racial stratification of the American society that *The New York Times* denounced by covering the Howard Beach incident.

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Notes

[1] http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/Cius_98/98crime/98cius16.pdf, accessed on 27 January 2015.

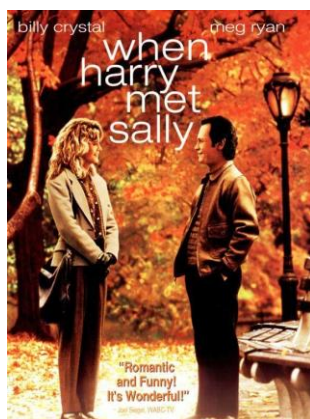
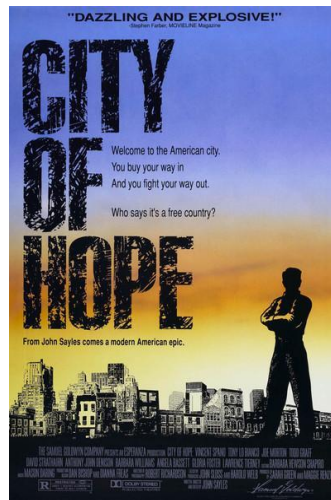
[2] The poverty rate for Blacks nowadays is 27% while it is 10% among Whites. The national rate is 15%. The rate of unemployment for Blacks is 10.4%, and the rate among Whites is 4.7%. The rate for the total population is 5.5%. These figures show the social marginalization of Blacks. See the website of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov, accessed on 19 October 2015.

[3] The Howard Beach incident is referred to 2,091 times in the ProQuest database for *The New York Times*.

WHEN HARRY MET SALLY AND SAMMY AND ROSIE GET LAID:

The U.S. and U.K. City in Thatcher-Reagan Era Movies

Douglas Muzzio



Decent people shouldn't live here. They'd be happier somewhere else
 —the Joker on Gotham City, *Batman*, 1989

The Script

To understand and explain the massive changes that have transformed their cities and, hence, their societies, Americans and Britons have long engaged in public conversations that explicate what is taken to be reality in the form of comprehensible stories. These discourses have often found their way into movies. Movies are, above all, commercial ventures, which consequently means they are designed to attract sufficient audience numbers to generate sizable revenue. Movies, therefore, are compelled to reflect prevailing opinions, attitudes, and beliefs; however, they may not merely mirror their society, but help to shape it by reinforcing, ridiculing, challenging, and ignoring it. Thus, movies help us form our “cognitive maps” of the U.S. and U.K. urban worlds, as Gerald Suttles argues in his book, *The Social Construction of Communities* (22).

When Harry Met Sally is a first take on the representations of the American and British cities in movies between 1980-1991: the Reagan-Thatcher era. (Margaret Thatcher served as British Prime Minister from 1979-1991; Ronald Reagan served as United States President from 1981-1989.) This paper addresses a few questions, most prominently: What were the dominant cinematic images and representations of U.S. and U.K. cities as they were projected in the 1980s? Other important questions—only cursorily addressed here—include: Were these images and representations challenged and/or displaced? What have been the commonalities and divergences in the projection of American and British cities over time and across genres? Are the images and representations evident in American and British films consistent with those described in the scholarly literature and commentary about the “objective” state of the city (that is, the reel vs. the real U.S. and U.K. city)?

This paper first looks at movies as cultural texts in larger discourses and narratives about the city in the United States and Great Britain. It then turns briefly to the “real” U.S. and U.K.

cities and then to their reel counterparts. The next sections examine several diverse and often divergent images and representations of the U.S. and U.K. city. The essay fades out by offering some commentary, as well as a preview of possible sequels.

Cities in the Movies/Movies in the City

Motion pictures are cultural texts that in some way reflect their time and place. Yet, American and British movies not only “reflect” their societies; they also “actively explain and interpret the way in which the world is to be perceived and understood,” as Hill explains in his book, *Sex, Class, and Realism* (204; see also Durgnat 1970). In their book, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text & Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, Barnes and Duncan state that movies as texts are parts of larger, even more open-ended narratives (2-8). Images of both the real and reel U.S. and U.K. cities conflict; dominant images are challenged, and some are displaced.

Movies have authentically reproduced the visual and aural features of the American and British cities. They have also depicted the interplay between character and environment and between the protagonists of the fiction on a screen and the historical conditions of the places they inhabit. Cinematic cityscapes are narrative spaces in which the protagonists act out the plot—whether the New York of *When Harry Met Sally*, the London of *The Long Good Friday* and of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, or the fictional urban spaces of *Batman* and *Blade Runner*. Nonetheless, cityscapes are not neutral. Cityscapes—both reel and real—structure and constrain; they present opportunities and impose costs.

The Real U.S. and U.K. City

How real are these cinematic images? In *British Cinema: Past and Present*, Ashby and Higson argue that our perception of realism depends not only on “our knowledge of everyday life,” but also “our awareness of prevailing canons of realism” (255). Hill further argues, “Realism, no

less than any type of art, depends on conventions, conventions which...have successfully achieved the status of being accepted as ‘realistic’” (Hill, qtd. in Landy 5). Realism is a product of discourses and narratives.

American and British city movies, like all movies, achieve the appearance of reality to the extent that they conform to our own conceptions, which are formed in some measure by movies themselves. There is an element of self-validation, even circularity. How and why a “real” space is used for a feature film is determined by a complex web of aesthetics, ideology, and economics.

The 1980s were a time of wrenching change for both American and British cities, such as Detroit, Cleveland, Manchester, and Liverpool, considering that old industrial or transportation centers underwent highly visible declines and were accompanied by predictable increases in poverty, crime, and dependency. Meanwhile, other cities thrived, most prominently in Sunbelt America and the south of Britain. The global cities, New York, Los Angeles, and London, proved magnets for international capital, labor, and tourism.

In this period, conservatives led both nations. Although they were personal friends, Reagan and Thatcher could hardly have been more different. Genial and optimistic, Reagan—a former Hollywood actor—was widely popular and is generally credited with helping to dispel the defeatist miasma of the Carter years.

Thatcher, on the other hand, was aggressively abrasive. Seen as representing the triumph of the petit bourgeois mentality and its callous contempt for the poor and the alienated, she provoked visceral hatred among many on the Left. In addition to ideology, filmmakers had more mundane reasons for their opposition: the 1984 Films Bill abolished the 1947 Eady Levy, a law that had distributed a percentage of box-office receipts of British-made films to filmmakers; the government provided no replacement for these lost revenues. The Thatcher government also

abolished a 25-percent tax-break for investment in film production and privatized the National Film Finance Corporation, eliminating any direct government involvement with movie production. Perhaps because of this hostility between the government and the film industry, the 1980s saw a renaissance in British filmmaking, with more British productions or co-productions than at any time since the 1950s. Many of these films were reactions to Thatcher's policies, the culture she helped create, and the ethos she espoused and fostered.

The Reel U.S. And U.K City

During the eighties, hundreds of motion pictures depicted representations of American and British cities and city life. The choice of movies to be analyzed in this essay and the images and representations to be (re)constructed is thus necessarily selective and indeed arbitrary, but hopefully it is appropriately and evocatively so. The films discussed in this paper include: *Fort Apache*, *The Bronx* (Petrie, 1980), *The Long Good Friday* (Mackenzie, 1981), *City of Hope* (Sayles, 1991), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Frears, 1986), *When Harry Met Sally* (Jewison, 1987), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Frears, 1987), *Letter to Brezhnev* (Bernard, 1985), *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), and *Batman* (Burton, 1989). These films were generally critical or popular successes and/or innovative or illustrative of a genre or "auteur." That is, they were among the highest-grossing movies of the year either in the U.S. or the U.K., were nominated or won major awards, or have subsequently been accorded a place of honor by serious critics and commentators. Although *City of Hope* is neither a box-office hit nor a major-award winner/nominee, it is widely recognized by U.S. urbanists as the best-ever American city movie.

The movies are also mainly "city-centered." The city actively participates in shaping character and plot, and are not merely "city-set"—in which the substitution of another locale would alter only the details (arguably in *When Harry Met Sally* and *Moonstruck*).

Images/Representations of the Reel U.S. and U.K. City

A reconnoitering of the U.S. and British cinematic cityscapes during the 1980s suggests several images and representations. Some reflect similar perceptions, interpretations, and projections of American and British cities, while others diverge. The images and representations include: a multicultural city/boiling pot, which can be found in *Sammy and Rosie* and *Do the Right Thing*; an underclass haunt, found in *Fort Apache, The Bronx*; an entrepreneurial city, found in *The Long Good Friday* and *City of Hope*; and, particularly in the U.S., Hobbesian dystopias and apocalyptic places, which are represented in *Batman* and *Blade Runner*.

City as Underclass Haunt: *Fort Apache, The Bronx* www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrcVKWm7vog (12-4:26)

Because the story involves police work it does not deal with the law abiding members of the community nor does it dramatize the efforts of the individuals and groups who are struggling to turn the Bronx around.

Prologue, *Fort Apache, The Bronx*, 1980

A drugged-out, Black, transvestite prostitute strolls up to an NYPD patrol car and calmly executes two rookie cops. The denizens of the neighborhood flock to the car and pick through it and the police officers' personal belongings. So opens *Fort Apache, The Bronx*—the first cinematic projection of the 1980s U.S. city. This city is an urban nightmare: a desolate, dangerous—indeed murderous—place. The images of the Bronx conjure up Canto 3 in Dante's *Inferno*: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter these gates."

During the credits, the camera pans the Bronx cityscape: its smokestacks and tenements, with its rubble-filled lots and its graffiti-covered subway cars, contrasts its desolation with the majesty of Manhattan (the two World Trade Center towers) in the distance.

The movie is the fictional account of the experiences of two former New York City cops assigned to the Bronx's 41st precinct during the 1970s. The precinct is known as "Fort Apache" because it is an

outpost of law in hostile territory. When the film was shot, the real Bronx was considered “a household synonym for abandonment, hellish crime, devastation, terminal urban disease and . . . saturation bombing” (Schanberg, 1981:31). At the time, the Bronx was also the site where presidential candidate Jimmy Carter addressed America’s “urban crisis” during the 1976 U.S. presidential campaign. Additionally, Jonathan Mahler notes in his book, *Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx Is Burning: 1977, Baseball, Politics, and the Battle for the Soul of a City*, that in October 1977, during the second game of baseball’s World Series, sportscaster Howard Cosell looked out at a burning apartment building and declared, “Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bronx is burning”. By 1980, the 41st had become another U.S. Western metaphor—Little House on the Prairie—since two-thirds of the residents of the precinct had fled and crime had fallen, according to Joel Rose in “On Location: ‘Fort Apache,’ A War Zone in the Bronx” (Rose).

The reel city met the real one when a bitter controversy arose because community activists got a copy of the film’s shooting script. South Bronx civic leaders, clerics, and politicians protested the film’s violence and its failure to portray any positive Spanish-speaking or Black characters. In response to such intense pressure, the filmmakers added the prologue noted above.

Fort Apache was the earliest of the “underclass” movies of the 1980s and 1990s. During the eighties, the emergence of an “underclass” in American cities became the subject of widespread interest and intense controversy among academics, minority-group leaders, foundations, journalists, and public officials (e.g. Katz, 1993; Wilson, 1987; see Muzzio, 1989, 1983 for reviews). This underclass was seen to be the most serious problem facing American cities, or as the Chicago Tribune reports, the “American millstone” (*Chicago Tribune*).

Entrepreneurial/Thatcherite City: *The Long Good Friday*,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=yni9G10rNjU (:30-3:34)

Exterior. Yacht deck. Day.

The screen outlined by Tower Bridge as the yacht cruises away from it, centre of

the river, Harold's head fills the screen.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm not a politician...I'm a businessman...with a sense of history. And I'm also a Londoner...and today is a day of great historical significance for London.

Our country's not an island any more...We're a leading European state. And I believe...that this is the decade in which London will become...Europe's capital. Having cleared away, the out dated...

We've got mile after mile, acre after acre of land...for our future prosperity. No other city in the world...has got right in its centre...such an opportunity for profitable progress.

—Original screenplay, Barrie Keefe, *The Long Good Friday*, 1979/1984

In the capitalist London of the late 1970s, East End gangster Harold Shand is on the verge of closing a deal with American-organized criminals to invest in a major Thames development—a transformation of the Docklands, including a stadium for the 1988 Olympics. As his yacht sails up the Thames, Shand, framed by the iconic Tower Bridge (signaling the “old” London), sees the renaissance of a global capital.

Life is good for Shand. He lives in a penthouse, anchors a world-class yacht on the Thames, hobnobs with pols, puts together deals, and sees himself as the chief architect of a resurgent England in the newly created European common market. He's an East End boy made good. He is also volatile, ruthless, sadistic, and a sociopathic killer—a gangster worthy of 1930s Warner Brothers.

While away in New York with American mobsters setting up a deal to redevelop the Docklands, Shand's associates become involved with the shady activities of a local politician and a developer, ultimately involving the IRA. He invites his American “investors” to see for themselves the vast potential of developing the deserted wastes of East London; however, just as he launches his charm offensive, his empire comes under attack by an unknown foe with even more ferocity and determination than he has.

Over the course of one Easter weekend, Harold's dream and world are shattered: his sidekick, Colin, is stabbed in a swimming pool changing room; a bomb rips through his lovingly restored pub, and another decimates his Rolls Royce, which was intended for his mother, but kills his driver; and an unexploded device is found in his Mayfair casino. Growing increasingly jittery because of the murderous pyrotechnics, the American Mafiosi call off the deal.

During the 1980s, cities in the U.S. and U.K. underwent profound and wrenching transitions, with many experiencing deindustrialization and depopulation. In response, government officials and private interests sought to transform these cities into service centers, cultural destinations, and finance foci in an increasingly interdependent global economy.

Filmed in 1979 but released in 1981, *The Long Good Friday* anticipated the entrepreneurial policies of the Thatcher government, the growing internationalization of the British economy and the economic redevelopment of the Docklands. *The Long Good Friday* is a "state of Britain" film, reflecting the emergent enterprise-culture of the 1980s. Shand is an entrepreneurial archetype for Thatcher's Britain.

British gangster cinema of the 1980s and 1990s reflects the struggle between the "old" and "new" Britain and Britons' relationship to an emerging post-industrial globalized order. Moreover, the boundaries between the underworld of organized crime and criminality and mainstream society, and between the capitalist and the gangster, became increasingly blurred, just as they did in the movie houses, as Monk reports in his work, "From Underworld to Underclass: Crime and British Cinema in the 1990s" (175).

Entrepreneurial City/Corrupt City: *City Of Hope*

www.imdb.com/title/tt0101588/?ref_ext_shr_eml_vi#lb-vi2545811737

I have fought at the municipal level to provide corporate tax incentives, to lure industry back to the city. I have fought at the state and federal levels to fund roads, light streets, provide police and fire protection. I have

fought against environmental alarmists and special interest groups that would block important developments [to] put this city back on the map [and to] create a city of the future, a city on the move, a city of hope.

Mayor, *City of Hope*, John Sayles, 1991

Hudson City—a fictional Northern New Jersey city—is notorious for disinvestment, de-industrialization, and its consequences: unemployment, drug abuse, street crime, racial and ethnic animus, poor schools, and a poverty that threatens to poison the future. The film appeared when U.S. cities—and their multitudinous and various needs and concerns—had virtually dropped off the national political agenda in the Reagan years.

The 1991 film *City of Hope*, written and directed by John Sayles, revolves around efforts to build a mammoth office building/housing complex, financed in part by Japanese investors. The problem is that low-income housing occupies the preferred site. Attempts are made to drive the tenants away: the heat, water, and maintenance are cut off, but it is to no avail. With the Japanese ready to abandon the deal, a crooked district attorney, who seeks substantial contributions from the investors, blackmails a corrupt mayor to clear the site once and for all. The mayor's assistant pressures the apartments' developer (his brother) to "take care of things." The buildings are torched, therefore killing an infant and his mother. The obstacle has been removed.

City of Hope dissects the city's governing regime—the interconnected public and private elites that shape its economic development. The public actors (office-holders and the declining White-ethnic party machine) work with private actors (property entrepreneurs, local investors, and, less visibly, overseas investors and the Mob), with no single interest capable of succeeding on its own. For example, the developer laments, "All my life I thought I was the one in control . . . well, I'm not in control of a damn thing." The financiers, dependent upon the party machine to manipulate government, exploit the political ambitions of the local district attorney to ensure that the machine maintains stable working relationships. Government needs the developers and

financiers to resurrect the city, create jobs, generate taxes, and provide the graft that sustains the political apparatus. Its justification is the belief that only economic development can ameliorate urban problems, and that only by offering appropriate inducements to developers and financiers will this development take place.

The mayor awards contracts, enforces regulations, and distributes financial assistance in exchange for concessions (legal and otherwise) to those upon whom he depends: large-parcel landowners, local developers, and the police. He withholds public services from the uncooperative, such as slum residents who refuse to make room for the developers. “If everybody just stands in line like good little soldiers, then good things can happen to all of us,” he states. The private actors, who require government assistance to achieve their goals, subscribe to the same self-serving belief. While property entrepreneurs, investors, and local political leaders are the most powerful actors in the growth machine, others try to influence the development process by entering the decision-making arena.

The mayor and the city council leader exploit the racist fears of their constituents to defeat redistributive policies. Italians control construction jobs, have ethnically based networks for securing patronage jobs, and vote heavily and as a bloc. The stubborn and pervasive ethnic and racial rivalries teach the minorities to aim no higher than displacing the ethnics; moreover, the formerly principled Black councilman wants only a place for himself and his followers. His old hope that minorities would coalesce to pursue justice falters when events teach him that they “can’t get it together, can’t work together.”

The players may change as one group supersedes another, but the game will stay the same, as the movie sadly observes. As an Italian policeman observes, “Before, the Italians lived in the slums, it was the Irish who owned City Hall. Someday, the Blacks will be in control. The Hispanics

will be fighting them for crumbs.”

City of Hope ends with a lunatic: Sayles’ demented, one-man Greek chorus, shouting repeatedly on an empty street, “We need help over here!”

Immigrant/Entrepreneurial City: *My Beautiful Laundrette*

Ext. Outside a large detached house. Day

Cherry and Salim walk toward the house. It is a large falling-down place, in South London. It’s quiet at the moment – early morning – but the ground floor windows are boarded up.

On the boarded up windows is painted: “Your greed will be the death of us all” and “We will defeat the running wogs of capitalism” and “Opium is the opium of the unemployed.”

-- Shooting script, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Hanif Kureishi, 1985

My Beautiful Laundrette portrays life in South London among Pakistani immigrants and features gay Pakistanis and immigrant entrepreneurship in the British city. The main characters are successful businessmen, fully imbued with Thatcher’s entrepreneurial Britain, and are devoted to making money both legally and illegally. One proclaims: “There’s no race question in the new enterprise-culture” (qtd in Chibnall and Murphy, p. 162). London is both a place of economic opportunity and freedom (e.g. the “freedom” to be gay), and of conflict and violence. Omar, a young, unemployed British-Pakistani, cares for his ailing, alcoholic, socialist father in a decaying South London ground-floor flat overlooking a crumbling rail track. His father urges him to go to college, but in the meantime, he gets him a job washing cars in his Uncle Nasser's garage. At his uncle's garage, Nasser is impressed by Omar's business sense and ambition and gives him the responsibility of running his dilapidated laundrette.

One evening, Omar is invited to Nasser's house to meet his family and colleagues, and Omar is propositioned by one of his daughters, Tania. At the end of the evening, Omar gives a drunken Salim and his wife a lift home. On the way, they are subjected to a volley of verbal and

physical abuse by a gang of racist youths. One of the gang members is Johnny, an old school-friend of Omar's and an ex-National Front member.

Johnny agrees to help Omar renovate the laundrette and Omar, in need of further funds to finance the laundrette, agrees to pick up some drugs for Salim; however, Omar and Johnny decide to keep the drugs to sell.

Meanwhile, Nasser agrees to let Johnny into the business if he helps him evict some unwanted tenants. Johnny and Omar begin working in the laundrette and become lovers. Soon enough, Johnny discovers members of the gang vandalizing the laundrette dustbins. They demand to know why Johnny has betrayed them by working for Omar and his family. With Johnny's help, Nasser evicts a West-Indian poet from one of his properties and offers the room to Johnny, which he takes.

At "Powders" laundrette's grand opening, Salim, who has realized that Powders has been financed by the missing drugs, threatens Omar with closure of the laundrette if he does not pay him back. But a few days later, when Omar offers Salim an installment of his debt, Salim tells him that he never really wanted the money; rather, he wanted to teach him a lesson.

Congregating at the laundrette, Johnny's old gang wait for the opportunity to smash up Salim's car. They beat him up, and when Johnny comes to Salim's aid, they attack him, too. When Omar arrives, a gang member throws a lump of wood through the window of the laundrette. The gang flee at the sound of police sirens, and Omar dresses Johnny's wounds in the laundrette's back office.

Boiling Pot British-Style: *Sammy And Rosie Get Laid*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=2s-bEGB0P7s

Ext. Street. Night.

...There is much running about in the street. The street is covered in debris. RAFI stops by the car that ROSIE saw in flames. It is all burnt out now but little flames

unnaturally flicker all over it.

RAFI My God, I can't understand it, why you ever live here?

SAMMY It's cosmopolitan, Pop. And cheap. Come on. Let's go, eh? Please.

RAFI No, I want to see this....

SAMMY Leonardo Da Vinci would have lived in the inner city.

RAFI You know that for certain, do you?

SAMMY Yes, because the city is a mass of fascination.

*-Hanif Kureshi, shooting script, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, 1987*

The London of the 1987 film, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, is a place of freedom, license, deprivation, and marginality. The movie portrays the estranged son of a prominent Pakistani (Sammy), his feminist social-worker wife (Rosie), and their open marriage in London. The film opens with a shot of an urban wasteland, but quickly turns to the couple's hedonistic life. Their life is altered when a race riot provoked by police brutality strikes their neighborhood, and Sammy's father shows up.

Sammy had resented his father for abandoning his mother, but it soon becomes clear that his father is also implicated in colonial atrocities back home. Eventually, tormented by his guilt and by Sammy's continued rejection, the father hangs himself in his son's apartment, and Sammy and Rosie then reunite.

At the time, the movie drew attention mainly for its multiple sexual couplings, but its point seems to be not prurience, but rather a comment on the shallowness and alienation that tar opponents of Thatcher's Britain. Further scenes of rioting, homeless encampments, and police killings make it clear that the victims of this pernicious congeries of policies and values extend far beyond Sammy and Rosie's middle class. The opening wasteland scene is revisited, and this time, developers evict squatters from the place.

There are generational differences between immigrants and second-generation children. Sammy's immigrant father tells his son that he should leave London and "come home." But Sammy declaims, "I am home, Pop. This is the bosom" (qtd. in Kureshi 138 and Frears 138).

Hanif Kureishi, the screenwriter of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* and *My Beautiful Laundrette*, depicts a London (and, hence, a Britain) that is both familiar and unknown. Kureishi aimed to “explor[e] . . . areas of British life not touched on before” reflecting his and other filmmakers’ “cultural interest in marginalized and excluded groups” (qtd. in Kureishi).

Boiling Pot American Style: *Do The Right Thing*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JonUchLUkac (1:00:16-43; 2:02:01-2:07:35)

RACIAL SLUR MONTAGE

MOOKIE Dago, wop, garlic-breath, guinea, pizza-slinging, spaghetti-bending, Vic Damone, Perry Como, Luciano Pavarotti, Sole Mio, non-singing motherfucker.

PINO You gold-teeth, gold-chain-wearing, fried-chicken-and-biscuit-eatin', monkey, ape, baboon, big thigh, fast-running, three-hundred-sixty-degree-basketball-dunking spade. Moulan Yan.

STEVIE You slant-eyed, me-no-speak-American, own every fruit and vegetable stand in New York, Reverend Moon, Summer Olympics '88, Korean kick-boxing bastard.

OFFICER LONG Goya bean-eating, fifteen in a car, thirty in an apartment, pointed shoes, red-wearing, Menudo, meda-meda Puerto Rican cocksucker.

KOREAN CLERK It's cheap, I got a good price for you, Mayor Koch, "How I'm doing," chocolate-egg-cream-drinking, bagel and lox, B'nai B'rith asshole.

...

SLOW MOTION

Mookie hurls the garbage can through the plate glass window of Sal's Famous Pizzeria. That's it. All hell breaks loose. The dam has been unplugged, broke. The rage of a people has been unleashed, a fury. A lone garbage can thrown through the air has released a tidal wave of frustration.

ANGLE--STREET

Da Mayor pushes Sal, Vito, and Pino out of the way as the mob storms into Sal's Famous Pizzeria.

INT: SAL'S FAMOUS PIZZERIA--NIGHT

The people rush into Sal's Famous Pizzeria, tearing it up.

--Shooting script, *Do the Right Thing*, Spike Lee, 1989

Spike Lee's ground-breaking *Do the Right Thing* was released in 1989, a time of tremendous racial tension in New York, and was immediately criticized for being incendiary. Lee hoped the film would help defeat the mayor, Edward I. Koch, who was then running for re-election, and explained that he was merely speaking the truth (Klein 55, 1989; Lee, 1989).

On the very hottest day of the summer, an African American man is killed by the police and an Italian American's pizzeria is torched by members of the Black and Latino community. Class discrimination and conflicting racial allegiances of generally symbiotic neighbors on the block are the driving force behind these acts of violence. The "different ethnic groups," according to Lee, "reflect the city as a whole" (qtd in Emery 145). The film owes its great strength to the ambivalence of the characters' relations with each other. Lee does not pretend that all these people are alike despite their different colored skins, nor does he paint them as good guys and bad guys. Instead, his characters, like actual human beings, are marked by a jumble of feelings and beliefs. They know each other, accept each other's differences, and experience a sense of community. Yet, they are also suspicious of each other, and are often governed by stereotypes.

Lee presents a portrait of racism, but the racism is not the stereotypical white-toward-black variety, but a free-floating, vitriolic, interethnic, and interracial animosity, which explodes in his "racial slur montage." In the montage, several characters face the camera in turn and spew out racial obscenities—Blacks slam Italians, Italians slam Blacks, Latinos slam Koreans, Whites slam Latinos, Koreans slam Jews.

Radio Raheem is killed by a white policeman using a chokehold. (Like *Fort Apache*, there are eerie resonances to the current day. For example, people witnessed the death of Eric Garner in NYC almost literally at the hands of the police.) On both sides of the Atlantic, in *Sammy and Rosie* and *Do the Right Thing*, pent-up rage explodes in rioting, looting, and arson, just as it did in Miami

in 1980 and Toxteth, Liverpool in July of the following year.

Lee contended that his film explored what he called the “black underclass,” who live “in the bowels of the socioeconomic system” (Lee 109). Indeed, the block where the entire film was shot—Stuyvesant Street between Lexington and Quincy Avenues in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn—was cleared out of drug dealers (who moved around the corner), and had two handy, empty lots where sets could be constructed. An abandoned building that was being used as a crack house was boarded up and another turned into a location site, according to Lee (108). Poverty, unemployment, or drug abuse does not devastate Lee’s street. In fact, until the final outburst, the site oddly echoes the shtetl of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Do the Right Thing’s enormous success opened the door for other young African American directors, and they, more so than Lee, focused on the underclass in narratives of criminals, addicts, and unwed mothers in an environment where crime, drugs, unemployment, welfare dependency, and indiscriminate violence are the realities of daily life.

City As Prison/City Of No Hope: Letter To Brezhnev
www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZXAUcSicqI (51:56-53:43)

Reporter; Surely you must feel strange to be leaving home and surroundings, going to a country with food shortages and lack of freedom...
Elaine: Just take a walk into any back kitchen around here and you’ll find soon food shortages.... Going to live in Russia can’t be any worse than living here. Why try to discourage me from escaping.

In the de-industrialized, post-Toxteth-Riots Liverpool, Elaine is on the dole with few prospects and wants something more: love. Teresa, whose job in a chicken plant is “fucking disgusting,” doesn’t even aspire to the love that Elaine desires. An evening’s liaison with a lad picked up in a bar or dance club will do. To Liverpudlians of the mid-1980s, booze and an evening of lovemaking is the “local entertainment.” It is “what happens when you have to give up.” Theresa declaims, “We’re not prostitutes, you know. You know what we are. Desperate. Fucking

desperate.” Though not criminals, they are not above lifting the wallet of an evening’s companion.

The Merseyside pair pick up two Russian sailors in a disco. While Teresa gets the good time she sought, Elaine finds love after a chaste evening with Peter, who must go back to the Soviet Union the next morning. Weeks later, lovesick Elaine writes the Soviet premier for permission to come to Peter. Shockingly, she receives a one-way plane ticket to Moscow. British Embassy staff, and then a reporter “of filth and titillation,” try to dissuade her from leaving. Yet, Elaine needs to escape. Liverpool is a prison. She is often filmed through a wire fence that keeps her trapped.

This despondency and gloom pervade *Letter to Brezhnev* as did a 1980s Liverpool that was blighted by unemployment and industrial decline, or as expressed in the movie, “An unflinching portrayal of a post-industrial city on the margins of Thatcher’s Britain” (*Letter to Brezhnev*). As David Byrne explains in his work, “The City,” by the mid-1980s, Liverpool had lost its global place in shipping, insurance, and banking.

The movie was shot in Liverpool. The tracking shots, which are washed out of color, show a drab, decaying city. The on-location shooting establishes the narrative frame of the movie. Viewing his city, a taxi driver remarks in disgust: “Just look at this city. Whoever did the planning for all this wants his balls roasted.”

The movie was made by a group of unemployed friends from Liverpool on a tiny budget. Its production designer explained the portrayal of Liverpool and its inhabitants by saying, “By the time that Mrs. Thatcher inherited the reins of power, the whole population of Liverpool was on the front pages. Riots, unemployment, doom, gloom, and despondency were upon us” (qtd. in Lay 92).

Dystopic City: Blade Runner

(:00-2:20)

A new life awaits you in the off-world colonies. The chance to begin again in a golden land of opportunity and adventure.

-advertisement offering escape from L.A., *Blade Runner*, 1982

In 2019, Los Angeles is hellish, claustrophobic, dark, and polluted, with a continual drenching rainfall in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982). As Pauline Kael describes in her article, "Batman: The Movie: The City Gone Psycho," it is a "grimy, retrograde future—the future as a black market, made up of scrambled, sordid aspects of the present" (Kael). Indeed, the cinematic city of the future has long been even bleaker than the ones of the present and the past, as previously explained in Muzzio's "Decent People Shouldn't Live Here: The American City in Cinema" (Kael, 1994).

Blade Runner is the "quintessential skewed vision of contemporary Los Angeles on film," (Kael, 1994) even though it was shot in Britain for the most part. It is a film of dread, tension, angst, anger, and grief. The trashing of Los Angeles in *Blade Runner* and other films of the 1980s and 1990s is significant since Los Angeles had supplanted New York City as the dream of the future. With the destruction of L.A. as popular culture's promised land, no other city has taken its place, which perhaps suggests the demise of the venerable dream of the city as promised land.

In 2019, L.A. nature has gone berserk, deluging the teeming city with an almost constant downpour. Smoke and fog add to the fumigated congestion. There are immense flying billboards, multi-racial medieval street life, open markets and open sewers, grungy soda bars, dwarf scavengers, and open bonfires. *Blade Runner's* visual language is part *film noir* and part jungle—given the wet, black streets, the steam, the chiaroscuro, the random craziness in the background. The soundtrack throbs with eerie sounds, echoes, pounding pistons, and the noises of flying vehicles like reincarnated pterodactyls shuttling through the poisonous atmosphere.

The city is a Third World bazaar: it is a mixture of races—primarily Asians and Mexicans (curiously, no Blacks)—and of cultures and languages. The *lingua franca* of the streets is, according to the protagonist's voiceover: "Cityspeak . . . gutter talk . . . a mishmash of Japanese,

Spanish, German, what have you." Immense, flying billboards flash images of Asian beauties and advertisements for the "Off-World Colonies"—a type of suburbanization that echoes the reasons for the migration to California.

As David Rieff explains in his book, *Los Angeles: Capital of the Third World*, *Blade Runner* quickly became (and remains) a part of the everyday parlance of Los Angeles. He states, "All someone had to do was mention it, and you immediately knew where they stood about the future of the city" (133). *Blade Runner* became such a commonplace metaphor for the future of Los Angeles that in his epilogue to the "L.A. 2000: A City for the Future" report, Kevin Starr did not feel the need to explain its origin when he warned of "the *Blade Runner* scenario," which he described as "the fusion of individual cultures into a demotic polyglotism ominous with unresolved hostilities" (qtd. in Rieff 133).

Dystopic City: Decent People Shouldn't Live There: *Batman*,
(2:30-4:30; 7:01-8:22)

"Hell has erupted through the pavements and carried on growing"
-first line of Tim Burton script for *Batman*, 1989

Benedict Nightingale describes Gotham City as "a stygian Babylon of emaciated alleys and big, bruising towers, all murk, sleaze and psychopathic architecture" in "Batman Prowls a Gotham Drawn from the Absurd" (Nightingale, 1989). In "The Murk in the Myth," Richard Corliss writes, "Despite being shot on a studio backlot [Gotham City] is literally another character in the script. It has the demeaning presence of German Expressionism and fascist architecture, staring down at the citizens." The Wagnerian score intensifies the oppressive gloom.

The movie's opening shot of Gotham City presents a dark, smoggy wasteland. As described in *Roger Ebert's Movie Home Companion*, it is a "nightmare version of megalopolis, an urban landscape without sun, seen through a smog of pollutants and despair" (54). Ebert later explains

that at street level, “gray and anonymous people scurry fearfully through the shadows” (54). Gotham City is a “city gone psycho” and “the brutal city where crime festers—a city of alleys, not avenues,” to Pauline Kael. (83).

The city's politics are corrupt; its elected officials do the bidding of criminal “Boss” Carl Grissom. As Grissom's chief henchman, Jack Napier (later the Joker), watches a candidate for district attorney on TV promise to make Gotham City safe for decent people. He sardonically cracks, “Decent people shouldn't live here. They'd be happier somewhere else.”

Gotham City must cancel its two-hundredth anniversary because the streets are not safe enough to hold the celebration.

City As Romantic Place: *When Harry Met Sally*
(:08-2:16)

Sally longs to escape from Chicago and go to New York. But Harry, a longtime friend, warns her:

Suppose nothing happens to you. Suppose you live there [New York] your whole life and nothing happens. You never meet anyone, you never become anything and finally you die one of those New York deaths where nobody notices for two weeks until the smell drifts out into the hallway.

- Screenplay, *When Harry Met Sally*, Nora Ephron, 1990

Despite the wise-guy New Yorker's quip about his city, New York is among movies' most romantic places. The movie is a postcard to New York, reminiscent of Woody Allen's elegiac montage that opens *Manhattan* (1979). The pair strolls through Central Park, visits the Metropolitan Museum of Art, wanders through Washington Square Arch in Greenwich Village, and eats at the classic Lower East Side Jewish deli, Katz's.

Here, New York City is a set on which Harry and Sally act out the plot. The movie could have taken place in any number of cities, or even a suburb or small town, without fundamentally affecting the larger “message” of the film, which ostensibly rests on the cosmic question as to

whether a man and a woman can hold sex at bay and remain friends. After following the pair over several years, during which they drift apart and eventually reunite, the movie's answer appears to be "no."

But what a beautiful set.

City as Romantic Place: Moonstruck

(opening credits)

...

*When a moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie. That's amore
When the world seems to shine like you've had too much wine. That's amore*

...

*When a moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie. That's amore
When the world seems to shine like you've had too much wine. That's amore*

...

*When the stars make you drool just like a pasta fazool. That's amore
(When you dance down the street with a cloud at your feet
You're in love*

When you walk in a dream but you know you're not dreaming signore

...

That's amore

Amore, that's amore

You can find *amore* here in New York City—as you can in Napoli—as Dean Martin croons during the opening credits. The iconic Brooklyn Bridge connects the grandeur of Manhattan with the ethnic neighborhoods of Brooklyn, from Lincoln Center to the Grand Ticino restaurant in Brooklyn. Truly, a bridge across cultures.

Perhaps because the broadly stereotypical Italian characters resonated with general audiences, the movie was a big commercial success. Certainly, its urban setting, with its exaggerated accents and ersatz ethnic flavorings, was essential to its appeal.

Closing Takes/Possible Sequels

The dominant images and representations of the U.S. and U.K. cities during the 1980s were downbeat, particularly so in U.S. movies. They were almost irrespective of genre, location, and

director, and did not consider whether the audience was mass or niche. However, they were not downbeat in the U.S romantic comedies like *When Harry Met Sally* and *Moonstruck*; these movies were “city-set.” The city was essentially a rich, recognized, but ultimately replaceable locale, and was not an actor in the story in its own right.

Why the negative projection of the reel U.S. and U.K. city? In the United States, the trauma of the innumerable urban riots of the 60s (repeated in Miami in the 80s) fundamentally changed the way cities were viewed. In Great Britain, cities also burned, considering it was the site of ethnic and racial civil disorder. During the Reagan-Thatcher years of the 1980s, both U.S. and U.K. cities seemed the most dangerous above all.

American and British cities in the Reagan-Thatcher years—both real and reel—are complex and paradoxical. In *The American City: A Sourcebook of Urban Imagery*,” Anselm Strauss states that the city in both countries (and elsewhere) has often been summed up in metaphor, analogy, or synecdoche (Strauss, 1968). The number of “city as” metaphors is large.

This paper suggests seven metaphors: underclass haunt (*Fort Apache, The Bronx*); entrepreneurial/postindustrial city (*Long Good Friday, City of Hope, My Beautiful Laundrette*); boiling pot (*Sammy and Rosie Get Laid, Do the Right Thing*); prison, retrograde future (*Blade Runner*); and romantic place (*When Harry Met Sally, Moonstruck, Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*).

When Harry Met Sally is a first cut at an understanding of the images and representations of the American and British city in the 1980s and 1990s. It is meant to be evocative, but in no way exhaustive, given the relatively few movies focused here. Any sequel would include *Witness*, the 1985 film directed by Peter Weir. It is a vivid expression of country-versus-city meme that has characterized motion pictures from their birth and in the United States from before it came to be.

Other cinematographic cities that appear as metaphors themselves can be found in *Married*

to the Mob (Demme, 1988), and *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Seidelman 1985), where one escapes to/from the city; in *Working Girl* (Nichols, 1988), where there are two cities, the one of success and the one of unimportance; the city in *Q&A* (Lumet, 1990), *Prince of the City* (Lumet, 1981) *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (Greenway, 1989), and *Mona Lisa* (Jordan 1986), where it is a land of crime and gangsters; and, finally, the city in *Brazil* (Gilliam, 1985), where the city is dystopian.

Finally, with a huge domestic market and unparalleled international marketing, the American film industry far outstripped the British in sheer output of movies, including city movies. Was the United States such a cinematic powerhouse that it influenced Britons' cinematic images of their own cities? Colin McArthur, author of "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls: Tracking the Elusive Cinematic City," would argue the cinematic representation of geographical space, both urban and non-urban, has been overwhelmingly derived from Hollywood films (33).

Credits

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JAMES BARRY'S COMPULSION FOR ANTIQUITY

Daniele Niedda

Northrop Frye subscribed to William Blake's view that the Christian Bible was the great code of Western art. That classical antiquity formed the major bridge across Western cultures well into the nineteenth century hardly requires a similarly strong endorsement. This was certainly the case throughout the eighteenth century, particularly the period during which the Irish painter James Barry (1741-1806) was active. Not only was Latin the *lingua franca* of the Republic of Letters and spoken by the international elites of scholars and literati, but also classical antiquity provided a shared encyclopedia, comprising stories, ideas, principles and ethics. I argue that classical antiquity became an obsession for Barry, so closely connected as it was with his idea that historical painting was the only genre worth the serious artist's effort for society's improvement. Besides, it used a universal language; everyone could decode a work of art, provided they were familiar with the classical subtext. Barry's compulsion for antiquity takes on an important psychological trait, as the ancient becomes symbolic of his agon with father figures such as Edmund Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Johann Joachim Winckelmann. The three works related to Barry's Italian period discussed here—*Self-Portrait with Paine and Lefevre* (1767), *Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos* (1770), and *Venus Rising from the Sea* (1772)—provide compelling evidence that determines the ancient was the territory in which the artist James Barry negotiated his identity.

After a long period of neglect, James Barry has been reassessed as one of the major Neoclassical (and one of the earliest Romantic) painters working in Britain. The 1983 Tate Gallery exhibition followed the first monograph written by William Pressly. A major retrospective of Barry was held in 2005 at the Crawford Art Gallery in Barry's native town, Cork, to celebrate the

tenure of Cork as the European City of Culture, and also the two-hundredth anniversary of Barry's death. In 2014 Pressly gave a talk about his last book, which is devoted to Barry's most famous work, a series of six great mural paintings titled, "*The Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture*," in the very room where they are kept at the Royal Society of Arts in London.¹

Barry's personality has been described as "notoriously belligerent" (Bindman 240). Prior to 2004, he could even boast about being the only member expelled by the Royal Academy (a distinction he now shares with the English contemporary artist Brendan Neiland). The icon of the "genius as rebel" was initiated by William Blake immediately after Barry died in extreme poverty. Blake identified with the poor artist Barry, "unemploy'd except by his own energy," and was keen to distinguish him from Reynolds and what he called Reynolds' "gang of cunning hired knaves" (Blake 636). Barry came from humble origins, and it was only thanks to the most famous countryman of his day, Edmund Burke, that he could spend his formative years in Europe. After a few months in Paris, he settled in Rome, where he remained for three years, and also visited Florence, Bologna and Venice.

After his return to London in 1771, Barry was chosen as a member of the Royal Academy, and in 1782 he was appointed Professor of Painting. His major work, the six-part series of paintings at the RSA that took him many years of strenuous work to finish, has aroused never-ending controversy. Critical judgment of the murals still ranges from enthusiastic to derisory: Andrew Graham-Dixon considers it "Britain's late, great answer to the Sistine Chapel," while Julian Bell (51) and Simon Schama (357) dismiss the work as "graceless bombast" and a "lamentable mishmash," respectively. Notwithstanding these opposite aesthetic views, one is hard-pressed to

¹ An excerpt of Pressly's talk is available at https://archive.org/details/RSA_Spotlight_-_William_L_Pressly_on_James_Barry_s_Murals (accessed 19 December 2015).

deny the work's intellectual intensity. At its inauguration, its conceptual power made such an impression on Dr. Johnson that he exclaimed, "Whatever the hand may have done, the mind has done its part. There is a grasp of mind there which you find nowhere else" (Boswell 1237). Furthermore, purely aesthetic considerations tend to overlook the work's foremost innovative quality, one that concerns its sociological relevance, as Pressly has underscored in his latest book. Barry's murals at the Adelphi Building marked a new era in public art, since Barry was the first artist working in a public context to be given full control by his patron, The Society, over his subject-matter (Pressly 2014).

However, the shift on public art in Barry's studies downplayed the element of the "artist as hero" to emphasize the didactic function of painting. It comes as no surprise that in the collection of essays following the 2005 Cork exhibition, the French period and the influence of Le Brun, Poussin and Le Sueur gained prominence, while the much longer Italian experience is hardly considered. This is even more unfortunate because the unresolved tensions generated by Barry's encounter with the ancient are generally overlooked. The Italian works considered here allow us to explore the sources of those tensions and the irresistible compulsion for antiquity that drove Barry for the remainder of his life.

Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos and *Venus Rising from the Sea* are conventionally seen as visual representations of the ideas of the sublime and the beautiful, respectively, which are the aesthetic notions analyzed by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry on the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757-59). Barry claimed to have been so captivated with his mentor's famous work that "he had been at the pains of transcribing it throughout" (Barry I, 10). Although *Philoctetes* was not mentioned in Burke's *Enquiry*, the subject of Barry's painting is debated in well-known works of eighteenth-century aesthetic philosophy, such as Wincklemann's *Gedanken über die*

Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst (1755, English trans. *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*) and Lessing's *Laokoon: oder, Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766, English trans. *Laocoon, or The Limits of Poetry and Painting*). In the more general context of the relationship between passion and form in art, Philoctetes poses the question of the limit to which art is called to observe in the representation of pain—in a word, the question of decorum.

Winckelmann was the first to make the connection between the story of Philoctetes, told, among others, by Sophocles and Homer, and the Vatican *Laocoon Group*. He connects the formidable Greek archer abandoned by Ulysses and his companions on their way to Troy—because they were exasperated by the horrible screams and the revolting odor caused by his wounded foot—with the Trojan priest killed with his two sons by giant serpents sent by the gods when he uncovered the stratagem of the Trojan horse. Winckelmann writes, “Laocoon suffers, but suffers like the Philoctetes of *Sophocles*: we weeping feel his pains, but wish for the hero's strength to support his misery” (Winckelmann 31). As everyone knows (at least according to Winckelmann), the general and distinguishing characteristics of ancient Greek masterpieces are noble simplicity and quiet grandeur, both in posture and in expression. Sedateness amid passions was observed in the famous marble group now on display in the Vatican Museums and believed to be the sign of a great and composed soul—the evident mark of civilized man, which invited the famous comparison with the deep sea. Winckelmann explains, “As the bottom of the sea lies peaceful beneath a foaming surface, a great soul lies sedate beneath the strife of passions in Greek figures” (Winckelmann 30). It is equally well known that Lessing rejects Winckelmann's ethical reading, with its blurred distinction between artists and philosophers, in favor of aesthetic considerations concerning the qualities and limitations pertaining to each art. Lessing argues that

if poets are allowed to express bodily pain in terrible screams and piercing cries without compromising their hero's prominence, visual artists cannot do the same for the simple reason that they are bound by their specific art. Responding to Winckelmann, Lessing concludes,

The master [sculptor] strove to attain the highest beauty in given circumstances of bodily anguish. It was impossible to combine the latter with all disfiguring vehemence with the former. It was therefore necessary to diminish it; he must soften screams into sighs not because the screaming betrayed an ignoble soul, but because it disfigured the countenance in a hideous manner (68).

At the time of Barry's residence in Italy, Winckelmann was the Pope's Antiquary, and his reputation in the world of the fine art was undisputed. Thus, Barry's acquaintance with Winckelmann's thoughts upon this subject is hardly to be questioned; moreover his lack of knowledge of Lessing's response, published in German approximately at that time, but unavailable in English to Barry when he painted *Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos*, is equally undoubted. In this light, Barry's very choice in painting a Philoctetes to demonstrate his talent went against the current. Barry painted *Philoctetes* in 1770 on his return trip to England to mark his affiliation with the Clementine Academy of Bologna. Critics have noticed its weakness, but at the same time have not failed to detect the work's extraordinary cultural relevance. Giuliano Briganti, for instance, called Barry's painting "unpleasant and clumsy," but also "an incunabulum" of the Romantic version of Neoclassicism and one of the sources of the mature nineteenth-century visionary and fantastic art (158). Another critic, Ottani Cavina (78-79), even described it as an "anti-quadro," that is, an anti-painting, for the whole series of antagonistic elements here contained. Barry's *Philoctetes* defied the tradition of beautiful painting, Winckelmann's idea of beauty, Raphael and the Academy; however, another contraposition escaped the critics' notice. There is a general

agreement regarding the work's adherence to Burke's theory of the sublime for its coloring (dark, deep and somber) and theme (solitude and pain), but surprisingly Barry's work was also against Burke. It was indeed against the philosopher who had inverted the hierarchy of the fine arts when he maintained the verbal was superior to the visual because it was not compelled to show everything. "A picture of Priam," Burke said, "dragged to the altar's foot, and there murdered, if it were well executed would undoubtedly be very moving; but there are very aggravating circumstances which it could never represent" (174). How could a painter, asked Burke, allude to the fact that the Trojan king's blood polluted the fire that, according to Virgil in the *Aeneid*, he himself had once consecrated? ("Sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacraverat ignes," Burke's emphasis.)

I believe that in *Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos* Barry (I, 73), who defined himself in a letter from Italy to Burke as "a man of your own making, and who has found in you, father, brother, friend, every thing," moved the attack launched by his mentor in the name of poetry against *ut pictura poesis* (the principle of imitation) into the very headquarters of painting. The story is much more complicated than it seems to most critics who have interpreted this picture as simply adhering to Burke's sublime; in reassessing the supremacy of painting over poetry, Barry went back to Winckelmann, and in that way, against Burke. The German philosopher's famous description of the Belvedere Torso is behind Barry's *Self-Portrait with Paine and Lefevre*. Of course, Barry, who during his Italian years had a burning detestation for Winckelmann, and especially for the academic and non-academic (like the antiquaries) followers of his theories, did not use Winckelmann in compliance with the neoclassical fixed canons of beauty. Rather, Winckelmann was used to stress the fact that the aesthetic experience is essentially a mental experience occurring in the convergence of the two levels of production and reception. Therefore,

Barry was not interested in producing a (neo)classical beautiful artifact. It was not important that his *Philoctetes* was ugly or did not appeal to popular taste; what was at stake was the work's power to fully engage its viewer. Whether Philoctetes is the artist's alias (Wilson) or not (Trilling), the wounded archer sung by the poets offered Barry the bow with which to propel visual arts into the unexplored waters of modernity.

To fully appreciate *Self-Portrait with Paine and Lefevre* as a profound meditation piece upon the ancient, one needs to examine it with the echo of Winckelmann's words in one's ears. Here is Winckelmann's renowned description of the Belvedere Torso dating back to 1759:

The first glance will, perhaps, discover to you nothing more than a misshapen stone; but if you are able to penetrate into the mysteries of art, you will behold one of its miracles, if you contemplate this with a quiet eye. Then will Hercules appear to you as in the midst of all his labors, and the hero and the god will at once become visible in this stone.

At the point where the poets leave off, the artist has begun. The former are silent as the hero is admitted among the gods, and has wedded the goddess of everlasting youth; the latter shows him to us in deified form, and, as it were, with an immortal body, which nevertheless, has retained strength and elasticity equal to those great labors which he has accomplished [...] In each portion of the body is manifested, as in a picture, the whole hero engaged in a particular deed; and we see here, as in a correct plan representing a rationally constructed palace, the purpose which each subserved, and the deed which it was intended to symbolize. I cannot look at the small portion of the left shoulder which is still visible, without calling to mind that upon its outstretched strength, as upon two mountains, the whole burden of the circles

of the heavens has rested. With what grandeur the breast expands, and how glorious is the heaving curve of its arch! Such a breast must that have been against which the giant Antaeus and the three-bodied Geryon were crushed. No breast of a thrice or four times crowned Olympian victor, no breast of a Spartan warrior born of heroes, can have showed so glorious, so sublime. [...] By a mysterious art, the spirit is borne through all the deeds of his strength to the perfection of his soul; and in this torso is a monument thereto, such as no one of the poets, who celebrate only the strength of his arms, has erected; *the artist has surpassed them all* (emphasis added). (Davidson).

Barry painted *Self-Portrait with Paine and Lefevre* approximately at the time of Wincklemann's assassination in Trieste in 1768. The artist's gaze, which is fixed on the receiver, is an invitation to step in and join the intensity of the mental act that prepares the *poiesis*, or the moment of artistic production. In the right upper corner the torso's almost imperceptible presence suggests the romantic distance between the ancient and the modern cosmopolitan community of artists living in eighteenth-century Rome. Following the diagonal organizational structure of the work, the French sculptor Dominique Lefevre is the only one in contemplation of the monument, while Barry's fellow painter James Paine is lost in his thoughts: his eyes fixed on the white canvas in front of him, his right hand playing with the black tie and his left hand holding the palette and brushes. It is significant that the painter's paraphernalia interrupts the shades of grey separating the figure of Barry in the foreground from his friends and the torso. The grey in the background gradually gives way to the soft nuances of the brownish palette and brushes, and then abandons the scene for the colors in the foreground to mark the entirely modern dimension of art.

Symbolically, color is the threshold that Barry invites the viewer to cross to actively contribute to the “new” artwork of modernity.

In *Venus Rising from the Sea*, a work conceived in Italy and finished in England for the 1772 Royal Academy exhibition, another mythical archer plays the same function as Barry’s gaze in the *Self-portrait with Paine and Lefevre*. The audience is the target of the arrow shot by Cupid soaring behind the goddess just risen from the sea, and the audience is the object of his impertinent gaze. Barry’s winged boy belongs to Sir Joshua’s stock of tender and graceful creatures, but the seduction scene triggered by Cupid has a higher aim here than the easy satisfaction of bourgeois taste that Reynolds allegedly sought. Barry himself provided the key to a reading of his work when he dismissed similar works by Titian and Raphael, as well as those by his rivals Benjamin West and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and declared that he found inspiration in two classical sources: a fragment by Lucan and the *Hymn to Venus* attributed to Homer, both of which emphasize the radical transformation of the world following the birth of the goddess of beauty and love.

The formal principle underlying Barry’s painting is easily traceable in the heart-shaped lines reiterated on the canvas. The symbol of love is the work’s basic structure. From the bottom up, the apex of the first heart coincides with the cloud of vapor that starts under the right foot of Venus and contains all the other lines and her torso, Cupid and the two doves. The second apex occupies the goddess’ pubic area, wherefrom the cloud of vapor on the right departs and surrounds her to finish at the point at which Cupid straddles. The two doves kissing on the left-hand side of the canvas form the smallest heart-line. Finally, the arms Venus raises overhead to keep the mass of her golden hair away from her shoulders form the last heart-line ending sinuously in the breast-separation. It is the civilizing force of love and beauty that liberated humanity from bestiality: this is what Barry gave his audience to ponder. Kept well outside the outer heart-line, the horse behind

the goddess recapitulates the animal world that Venus leaves in the sea of elements behind her. Unfortunately for Barry, what he intended as the apotheosis of love and beauty had quite a different destiny. Paradoxically, it was its huge success, evinced by the demand for prints, which made *Venus Rising from the Sea* odious to his eyes. As market forces prevailed, the artwork meant to bear testimony to the high values of civilization was reduced to a standard and low-priced object of interior decoration for poorly furnished Georgian drawing rooms, pubs or, even worse, brothels.

Margaret Lind has told the story of Barry's re-appropriation of his *Venus* in one of the RSA murals, *The Distribution of Premiums*. In a black-and-white printed version, Venus is in the background and the position of the head is reversed compared with the original, as if Barry had disowned it. Just below are the two beauties of the day—the duchesses of Rutland and Devonshire—and between them is a frowning Dr. Johnson who is pointing at the example that the two ladies are encouraged to follow: Mrs. Montagu, in the act of recommending the service of the poor girl next to her to the Duchess of Northumberland. The message is clear: moral beauty prevails over physical beauty; mind wins over body.

That such an intelligent interpreter of Neoclassicism as Mario Praz misses Barry's tension between art and market-orientation comes as a considerable surprise, particularly when one thinks of the brilliant thesis in his unrivaled study, *On Neoclassicism*, which discusses the romantic treatment of classical themes. Instead, Barry is dismissed with a single mention and ridiculed for the fourth mural of the Adelphi cycle, *Commerce or the Triumph of the Thames*, because of the clumsy mixture of classical and modern². Barry paid a very high price for his determination to dedicate himself only to great subjects. The renowned theorist of the picturesque Richard Payne

² Unfortunately, Praz's critique that appeared in the 1974 (third and last) Italian edition of *Gusto neoclassico* is not included in the 1969 English translation, which is based on the 1959 Italian edition.

Knight was very harsh when he reviewed Barry's works published posthumously by his friends in 1809. He charged Barry with narcissism and pride for disregarding his prominent friends' advice that he should apply himself to portrait painting to his own advantage. Along the same lines, more recently Barry has been held responsible for "voluntary castration," because it is believed that it is only in portrait painting that he reaches "exquisite elegance" (Ottani Cavina 79); and it must be admitted that this is true, particularly of self-portraits, as his *Self-Portrait as Timanthes* certainly illustrates, perhaps even more than *Self-Portrait with Paine and Lefevre*.

Timanthes, the Greek painter famous for winning a contest with his representation of Iphigenia's sacrifice, was the ancient herald of anti-representationalism. According to Pliny, having exhausted all the visual manifestations of sorrow, Timanthes had portrayed Agamemnon's face covered by a veil, thus leaving the viewer to imagine the intensity of the emotions of Iphigenia's father. Indeed, he won because he had succeeded in representing what literally was not representable. It is highly significant that in one of his last works Barry returns to the anti-representationalist polemic to define himself. The head in *Self-Portrait as Timanthes* dates to 1780, whereas the rest, with all its complicated network of classical allusions and references, was finished after twenty-three years, only a few years before Barry's demise in 1806. This very intense work reveals what already transpires in Barry's Italian works: that his compulsion for antiquity was rooted in the desire to exceed the father figure. In the case of Barry, the work takes on the features of the two-headed Janus of the beautiful and the sublime. In Freudian terms (Armstrong), Barry's obsession was indeed kindled by his sense of Oedipal triumphing, simultaneously on Winckelmann and Burke, by alternatively turning each other's aesthetic arguments against one another. Burke, Barry's eventually estranged mentor, had offered him the platform to defy the canons of beauty set by the former and thus give expression to the chthonic dimension, the

indefinite, the darkness and the disproportionate. Winckelmann had provided the painter with a powerful theoretical support for the primacy of visual arts in the challenge of paradoxically representing the unrepresentable.

In conclusion, it is difficult to say how much pride and narcissism is implicated in Barry's character, and consequently whether Payne Knight's portrayal of Barry is accurate. One thing is certain: Barry's life and works reveal the same tormented conscience in Romantic agony as the far more famous Fuseli, Blake and Delacroix.

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Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos

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Self-Portrait as Timanthes

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Urhobo Wood Sculpture: A bridge between the Pre-colonial Period and the Twenty-first Century

Ese Odokuma

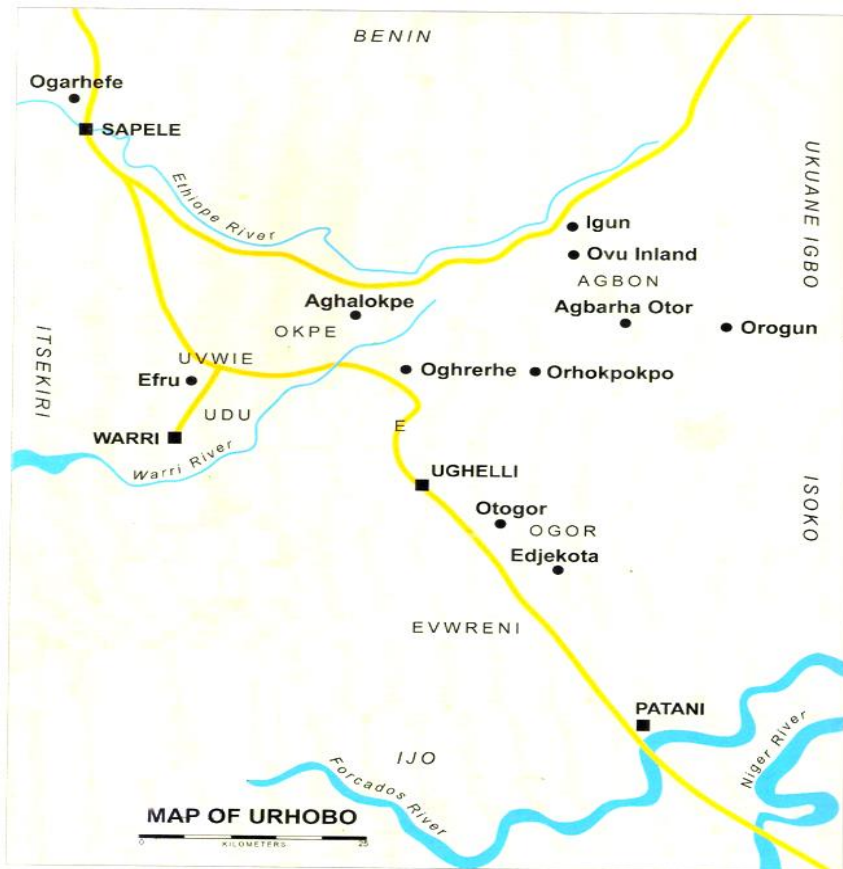


Fig. 1: Map of mentioned towns and cultural influences

Urhobo art: An Introduction

Urhobo³ art-practice is as old as the culture. In his book, *Pride and Preservation: Urhobo Art and Culture in the Twenty-first Century*, Wilson Perkins Foss notes that the Urhobo people are often said to have migrated to the present site from Benin (23). Evidence, however, shows that an earlier date may be associated with their origin. As Otite explains in his book, some Urhobo people claim to have existed in Benin Kingdom during the Ogiso period (Otite 23). In the words of Egharevba⁴ in *A short History of Benin*, the Ogiso ruled in the ninth century A.D. (1). The Benin culture attests to this relationship. As Eriwo explains in his article, “The traditions of origin of the Urhobo of the Niger Delta,” linguistically, certain words, phrases and names are related to the Edo language (31); however, the Urhobo who migrated to and from Benin are a unique culture that shares relationships with Benin, Ijo and some western Igbo cultures. (Eriwo 43-50) and (Odokuma, Thesis 93)⁵. Despite these relationships, Urhobo culture has its own characteristic style. This trait is also evident in their art styles.

The method of research used in this study derives from art-historical, psychoanalytic and symbolic approaches. All these methods will be systematically integrated into the study. For instance, when addressing the historiography of the Urhobo culture, the first method of art-historical will be employed. Since the primary concern of psychoanalysis is in the unconscious significance of works of art (Adams 179)⁶, the psychoanalytical aspect will be adopted where the analysis of the art works and the artist is concerned. Symbolism, on the other hand, is indeed an early-nineteenth-century Western European movement, as Chilver and Osborn point out in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art* (546). As a method, it will also be systematically integrated into the study.

Urhobo Wood Sculpture in the Pre-Colonial Times to the Twentieth Century

³The Urhobo are one of the over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are located in the Niger Delta, southern Nigeria with a population of over a million as of 2003.

⁴Egharevba Jacob is an authority in Benin history and he claims that quite a number of cultures including, Esan, Ika, Aboh, Isoko, Onitsha Igbo, as well as the Urhobo, migrated from Benin during the Ogiso periods.

⁵Eriwo Samuel and Odokuma Ese, in 1974 and 2001, respectively observe relationships between Benin, Ijo and Igbo cultures with the Urhobo through linguistic interdependence and artistic juxtapositions.

⁶Laurie Scheider Adams, a renowned art historian, describes psychoanalysis as an approach to art history that deals primarily with the unconscious significance of works of art. She claims that works, artist, audience/viewer and cultural context.

The pre-colonial period⁷ in this study spans from the era before the arrival of the Europeans to the area of study. That is about the period before the thirteenth century. The Urhobo produce wood sculptures that vary in size, shape and design. Although certain unique styles are evident among the diverse collections of works, the character often remains similar.

The continuity absent in some Nigerian art forms such as the Nok terracottas, Igbo Ukwu bronzes, Ife terracottas and bronzes, Owo pieces, and Isoede works, just to mention a few, is present in Urhobo wood sculpture⁸. It is present in the sense that, since its inception, it has continued from the past to the present.

The basic characteristics of Urhobo wood sculpture are threefold: the head, body and lower limbs. The head region shows facial features such as the eyes, nose, ears, chin, and cheeks. The facial features further reflect aspects of the culture that depict their history, style and religious designations. It also shows various developments of facial beauty-marks, coiffures and cultural practices observed in the culture. The body region points to their historical culture, while the lower limbs articulate their greeting methods, leadership postures and sitting poses in the past, as well as the present.



Fig. 2: The tools for the production of Urhobo carvings

Urhobo wood sculpture is unique because of the type of wood and tools used to produce these works⁹. This study focuses on the works of an Urhobo artist in his thirties. He is a twenty-first century artist of Urhobo origin who practices wood sculpture. What is indeed interesting is his

⁷ The pre-colonial period in this context refers to the period before the arrival of the Europeans, that is, before the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

⁸ The writer believes that apart from Benin art where artistic production has continued through the ages, other artistic traditions such as Nok, Ogo Ukwu, Ife, Owo, and Isoede have all gone extinct. However, Urhobo art is still flourishing in the twenty-first century. Apart from Charles Ebrudu, I have met other artists from Ovu inland, Okpara inland, as well as at Agbarho.

⁹ The Urhobo carver uses very hard wood called Okpagma (Iron wood) to carve. It must be noted that such types of wood are derived from the forest and are resistant to termites.

effort to continue the practices of his forefathers by adopting the techniques, materials and processes of traditional wood-carving practices of the Urhobo.

Studies in Urhobo Art and Culture

A good number of scholars, such as Ekeh (1-41), Otite (21-41, 58-73) Nabofa (37-52), Oyaide (1-23), Foss (17-29), Aweto (12), Onobrakpeya (95-99), Adjara and Omokri (1997), Eriwwo (42-53), Agberia (12), Diakparomre (31-40), and Odokuma (inter-ethnic 19-20, Odokuma, Edjekota 96, Odokuma Stylistic analysis, 315-317, Odokuma, Visual 20, Odokuma Therapeutic, 241, Odokuma functions 58-68), have written on Urhobo arts and culture. The relevant literature available has been examined according to two categories:

- i. History and culture
- ii. The arts and its influences

History and Culture

This aspect deals with contributions from scholars who have written on aspects of histories and cultures of Urhobo art.

In his article, “Imperialism Nigeria Historiography and the Nature and Outline of Urhobo History,” Ekeh writes about European imperialism and the conduct of historical scholarship in Nigeria.¹⁰ He further postulates about African reactions to imperialistic ideologies, as well as the nature and problems of Urhobo history. He speaks extensively about ancient times in Urhobo history, primary and secondary migrations into Urhobo culture and concludes his views in the modern times of Urhobo history. In 2003 Otite wrote a book on the Urhobo people with a number of renowned Urhobo scholars. Otite also writes about the Okpe, an Urhobo clan, regarding its origin, development and European contact.

Adjara and Omokri discuss the ethnography, history and social organization of Urhobo culture in their book, *Urhobo Kingdoms Political and Social Systems*, while Eriwwo comments on the original traditions of the Urhobo of the Niger Delta in the article, “The traditions of Origin of the

¹⁰ Peter Ekeh has written extensively on Urhobo culture and history as he reveals issues on European imperialism, Nigerian historiography, as well as the nature and outline of Urhobo history.

Urhobo of the Niger.” He explores the traditions of Urhobo origin from the Ijo, Igbo and the Benin axis and speaks about a linguistic relationship between these cultures.

The arts and its Influences

In “Urhobo Art and Religious Belief,” Nabofa examines the context in which Urhobo religious beliefs and practices are maintained in visual imagery. Meanwhile, Oyaide shows us how the Urhobo people see the world through art in the article, “How the Urhobo People See the World through Art.” Throughout his multiple works, Foss traces the Urhobo history, art and culture from its inception to the contemporary times as he speaks on the characteristics of the sculpture in the round, masks and their performances. His almost fifty-year interaction with the culture and people of Urhobo land has led many up-and-coming Urhobo-logists to emulate his interests and continue his research.¹¹

Geographically, Aweto and Igben have continued to show the location of the Urhobo in the Nigerian map in their work, “Geography of Urhobo Land.” Speaking of its physical environment, relief climate, vegetation, population, as well as its occupation, Onobrakpeya discusses colour symbolism in Urhobo art. He points out that in Urhobo culture, red stands for beauty, dignity and class, while white “celebrates a life well-lived and marks a final passage from the world of the living to that of the spirits” (95-99). In the article, “Aesthetics and Rituals of the Opha Ceremony Among the Urhobo,” Agberia highlights one of the exuberant ritual ceremonies of Urhobo cultural practice known as *Opha* (41). Diakparomre talks about surface decoration regarding Urhobo sculptures and he displays an array of traditional Urhobo sculptures in his work, “Specificity of Surface Decoration to Context in Urhobo Sculpture.” In “Influences and Inter-Ethnic Styles,” Odokuma attempts to use the arts to show inter-ethnic influences in Urhobo art-origin. Still using art forms to comprehend the veracity of claims of origin by the Urhobo, Odokuma and Bazunu examine some Urhobo masking styles in “Urhobo Masking Styles: Origins and Influences.”

Odokuma goes on to systematically link the Edjekota head with Igbo-Ukwu art-culture in his work entitled, “The likely source of the terracotta head found in Edjekota Urhobo land in the Niger Delta.” In his 2006 article, “Stylistic and Interpretative Analysis of Urhobo Wood Sculpture,”

¹¹ I met Perkins Foss in 1999 and since then my interest in Urhobo art has grown tremendously.

Odokuma identifies, analyzes and classifies Urhobo wood into three styles. In 2008, after intense research and studies, Odokuma revealed the structure and functions of some Urhobo wood forms in the work “The Structure and Functions of Some Urhobo Wood Form, from the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria.” Odokuma (visual 20)¹² attempts to analyze artistic forms using Urhobo art as a visual language. By 2013, Odokuma studied Urhobo sculptures and their therapeutic tendencies.¹³ The study showed that from their sculptural forms, medicinal ingredients exist and that their sculptural pieces have a functional role to play in Urhobo art development. From these studies, it is therefore evident that some amount of work has been done in the arts and culture of the Urhobo; however, not enough documentation has been achieved in assessing the development of art-forms of the Urhobo in the twenty-first century.

Meaning and Functions of Urhobo Art

Foss claims the first work of Urhobo art to be discovered was a piece earlier associated with Jukun art (33); however, the work discovered shows the continuity, characteristics, form and ideology of Urhobo art. All the formal descriptions remain the same as earlier or later dates. Hence, it has often



been said, “If form determines function, can the same question be asked of Urhobo art?”

Does form determine function in Urhobo art? A critical examination of Urhobo art clearly shows that form in Urhobo wood sculpture determines

Fig.3: Showing one of the earliest documented works of Urhobo art. Courtesy Where Gods and Mortals Meet Continuity and Renewal in Urhobo Art

function. For instance, amongst the Ovughere tableau (fig. 4), each figure depicted has its role in the society and certain items are displayed with them. The structure of the figures determines their roles.¹⁴ It is indeed obvious that the male figures

¹² In 2000, I started lecturing in Delta State University, Abraka where I lived amongst the Urhobo people. In doing so, I observed many of their customs and traditions. I have even visited quite a number of their shrines in order to fully understand the people’s ideologies and cosmologies.

¹³ Some of these sculptural pieces have manes and responsibilities assigned to them. Most people see them as “juju” (idols). To the best of my knowledge, amongst these tableans comprise doctors, warriors, seerers, flutists, security men, wives and so on. Basically, each figure has its inbuilt duties which he performs for the benefit of the society.

¹⁴ Sometimes the structure of the figures determines their role. For instance, some of these figures are shown with military paraphernalia like cutlasses, spears, medicine containers, and chains. Figures like this are usually representative of their founding fathers or warriors aligned with other figures.

depict features of warriorship. The Ovughere assemblage also consists of medicinal, physical and spiritual features (Odokuma, Therapeutic 240).

In the works done in the twenty-first century, slight influences seem to be derived from other cultures, particularly from neighboring cultures, books, the internet and other related sources. To a large extent, the twenty-first century Urhobo art-works still maintain a link with the past. First, considering the formal structure of the figures and their mathematically Urhoboic proportions,¹⁵ the present works can be associated with past art-works.



Fig. 4: Ovughere tableau

Second, there is a link in the cubist depiction of forms and in the emergence of varied styles, resulting in an individualistic style. The link also seems to take the form of a bridge between the past and the present. The basic function of Urhobo art lies in its role to protect, guide, guard and direct community-members.



Fig. 5: Festival of Ovughere in 2006



Fig. 6: Another Ovughere scene in 2006

There is always a major figure with wives and other minor figures (*edjos*) of high significance. All these figures, including the female figures, play protective roles. In the case of the **Ovughere** assemblage, and many other Urhobo tableaux of similar tendencies, the major figure is often linked to being the founding head of the community. One version of the origin of the **Ovughere** tableau claims that the Oghara group in Ovu were known to have brought Ovughere (deity) from *Iri Isoko* land, as explained in an oral interview with Gordon Onorhotaoghene. Since then, an annual festival is celebrated between the months of February and March as a communal reminder of the great

¹⁵ This is a traditional proportion common with Urhobo artistic style and noticeable among the Ijo, Isoko and Ukwuani art styles.

deeds of the founding father of Ovu. The festival lasts for a week while other villages under Ovu come and pay tribute to the **Ovughere** deity. The great finale is usually when the priest who leads the congregation during these festivals carries what seems to be a human head. Fig.5 and 6 show some of the festive performances during one of these festivals in 2006. The aim of the festival is to cleanse the town of spiritual dirt and guard indigenes of the land.



Fig 4: Ese Odokuma's Ovughere depiction, 2007.



Fig 7: Perkins Foss Ovughere depiction, 1968. Courtesy of where Gods and Mortals Meet 2004. Continuity and Renewal in Urhobo Art

Urhobo Wood Sculpture in the 21st Century: A Review of Charles Ebrudu's Works



Fig. 8: Picture of Charles Ebrudu
25/5/2015

In the twenty-first century, the processes and styles of production have retained some elements of the past with mixtures of materials and methods of the present. The artist in question, **Charles Oboragharhe Ebrudu** (b. 1974), inherited this art of wood-carving from his grandfather, Chief Kuruse Ebrudu Edewor.¹⁶ His grandfather probably had produced

¹⁶ Charles Ebrudu claims that his grandfather taught him carving.

works of art in the past, which probably adorn public and private collections worldwide. In 1985 and 1995, respectively, Charles Ebrudu obtained his primary and secondary school certificates; but, he could not afford a university education. He did however attend a blacksmith-training programme in Benin City for one year. Today, alongside his carving skills, he also fabricates metals from decorative doors to protectors and iron gates.¹⁷ Since childhood, **Ebrudu** had always created works of art depicting traits of his grandfather's style, along with his original flavour.

It is indeed true that some of the stylistic features of his works are derived from his clients' requests. On several occasions, his clients have requested diverse styles and items as led by the Spirits to be used to represent the work. They may tell him to carve the hair upwards according to the directive of the Spirits. His works are often a reminder of the developmental elements evident in Urhobo art from the pre-colonial period to modern times. **Ebrudu** has executed quite a number of works, some of which will be analyzed in the course of this paper. A comparison with older Urhobo art forms will also be achieved to determine whether drastic or subtle changes have occurred, and whether Charles has been able to develop in stages. Importantly, unlike other European-trained Urhobo artists, this artist was traditionally trained by his grandfather, and has continued to produce elements of the past in the twenty-first century, therefore creating a link between the two eras.¹⁸

Analysis and Interpretations of Charles Ebrudu's Wood Sculptures

The Urhobo have diverse spirits called *edjo*. There are those who belong to the atmosphere (*edjenu*), those on land (*edjotor*), and those located in the waters (*edjorame*). This piece made by **Ebrudu** (fig. 9.) was executed in the twenty-first century and it is called *Ijomo*. *Ijomo* is an *edjo*

¹⁷ The economic situation is affecting the turnout of Charles works because of lack of patronage. He claims some years ago his works were in high demand but of recent, few clients have shown interest. I have encouraged him to at least carve work more frequently.

¹⁸ One obvious element in Charles' work is that he stands as a bridge between the pre-colonial period and the twenty-first century.

(spirit). It is commonly used in the Obeji community and Delta state to recover lost goods or stolen items.

Here, one can see how the artist tries to forge his way through in the execution of the work. Starting from the region of the head, the cap is carved out of the same log of wood as the entire body.¹⁹

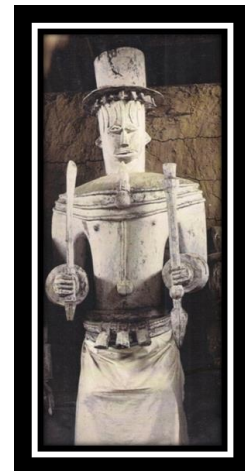
The head is geometric with etched-in eye sockets and rounded eyeballs suggestive of its ever-seeing characteristics. The nose and mouth are highly cubical and expressive. The teeth are depicted as open as well as being closed. These are indeed attributes of the spirits: although the teeth may appear shut, they constantly speak to their believers. The neck is elegant as it broadens into the chest, which is stylized. The figure is holding a stick (*oppo*) and a small child (*omo*). The small child here represents the working ability of the spirit. The upper limbs (arms) are long and the legs seem to be in a sitting position, which connotes authority. The interpretation of this work lies in the man and the child. The figure sends the child into the world to carry out specific missions known only by the father, but he equips the child with medicinal, physical and leadership abilities.



Fig. 9: The standing shrine figure Ijomo, wood, 3ft 6inches Charles Ebrudu, 21st century.

A similar trait is noticeable in one of the *Owedjebo* figures studied by Perkins Foss in 2004. Between the facial features of the *Owedjebo* and that of *Ijomo*, slight changes are evident. This of course may be attributed to the style of the artist and location of the clan; neighborhood influences may result in slight differences. The Owedjebo corpus may have more Ijo influences than the *Ijomo* type, which may possess more Benin traits; however, the

Fig. 10: Owedjebor figure in wood, 1969. Courtesy of Perkins Foss, 2004, *Where God's and Mortals Meet Continuity and Renewal in Urhobo Art*



¹⁹ The artist carves his pieces from a log wood. He carefully divides the head from other parts of the body with his self-made tools.

Owedjebo figure was photographed by Perkins Foss in 1969, while Ebrudu's *Ijomo* figure was executed about the year 2000. The changes are indeed significant.

Comparison of the *Ijomo* and *Owedjebo* Figures

Both heads are not similar; even the foreheads have diverse marks on them. The facial features of *Owedjebo* are triangular while *Ijomo's* is circular. Regarding the neck, the *Owedjebo* has a thick neck while that of *Ijomo* is thin. The chest of the *Owedjebo* is broad and geometric, while that of the *Ijomo* broadens at the shoulder and slowly thins out at the beginning of the stomach.

It must be noted that the function of the *Ijomo* figure is to maintain order in its community and restore lost or stolen goods, while the *Owedjebo* figure represents a founding man of the community, as Foss explains. (81)



Fig. 9: The standing shrine figure *Ijomo*, wood, 3ft 6inches Charles Ebrudu, 21st century.

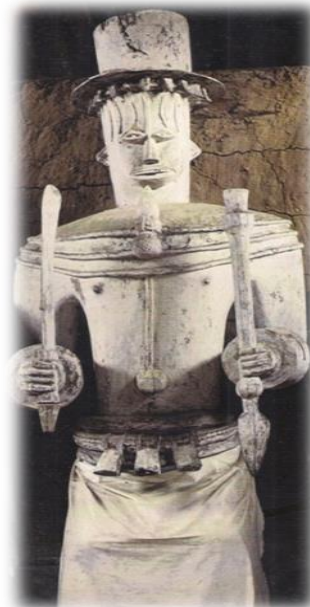


Fig. 10: *Owedjebo* figure in wood, 1969. Courtesy of Perkins Foss, 2004, *Where God's and Mortals Meet Continuity and Renewal in Urhobo Art*

Another work of Ebrudu executed in 2006 is the “*Inene* figure.”²⁰ The word **Inene** in Urhobo language refers to “mother”; thus, this figure is depicted in the form of a woman. In Igun land, a town in Delta state, there is a festival celebrated every February to respect this figure. During this

²⁰ These works are seen by some people as caricatures or idols. They are not idols in the sense that many individuals view them, but embody the people's culture. Each coiffure, mark, expression, and limb tells a story about the origin of the people.

festival, people make sacrifices of all kinds, from drinks to other edible foodstuffs. All these are done to appease *Inene*. She is also a fertility goddess who provides children and secures jobs. This work clearly shows the Urhobo style of the 19th -20th century from the conical hat shape to the facial marks (*Akprusi*), which are all indicative of Urhobo Wood Sculpture. The facial marks (*Akprusi*) show the sex of the figure and represent lines of prayers (Odokuma Visual 20).

The thick neck, angular shoulders, rectangular body, and bent arms are all very much like pre-colonial Urhobo pieces. The pedantic area, as well as the mammary gland, are expressively treated, indicating the sex of the figure. Here, the figure is seated, unlike earlier Urhobo figures that are half-sitting and half-standing. This could also mean that after their initial migration from

Benin, they were not fully stable. Nonetheless, after centuries of settling in their hometown, some art-forms depicted in Urhobo culture are now shown fully seated. This shows a settled people, community or society.

In Urhobo tradition, children are seen as a form of wealth. Small wonder most of the figures or masks depicted in Urhobo culture—even in the twenty-first century—show traits of fertility and abundance. Fertility plays a prominent role in the traditional life of the Urhobo. The twin figures in fig. 13 and 14 are called *Oghemo*, and they are examples of fertility figures.



Fig. 11: Inene (edjo) 2006 21st century wood, chalk. Charles Ebrudu.



Fig.12: *Oghemo* male and female figures



Fig.13: Back view of the *Oghemo* twins

Most of these figures, if not all of them, are built from a log of red iron wood (*Opagha*). With the artist's chisel, saw, wooden mallet, cutlass and often self-made tools, he gradually chips pieces of wood away from the intended figure he intends to represent. Both figures are about the same height; hence, I refer to them as twin figures in this paper. The female figure is painted red, while the male figure is painted white. Colours in Urhobo culture are highly symbolic. In his article "Colour Symbolism in Urhobo Art," Onobrakpeya speaks of red as symbolizing beauty, dignity and class in one context, while white stands for purity and transition to the world of the spirits (97). Onobrakpeya further explains that the white chalk (*Orhe*) is used to convey supplications to the supernatural powers, as well as to obtain real blessings (97). In "Urhobo Wood Sculpture of the Niger Delta: Its Structure and its Therapeutic Tendencies," Odokuma speaks about the white chalk (*Orhe*) as a component of herbal concoction (241). White in Urhobo culture therefore signifies peace, purity, blessings, prayers and supplications, while red signifies dignity, beauty, class and war. Although Foss states that some of the earliest pieces of Urhobo wood sculpture were dated back to the nineteenth century, these twenty-first century works show evidence of a long-term tradition of Urhobo art that may have even started earlier than the ninth or tenth century (33).



Fig. 14: Joined twin figures wood, 2×3cm, Ebrudu Charles

Ebrudu seems to be fond of making twin or joined figures. This piece in (fig. 14) shows two figures with deeply marked foreheads, geometric facial features and bodies seemingly joined at the torso. In front of the figures are two gigantic phallic objects projecting from the base. The Urhobo of Southern Nigeria have a long tradition of wood carving. The style of Urhobo wood carving is similar, although individual styles are evident. The interpretation of these figures may be linked to the Janus probability, or dual personalities. The marks on the heads of the figures are in threes—in other words, they are males. The phallic structures springing from the base of the work speak significantly about the role of males in Urhobo societies. Thus, Charles **Ebrudu** was possibly trying to merge an existing culture's style with his own. This is a true example of a twenty-first century style of the representation of the union of a man and a woman in holy matrimony. The Urhobo characteristic of geometricism is evident in this work.

Figure 15 shows another work of Ebrudu titled “*Agbako*.” The *Agbako* is a male of high status.

It is a war statue depicted as a standing nude figure. The white chalk (*Orhe*) is prominently used in Urhobo culture for cleansing, as shown in this figure. Three long marks (*Akprusi*) run down the forehead of the figure, which is indicative of the sex of the image. The eye (*ero*) and teeth (*Ibiako*) are open, expressing the continuous communication of the spirits (*edjo*) with man. The work is characterized by a pneumaic chest, geometric neck, shoulders and the presence of a medicine projection on the chest.²¹



Fig. 15: Standing figure (*Agbako*) 21st century. Wood, 3f×3inches, Ebrudu Charles.

²¹ Although Charles Ebrudu was able to maintain certain Urhobo features, he has been able to produce a unique style of his own particularly in facial features, body forms, neck and expressive standing and sitting postures.

One of the figure's hands swings loosely, while the other holds a stick (*opo*). The figure is seen to be wearing bangles (*Ikoro*) on its hands and legs, signifying royalty. This work is used in Okuechi village in Eku, Agbon Clan, Delta state, Nigeria.

Conclusion

As previously stated, certain facts have been revealed regarding Urhobo art in the twenty-first century. Unlike many cultures in the world, Urhobo art has continued to flourish since the pre-colonial times to the present day. Diverse Urhobo carvers still exist in different parts of the Urhobo nation. Even if the Urhobo style appears to be similar, varied individual styles exist. Influences are still derived from border land communities, books, the internet and even cultural interactions. Despite these influences, individual styles exist. Even if Benin is often claimed as the origin to some clans in Urhobo land, their wood works are at odds with the Benin claims of origin. It is indeed obvious from the paper that the Urhobo art-forms reflect the cultural development of the Urhobo.

The study shows three classified segments of Urhobo wood sculpture. The classification is as follows: The pre-colonial Urhobo wood carving, post-colonial wood carving and neo-colonial Urhobo wood sculpture. Charles Ebrudu has succeeded in creating a bridge between the past and present—a connection between the old and new. He has created a style that has become a bridge that has moved across cultures, oceans, seas and continents. To make his works truly contemporary is for him to sign his works. Unlike his grandfather and others, the works were said to be spiritual rather than individualistic, hence their works were not signed. They were not meant to be enjoyed in the museum or gallery, but used for the edification of a community, household or unit; therefore, Ebrudu Charles' Urhobo wood sculptures create a sense of closeness with works of art of pre- and post-colonial eras that are echoed in the characteristics of his twenty-first century work.

Informants

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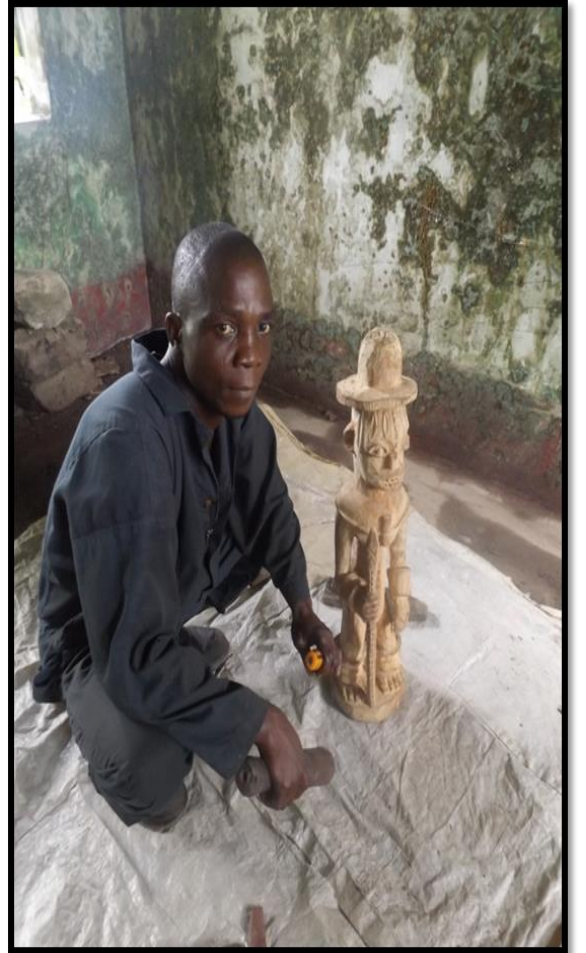
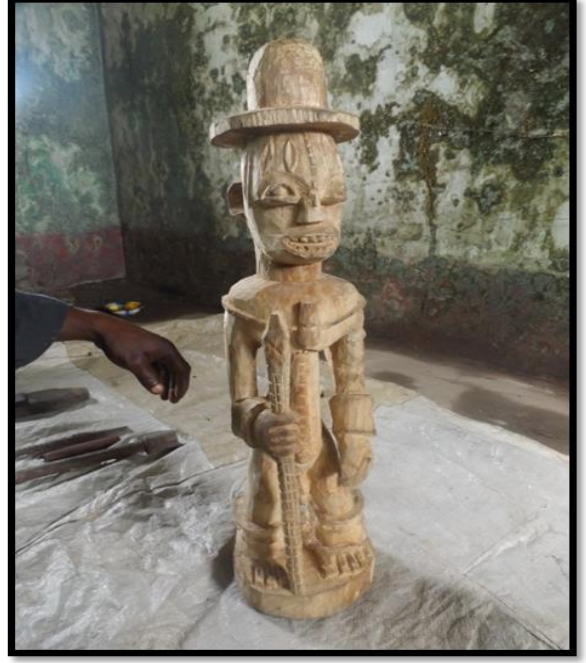
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Carving processes by Charles Ebrudu







Space and Civil War in Contemporary Brazilian Cinema

Ana Paula Pacheco

Since the nineteenth century, there has been a trend in Brazilian culture to allegorically represent the nation by setting the whole totality in a certain space. In the 1890 novel *O cortiço*, by Aluísio Azevedo, which was influenced by Zola's 1877 novel, *L'Assommoir*, a formal operation reduces the country to a "domestic" space collectively inhabited and ruled by the power of private property. The relationships between the public and private spheres merge, and suggest life confinement and the appropriation of the urban civilization by the owners of capital.

Space as representation of a disintegrated social totality has returned in recent Brazilian cinema. Here, criminal "intruders" are not the exception in a state of permanent exception. Without suggesting social transformation, the conflicts take place in intimate spaces, that is, in households or neighborhoods. The contiguity between bourgeois and murders, and the petty-bourgeois "normality" are highlighted. Ordinary people is forced to adapt to precarious working relationships, patterns of consumption, the cultural industry, and organized crime. I intend to analyze and interpret Sérgio Bianchi's 2009 film, *Os inquilinos* [*The tenants*], which is, in my point of view, the most interesting movie production on this issue in recent times. By making use of effective techniques of estrangement and some formal experimentation, this film seems to question the underworld of social normality under contemporary Brazilian Capitalism.

In an essay entitled "1964," the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Arantes recognizes the starting point of Brazilian contemporary times in the military dictatorship, which took place between 1964 and 1985. The punitive power began to shape the contemporary Brazilian State of Exception, which has remained to the present day.

Not the "transitional period to democracy" or the new Constitution, but the counter-revolutionary Coup marked the beginning of our Era. According to Arantes, the State of Exception modernized itself; life exposed to State Terrorism began to be *included in the social and political order*. The militarization of the daily life that we and, above all, the low classes have lived until

nowadays has begun. From this angle, the political openness in the Brazilian 1980s was in fact a continuous contention. That is, the dictatorship went into recess when it became part of the “democratic” everyday life. Since then we have lived a “dead time” - the dictatorship that never finishes passing. It is a permanent threshold in which guardianship and threat get together.

Suffice to say that the so-called Citizen Constitution of 1988, as shown by Jorge Zaverucha in *Forças Armadas e política: entre o autoritarismo e a democracia*, incorporated the entire state apparatus structured under the dictatorship, including the legal clauses related to the armed forces, military police, and public security, elaborated during the Constitution of 1967 and emended in 1969, which was a time when Brazilian dictatorship was particularly brutal. (Zaverucha). {3} Thus, there is an ample liberal-constitutional latitude in which the higher classes move, whereas the lower classes live in the intensification of a paternalistic-punitive treatment. This point is in common between the State and the organized crime, which functions as a parallel State in slums and lower-class neighborhoods. To say in a few words, the dictatorship has created a double forehead State which persists; rule of law to the elites and **punitive-assistential** to ordinary people, especially to the poor. There’s been a renewal of a State of Permanent Exception since dictatorship to the present that justifies itself for the imperative of “security,” which gives the sovereign power a suspensive force of rights.

Since the Brazilian military dictatorship, the State of Exception also continued in an economical State of Permanent Emergency. According to Paulani in *Modernidade e discurso econômico*, it is a State that protects the mechanisms of accumulation, which are always “urgent,” to the detriment of the poorest, who have no prospect of social integration; therefore they become available quota for trafficking and organized crime. (Paulani).

Therefore, an entire conception of State and of a violent administration of the violence (most of the time created by this very State) remained from the dictatorship. With this continuity of an authoritarian State and a false democracy in mind, let us carry out a brief analysis of the film, focusing on how much it reveals about the legacy of the “Anos de chumbo” [“Years of Lead”] to our present time. In other words, we have in mind the extension of the counterrevolution in our continent, whose primary aim might have been to extinguish the formative power of politics, while essential dimension of human expectations.

Directed by Sérgio Bianchi, *The tenants* depicts contemporary life under the second Lula government, and dares to show an image of the country organized as a state of permanent exception when a deceptively popular government began its second term. The film blends apparent chaos, unorganized criminals, a State presented in a consented anomie, and organized crime (linked to big interests). That is to say, when the State finally intervenes and arrests the killer tenants — more or less unorganized — the organized crime takes over as an extension of a public terrorist-patronizing order.

The basic plot consists of a lower-middle class family whose daily life is changed by the presence of unwelcome next-door tenants. The newcomers sleep until late, do not work, throw parties, bring women home (one of them underage), and have drugs and alcohol about. They fight and we soon learn that one of them stabbed a man to death, although the plan was simply to "make a living and get out as fast as possible." The noisy neighbors, poorly educated and unruly, become more than bad neighbors, however.

At the beginning, a kind of family moral governs the glance on the tenants. It is a small-bourgeois moral, linked, on the one hand, to *the principle of the private property as untouchable value*. For example, inside the house they rent they can do *whatever* they want. On the other hand, it is linked to the "good" (although chauvinistic) education of the kids (How to raise their daughter with boys having parties with girls in the neighbor's house? — asks the mother arguing to her husband about the "invasion"). As the couple makes clear, if the "mass" happened (not so far away) in the "favelas" [slums], there is no problem. The emphasis highlights differences between the low middle-class neighborhood and the slums. As its very close "other," it is also disturbed by the neighbors tenants' contiguous presence, acceptable "there," at a safe distance (although in fact very short in many senses), but not "here." The moral criterion hides the social and space-related ones, and vice versa: the family father's parameters — shared by the neighborhood, by Mr. Dimas and by the friend with whom Valter goes to work daily — bound the violence to a subject of rule of individual conduct (that is, as if violence was not socially generated and reproduced). He doesn't

mind the civil war, since it happens in another neighborhood, without splashing in his.

The private sphere is invaded, as the boundaries between the "I" — the father whose eyes we follow throughout the film — and the "Other" — the criminal tenants — are broken. As I've said, the invasion is legitimated; however, the money they pay for rent gives them the "right" to do whatever they want in the space of the house (even if the sounds, the cries, or the crash gate interfere in the common patrimony, as it would be the air and the silence).

As in an abrupt fall in the ground of the capitalistic law, the ideology seems to have abandoned the work of the appearances, leaving aside even the disguise of the individual interests into general ones. In the film, which shows the periphery of the world as a place where the universal march of the contemporary history becomes very visible, the new regulation way is the "deregulation" — i.e., a new form of social *organization* ruled through financial globalization, making for de-territorialized, precarious work. Every idea of community was replaced by the law of money without social concessions. The notion of imagined communities, as an ideology that hides the fact that a country is a community of owners — but not without having correspondence with some ground, where the effective problems of the unequal society were thought — seems to have been canceled, while the public space figures as a "no one's land", cyclically occupied, as Anderson argues in his book, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.

They disturb the daily lives of the neighbors in many ways, and even slaughter and kill Mr. Dimas, the co-owner of the house they rent. Only after this event do the police show up and people call them criminals. By the way, despite of the presence of the police at this moment, everybody acts as if there was no mediation of social law. First, everything seems to be allowed (in and) by the private property; after the blood bath, the neighbors want to kill the tenants with their own hands. After all, once the police take them to prison, life seems to come back to normality, but it just lasts for some hours. Or, in other words, "*normality*" is turned in a state of suspended violence that comes to act anytime, without previous warning.

In the final scene, with a wry smile but unmistakably happy with the prospect of renting the entire house, the ex-wife of the dead man vigorously cleans the blood left on the ground. Meanwhile new tenants arrive and this time they really are organized criminals themselves. It's interesting to note that one of them — a white, blond, male, bourgeois type — is a member of the

old group, probably free from prison by the big bosses of the traffic, and elected to be the head of the new and much more organized group. The ambiguity behind referring to the old tenant's replacement as "the chief" seems to be on purpose. We see the same actor, better looking and more ready for crime, but is he the same character or not? The doubt makes us think about the replaceable character of everyone in low-level trafficking, despite the fact that the blond guy had the chance to cease being cannon fodder.

Armed to the teeth, the new tenants come in a truck that is owned by the "Party" for food distribution to the population. The "Party" is the nickname of the criminal organization known as The First Command of the Capital, which operates in São Paulo and in another 22 states of Brazil, making around 40 million U.S. dollars per year. Manipulating fear, it imposes the rule in the "community" where it is established, collecting tributes, regulating the hours when it is permitted or interdicted to walk outside the houses, etc. At the same time, the "Party" takes care of the population, doing the work of a paternalist State.

Over the bass wall that separates his backyard from the neighboring backyard, Valter, the protagonist, watches the scene: he looks at the new tenants who dare him and greets his dead neighbor's ex-wife, and then finally marches on to work, along with dozens of other workers. The open-air prison filled with precarious workers who are frightened and disorganized presents itself as the established normality.

The fact that organized crime reigns undisguised (machine guns are always in hand) indicates the link between State, big business, and the mafia trafficking. The replacement of the first tenants for new and more powerful ones – a replacement interspersed by the cleaning of the ordinary citizen's blood — suggests various degrees of violence that range from chaos to organized terrorist-care, which forces us to imagine a larger head (Capitalism itself?) outside those replaceable bodies. The final song, sung in a low key, resembles a funeral and hangs over the open-plan scene in which workers marching on to their journeys represent the set of Brazilian lower classes, undead.

Following the point of view of lower middle-class workers, what is the relationship the film establishes with the viewer by focusing on everyday routinized oppression without any perspective of class struggle or organization? In other words, as the title of my intervention suggests, what kind of relationship is formalized between the criminals, the low-middle classes,

and the spectators by the metaphor of social life turned into a civil war field in which the poor have no political place? By the way, it is worth specifying who we are calling "criminals" here: the First Command of the Capital organizes rebellions, assaults, kidnappings, murders and drug traffic; the police have been following an extralegal conduct of poor extermination, making use of a shameful and murderer presupposition that the poor are, by definition, "suspect" of crime. On average, the Brazilian police have been killing about 60 young people of periphery a day. In 2012, the average number of deaths by firearms in Brazil was 116 people a day, according to research led by UNESCO. Between 2004 and 2007 192 thousand Brazilians were murdered: 77% of them were black, which is a number larger than in territories in war, like Iraq, Sudan and Afghanistan, as shown in research completed by the International Amnesty. Only 5 to 8% of the cases have gotten to be represented in lawsuit. In 2014, about 82 young people between the ages of 16 and 29 died; the immense majority were black. It is considered as a genocide silenced by the State and the Brazilian population.

Part of the answer is in a central image of the film, in which the imaginary fight with the Other appears in the literal image of a dogfight; it is shown as a primitive-irrational dispute in which the weakest always loses. The family keeps a mutt dog in the yard, who is chained so that he does not destroy the plants. When tenants consolidate the violence that was "in the air" since they have settled there (that is, in the occasion of the first murder), the wife asks her husband what to do, and he replies, "Let the dog loose for a while, if he destroy the plants I'll fix it later." The action is clearly disproportionate: in an ironic vision of the protagonist's perspective, he sees only his yard, without eyes to the social dimension of the violence (the unnamed civil war called "democracy" in Brazil). Shortly after that scene, we are led to see the dog urinating in the backyard corners, "marking the territory with its scent," which is an action imitated by the father. An earlier scene shows Valter crawling as if he were a dog, while he jokes with his son and trains his mutt dog at the same time. The allegory of the dog fight is completed when the co-owner of the neighboring house rented by tenants (who is forced by his ex-wife to live with the tenants, which causes the situation to become more unbearable by the minute) comes to Valter's house limping and showing his leg bitten by one of the "boys" living next door.

The image is rather disturbing, as the film induces us to identify ourselves with Valter's point of view and look for revenge. However, Valter never achieves revenge; his revenge merges

as a mirage in moments of daydream and it's moved by the dammed hate as a kind of imaginary compensation for his subordinate position and his defenseless in the day to day. Yet he doesn't agree with the more explicitly fascist speeches of the bitten neighbor. Mr. Dimas, in the bar, tells Valter that he's waiting for the dogs go out of the house. He promises, "One of these days I'll finally get some poisoned meat dumpling. Better than that, meat with ground glass. With animals you must do like that. You have to implode." Following Valter's perspective we are led to see the problem in its most immediate and irrational dimension, as if it were a dispute (for territory, women etc.) between domestic dogs and vicious dogs to demarcate territories, namely to ensure their part in chaos (as says the wife, justifying the "right" of not seeing the aggressions and suspicious actions coming from the house next door, "Every life is a life.") While restricting ourselves to both Valter's point of view and his wife's, *the film induces us to see the things reduced to the private and immediate dimension of the violence issue*. We are almost led to forget that a society is not a pack of dogs. However, the film assembles other materials as some news which, even if distorted, give us some other glimpses of reality, such as the speech of two classmates at school who are trying to explain to Valter that good and evil are not natural attributes or the convocation of the act of seeing as a leitmotiv, urging the viewer to some position. All these attributes together *propose a detachment from the protagonist's and his relatives point of view* (or from that of the low middle classes, worried with distinguishing themselves from the lower classes, even when precariousness and menaces put both close). Passing their available options of an end to the other as always immediate (that is, without the mediation of a public instance), they seem to be very set in the inaction/submission or in the extermination of the armed neighbors. By the way, the alternative for liberating themselves from such close trouble goes by a piece of advice out of law. As in the story told by Valter's colleague, a policeman recommends the "bullet solution" to another worker who saw his home and wife taken on by an attacker.

First of all, the violence issue exceeds moral and private spheres since there is an objective and generalized situation exposed by the film; it is an insecurity or a state of oppression that takes the world of precarious work (where Valter cannot have his working papers), the childhood invaded by sexual consumption patterns, the insecurity indoors, the blurring between the public and private spheres, the colonization of the subjectivity by money, etc. In this status quo, the appearance is that of a chaotic world — as seen by Valter's perspective — where larger dogs slaughter smaller, weaker or scrupulous dogs. While Valter focus allows him to only see dispute

between the strong and weak in a chaotic world, the *leitmotif of the act of seeing*, which is very present in this film, shows something else about *the organization of the apparent chaos and the omnipresent fear*. The continuous presence of disputes in other spheres (big ones, and not for bones), or the suggestion that the issue of violence is because of the whole organization of society under Capitalism, increases during the film.

For instance, while Valter and his wife don't know what to do to protect their children and save their home, TV shows us some conflicts between the government and organized crime, resulting in a part of the city burned down. Instead of giving a critical perspective, the journalist says (again reducing everything to individual dog lives), "The population was left without busses and without any patience," which just happen to be the narrow consequences of the war.

Since the beginning, the *long shot* shows the lower middle class neighborhood, whose brick houses are embedded on the hill as if they were an "organic" part of its "nature." Alongside the brown of the human constructions, there seems to grow a great green tree that imposes itself as if life fed off the hill, or of that poor land. The brick houses are crowned by two leafy trees, which provides a beautiful depiction of poverty that deceives the eye. It is important to note that the houses are brick because it is cheaper than paint. Then another *long shot*, bigger than the first one, shows that neighborhood as part of the city. Afterwards, we will see in medium shot a street and then the protagonist's house. We get into the "real life" that is in and out of these houses, which previously could be embellished by the distant look. The "ton s'ur ton" between the hill and the houses without painting transforms the poverty in landscape, but the camera interacts with this crystallized glance, pointing a connection where the common sense sees a separated reality "on the sidelines." Through the assembly that opens the vision angle, a connection is made between the "community" built in the hillside (the neighborhood of average-low class, which from a distance is possibly confused to a slum) to the whole of the city, glimpsed under fog. Then, the camera put us close to the life of the neighborhood. Also here the mediation will be important, inducing us to the mistake, inviting thereafter to see in a more complex way a time-space in which the violence is much more than an attribute "of the other." Located as somebody that watches outside the house and is unable to see, viewers hear sounds of a couple amidst a heated discussion of aggression and death threats. The *flagrante delicto*, testified by the ear, is false, undoing the expectation of a spectacular reality in the periphery. At the same time, that space won't be immune

to the logic of the show, by which social suffering can always yield profit. That is, reality and imaginary filtrated by the cultural industry, which spreads fear routinely, get confused in a perverse way, but the "game," or even the formal strategy in the film is produced in order to dissolve the common sense: children play killing "by chance" in the street; inside the house, the protagonist's daughter sees a very violent fight between another couple on TV while doing her homework. Before seeing the inside of the house and the TV, we hear the sounds of the discussion through the window. This creates a contiguity between life out there (what we hear from the street), life indoors (where the family gathers at night) and, to use Guy Debord's terminology, the society of the spectacle, where there is no limit between public and private, distraction and social suffering, between life and consumption patterns (which includes violence as a merchandise, often presented as a "monstrous exception", that is, disconnected from the social nexus that produced it).

The approach of the film for the act of hearing is a structural trait to be kept as well. As soon as the first scenes present us the view through a distant glance, we are able to see the hill-painting and the city under a certain haze, crystallized. But already put in perspective by the assembly in sequence, the approach for the ear doesn't also implicate direct contact, or it distorts the assumption of a direct contact. We hear the scene (instead of seeing it), as if we were to penetrate in a melodrama, but the melodrama is a particular type of representation, an entertainment TV show that the daughter sees. That is, we hear the scene doubly distanced of a contact more "naturalized," produced with the conventional techniques of conventional movies (or without reflection about the act of seeing and its political consequences). Here, the action of seeing is reflected by the ear: *the senses operate in separation* against the dive in the images, in favor of *producing distance* from what we, the spectators, are supposed to know beforehand. Between us and the protagonist's home there are a lot of mediations: of the fiction (the film recreates the life of a family), of the camera (that is shown as such, and take positions), of the sound (that can come from the street, of a child game, and continue in the false exceptional violence of the television melodrama, without excepting the present violence in the boys' game as being real). We have also varied channels of reception of the brutal daily life (TV, windows, sexualized music "for girls" playing a very sexualized role without being conscious of it). The disillusionment created by the "montage" tells us to distrust of all these mediations (because none of them are neutral and yet all bring a moment of truth, even as a testimony of social symptoms). With them or through them

(social mediations turned into art technics) we are invited to see the represented reality as an effort of detaching the *status quo* in order to construct a critical regard.

In the game of sights, the confusion between TV and “real life” (standardized by the ideology that makes people think, according to Mr. Dimas who says, “This violence is not mine, although it is very close”) will have further resonances. The TV news about the rape of a girl is turned into sensationalist images and has some correspondence in the scene in which the daughter of the couple dances in an extremely sexualized choreography with her friends. Watching the girls, Valter submerges in the game, as if it was innocent (and not much more perverse) because it was executed by children. Suddenly the father’s eyes meet the eye of another spectator who is staring at the girls and can be considered as a possible stalker. The man is dressed in a work uniform, which indicates his professional extent; he is probably also of average-low class. The eyes of Valter on the stranger, who is seen as a “bad man” who watches his daughter and other girls, are not just a recognition of differences between “I” (a “correct man,” who considers ethical and moral principles, an employee, etc.) and “other” (a perverted one, also an employee by chance). This scene of his daughter dancing with her friends will have yet another eye-crossing correspondence: now between Valter and a girl brought by the first tenants to one of his parties. Mr. Dimas tells Valter what happened the night before and Valter imagines, fantasizing in a sensual way, the presence of a girl, a child, in the tenants' house. He asks Mr. Dimas if the “girl” was a child or a woman, but the neighbor doesn’t answer because he is interested in telling the end of his history. The neighbor, who is bitten by one of the tenants, tells Valter what happened the night before: the tenants were making a private party and he, Mr. Dimas, decided to take profit of their distraction to find out proofs of crimes practiced by the tenants. They hear him, go out and hurt him. When they leave the house to see what is happening they forget the door is ajar, so then Mr. Dimas sees a girl. In Valter’s imagination she appears naked, sensual, with her childish face made up like a woman. Horror and desire mingle in a libidinal organization correspondent to a social organization in which taboos and limits were exceeded by “total invasion” (that is, legitimized by society and State). This imaginary scene takes to review the first, that one with the dancing girls in the street: the encounter with the desirous eyes of the stranger turns much more terrifying because both look like a mirror.

In fact, in many scenes, against Valter vision or consciousness, *crus-crossed sights indicate the blurring line between an ordinary man (or woman) and criminals*. This is a central topic of the film that is definitely consummated in one of the final sequences. For now it is worth pointing out that the overflow of desire — although restrained in Valter’s imagination — takes place within the picture of present-day neoliberalism as drawn by the film (precarious work, anomie, murder of “suspicious” young people, absence of State intervention in illicit activities involving profit). Specifically, we can notice that the limitless desire —almost always involving sexuality, even when its objects are things for consumption — is a structural part of a neoliberal society, which has horror to interdictions, interventions or any form of limitation of the categorical principle of incessant consumption.

The imaginary consumption of the body of the girl’s witness is more than a delimited moral problem. It testifies to the perversion of an entire society, represented by the symmetry between the eyes of the father and of the butcher.

In the same way, while in Valter’s imagination tenants appear as monsters that emit terrifying grunts (sound distortion effect), the film points out several times the close relationship between the worker who cares for his family and small property, and the murderers, or criminals who are not organized. While the final image of the new tenants, whose posture is parental-threatening (in the truck, they have food for the neighborhood; in their hands, machine guns), marks the proximity between them and a conniving/absent State, present in the figure of the criminal organizations who are much too comfortable in their "territories." We shall remark the ambiguous intervention in the "combat" with the traffic and the organized crime that only comes in last case, as images suggest, and doesn't hide any visible agreements (one of the boys arrested returns to the house much more powerful).

It is worth emphasizing once more that this “total invasion” is connected to the existing order - this very threatened father does not feel entitled to complain about the violence of the tenants as long as they pay the rent. In a moment in which his exalted wife complains of the threatening situation, of the disorder and disrespect to public "peace" and to the decency in the neighborhood, he says, "They can do whatever they want — they are in their house." Valter, who is bleeding after being hit by a stone of a boy in the street, *formulates the impossibility of*

formulating the invasion of his life (by the neighbors? by the media? by the consumption? by the deregulation of the limits between good and bad, legitimate and illegitimate, in a picture in which such parameters can't no longer deal with the problem?). He states, "The confusion is the noise." He falters, searches for other words and later speaks aloud, "The confusion is the confusion."

Valter's perspective is completed with that of his wife who is always peering at the tenants through the kitchen window. In his imagination, as he sees her looking at the tenants, there is some desire between her and them. In an imaginary scene, he is the one who watches through the kitchen window and sees a girl hanging out some clothes on the clothes line and it is his wife leaving the domestic activity for being closer to the naked chest of one of the tenants without a skirt on.

At the end of the film, as I've mentioned, the game of seeing is again, and more decidedly, inverted: the wife sees Valter entering the house next door and observing the scene of the crime, still full of blood. When he looks at her from the house where the tenants killed the neighbor, that is, changing places with the criminals, she smiles at him in a sensual way. In the subjective camera, the father, who sees the woman looking at him with desire, turns virile, as if he had experienced for the first time in the film the sensation of security that he had not found at his precarious workplace, at school (who his friends say will amount to nothing), or at home. We, the audience, go from identification with the stunned look of the father (related to the sense of property and to the idea that disorder is backed) to identification with a potential criminal, someone who becomes strong in Valter's and his wife's eyes (since it is he who imagines her desire).

The image of a low-class worker who is subjected to a hard daily life of precarious work and is constantly threatened by powerful people (criminals or otherwise) finds its powerful double by the end of the film. We become powerless spectators of these options given by the unbridled capitalistic society — stunned spectator or potential criminal — but we are invited to refuse both roles, failing to become small dogs and safeguarding our small territories of confinement.

Finally, I'd like to emphasize another provocation by Sérgio Bianchi: the film was conceived and made during the second term of Lula's government, when the promise of a government for the poor — which should face the urgent need for redistribution of income in the country — was left behind in the name of financial interests, which are always higher than the

social urgencies. The depoliticized worker, who wonders how to be a part of social issues or makes profit from the violent *status quo*, is an image of the lower-middle class that reiterates barbaric order; nonetheless, he can also be read as a double of the worker president after betraying his commitments to his class.

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Robert Graves and Aggelos Sikelianos: Apostles of a New Religion

Dionysious Psilopoulos

This article bridges the poetry of the British poet Robert Graves (1895-1985) and that of the Modern Greek poet Aggelos Sikelianos (1884-1951), and discusses their similar vision of bridging the cultures and the differences of nations and peoples by uniting them in a religion of love and unity—that of the Mother Goddess. Even though the two poets were not aware of each other’s literary work, both were Muse poets who were well versed in Greek mythology, specifically the Orphic esoteric current, and shared an admiration for ancient Greek principles. Inspired by the Goddess, both poets believed that they were the harbingers, prophets, or priests of the religion of the Goddess, and rebelled against the morals, moral anarchy, and mental confusion of their era. Both poets believed that institutionalized Christianity no longer satisfied the religious needs of the people because it had given birth to the pseudo-cult of Mammon, which Graves defines as a “self-sufficient and conscienceless god” in his work, *Difficult Questions, Easy Answers* (193). He believed that Christianity was debased to such an extent that it could no longer be considered a religion. Both poets believed that the schism in the human consciousness, which took place when patriarchy superseded matriarchy, resulted in the disruption of the balance. Both poets struggled to restore this balance between the male and the female and to lead them back to the warm embrace of the religion of the Goddess that would unite all people to a spiritual brotherhood. As Sikelianos observes, “There must be a bridge, a causeway, between those who see and those who only feel. There must be an interchange between the lungs and the heart, or both will perish” (qtd. in *Upward Panic* 65). Through an examination of selected poems by Robert Graves including “A Boy in Church,” “Outlaws,”

“Rhea,” “Knobs and Levers,” “The White Goddess,” “The Return of the Goddess,” and “Instructions to the Orphic Adept,” as well as selected works by Sikelianos, such as his play *The Dithyramb of the Rose*, the poem “The Sacred Road,” as well as the two Delphic Festivals organized by Sikelianos and his wife Eva in 1927 and 1930, this article will argue that these poets defined a similar vision that related to the worship of the matriarchal principle. For Graves, this vision was embodied by the resurrection of the original European religion, that of the Great Triple Moon Goddess, while Sikelianos envisioned the revival of what he called the “universal principles,” which exist in the inner essence of human beings, striving to bring together all those “who see clearly, beyond all dogma, the inner truth and unity” (qtd. in *Upward Panic* 59), and initiating them into the religion of the Mother Idea, or Universal Enotheism or religion of the Mother Earth.

In *Robert Graves: The Lasting Poetic Achievement*, Carter observes that Graves “has undertaken the Herculean task of sweeping away three thousand years of a male-dominated civilization that has gone disastrously awry, in order to fetch us back to the orderliness, warmth and comfort of the matrilineal hearth” (16). Graves’ poetry inevitably reflects his lifelong struggle to reinstate the matriarchal, antithetical spirit in the world. For Graves, poetry becomes a way of life, an initiatory medium to express his inner intuitive self and to protect against the patriarchal, abstract primary spirit. In “The Case for Xanthippe,” Graves asserts that for him, poetry is a “peculiar attitude to life . . . a practical, humorous, reasonable way of being ourselves, of never acquiescing in a fraud; of never accepting the second-rate in poetry, painting, music, love, friends, of safeguarding our poetic institutions against the encroachments of mechanized, insensate, inhumane, abstract rationality” (*The Crane Bag* 67).

In *Robert Graves*, Cohen claims that Graves' place in the English poetic tradition is "an isolated one. Not only has he never been a member of a school or followed any prevailing fashion, but even in generation he stands alone, too young to have experienced the impact of Continental Symbolism which struck W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot, and Edwin Muir" (3). Even though Graves did not belong to any school of poetry, his position in poetry is not an isolated one, despite Cohen's argument. In "Preface to a Reading of New Poems at the University of Michigan," Graves confesses to his audience, "In the present confused state of literature, I probably rank as a traditionalist; but not as one who opposes innovations in poetic technique" (*Steps* 236). Graves was a traditionalist as well as a Romantic, but he was also a Muse poet—one who declared war on the patriarchal spirit and allegiance to the cult of the Great Goddess.

As a Muse poet, Graves believed that the poets are the priests of the cult of the Mother Goddess, and axiomatically have the right to become the world's potential leaders. According to this ideology, poets also have the power to revive the cult of the Goddess and help humanity advance to the coming antithetical age. For Graves, the Muse poets are those who "understand what is happening and what is at stake, even more clearly perhaps than historians and anthropologists" (*Oxford Addresses on Poetry* 12-13), and that they can "change the present disagreeable climate of human thought" (*Oxford Addresses on Poetry* 78).

Graves scholars agree on the impact of the Mother Goddess on Graves' poetry. In *Robert Graves*, Cohen states, "The White Goddess is so closely connected with his poetry that it cannot be considered on its own" (1). Furthermore, in *Swifter than Reason*, Day claims, "The reader who makes no attempt to understand what the Goddess means to Graves cannot hope to understand his best poetry" (xiii). Graves' obsession with the cult of the Goddess should not be

considered an isolated and eccentric preoccupation in Graves' life, but a natural consequence of his serious investigation into the history of religion and mythology to discover spiritual values.

As I have argued in my article, "Robert Graves, the Esoteric Tradition, and the New Religion," Graves' disillusionment with patriarchal Christianity, a religion that, for Graves, was responsible for the establishment of duality and, consequently, of disorder and imbalance in the human soul, drove him to the ancient European religion of the Great Goddess. Graves considered this religion to be the ultimate solution to the spiritual crisis of modern times, and one that would re-establish the severed spiritual link between humanity and the divine. Graves' fixation with religion and his alienation from the patriarchal god can be discerned in his early poetry, particularly in his 1917 collection *Fairies and Fusiliers*. In "A Boy in Church," Graves expresses his doubts over the influence of Christian ritual on worshippers, and points to the alienation of the Christian Church from nature. The Christian ritual, described as "gabble," does not touch the heart of the young boy who hears the mass. In fact, the boy "hardly hears the tuneful bubble, / Not knowing nor much caring whether/ The text is praise or exhortation, / Prayer or thanksgiving, or damnation" (3-6). The Church is described as an unnaturally quiescent place, with pews that "never shiver . . . never bend or sway or lurch" (15-16). This is an ideal place "for dreams and thinking, / Lolling and letting reason nod, / With ugly serious people linking/ Sad prayers to a forgiving God . . ." (25-28). However, the quiescence and rationality of the church are inconsistent with the restlessness and irrationality of nature and the outside world:

Outside [the Church] it blows wetter and wetter,

The tossing trees never stay still.

I shift my elbows to catch better
 The full round sweep of heathered hill.
 The tortured corpse bends to and fro
 In silence like a shadow-show. (7-12)

The nature-god's response to the prayers of the "ugly serious people" is not a blessing, but a "damb blast [which] sets the trees swaying/ With furious zeal like mad men praying" (23-24). Graves' thorough investigation into the history of Christianity compelled him to characterize Christian dogma as misleading and to turn his attention to the old gods. In the nightmarish atmosphere of "Outlaws," which Carter asserts as "one of Graves' earlier steps on the road to the Goddess" (119), Graves presents the old gods, who were driven underground for about three thousand years, as once again eager to emerge and rule humanity's religious consciousness. The poem reads,

Ambushed in shadow beyond sight
 The outlaws lie.
 Old gods, tamed to silence, there
 In the wet woods they lurk,
 Greedy of human stuff to snare
 In nets of murk. (3-8)

For though creeds whirl away in dust,

Faith dies and men forget,

These aged gods of power and lust

Cling to life yet-

Old gods almost dead, malign,

Starving for unpaid dues:

Incense and fire, salt, blood and wine

And a drumming muse. (17-24)

In “Outlaws,” Graves approaches the old gods in a diffident manner, groping his way towards the cult of the Great Goddess. Despite the terror and awe the old gods inspire, it seems that Graves is on their side by “acknowledging their past splendor and the fact that they have not yet become entirely extinguished” (Carter 121). The old gods finally merged in Graves' mind into the figure of the Great Goddess. As Graves reveals in “Rhea,” originally published in *Collected Poems 1975*, the cult of the Goddess has not been extinguished, but driven underground, waiting for the right moment to reappear in the world. Graves describes the Goddess in the following lines:

Discrete she lies,

Not dead but entranced, dreamlessly

With slow breathing, her lips curved

In a half-smile archaic, her breast bare,

Hair astream. (4-8).

In “Knobs and Levers,” which is featured in *Poems 1970-1972*, Graves declares the loss of the god, who is characteristically “shot while running away,” (1) and displaced by the evil principle Mammon, or element of Usura, who has appropriated the Christian faith, led humanity to a spiritual anarchy, and turned individuals to “ancillary knobs or levers / With no Law to reverence nor faith to cherish” (8-9). Moreover, Graves expresses his conviction that this dehumanization and loss of religious faith will inevitably cause “a full-scale break-down implemented / By famine and disease” (14-15). Despite the dire consequences induced by Mammon, the end of “Knobs and Levers” is optimistic, since Graves predicts the return of the Goddess to the religious consciousness of the people. He writes, “God died; clearly the Devil must have followed. / But was there not a Goddess too, God’s mother?” (17-18).

In “The White Goddess,” Graves declares his adherence to the Great Goddess, and asserts that the Muse poets’ mission is to rebel against the patriarchal spirit, which encourages mediocrity; to disdain the old morality and norms of patriarchal society; and to bring forth the Goddess. Graves confesses:

All saints revile her, and all sober men

Ruled by the God Apollo’s golden mean

In scorn of which we sailed to find her

In distant regions likeliest to hold her

Whom we desired above all things to know,

Sister of the mirage and echo. (1-6)

.....

Seeking her out at the volcano's head,

Among pack ice, or where the track had faded

Beyond the cavern of the seven sleepers (9-11)

In "The Return of the Goddess," it seems that the Goddess of the Seven Stars is awake and ready to replace patriarchy. The god is dead and the whole of nature fearfully invokes the Goddess, who finally appears in the shape of a crane thirsting for revenge, taking humanity violently under her wing once more:

Under your Milky Way

And slow-revolving Bear

Frogs from the alder thicket pray

In terror of your judgement day,

Loud with repentance there.

The log they crowned as king

Grew sodden, lurched and sank;

An owl floats by on silent wing

Dark water bubbles from the spring;

They invoke you from each bank.

At dawn you shall appear,
 A gaunt red-legged crane,
 You whom they know too well for fear,
 Lunging your beak down like a spear
 To fetch them home again. (1-15)

Graves believed that the Muse poets, being the priests and prophets of the Goddess, are responsible for the coming of the cult of the Great Goddess. Psychologically speaking, the poet succeeds in bringing forth a new divinity, a new state of consciousness, because the Goddess succeeds in assimilating the opposites in her soul. The poet turns his attention within, communicates with his shadow—his rival, his “blood brother,” and his “other self”—acknowledges its importance, sacrifices his ego, his personality, in favor of his other half, thus liberating himself from the bondage of duality and discovering the state of unity represented by the Mother Goddess. The birth of the new divinity, or divine child, in the human soul constitutes the answer to the problem of the Wheel mentioned in Graves' *The White Goddess*: “Must all things swing round again forever? Or how can one escape from the Wheel?” (135). Graves believes that the solution lies in the cult of the Great Goddess. Specifically, he affirms that the individual who desires liberation from the wheel—that is, desires to dissolve duality—should undertake an initiation that will lead him to the realm of the goddess Persephone. The initiate in the process of this initiation should not forget to “refuse to drink the water of cypress-shaded Lethe however thirsty one might be, to accept water only from the sacred . . . pool of Persephone, and thus to become immortal Lords of the Dead, excused further Tearings-to-Pieces, Destructions, Resurrections and Rebirths” (135). Thus, initiated into the mysteries of the

Mother, the individual escapes the Wheel and becomes axiomatically the “acknowledged legislator of the world.” In “Instructions to the Orphic Adept,” Graves describes part of the ceremony of initiation into the mysteries of the Great Goddess at Samothrace. The initiate is warned to avoid drinking from the spring of “forgetfulness.” Graves writes, “Though all the common rout rush down to drink / Avoid this spring!” (12-13) and the initiate is encouraged to drink from the spring of “memory.” Before he is allowed to drink from the pool, the initiate declares his allegiance to the cult of the Great Goddess:

Out of the Pure I come, as you may see.
 I also am of your thrice-blessed kin,
 Child of the three-fold Queen of Samothrace;
 Have made full quittance for my deeds of blood,
 Have been by her invested in sea-purple,
 And like a kid have fallen into milk.
 Give me to drink, now I am parched with thirst,
 Give me to drink! (31-38)

At this stage, the initiate realizes that the mysteries of the Goddess represent a way “out of the weary wheel, the circling years, / To that still, spokeless wheel: —Persephone” (40-41). Once the initiate drinks from the pool of memory and reasserts his link with the Great Goddess, then he becomes one of the

Lord[s] of the uninitiated
 Twittering ghosts, Hell’s countless populace-
 To become heroes, knights upon swift horses,

Pronouncing oracles from tall white tombs

By the nymphs tended. (49-53)

And this is precisely how Sikelianos felt of himself: a visionary, a prophet pronouncing oracles from the temple of Apollo at Delphi during the Delphic festivals of 1927 and 1930. Like Graves, Sikelianos shared Graves' belief that humans have lost their touch with the sacredness of nature and the holiness of Mother Earth; they have suppressed the mystic pulse of the universe in their hearts and become slaves to matter and the cult of Mammon.

As a successor of Kostis Palamas, Sikelianos is certainly a Romantic. He shared with Kazantzakis and Varnalis the conviction that the poet has a role to play in society and that the poet is a prophet and creator. Sikelianos followed the visionary romanticism of Solomos, and became the first Greek poet to systematically use free verse, and was the first to dispense altogether with both rhyme and formal metre. Born on the island of Leukas to a historical family on July 24, 1884, Sikelianos was another poet touched by the Goddess. Disillusioned by patriarchal religions and dogmatic polytheism and monotheism, Sikelianos becomes the apostle of a new religion that would be called universal enotheism. He cryptically refers to this religion as the Mother Idea, an idea that human beings have forgotten and related to the great principles of the Hellenic civilization.

Sikelianos wanted to awaken the memory of the Mother Earth to restore unity in the fragmented human psyche. To achieve this end, he conceived of the Delphic idea of bringing all the nations of the world together in an intellectual league with headquarters at Delphi. It was a call for peace—a call for unity for all the people and their return to nature and Earth. It is not accidental that he chose Delphi for the Delphic festivals since the first oracle there was dedicated to the Mother Earth, whose worship was degenerated and, according to Sikelianos, restored later

by Doric Orphism. In the ancient years Delphi was the religious and educational center of Greece. It was the first League of Nations, a political center where the neighboring states formed political confederations. It was the only serious attempt to peacefully unite the peoples of the East and the West through art, the theatre, religious ceremonies, and athletic contests. Sikelianos believed that people would go to Delphi to be purified and get in touch with the Mother Idea, the Mother Earth Herself. He wanted to establish a new intellectual aristocracy that would meet at Delphi, become the spiritual leaders of the world, and lead humanity to a path paved exclusively by love and beauty. Sikelianos organized the Delphic festivals together with his American wife, Eva Palmer. Palmer and Sikelianos achieved the impossible. For the first time, after thousands of years, they managed to stage ancient drama in its original setting and recreate the full religious atmosphere. The ecstatic international audience watched *Prometheus Unbound* and *Iketides*, as well as the associated spectacles of an ancient Greek festival, such as athletic games that were held in the stadium. Sikelianos's ultimate idea was also to establish a university at Delphi that would include departments in philosophy, drama, music, traditional dances, handicrafts, textile arts, athletics, and agriculture. In fact, he wanted to revive the arts and traditions of ancient Greece, including the development of drama and music. He envisioned a united world flooded by the light of ancient Greek beauty. A few weeks before her death in May of 1952, James Binder of *The Athens News* interviewed Palmer. Palmer asserts that the "deepest manifestation of the Delphic Idea, was the idea for the creation of a centre of the human spirit, a centre where all the peoples of the world might gather and communicate with each other in the interests of bringing about a universal brotherhood among men."

Sikelianos, a deeply religious man, wanted to reconcile the human and the divine to prove that there is a continuity, or a connection, between Christianity and the ancient Greek

civilization. In his tragedy, the *Dithyramb of the Rose*, Sikelianos wanted to unite the past with the present, to bring forth the unity of the Goddess, symbolized by the Rose. As he comments in his prologue, the Rose is a symbol that unites and resolves the conflicts. It was for thousands of years in the shadow, as it represents the highest and most difficult initiation that humans and nations could endure. Sikelianos declares that the Rose is slowly emerging in our times, and that it has already been reborn in his soul, and with his poetic logos he communicates it to his fellow human beings. Sikelianos resurrects the Rose-Logos in his Orphic tragedy, and as already mentioned, he believed that Doric Orphism renewed the worship of the Mother Goddess. Indeed, even though the sun plays the most significant role in the Orphic teachings, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of the Great Goddess in the Orphic Hymns. There is a specific hymn that is dedicated to the Mother of Gods,²² according to which the respectful (σεμνή), and πολώνυμη Θεά, that is the Goddess with the multiple names, is the one who dominates the earth, the sea and the rivers, and who is also responsible for the birth of the mortals.

The Mother of Gods is also associated with the Goddess Earth and the Night, who are also praised as the mothers of the gods and the mortals.²³ In *Orpheus and the Greek Religion*, Guthrie asserts that the “position of Night in the Rhapsodic Theogony is remarkable” (102). Night was not only the Mother of the gods and the mortals, but also the cause and the initial source of everything. Indeed, according to the Orphic Theogony, Night, or the absolute darkness, was the first entity that existed in the universe. Sikelianos glorifies the Night in his tragedy and considers her as the initial source of the primeval light. From Night, the egg was

²² Orphic Hymn xxvii.

²³ See the Orphic Hymns to Night (iii) and Gea (xxvi) respectively.

laid, and as Guthrie asserts, the egg “was laid by Night unaided by any male partner” (94). From the egg we have the birth of Eros, who is also called Phanes. Phanes, as the name indicates, is the Helios or sun, and is also associated with Dionysos, Zeus, and Apollo as the Orphic fragments²⁴ amply indicate. All these names reflect the son of the Mother Goddess, the child of the Mother alone, who is, like Dionysos, a composite being who encompasses both male and female qualities.

It seems that Phanes or Dionysos is the primeval or alien god that the Gnostics also refer to. If we take a closer look at the myth of Dionysos, the god of the Orphics, then we realize that Dionysos is the god who encompasses the qualities of both religions: the matriarchal religion of the Pelasgians, and the patriarchal religion of the Olympian gods. Dionysos was the divinity that united these two opposite religious trends. According to the myth and the Orphic tradition, Dionysos is “διφυής” (of double nature or form) and “διγονος” or “διγενής” (twice-born).²⁵ Moreover, Apollonius names Dionysos “the child of the double door,”²⁶ (διθύραμβος) referring, of course, to the double birth of the god. Dionysos was the product of the god Zeus and Semele, the daughter of King Cadmus of Thebes. Semele or Selene (the moon), or Thyone or Themele (the foundation), represents the Great Goddess, and generally the matriarchal religion of the Pelasgians overpowered by the patriarchal religion of the returning Greeks. Semele was six months pregnant with Dionysos when her secret lover Zeus, trapped by his jealous wife Hera, appeared to her in all his glory amidst thunder and lightning. Semele was consumed in the flames, but the child Dionysos was saved by Hermes and was placed in the thigh of his father

²⁴ See fragments 4,5,7,9,28.

²⁵ See the Orphic Hymn to Dionysos (XXX).

²⁶ Iv.1137.

Zeus for the remaining three months of the gestation. Thus, Dionysos is twice-born; he is not only the child of the Mother alone, but he also becomes the child of the Father, and assumes immortality by his immortal Father. Graves' interpretation of the myth of Dionysos is that the latter “began, probably, as a type of sacred king whom the goddess ritually killed with a thunderbolt in the seventh month from the winter solstice” (*The Greek Myths* 14.4). However, with the predominance of the Olympian gods, this matriarchal tradition ends, and Zeus, who affirms his power over the Goddess, “takes the doomed king under his own protection, and destroys the goddess with her own thunderbolt” (*The Greek Myths* 14.5).

With the introduction of Dionysos in his *Theogony*, Orpheus does not aim at the destruction of the Goddess, but at the synthesis between the two opposing religious ideologies. We should not forget that Dionysos, unlike Orpheus, had managed to bring his mother, Semele, back to life, reinstating, symbolically, his requisite respect for the feminine principle. Dionysos was “δικέπων” (horned), and as a child he was crowned with snakes; he was both male and female, both Iakchos and Bakchos. The masculine “I” in I-akchos suggests the patriarchal spirit, or the spirit or energy in general, and B-akchos consequently represents the matter, or the mother, as the feminine “B” indicates. Thus, Dionysos becomes the catalyst that brings together the human and the divine, the matter and the spirit, the wine and the Eleusinian wheat or bread. He is the god responsible for the superb civilization that the Greeks created, a civilization that could only be produced as a result of the synthesis between the two eternal opposites: the male and female; the matter and the spirit; the soul and the body; the matriarchal religion of the Pelasgians and the patriarchal Olympian religion of the invading Greeks. It was a synthesis that was superbly manifested in the ancient Greek world generally by the esoteric Eleusinian Mysteries of the Great Goddess, and the exoteric patriarchal religion of the Olympian Zeus; thus,

the synthesis that was so masterfully expressed in the Orphic religion of Dionysos Zagreus could only be communicated through the Mysteries—the chthonic Eleusinian Mysteries of the Great Goddess, and the solar Orphic Mysteries. In other words, this knowledge could not be disseminated through the exoteric, prevalent religion of the Olympian gods; rather, it was meant only for the initiates of the chthonic and solar esoteric traditions. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, the transmitter of the chthonic esoteric tradition, the synthesis was embodied in the figure of the Mother Goddess. On the other hand, in the solar, the synthesis was embodied in the figure of Dionysos, who was equated with the sun or Helios, or Apollo or Zeus.

However, it seems that this remarkable attempt of Orpheus to unite the two alien forces, and to institute a religion that would reconcile the old Pelasgian cult of the Goddess and the new religion of the Olympian gods, was not destined to last for long. Dionysos, this complete or “whole” god, was not meant to rule forever. According to the Orphic tradition, Phanes or Dionysos united with Night and the Titans were consequently created, and from the Titans, Zeus was created. Zeus, the strict patriarchal principle, who in the Orphic iconography appears as a serpent god, desires to be the monocrator of the universe and devours Phanes. As we have seen according to one version of the myth, Orpheus was killed by the Maenads, the adherents of the Mother Goddess, for having allegedly betrayed the cult of the Mother Goddess. However, there is another version that claims Orpheus was struck down by a thunderbolt thrown by Zeus.²⁷

²⁷ See the epigram of Diogenes Laertios referring to Orpheus quoted by Guthrie in Orpheus and Greek Religion, p.65.

Orphism, thus, is not just a religious heresy, but a complete esoteric religious system, whose teachings complimented the methodology of the exoteric patriarchal religion of the Olympian gods. The Orphic esoteric current provided the foundations of science and philosophy, as well as the monotheistic doctrine.

This is the esoteric current that Sikelianos desired to revive. Sikelianos made it clear in the *Dithyramb of the Rose* that his allegiance is to the Sun behind the Sun. Even though he prays to Apollo, the son of the Goddess, he is aware that it is the Mother Goddess who has the real power. Orpheus prays to Apollo, the sun, but he is aware that “Behind you, even though she is shaded by your light, I can perceive your Mother, the Holy Night, embracing you.” “I am her son too,” Orpheus adds, and “I am your brother, but how can one know the son, if he will not meet the mother first” (21-22 my translation). In his tragedy Orpheus appears as a Christ-like figure. Like Christ, he is a warrior of Light and The Carrier of Love; he is an initiate who had "managed to unite himself with the universal rhythm.

Unlike Christ, however, at the eve of his pathos he prays to the Mother Goddess and not to the Father. “Oh Mother,” he cries, “give me the strength to inspire in the souls of those who do not know you the mystery of the Rose, to take them step by step to the holy peak” (22-23 my translation). At the peak of the mountain, the Goddess will also be metamorphosed; she will shed her dark cloths and her forlorn look, and will appear pale, silent, and dressed in white. At the beginning Orpheus announces to his disciples that he is about to climb the mountain of Pagaion alone, reach its peak and surrender the mystic rose to the hands of Apollo. He has to carry the hundred-petalled Rose without anger in his soul, filled by its miracle and by its holy symmetry, even though he is about face the ultimate sacrifice in the hands of the Maenads, who wish to steal the rose from his hands. At the end, after sharing a holy communion with their master, the

disciples of Orpheus, like the disciples of Christ, and also like Criton, the disciple of Socrates in the Platonic dialogue, cower in front of their master's sacrifice. Nonetheless, they all swear to keep the secret heritage of Orpheus, to water the Rose with all their blood and spread its message to the people. It is the rose that will break the chains that the tyrants put to the souls, the hands, and the feet of the people. Apollo has to acknowledge the power of the Mother, receive the Rose, and kill the ancient serpent that tyrannizes humanity.

Three years after the *Dithyramb of the Rose*, Sikelianos created another Orphic poem titled "The Sacred Road." In this poem, he reveals his affinity for the religion of the Mother Goddess. In "The Sacred Road," the poet assumes the role of the Hierophant, the revealer of the sacred logos, and is on his way to Eleusis via the sacred road that the ancient initiates walked to reach the temple of Demeter to become initiated at the Mysteries of the Goddess. He writes, "I walked alone at dusk along the road that starts / at Athens and for its destination has/the sanctuary at Eleusis—the road/ that for me was always the Soul's road" (7-11).

As the poet initiate rests on a stone, he encounters a gypsy who drags two "heavy-footed bears," who are an enchained mother and her child. The Mother Bear clearly represents the Mother Goddess, "the primordial image of the Great Goddess, / the Eternal Mother, sacred in her affliction, / who, in human form, was called Demeter/ here at Eleusis, where she mourned her daughter, / and elsewhere, where she mourned her son,/ was called Alceme or the Holy Virgin" (38-43). The chained bear, or the Goddess, becomes a symbol of "all the primaeval suffering for which,/ throughout the human centuries the soul's/ tax has still not been paid. Because the soul/ has been and still is in Hades" (68-71). Indeed, the chained Mother describes perfectly the fragmentation of the human soul, the slavery of the human soul, and the suffering and the pain we all experience away from the embrace of the Mother. The poet wonders, "Will the time, the

moment ever come when the bear's soul / and the gypsy's and my own, that I call initiated / will feast together?" (83-86). The poem ends with a note of optimism as the poet perceives the pity that the Mother Bear shows for her innocent child, and feels certain that she will break the chains of history and liberate her child, or the soul of the initiated poet, from suffering. Indeed, a murmur "is spread through all the air," saying that "it will come" (98). The time will come when all the souls will be once again united in the divine breath of the Eternal Mother.

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An Italian jurist in Shakespeare's England: Alberico Gentili's theories on the London stage

Cristiano Ragni

For the many people who had to flee their homelands because of political or religious reasons in the sixteenth century, England was an ideal destination. The country was in the middle of far-reaching transformations that would lead it to become a first-class power in Europe, and its capital city, London, offered many opportunities to all the people swarming there from every corner of the continent. Despite the notorious feelings of antipathy, the English often showed towards these immigrants – sometimes resulting in episodes of crude and open xenophobia – Queen Elizabeth and her counsellors encouraged their arrival [1]. As a matter of fact, the English government immediately understood the great potentialities represented by these refugees. In terms of cultural and technological advancements, England was somewhat behind the times with respect to the other European countries. Thus, the arrival of people from the continent – especially from France, Italy or the Flanders – meant the arrival of new, much-needed ideas and skills. These intellectuals, merchants, artisans and technicians would greatly compensate for the patent English shortcomings – or so at least the government hoped. It therefore comes as no surprise that from the mid-1500s on, the Crown passed various edicts aimed at regulating the status of these “aliens,” or strangers, in the country, to keep the aforementioned xenophobia at bay. This is evident in the Edict issued by the Court of Aldermen on March 9, 1575:

The masters of all London companies are warned to take order that neyther they nor any of there seruants shall in any wyse mysuse, dysturbe or evell entrete any

the strangers within the Citie but shall quyetlie suffre them to pass in & oute aboute there busyness without let or vexacion upon payne of disfranchisement (qtd. in Hunt Yungblut 43).

As a fortunate consequence of the government's protection, the different foreign communities found it quite easy to settle down in London and prosper.

Among the most conspicuous immigrant groups was the Italian community. This group mostly consisted of refugees *religionis causa*, or those who had to flee Italy because of the religious persecution against non-Catholics. The flourishing community gathered around Michelangelo Florio, a theologian who had been elected pastor of the Reformed Church for Italian-speakers thanks to the favour of both Bishop Thomas Cranmer and of the Secretary of State William Cecil. Michelangelo Florio was also the father of the more famous John Florio, who is nowadays renowned for his translation of Montaigne's *Essays* and the first English-Italian dictionary [2]. It was in 1580 that this community welcomed the arrival of Alberico Gentili. Commonly considered the father of modern international law, Gentili can be considered as a perfect example of someone who created a "bridge" between two cultures. The aim of this paper is indeed to show how his ideas and his Italian background had a deep impact both on the culture and the politics of the Elizabethan Age (Ragni 81-89).

Born in the town of San Ginesio (Ancona), in what was then the eastern region of the Papal States, Gentili was a jurist and an expert in Civil Law. After graduating from the University of Perugia in 1572, he started working as a lawyer and judge between Ascoli Piceno and his hometown. However, since he belonged to a family of early Protestants who lived in the lands of the papacy, he should not have expected things to go on smoothly for long. His family soon

attracted the attention of the Catholic inquisition, and Alberico, together with his father and younger brother, had to leave the country. After brief stays in Slovenia and Germany, where his brother Scipione decided to settle down, Alberico and his father arrived in London [3]. Thanks to Michelangelo Florio's network of acquaintances, Gentili became acquainted with some of the most important politicians and intellectuals in England. In particular, he gravitated to the cultural and political circles of the poet Sir Philip Sidney, the new Secretary of State Francis Walsingham and the Queen's favourite, Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester. It was by the kind intercession of the latter, Chancellor at Oxford University, that in November 1580 Gentili – “a stranger, and learned, and an exile for religion,” as Dudley addressed him in his letter to the University board (qtd. in Panizza “Alberico Gentili” 42) – was appointed Reader of Civil Law.

Gentili was one of the few experts in Roman law available on English soil. In fact, his Italian education led to his immediate involvement in some of the main debates taking place in England at the time. Even though Roman law – together with Canon law – had been abolished following the Reformation, it remained nonetheless essential to solve everyday issues, such as marriage contentions (Minnucci “Silete Theologi” 25-61). Gentili always defended the usefulness of Roman civil law in daily life, as opposed to many English jurists who conversely referred to it as a mere attempt to show off their knowledge. As J. W. Binns rightly stated,

Th[e] approach of Gentili fits in with his primary interest, which was in the civil law as a useful working body of universal legal knowledge, valid for his own period. The humanist jurists, on the other hand, were simply turning civil law into an antiquarian study, a peg from which to hang their own classical erudition. (342)

It is not surprising, therefore, that Gentili would draw upon Roman law also when he became involved in the long-standing debate over drama that was raging in England at the end of the

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century. By that time, not only had Elizabethan drama asserted itself as a first-class literary and cultural phenomenon, but also as a unique social manifestation that reached people from all socio-economic classes. This is the reason why the control of such a far-reaching means of communication was at stake in the battle between the exponents of both politics and religion, who clearly realized how theatrical representations were crucial for the propaganda of their own ideas [4]. To quote Andrew Hadfield:

A strong case can be made that literature played a crucial role in constructing a public sphere before the advent of mass literacy, one in which the nation was not only debated but imagined and defined [...] literary works, especially drama, often represented and discussed matters of significant national import, such as the succession crisis, court scandals and key events. (“The Nation in the Renaissance” 135)

By the end of the century when the supporters of the Crown had established solid control of which plays were represented, the strictest clergymen, theologians and preachers counterattacked. The Puritans proved to be tireless attackers of every kind of play, not only the public ones but also those acted out in the more sophisticated ambience of universities [5]. Starting in the 1560s, an increasing number of their anti-theatrical pamphlets circulated in England, such as Stephen Gosson’s *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579) or Philip Stubbes’s *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), to name the most famous ones. Instead of claiming a control they could not yet aspire to, these Puritans began to criticise the immorality and ungodliness of the plays represented on the London stages more and more vehemently. For example, Stubbe’s wrote ,

For who will call him a wise man that playeth the part of a foole and a Vice? Who will call him a Christian who playeth the part of a Deuill, the sworne enemy of Christ? Who can call him a iust man that playeth the part of a dissembling Hypocrite? [...] Away therefore with this so infamous an Arte [...] (Stubbes 205)

Despite the strong replies by many well-known intellectuals and actors, this high-pitched opposition did not abate [6]. If these attacks had been nothing more than a literary *querelle*, they would have undoubtedly ended earlier and received much less attention. However, something much more serious was at stake under the surface of such unrelenting controversy. By attacking plays and actors, the Puritans were subtly demonstrating their radical opposition to the Queen and her government – the most important patrons of theatre. This opposition was rooted in the parties' conflicting religious and political opinions. On the one hand, Elizabeth I and her counsellors had been adopting a middle-ground policy; while aiming at strengthening the powers of the sovereign, they tried to mediate between the extremisms of both Catholics and Protestants and only promoted the formal acceptance of the official cult [7]. On the other hand, highlighting the limits of what they considered an ineffectual policy, the Puritans were eager to establish a truly reformed church, one as strict as that of Calvinist Switzerland (Collinson "Richard Bancroft" 13-38). Consequently, the Puritans were more than willing to wage holy wars against *all* Catholics; in their sermons and pamphlets, for instance, Spain was often referred to as "the Antichrist" or "Satan" himself (Baseotto 37-53). The considerable risk of such a strategy greatly preoccupied the Queen, who was instead trying to unify a kingdom where both Protestants and Catholics lived. Moreover, in accordance with their Swiss model, the Puritans also aimed for a political reorganization of the

country, which did not necessarily include a sovereign as head of State (Collinson 243-284 and Guy 126-149). This is why Elizabeth had already started to impose strict measures against Puritan extremists in the 1580s [8]. The ways in which these political and religious tensions underlay the latter's opposition to drama in the 1590s emerges unmistakably from the controversy that took place at Oxford University. Oxford was indeed one of the strongholds of the most tireless anti-theatre Puritans. It was there that the inflexible opposition of the eminent theologian John Rainolds led to the outbreak of a famous contention in which Alberico Gentili himself would end up being involved.

This controversy broke out in 1591, after the representations of William Gager's *Ulysses Redux* and his adaptation of Seneca's *Hippolytus*. At the end of the latter play, Gager – who was also a jurist at Oxford – added some scenes that he himself had written, introducing a character called Momus. While evoking the evil-spirited Greek god of censure, Gager's Momus was appelled as a theatre critic and ironically mocked a series of supposed flaws in the jurist's play. The irony lay not only in the fact that Momus's tirade had been written by Gager himself but, most significantly, that Momus's arguments were the same ones that had been previously asserted – but in a much graver tone – by John Rainolds (Gager F3v). After having been invited to see the aforementioned plays by Chancellor Thomas Thornton a few days earlier, Rainolds had declined the invitation, expressing his strict views on the illegitimacy of such theatrical representations. Consequently, once he was informed about Momus's monologue, the theologian immediately saw it as a direct attack on the part of Gager and wrote him a long letter asking for an explanation. He wrote, “How can it be avoided but I who had vttered those things against the plaies, though deeming them sound reasons, not rascal reproches, must think my selfe charged vnder the name of Momus?” (Rainolds 1-2). This was the first of a series of letters in which not only would he

blame Gager as a playwright, but he would also condemn all actors as vile and sinful and the cross-dressing they used as a perverting habit [9]. With a bitterness yet unseen in the English controversy, Rainolds ended up blaming a main element of drama itself, the *mimesis*. However, in condemning the dangers of identification that the audience could undergo when watching a play, Rainolds also implicitly recognized its undeniable power. To put it in Tanya Pollard's words:

What it is striking about [these writings] is the radical power accorded to the theatre by its early commentators: a far-reaching power affecting mind, body and soul. Both supporters and critics of the theatre shared a core belief in the weightiness of this power; in fact, their arguments rest fundamentally on it. ("Shakespeare's Theater" XI)

That same power Shakespeare himself would celebrate through Theseus's words in his *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turn them to shapes and give to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. [V, i, 12-17] (419)

By emphasizing instead how the plays performed in Latin in the universities helped students improve their knowledge of that language and its culture, Gager tried to defend the goodness of his plays. However, Rainolds did not back down and retaliated:

[...] evil affections might be stirred up by other parts than these: as namely by your new parts of Pandarus and Nais [in *Hippolytus*]. [...] I think your selfe if you pervuse advidedly this which I haue written, and diligently compare it with your *Ulysses Redux*, *Rivales* and *Hippolytus*, will take time of respite before you name as much as one inordinate passion; whereto I shall not quote at least one plaiers part, perhaps two, or three, that may be as oyle vnto the fire. Howbeit, had you proued the contrary hereof, yet is my conclusion entire, as I said, and your plaie svnlawfull: because it is vnlawfull to imitate and resemble any misbehaviour [...]

(118-120)

As Rainolds's attacks became fiercer, Gager simply stopped replying. It was at this point in July 1593 that Alberico Gentili stood up in defence of his friend and colleague. Yet friendship was not the only reason why he decided to confront the eminent theologian. As a matter of fact, just a few months before, Gentili himself had published a treatise in Latin in which he had defended both poetry in general and the legitimacy of theatrical representations for didactic purposes from the attacks they had been receiving for centuries.

Following his belief in the usefulness of Roman law in everyday situations, Gentili started his defence by commenting on a famous law of the *Code of Justinian* in his work *Commentatio ad Legem III Codicis de Professoribus et Medicis*. The mentioned law stated that, unlike doctors or

teachers, poets and actors should not enjoy immunities, since they were guilty of corrupting people's minds with their works. Gentili demonstrated the illegitimacy of such reasoning by instead highlighting the educational purposes of both poetry and drama. Echoing what Philip Sidney – whom he personally knew well – had written in his *Defence of Poesy*, the jurist defined poetry as “an instrument of active civil philosophy” through which citizens could tell good and evil apart thanks to “invented deeds and fictitious actions” created by poets and playwrights. Gentili wrote,

For poetry, like rhetoric, is an instrument of active civil philosophy. For through poets and poems it makes the morals of the citizens good. And just as rhetoric fulfils this function with words through orators, so does poetry through poets with invented deeds and fictitious actions [...] This is, it is clear, the end of true poetry.
(“Commentatio” 91)

As for drama, and comedies in particular, Gentili stated that it was precisely the often-humorous representation of human vices that kept the audience away from indulging in them. In this regard, he wrote that the theatrical disguises the actors employed – whose promiscuity the Puritan attackers used to condemn – was not something of which playwrights needed to be ashamed. Even the actors playing immoral roles could result in producing virtuous effects: they helped the members of the audience to identify themselves with the represented events, in this way freeing them of the depraved behaviours whose dangerous consequences they clearly saw on the stage. To support this theory, Gentili referred to the ancient concept of *mendacium officiosum*, the official falsehood which had been already defended by Horace and Lucretius. According to *mendacium*

officiosum, poets are like doctors who cure their patients by giving them medicaments dipped in honey to make them less bitter. As Gentili wrote, “Poets are doctors. They certainly cure through the emotions in a powerful way” (“*Commentatio*” 93).

Through such statements, Gentili’s not-so-covert opposition of the Puritan religious faction is evident. Indeed, his opposition dated back to an episode that happened a few years before. The Puritans who had polemicized against drama for years were also the same ones who had already attacked him for being “Machiavellicus” when, in his treatise *De legationibus*, Gentili distanced himself from the stereotypical image of Machiavelli circulating at the time in England and then celebrated the Italian statesman as a “defender of democracy” [10]. Such a fierce opposition, raised by Rainolds himself, would never be forgotten by Gentili, who clearly expressed his considerations about Puritans in the last part of his *Commentatio*. Here, while acknowledging the theologians’ authority on religious matters, the jurist disposed of them when it came to moral or political issues. He stated, “And I indeed, as I am greatly influenced by the authority of the theologians in matters of religion, so am I not greatly influenced by them in matters of morals or politics” (“*Commentatio*” 112). These lines re-emphasize that this was not merely a literary issue. It was a demonstration of two opposing world-visions facing each other in the fragile historical context of Europe’s wars of religion (Minnucci, “*Silete Theologi*” 129-172).

Since Rainolds must have already read the *Commentatio* when he began his correspondence with Gentili in July 1593; their correspondence was far from friendly from the very onset. The theologian immediately attacked the jurist for his impious considerations and particularly stressed how he could not tolerate to accept the *mendacium officiosum* as something good. For Rainolds, admitting that such a dubious practice as cross-dressing could have positive effects would mean legitimizing every kind of evil doing. His harshness is further explained by

the fact that he knew that Gentili was supporting such concepts, even in his treatise on war and international law. He stated, “[...] that which seemed to me the most crucial opinion of all, namely, that the abuse of evil is not evil but good, you indicate you will defend again in your books on war” (Markowicz 85). Rainold’s reference to Gentili’s *De iure belli* was not accidental, but is what reveals the true nature of his vehemence. Indeed, by a close reading of the letters between the two, one can easily understand how actors and stage-plays were but an excuse for Rainolds to confront Gentili on much more serious grounds: that of the moral principles regulating the relations between theology and jurisprudence within society. From Rainolds’s correspondence also emerges his deep concern about Gentili’s validation of the impious “official falsehood” from a legal point of view. The theologian obviously realized how the Italian jurist was thus creating a bridge for much more dangerous ideas to pass over. Behind Gentili’s defence, Rainolds saw the emergence of the theories of the impious Italian thinker who the jurist had celebrated before: Niccolò Machiavelli.

Indeed, even though Gentili had ceased to mention Machiavelli in his works after Rainolds’s first attacks to his *De legationibus*, the Florentine’s political ideas still supported his thought. This is evident both in the *Commentatio* and especially in the *De iure belli*, whose drafts had begun to circulate in the same years [11]. In his major treatise, Gentili took a firm and modern stance on war and on how States should wage it. Here, he asserted that wars were just contentions between public armies and, being just, they had to be grounded on just causes. The truly innovative aspect of Gentili’s theory was that, while commenting on these causes, he firmly excluded the religious ones. According to him, religion was not an issue in such conflicts. Even when he came to deal with the Catholic threat of a Spanish invasion of England, Gentili underscored how it was Spain’s outrageous expansionism that England had to fight back, not their religion. It was indeed the defence of one’s nation from a foreign attack that the jurist supported, not a holy war against

Spain's Catholicism. It was not coincidental that Gentili was the protégé of the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham. Among the Queen's political counsellors, these men were the most steadfast supporters of a stronger foreign policy against Philip II of Spain. Just as Gentili wrote, this one had to be defeated – they asserted – not by waging a holy war, but rather attacking his economic interests in the Americas. It was by adopting this winning foreign policy that the English – as Carl Schmitt also acknowledges – managed to divert the attention from the European wars of religion and lay the foundations of their empire [12]. Of course, such a political view aligned Gentili with Machiavelli and the other supporters of a “preventive” war. Indeed, they believed that if the security of the nation was at stake, a country should not wait to be attacked; its honour had to be defended as it was an essential element on which to build national unity. Gentili's views – just like those of the most important politicians of the time – were radically opposed to the Puritan idea of a holy war against non-reformed countries.

Being Europe torn to pieces by endless wars of religion, therefore, Gentili made a significant statement: religion had nothing to do with wars. Religion, according to the jurist, only involved the private relations between men and God, while war was a legal action taking place in the public sphere. It was jurisprudence, and not theology, that had to regulate such political issues. “Theology is teacher of faith and of life, but not of all life,” Gentili wrote to Rainolds in one of his letters (Markowicz 39). He stated this even more vehemently in his treatise on war, in which he exclaimed, “Silete theologi in munere alieno,” that is, “Be silent, theologians, in a matter which is not yours” (“De iure belli” 57). However, this did not mean that Gentili did not acknowledge the importance of religion. On the contrary, he wrote that religion “is a matter of the mind and of the will” and “appeal[s] to the hearts of men” (“De iure belli” 40-21 and 72). In other words, while refusing the intrusiveness of theologians in the public life, Gentili clearly supported what had been

the original social purpose of religions: to bring men together and unify them into one single nation. Machiavelli underscores this same purpose in *Discourses on Livy*, where he deals with the religion of the Romans. He writes,

[King Numa Pompilius], finding the people ferocious and desiring to reduce them to civil obedience by means of the arts of peace, turned to religion as the instrument necessary above all others for the maintenance of a civilized state [...] It will also be seen by those who pay attention to Roman history, how much Religion helped in the control of armies, in encouraging the plebs, in producing men good, and in shaming the bad. (50-52)

As Gentili wrote in the *De iure belli*, in order to build a strong and powerful nation, a sovereign had to rely on an efficacious foreign politics and on a skilful use of religion. Such a sovereign was also the only one who could decide to wage a public war to protect the safety and honour of their kingdom – but not in the name of any God. Theologians in general, and the Puritan ones, had to keep silent on such issues. Moreover, Gentili also made clear that the means used in politics to protect the nation should not always be necessarily legitimate, but rather effective. He stated, “A just and unavoidable necessity makes anything lawful” (“De iure belli” 351). In such a way, the jurist managed to raise the ambiguous moral category of “utility” to the same level of “honesty.”

In Rosanna Camerlingo’s words:

Rainolds understands perfectly that Gentili’s interpretation of Machiavelli’s famous principle [that good ends justify evil means] could lead to the moralization

of Machiavelli “impious” political science [...] Raising “evil doing” [...] to virtuous action, Gentili was inevitably raising the status of Machiavelli to the rank of a moral political thinker. (111)

Rainolds’s concern that Gentili’s views were Machiavellian was then justified when he attacked the jurist’s defence of *mendacium officiosum* in the *Commentatio* [13]. However, Rainolds’s strict Puritanism was undoubtedly far more disturbing to Elizabeth I than the *mendacium officiosum* defended by Gentili. As stated above, the Queen had endorsed a religious Reform mostly aiming at a formal acceptance of the official cult; she too had been using religion politically for years to maintain peace between Catholics and Protestants in her kingdom. To put it in Collinson’s words:

Queen Elizabeth’s church policy was not affected by her private religious opinions, which seem to have been those of a moderate protestant, held with the independence of a mind which was not possessed by any of the current orthodoxies [...] with Elizabeth, the queen often obscures the believer and the woman, and her conduct of church was above all *an act of statesmanship*. (29)

This is evidence that, while attacking Gentili, Rainolds was expressing his stern opposition to the Queen’s political circle, and – because of his belief in the superiority of religion over law and politics – to the Queen’s own policy. The harshness of this controversy was so painful that Gentili – who had previously experienced the effects of such religious fanaticism in Italy – even thought about leaving Oxford. In the end, however, he withstood and remained. Furthermore, when Rainolds decided to publish their correspondence in a treatise, *Th’Overthrow of Stage-Playes*,

Gentili chose instead to articulate his reasoning on such topics in two other works, the *Disputationes duae*. Both Rainolds's and Gentili's works were published in 1599. While Rainolds highlighted the dangers underlying the concept of the *mendacium officiosum*, what emerges from Gentili's *Disputationes* is a further defence of the same. This time, he specifically appealed to moderation; indiscriminate criticism and religious fanaticism – Gentili seems to claim – could lead to much more serious dangers for the nation than his “official falsehood” [14].

What this controversy demonstrates is the interrelation between politics, religion and drama in the Elizabethan age, and it is indisputable that Alberico Gentili played an active and influential role in these debates. Having established this, it is not surprising that such issues also resonate in the plays written by William Shakespeare, the greatest Elizabethan playwright. This is too wide a topic to be thoroughly analysed in a single paper, but a powerful example can be Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599). Here Shakespeare brought together poetry, war and foreign politics in the same year when the Oxford controversy was coming to a close and after the publication of Gentili's *De iure belli*. In this patriotic representation of a heroic and unified nation, not only did Shakespeare quite openly portray the reign of Elizabeth I ten years after the fortuitous defeat of the Spanish Armada, but he also apparently aligned himself with Gentili's theories of how to engage a just war and the necessity of a political use of religion [15]. Even though it cannot be proven that the playwright had actually read the jurist's works, it is nonetheless highly likely. With the publication of his *De iure belli*, Gentili took part in such a heated international debate on just war that it could have hardly been ignored by an intellectual such as Shakespeare (Hadfield, “Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics” 15-20). Moreover, the jurist had been also involved in the popular controversy on drama, which everyone working in that world of the theatre must have known well.

When portraying the historical war between England and France in *Henry V* – apparently following what were Gentili’s ideas – Shakespeare distanced himself from all the contemporary fanatics (both Catholic and reformed) who were encouraging the continuation of the wars of religion in Europe. The war that Shakespeare’s Henry V waged against France was not at all a holy war. It was fought, instead, to claim legally justifiable (although dubious) hereditary rights in accordance with the law of the nations. “[King Henry] wills you [...]” – the English ambassador told the French king – “that you divest yourself and lay apart | the borrowed glories that by gift of heaven, | *by law of nature and of nations*, longs to him and to his heirs [...] (II, iv, 76-81). In addition to that, after the provocative gift of tennis balls from the Dauphin, Henry V had a further element for his plan, in that he also had to defend the honour of its nation. Shakespeare had him address the French ambassador as follows,

But tell the Dauphin I will keep my state,
 be like a king and show my sail of greatness [...]
 I will rise there with so full a glory
 that I will dazzle all the eyes of France, [...]
 and tell the pleasant Prince this mock of his
 hath turned his balls to gun-stones [...] [I, ii, 274-283] (600)

By waging this foreign war, Henry took his dying father’s advice, as the audience had undoubtedly seen in the second part of Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*. There, the old king had told his son and heir that the only way to keep his kingdom together was to unify his subjects around a common purpose. The king stated, “[...] my Harry, | be it thy course to busy giddy minds | with foreign quarrels, that

action hence borne out | may waste the memory of the former days” (IV, iii, 341-344). To divert the internal divisions and the personal animosities among the English aristocrats, Henry had to occupy them in a foreign war against another nation threatening to invade their country. To build a powerful nation, as Gentili had written, successful foreign policy was needed. Shakespeare’s Henry V knew that well.

The other unifying element, as it has been shown, was religion. It was not accidental that the young king demonstrated his capacity to manipulate this element at will, before and after the decisive battle of Agincourt [16]. At first, on the eve of the battle, a disguised Henry underlined that each person’s conscience was a matter of the private relationship between God and the individual by firmly replying to his worried soldiers about the moral responsibilities of the king in a war. Henry stated, “Every subject’s duty is the King’s, but every subject’s soul is his own” (IV, i, 179). What emerges here is the support to the theory of the private dimension of everyone’s conscience that Elizabeth I and Richard Hooker had promoted and that Alberico Gentili had expressed both in his correspondence with Rainolds and in his *De iure belli* (Aquilecchia 376-393). For Henry V, the reassurance about both his soldiers’ souls and the outcome of the war did not lie in conscience of the king, but rather in their obedience to him. Indeed, the audience was shown that Henry’s conscience was all but clear. In a brief moment of solitary prayer, after dismissing the soldiers, the King asked a very pagan “God of battles” not to think “upon the fault | my father made in compassing the crown” (IV, i, 290-291). Thus, the memory of Richard II’s murder on the part of Henry IV eventually crippled the legal but already dubious cause that Henry V had invoked to wage his war. However, the English miraculously won at Agincourt and it was therefore *after* the unexpected victory that the King could publicly thank God for the outcome of the battle and rejoice, “Praised be God, and not our strength, for it” (HV, IV, vii, 83-84). The

audience perfectly knew that this success had to do more with luck than with God, but Shakespeare seemed to make explicit reference here to the idea of religion as a social bond; that is, the same concept that was found both in Machiavelli's *Discourses* and in Gentili's *De iure belli*. Even though, just before the battle, the charismatic Henry had created a powerful "rhetoric of the brotherhood" to unite his soldiers in the famous Saint Crispin Day's speech, Shakespeare knew that hereditary rights, courage and honour would ultimately not be enough to forge the nation (MacEachern 83-137 and Tosi 45-166). In order to do so, the king had to adopt his subjects' religion and declare the nation elected and its actions supported by God himself. Thus, his king eventually turned to the original, socially-binding element of religion because, as Gentili had acknowledged, it powerfully appealed "to the hearts of men" ("De iure belli" 72).

To conclude, Alberico Gentili's theories can be said to have been very important to the debates on some of the most relevant political and cultural issues in Elizabethan England. The fact that his ideas were given credit by the most important politicians and intellectuals of the age and that they even seem to resonate in Shakespeare's works is an example of how crucial the exchange between distinct cultures has always been for the political and cultural development of a country. Personalities such as Gentili were indeed pivotal in bridging cultures and allowing people to understand the similarities they shared. In particular, Gentili proved to be essential in providing a legal basis, grounded in Latin and Italian juridical traditions, to all those Englishmen who were trying to pacify the two religious factions fighting in England at that time. As Gentili claimed, both politicians and intellectuals knew well that to create national unity religion had to be taken only as an effective social bond, and not as a just cause of war. However, England would need to experience another civil war before accepting the lesson given by this "stranger, and learned, an exile for religion."

ENDNOTES

[1] For the presence of strangers in England and the episodes of xenophobia broken out in the Elizabethan Age, see Cunningham, William. *Alien Immigrants to England, London*. London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897. 17-148; Hunt Yungblut, Laura. *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us*. New York: Routledge, 1996. 10-14, 61-79; and Vigne, Randolph, and Littleton, Charles, eds. *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland and Colonial America, 1150-1750*. Brighton: The Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland and Sussex Academic Press, 2001. 1-54.

[2] For the Italian reformed community in London in the sixteenth century and the major role played by John Florio, see Wyatt, Michael. *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[3] Scipione Gentili (1563-1616) studied at the universities of Tübingen, Wittenberg and Heidelberg and would later become a high-esteemed law professor and legal writer all over Europe. For a complete and updated biography of Alberico Gentili, see Gause, Artemis. “Gentili, Alberico”. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 or Minnucci, Giovanni. “Gentili, Alberico”. *Dizionario Biografico dei Giuristi Italiani*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013.

[4] The English controversy over drama was characterized by many heated debates from the second half of the sixteenth century to the first decades of the seventeenth century. For further details, see among others Bevington, David. *Tudor Drama and Politics. A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning*. Cambridge – Massachussetts: Harvard University Press, 1968. 127-302;

Spinucci, Pietro. *Teatro elisabettiano. Teatro di Stato*. Firenze: Olschki, 1973; Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare & Co. Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Dekker, Ben Jonson, Thomas Middleton, John Fletcher and the Other Players in His Story*. London: Penguin, 2007. 7-8. EPUB file; Pallotti, Donatella, and Pugliatti, Paola, eds. *La guerra dei teatri. Le controversie sul teatro in Europa dal secolo XVI alla fine dell'Ancien Régime*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2008; Chambers, G. E. K. *The Elizabethan Stage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; Bate, Jonathan. *The Soul of the Age. The Life, Mind and World of William Shakespeare*. Chapter 1. London: Penguin, 2009. 1-15. EPUB file; and Pollard, Tania. "Audience Reception." *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare*. Ed. Arthur F. Kinney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 458-473.

[5] For further details on the English controversy over academic drama, see Schelling, F. E. *Elizabethan Drama 1558-1642*. v. II. Boston and New York: Archibald Constable & Co., 1908. 51-92; Boas, Frederick S. *University Drama in the Tudor Age*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914; Chambers, E. K. *The Elizabethan Stage*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 and to the more recent Fraser, Russel A. *The War Against Poetry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971; Binns, J. W. *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*. Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1990. 120-140; Nelson Alan H., ed. *Records of Early Modern Drama: Cambridge*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1989; Pollard, Tanya, ed. *Shakespeare's Theater. A Sourcebook*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. 170-186; Mullini, Roberta. "La legge, il teatro e l'accademia nell'Inghilterra rinascimentale." *Forme della Censura*. Eds. M. Morini e R. Zacchi. Napoli: Liguori, 2006. 29-42; Shenk, Linda. "Gown before Crown. Scholarly Abjection and Academic Entertainment Under Elizabeth I." *Early Modern Academic Drama*. Eds. J. Walker and P. D. Streufert. Farnham: Ashgate, 2008. 19-44; Norland, Howard B. *Neoclassical Tragedy in Elizabethan England*. Cranbury: Rosemont Publishing, 2009.

[6] In this regard, see for example Sidney, Philip. *A Defence of Poetry*. Ed. Jan Van Dorsten. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; Lodge, Thomas. “A Reply to Stephen Gosson’s Schoole of Abuse in Defence of Poetry, Musick and Stage Plays (1579)”. *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge*. Ed. Edmund Gosse. Glasgow: The Hunterian Club, 1883.

[7] The ideological basis to the official Church was provided by the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, written by the theologian Richard Hooker, who is acknowledged as the champion of Anglicanism under Elizabeth I. In this regard, see Hooker, Richard. *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Ed. Christopher Morris. Vol. II. London – New York: Everyman’s Library, 1965.

[8] These were part of far-reaching security measures that Elizabeth I promoted also against the Catholics from the continent and the English recusants. They too were known to ideate continuous plots against the Queen in favour of the Catholic pretenders to the throne and that is the reason why the Secretary of State Francis Walsingham created the first European network of spies and informers. In this regard, see Walsham, Alexandra. *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*. Rochester - NY: The Boydell Press, 1993; Vynnicombe, Carolyn. “Recusancy and Regicide: the Flawed Strategy of the Jesuit Mission in Elizabethan England.” *Penn History Review*. 19.2 (2012): 25-43; Houliston, Victor. “Filling in the Blanks: Catholic Hopes for the English Succession.” *SEDERI* 25 (2015): 77-104.

[9] For a selection of the letters exchanged between Rainolds and Gentili, see Markowicz, Leon, ed. *Latin Correspondence by Alberico Gentili and John Rainolds on Academic Drama*. Salzburg: Inst. f. Engl. Sprache u. Literatur, Univ. Salzburg, 1977.

[10] The accusation of Machiavellianism referred to the double image of the Italian thinker that had spread in England in the sixteenth century. On the one hand, the controversial statesman; on the other hand, the atheistic and slimy schemer. This one was particularly popular because of the

wide use that playwrights made of it. In this regard, see, among many others, Meyer, Edward. *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama*. Weimar: Felber, 1897; Praz, Mario. “Machiavelli and the Elizabethans.” *Proceedings of the British Academy*. XIII (1928). 3-51; Raab, Felix. *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500-1700*. London: Routledge, 1965; Anglo, Sidney. *Machiavelli. The First Century. Studies in Enthusiasm, Hostility, and Irrelevance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; Arienzo, Alessandro, Borrelli, Gianfranco eds. *Anglo-American Faces of Machiavelli. Machiavelli e machiavellismi nella cultura anglo-americana (secoli XVI-XX)*. Milano: Polimetrica. International Scientific Publisher, 2009 and Arienzo, Alessandro and Petrina, Alessandra. *Machiavellian Encounters in Tudor and Stuart England*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

[11] The first drafts of what would be the *De iure belli libri tres* were published in 1588 and 1589. The revised final version of the treatise was published in 1598.

[12] See Schmitt, Carl. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Candor – NY: Telos Press Publishing, 2006.

[13] On the relationship between Gentili and Machiavelli, see Panizza, Diego. “Il pensiero politico di Alberico Gentili. Religione, virtù e ragion di Stato.” *Alberico Gentili. Politica e Religione nell’età delle guerre di religione*. Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 2002. 119-129.

[14] As no printed edition of the *Disputationes Duae* exists, the related bibliography is also very limited and mostly in Italian. In this regard, see Panizza, Diego. *Alberico Gentili giurista ideologo* 77-81; Belloni, Alessandra. *Alberico Gentili e l’infamia degli attori. De actoribus et spectatoribus fabularum non notandis*. Master’s Degree thesis defended at the University of Macerata in 1998-1999, and entrusted to the Centro Internazionale di Studi Gentiliani di San Ginesio; Binns, J. W. *Intellectual Culture* 351-354; Di Simone, Maria Rita. “Alberico Gentili e la controversia sul

teatro.” *Alberico Gentili. (San Ginesio 1552 - Londra 1608). Atti dei Convegni nel quarto centenario della morte. S. Ginesio, 11-12-13 settembre 2008. Oxford e Londra, 5-6 giugno 2008. Napoli, 6 novembre 2007.* Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 2010. 394-410 and Lavenia, Vincenzo. “«*Mendacium officiosum*». Modi di mentire in un’opera di Alberico Gentili (1599).” «*Responsibility to Protect*»: nuovi orientamenti su intervento umanitario e ordine internazionale. *Atti del Convegno della XV Giornata Gentiliana, San Ginesio 14-15 Settembre 2012.* Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 2015. 243-266.

[15] The first to highlight Gentili’s probable influence on this play was Andrew Gurr in his “Introduction” to Shakespeare, William. *King Henry V.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 15-29. In this regard, see also Meron, Theodor. *Henry’s Wars and Shakespeare’s Laws.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; Pugliatti, Paola. *Shakespeare and the Just War Tradition.* Farnham: Ashgate, 2010. 197-240; Camerlingo, Rosanna. “Henry V and the Just War: Shakespeare, Gentili, and Machiavelli.” *Machiavellian Encounters in Tudor and Stuart England.* Eds. Alessandro Arienzo and Alessandra Petrina. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 103-120 and Warren, Christopher. “Henry V, Anachronism, and the History of International Law”. *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature 1500-1700.* Eds. Lorna Hutson and Brandin Cormack. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016 [?].

[16] The character of Henry V has always been a controversial one. Some critics celebrated him as a providential ruler, while others highlighted his hypocritical Machiavellian behaviour. For a general overview on this topic, see among others Ross Smith, Gordon. “Shakespeare’s *Henry V*; Another Part of the Critical Forest.” *Journal of the History of Ideas.* Vol. 37. Num. 1 (Jan. – Mar. 1976): 3-26; Rabkin, Norman. “Rabbits, Ducks, and *Henry V*.” *Shakespeare Quarterly.* 28, 1977.

279-296; and the more recent Chernaik, Warren. *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's History Plays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 17-18 and their references.

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Analyzing through the Rawlsian Framework the Creation of Social Justice in Post-Colonial India

Sucharita Sen and R. Krishnaswamy

The place of justice within the modern philosophical and political discourse must be seen within the historical background that made possible not only the political changes of the modern western world but also the philosophical debates that endangered it. The whole question of justice however is as old as the biblical times where Job is visited by ill fortune and the whole Book of Job can be seen as an attempt to answer the riddle of God's justice.

We also have the notion of justice taken up by Plato in his *Republic* and it would be safe to surmise that different religions and societies have always grappled with justice and we can see that in many societies the justice and the meaning of life are interrelated issues. Whatever the pre-modern discussions of justice might have been, an important turn towards a particular conception of justice evolved in the western world in the sixteenth century. This conception, we would like to call as, *individualistic justice*. What we mean by that is a conception that takes a look at justice that is *constitutive* of an individual self and thereby makes possible questions of equality and freedom. We will explain this more further down.

Starting from the 16th century in the western world as the West was slowly coming out of the shadows of the Middle Ages and the Wars of Religion and its various discontents, we can see the western political discourse taking a shape that moved more away from religious catholicity and more towards self-determination. Self-determination initially was territorial and the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 (Brendan Simms 50) is widely seen to be start of national self-determination. These political movements should also be understood along with the parallel shifts in the western

political discourse around that time. And both must be seen as evidence of a historical shift or if you will archeological shift, (Foucault) at that time.

Ever since the Cartesian *cogito*, the West has moved away from a cosmos where every person had his *rightful* place and society was a microcosm where all moved according to laws that lead to the glory of God. The advent of rationalism also meant that what was once morally contiguous concepts -- the universe and community -- became divorced. For a detailed discussion of how western thought became more “secularized” so to speak. (See Goldmann) The growth of science can be seen as the result (or as the cause, if you like) of the growing separation of man and the universe and the need to bridge the gap between the two. The community as a catholic unit came to play a lesser role in philosophical discussion than the role of the individual. Individuals became the unit of political discourse and therefore questions of *individual* freedom, *individual* rights and duties etc came to the foreground. Out of this emerges the modern notion of justice as impartial and this is what we have in mind when we talk about *individualistic justice*. When justice is supposed to be indifferent to people, their birth or rank and is to apply equally to everyone then it is individualistic. When religious affiliations of individuals are made secondary through the separation of the state and religion, then the question for the modern political state is what constitutes an individual entity in the modern state?

From out of this historical stage, the central question for modern times that emerges is “what is a political being”, in other words, who is *homo politicus*?

Before we answer this we can answer this we need to also keep in mind that triumph of Cartesian rationality and Galilean science meant that both nature and the human being could be measured with the same objective yardstick of mathematics and empirical observation. This motivated a discussion about self-determination in empirical terms.

Therefore any discussion of humanity needed to take in both the empirical facts of the individual self as well as the urgent need to answer the problem of national or collective self-determination. With the philosophical triumph of the Cartesian self we find a proliferation of debates surrounding the autonomy of the self. We have detailed discussions regarding the primacy of sensation towards the acquisition of knowledge in Locke (25-50). Given sensation and emotions as main pillars of human identity it is inevitable that human identity was seen primarily as that which promotes individual interest i.e. self-interest. Self-interested was what came to be understood as what lead to individual advantage. Further justification was added to this belief through biological theories like Darwin's survival of the fittest or natural selection.

Thus it came to be taken for granted that it is a self-evident fact that humans are self-centred. But admitting this fact only brought into greater prominence the problem that lay at the root of a modern society which is that of finding a rational basis for cooperation. The problem was if individuals are self-centred what is the basis of a society. In the 18th century we had two answers – one from Rousseau in his *Social Contract* and the other from Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Both came from completely different angles but attempting to solve the same problem.

Who then is a self in a modern society? Any definition of what a self in a political society, because it is a definition and therefore pertains to the ideal realm, will be normative. This much we learnt from Kant. The conditions of what a political society should be will have stipulations that more often than not are not reflected in reality. To try and understand what a self is, we can either define what an individual self is – this would be a moral definition and then make a collective of such selves a good society or start from the other end and define what are the conditions that a just political society should have and say that those people who form such a political society are

rightfully responsible individuals. Kant started from the former end while Rawls started from the latter.

Here, we will deal only with Rawls. For Rawls, “justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.” (*A Theory of Justice* 3) To identify the principles of justice that people who are self-centred and rational will automatically come to is the goal of his *A Theory of Justice*. These principles will therefore have to be very general and, according to Rawls, should not violate personal freedom. Because Rawls’ is an exercise in finding out those binding principles of justice, there has to be adjustments made to compensate for reality. That is, society as we live in, has gone through historical changes and remains at a point in time as a system of human interrelations bound by factors like family, religion, political affiliations etc. To get to those principles of justice, that is those principles that people *will* automatically come to agree in, there is needed “an initial situation that incorporates certain procedural constraints on arguments designed to lead to an original agreement on principles of justice.” (*A Theory of Justice* 3) This is called the original position of equality by Rawls.

If everybody could live on air, then the whole problem of society would be much more simplified. But the fact that we all depend on natural resources and they are limited takes us to the central problem of the just distribution of natural resources. The problem of society then is to find the equitable distribution of 1. rights and duties and 2. natural resources. The task of Rawls is to find those principles of equality that people in the original position would come to that would satisfactorily solve both the problems of rights and duties and material resources.

One of the premises for a successful society is mutual cooperation. Mutual cooperation is predicated on some sense of equality since otherwise there will be no basis to cooperation. But historical evidence would suggest that societies from different civilizations have successfully been

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rigidly power-driven and therefore unjust. But the fact that there is a demand for cooperation among humans implies that there is some sense in which the cooperating parties consider themselves equal. That is, there is an implicit understanding that cooperation is based on trust and trust, like a promise, binds mutually.

This loose sense of equality is what the original position implies. People are equal in as much as they can be party to a contract. In this case, the contract is social. We may start equal but the question is will we end up being equal. In other words, given the original position and also the fact that everyone is ultimately self-serving, will we have a society which has a just distribution of rights and resources?

One of the procedural constraints that Rawls introduces to ensure that from this hypothetical position of original equality people form a social contract that is just is what he calls a veil of ignorance. The veil of ignorance is nothing but a procedure to ensure that people who are about to form a social contract consider each other equal in all respects. Given human psychology and the fact that external impressions have an influence in one's judgment of fellow humans, our view of other humans is bound to be distorted through social and historical considerations. That is, what we think of another person is usually influenced by his level of education, his social background, his class status etc. But to consider the other person as he should be considered is a desideratum for any social compact. What the veil of ignorance does is it enables society, by asking the people party to a contract, to discount all the *contingent* differences between people, like education, social status, natural ability etc. For Rawls,

“the idea of the original position is to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just. The aim is to use the notion of pure procedural justice as a basis of theory. Somehow we must nullify the effects of specific contingencies which put men at odds and tempt them to exploit

social and natural circumstances to their own advantage. Now in order to do this I assume that the parties are situated behind a veil of ignorance. They do not know how the various alternatives will affect their own particular case and they are obliged to evaluate principles solely on the basis of general considerations.” (*A Theory of Justice* 118)

What is motivating the whole discussion of finding principles of justice, we must have come to realize, is finding that notion of equality that will stand as the basis for all cooperation and not only cooperation that is instrumental to any particular end. So far, we have understood that two people are equal in as much as they can be party to a contract and whatever unequal distribution of natural talent or social wealth that may otherwise have is not be considered relevant for the making of a society.

If people who are equal in the above sense come to the negotiating table, the first principle of justice that they will come to is that everyone should be given equal rights. If I discount, or better still, if I don't even know what the distribution of natural talents, or social position will be, including mine, my safest bet is to allot everyone all the rights that I would allot myself so as to give myself the best chance of being in a position in society that is not unfair. To understand the negotiating process of a social contract better, one must think of all the people of a society making the principles of justice to enter the society only when they have set up the laws of the contract. This may be easy to imagine in the case of ordinary contracts, which people draw up first before they enter into one. But when it comes to the social contract it is very difficult to imagine such a situation because we don't sign any contract before we are born. We are, as Heidegger would say in a different context, *thrown* into the world, whether we like it or not.

If it helps, one can try and grasp this imaginative leap through the use of Platonic myths. Plato used myths as a very good heuristic device to enable the reader to grasp those concepts or situations

that were not amenable to discursive language that easily. In the *Republic* (Plato 330-338), Plato uses the myth of Er. Er, in the story, is the son of Armenius, and is killed at battle. Once he died, his soul along with other souls went on a journey. He was taken to a plain field where there were two judges sitting and there were two ducts that went up and below them there were two openings that went down. The good people, after death, were sent on the duct that went above to heaven and the unjust people were sent down below the earth.

From here, Er, along with other souls were taken to a meadow. There he meets Necessity. (I am going over some very otherwise interesting details so as to get to the point that I wish to make). Necessity is therefore to be pictured as standing outside the whole universe with a spindle between his knees. This spindle ties the whole world together. Necessity, for Plato, has three daughters. Lechesis, Clotho, and Atropos. They are otherwise called past, present and future.

Since Necessity is what controls the whole universe, every soul who wants to be born or reborn in this universe has to go to Necessity and the choice of what kind of life is given to you by Necessity. In other words, imagine that before you were born you were sent to a god like Necessity and were given the freedom to choose the kind of life you want except that unlike Er, you could not see how your future would be and what your natural talents would be and how lucky you will be in life. Extrapolate it to the whole society who, at the beginning of time, are about to be born and they don't know what kind of life they will be leading and what natural talents might accrue to them and what social privileges they might get, that information god conceals from them. In such a case, every person would want to live a life that gives him the best chance to develop his natural talents and nothing to inhibit his progress except his own personal limitations. In other words, he would want the utmost freedom and since he doesn't know if he will be born as a prince or as a pauper, he will want everyone to have the same number of rights.

This is the first principle of justice in Rawls. That is, “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.” (*A Theory of Justice* 53) This principle states the condition for equality. And equality in society is the right to be considered a political self with equal rights. Each person is equal to every other person in as much as each person is first a self. This is how a self is connected to the whole society. Each person is a political self only because everybody in a society agrees to give each other equal consideration. And a self in society is someone who has basic rights (like everybody else). These basic liberties are

“political liberty (the right to vote and to hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person); the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. These liberties are to be equal by the first principle. (*A Theory of Justice* 53)

I do know that the right to hold property has been a contentious issue philosophically. We are not going into that issue because the aim here is to mainly delineate the general conditions for equality.

Given these rights that are considered basic and so to speak “equalizes” everyone under the eye of justice, what about the differences that might still remain? Even after giving everyone equal rights, there are a lot factors like individual and natural differences in terms of intelligence, luck etc. But these differences it is not in the power of a society to equalize. Actually, there must be provision in society to give merit and personal powers a chance to develop. Otherwise, we would have a society which would be at best dull and at worst authoritarian.

The only difference that is in the power of society to adjust so as to make people feel that fate has not been too unkind to them is to re-distribute the social and economic resources. Since it is important to respect individual differences, society must take care to re-distribute the social and economic goods in such a way as to ensure that nobody gets more than they deserve. “To each his due” is a principle which is very difficult to bring into practice. Society can at best bring to force the spirit of this principle. What it can do is to ensure that each person gets a share of the social and economic good that is commensurate with his natural talents. To ensure that, first, it is important that society opens up opportunities equally to everyone so that people who are naturally gifted or hard working are able to grasp those opportunities. Second, after giving equal opportunity to everyone, it is important that people who have been able to take advantage of an opportunity are not carried away to such an extent that their climbing the social or economic ladder is at the expense of the less-gifted.

The second principle which is otherwise called the Difference Principle is stated by Rawls as

“Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions:

- a. They are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of *fair equality of opportunity*;
- b. They are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the *difference principle*).” (*Justice as Fairness* 42-43)

What the second principle states is that personal merit and other remaining differences between people should be respected and that can be done only when each is given a fair chance at opportunities. The second part of the principle says that even though differences are to be

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respected, there should not be a situation where the least advantaged, whether through luck or natural talent, are not completely left behind in society. Every advantage to the more gifted person in society should also benefit the least-advantaged person. Otherwise, any such advantage would be one-sided and would lead to an unfair distribution of social and economic goods.

So far, we have looked at Rawls' notion of justice and how it starts from a hypothetical point of complete equality, which he calls the original position. But it is not very difficult to point out that humanity never started out from such a position and is very unlikely to wipe the slate clean and start afresh in building a just society. The two principles of a just society that Rawls has given us have enabled us to look for those general characteristics that any just society should have. For that, we are very grateful.

Now we have seen how it is that the original position is instantiated in Rawls. However hypothetical the original position of Rawls might seem it is important to understand what makes such a philosophical move possible. We must understand the original position as the culmination of the modern western discourse surrounding the self and its identity. What started off as the divorce between the self and the cosmos ends as the "free" self of Rawls which can be viewed behind a veil of ignorance i.e. without any affiliations to birth, society, upbringing, religion etc. This is particularly the modern western notion of a political rational self. Whatever may have been the political, historical or philosophical motivations behind the modern notion of a self, justice as equality as an idea even though recent has had very dignified proponents like Kant, Rousseau and lastly Rawls.

But parallel to the intellectual development of the West there was also the practical political ambitions of western nations. As western nations became modern and industrialized (see Samuel Huntington 56-70) and they found their own regions too limited to exercise their enlarged prowess, BridgesAcrossCultures2015

they decided to look afar to other shores and thus the process of colonization started. We have countries like Britain, France and Spain from the 18th century onwards ruling over large parts of different continents. Thus the western world became intertwined with the rest of the world. The advance of technology brought in globalization and countries came closer.

The power structure among the western countries changed as a result of two world wars, an economic depression. There was also murmurings of dissent in the colonies and the elite intelligentsia in these western countries also could not find reasons to square such imperialistic ambitions with their own intellectual history that stressed individual self-determination. Eventually and almost inevitably the colonies asserted their right to freedom and among the biggest countries to acquire freedom in the post world-war era was India.

The British, India's colonial master, went about realizing its imperialist goals in India but paradoxically it also gave India the ideological tools, namely western notions of freedom, equality, self-determination etc, to counter the legitimacy of the British claims to power in India. When India did get independence it became a nation which had a constitution – the very idea of a constitution is to be traced to the ideals of the French and American Revolutions.

Given such a background and also the chance to start afresh as a society in 1947, India decided to draft its own rules of social formation. It was given to Ambedkar, inspired by Western notions of a *polis*, to draft the constitution. In the rest of the paper, we will be taking a look at what, given the framework of Rawls and the overall western notions of self and liberty, principles of justice were at play in Ambedkar's constitution and his world-view. Also given that equality was one of the main aims of Ambedkar, we are going to look at how he had to come to terms with the real inequalities that were at play in India at that time

That is, the question we are going to ask is what did Ambedkar have to do, given the fact that India in 1947 came with the baggage of historical, social, economic inequalities, to ensure that post-colonial India will be able to start at the point where there will be complete equality. To put it in other words, what were the considerations that Ambedkar had to bring about in the original position -- which India found itself to be in 1947 – that was as equal as possible to the mythical or hypothetical one of Rawls.

That is, the original position, as we had indicated earlier was a hypothetical one for Rawls. But even such a hypothetical position was made possible as we have analysed through historical and political events. But India was in a different position in 1947 given that they had a history had pre-dated British colonization. That history obviously had its own development – a development which was rooted in its own social mores and very far from sharing Western concerns for dividing state and religion or ensuring private freedom etc. Thus Ambedkar had, so to speak, two India's to deal with – one India which was western and “forward” wanting to have equality and the other India which had its roots in a history where the role of the individual in a society was to play out his assigned role viz his *dharma*. (Radhakrishnan 1-22)

To start off, he made a list of basic liberties in the constitution which enabled everyone to be free and equal participants in the legislation of India. But obviously the problem was in the second principle of justice which was what Rawls called primary goods including “rights, liberties and opportunities, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect.” (amartya sen – pg 80 rawls quote) The second principle of justice would be applicable only if the original position was as he had described. But India in 1947 was far from that position and therefore the question of whether opening up of opportunities to everyone equally would lead to a just and equal society was a debatable one.

The purpose of this part of the paper is to analyze the notion of justice in India by using an international theoretical framework of justice, offered by John Rawls. One is often inclined to believe that an intense, largely communal and discriminatory colonial experience could only provide a very weak social base for a country to develop a holistic, welfare driven, egalitarian democracy. If we use this approach to understand India's post-colonial identity, the country would present itself as a puzzling case. In a socially diverse country like India, the national freedom movement was mostly successful in bringing the people of the nation under a single political project (Guha 1). During the colonial years, particularly in the last two decades leading up to independence, the nationalist discourse ran two projects simultaneously—i) a movement towards attaining political equality and ii) initiating a movement that would integrate the marginalized into the existing socio-political order, subsequently leading to a stronger sense of social equality. In other words, the whole attempt by Ambedkar is to be seen as integrating the two social needs of India viz., the need to find political equality and the other social upliftment. Designing equality then meant that the constitution not only took all people as equal but paradoxically also as unequal. In other words, the veil of ignorance, a heuristic device that Rawls uses, to negate any prejudicing factors like birth, social class, etc to influence one person's view of the other is not completely possible, even as a theoretical tool, in India given the fact that a. this device is a product of the French enlightenment and therefore rooted in Western history and b. India's social history has had a hierarchical system of caste where the question of equality was not as important as each doing his dharma, which in social terms meant following his caste strictures.

From the western perspective, each Indian was therefore born with inalienable differences. Ambedkar had to start with a clean slate, so to speak, of complete equality as an ideal and then acknowledge that reaching that ideal would require that some people, whose privileges have been

socially withdrawn in traditional Indian society, be given more opportunities to catch with those who were born socially lucky. This procedure he called reservation. That meant that the minority castes, which he called the Scheduled Caste and Tribes be given an assured set of opportunities i.e., reserve positions of power, jobs etc with the government.

Thus there were projects for Ambedkar which roughly correspond to the two principles of justice of Rawls though the motivations behind them are vastly different. The first principle of equality as stated by Rawls gives people political liberties like freedom of conscience, freedom of speech etc. Rawls' second principle is what can lead to greater social equality.

The desperation for political freedom and the gradual decline in motivation on the part of the Raj to hold on to its Indian empire, jointly made it very difficult for the political leaders (fore fathers?) to spend adequate time in elaborately developing the second project— social equality. Given the variegated nature of Indian society, divided on religious, caste, class and gender lines, it was solely the thread of political equality that tied the people of this country together. Political freedom became a crucial part of nationalist rhetoric and the reservation of seats for marginalized 'natives' in the electoral process made it an urgent necessity for upper caste, upper class nationalist politicians to capitalize on the vote of the oppressed classes, by aggressively endorsing the project of social equality. In other words, political equality became the driving force and social equality, in its diluted and complex form, became its byproduct.

Here lies the problem of constructing a theory of justice in India. Justice should be understood as the co-existence of fully developed forms of political and social equality. Much of what was achieved, in terms of political and social development during the colonial period was continued or carried over in the formative years of independent India. After independence, the socio-political structure was not uprooted in order to replace it with a new system that would provide a stable

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democracy. Much of India's post-colonial identity was therefore grounded in the ideals or virtues of the freedom struggle itself. Some were achieved and some remained aspirational. Some components of a just society were fulfilled at the time of drafting the Indian constitution when ideas of state and citizenship were defined, political reservations were secured for the oppressed classes, religious reforms were introduced and discrimination of any kind surmounted to chargeable offense.

In order to understand the ideal form of justice that would be able to cater to such a large and diverse mass of people in India, this part of the paper will analyze the idea of justice proposed and developed by Dr. Ambedkar, the principal architect of India's constitution in order to judge to what extent social justice was achieved constitutionally and how much of it remained aspirational. This would also help us in positioning India within the Rawlsian framework of justice and the broader motivations that must have necessitated a theory like Rawls'.

Babasaheb Bhimarao Ambedkar was one of the most important political figures in colonial India who actively engaged in reforming the country's social order throughout his political life. One of India's first great economic thinkers, its constitutional draftsman and its first law minister, (See Hegde) Ambedkar contributed toward the creation of a 'just' society. The idea or vision of an independent India received several contributions from various quarters. Some like Gandhi envisioned a united independent India where all communities and classes would exist in perfect harmony which he theorized as his notion of *Ram Rajya*. There were others like Nehru whose idea of India was shaped by western notions of secularism, liberalism and industrialization with a functional system of a just distribution of wealth. These figures dominated the political scene but there were several others who flavoured the freedom struggle with notions of gender equality, principles of universalism etc.

With the existence of a time-honoured discourse that paid tribute to caste based differences and discrimination no amount of secularism or universalism could lead to the successful creation of a modern democracy along western lines. In other words, there was a need to square the modern nation's need to find a solid basis for equality as well as integrating the unique history of India. This is something Ambedkar recognized very early on, given his own background and experience of being an untouchable in India. Ambedkar understood democracy as being more than just a form of government—according to him it ran much deeper than just a superficial model of power arrangement. Democracy lies in the association that people share with each other, who then collectively make up society. Together they share a collective desire for welfare and participate in the creation of mutual sympathy and cooperation (Jadhav 69). It is critical to understand that much of Ambedkar's vision of social justice was based on his identification of social injustice. In his speech on "Conditions Precedent for the Successful Working of Modern Democracy" he says, "there must not be glaring inequalities in society; there must not be an oppressed class, there must not be a suppressed class. There must not be a class which has got all the privileges and a class, which has got all the burdens to carry. Such a thing, such a division, such an organization of a society has within itself the germs of a bloody revolution, and perhaps it would be impossible for democracy to cure them." (Jadhav 69)

For him, the existence of the caste system was a 'standing denial' of the principles of social justice, and thereby a healthy democracy. Today India stands at the threshold of entering her sixty-eighth year of independence yet we continue to depend on political equality and our constitutional entitlement to certain freedoms in order to bargain for social justice. We still depend on a system of making comparisons, estimating and assessing inequalities to judge our state of affairs in terms of social justice. The purpose of this paper is not to undermine the incredible progress that this

young democracy has made since independence, incorporating some monumental socio-political and economic reforms that have helped India emerge as a stable democracy in South Asia. It is unfortunate however, that social inequalities, like the caste system continue to exist and a democracy that is aspiring to deliver social justice, politicizes caste in order to integrate the down trodden into mainstream political discourse. Therefore any form of social justice, is not a result of what Ambedkar envisioned as the existence of ‘mutual sympathy and collective desire for welfare’ but essentially stems from impositions of political equality. In other words, social equality is imposed by our democratic system, instead of a situation where social equality emerges from within our societal framework.

In a country where religion and its prescribed caste distinctions are so deeply embedded into the social fabric, where differences are sanctioned through socially constructed hierarchies, it is virtually impossible to expect equality stemming from within. Hindu *dharma* dictated the position of each person in the cosmos and his duties was to primarily maintain his own position in the cosmic order by engaging in activities prescribed by tradition. This notion of *dharma* led to the division of people according to their vocation and in time their maintaining their caste identity became their duty. For Ambedkar, who was influenced by modern western concepts of political justice, morality or *dhamma*, (as he borrowed the word from Buddha), meant the exact opposite which was to try and move beyond the rigid distinctions imposed by Hinduism. That is why he was very sympathetic to Buddhism and saw in his conversion to Buddhism an attempt to create a reformation in society that was equivalent to the one Buddha himself created.

Given such a divisive country in terms of its intellectual lineage there was only one of two possible ways out of this. Either dissolve all religious differences and give more power to the state and the thereby to the individual or apportion power between religion and the state. Ambedkar took the

former option and that is why he advocated an active deconstruction of the religious code of conduct and superstitions. He hoped that will redeem India's religious life and contribute towards the dilution of religious falsifications and hierarchies. On the other hand, Rawls uses his concept of veil of ignorance to explain how crucial it is for a group of people to be able to stand on an equal footing by being ignorant of all differences between themselves which will allow these individuals to be fully ready to enter a social contract and justly agree to any principle adopted, from that point onwards. Ambedkar's ethical philosophy, much like the Rawlsian veil of ignorance, is designed to suit that very purpose.

An active engagement with religion will not only allow human beings from all strata of society to embrace religion equally, but will consequentially lead to the gradual dilution of these socially constructed stratifications. What we have realistically achieved so far in India is that religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence of all religions are constitutionally ensured. It is however up to civil society to make progress in terms of reforming its own understanding and use of religion. Inherent power politics exists in society and religion often becomes a powerful political tool- for the privileged and underprivileged. What remains aspirational therefore is to separate religion from the scope of citizenship where individuals are drawn into using their religious identity to create differences and instead allow it to become a veil of ignorance, blinding individuals of their own differences.

In his theory on social justice, Rawls explains the fair and equal distribution of 'social primary goods' through his 'Difference Principle', discussed earlier. By social primary goods, Rawls suggests opportunity, income, wealth and self-respect. These goods, according to him should be equally distributed, "unless an unequal distribution of any or all of these goods is to the advantage of the least favoured." (*A Theory of Justice* 44) For Rawls, together these social primary goods help

in the construction of social justice. Ambedkar's own theory of 'Protective Discrimination' that was subsequently incorporated in the Constitution of India was perhaps designed on similar principles. In a hierarchical society where differences are used for political advantages, the fair and equal distribution of privileges like education, jobs, political representation, share in wealth etc. will only lead to greater social injustice. In a society where it is difficult to bring everyone on an equal footing, Ambedkar made separate provisions for the oppressed classes, especially for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in order to ensure a greater sense of social justice.

As an established democracy today, modern India is economically ambitious and is aggressively trying to carve out its space in the world of global capitalism. Yet there are serious gaps at a societal level. Ambedkar's vision of an independent India remains vital as India negotiates between remaining diverse and equal at the same time.

There are underlying notions of political equality that is both at work in Rawls and Ambedkar. But what differentiates these two people is the role of religion. For Rawls, different religions have differing world views aiming at different goods (in the ethical sense) for different peoples but the *polis* is what by constituting a notion of justice enables people with different religions to cohabit as long as they respect the fundamental equality prescribed by the two principles of justice. Ambedkar, on the other hand, even though a product of western education, thought that religion and political justice cannot cohabit as they are mutually exclusive and understood the deep influence that religion has on people and therefore was persistent throughout his life and almost vituperative in his criticism of religion.

Much of the modern debate about reservation, religious rights etc must be seen within the horizon of the modern history of India whose modern political discourse is as a marriage of two traditions. Ambedkar's influence therefore is testimony to the presence of both India's millennia long history

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and the influence of the West. As a modern democracy, possibly the largest such democracy which was also an erstwhile colony, India is at the juncture of the East and the West.

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Folk Dance Conservation: The Case Study of *Fon Long Nan*

Praparsri Sripradit

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the history of *Fon Long Nan*, the Thai northern folk dance on the oar in the Nan province, its status, attitudes towards it, and persistent methods of preserving it. The data was collected from printed documents, related research studies, in-depth interviews, reflections from photographs and video recordings, live stage performances, questionnaires, and a seminar of *Fon Long Nan* sustainable conservation methods.

The results showed that the history of the oar dance was first inscribed in 1902, when the town ruler, Payakarnmueng, and his people migrated from Waranakorn to Wiang Phuphiang. In this migration, there were processions of rafts and oars along the Nan River. These rafts carried carrying belongings and musical instruments, as well as officials and town people. While travelling, some people stood up and danced on the oars to relax. Later, this dance was chronologically developed. According to clear evidences found, there were four periods of the dance development: 1) the dance on the racing oars performed by the locals and by the royal officials; 2) the dance in the royal palace; 3) the dance outside the royal palace; and 4) the dance standardized by the Cultural Office in the Nan Province.

Nowadays *Fon Long Nan* represents Nan's cultural dance since it has been performed in various crucial events of the community. The results from the questionnaire survey showed that 49.1 percent of the participants watched the dance more than four times. This made them feel so accustomed to it and so involved with it that they gave it high values and showed their desire to support and preserve it in various ways. That is, they helped to publicize *Fon Long Nan* by introducing it, revealing its history and significance, watching it, arranging it in many events, and having their children practice it. However, some participants had never been involved with the dance conservation, and some had no methods of preserving it. Thus, the researcher held a brainstorming seminar to provide the methods of sustainably preserving it. The seminar was held on May 28, 2015. Its outcomes were then submitted to organizations related to cultural conservation, development and empowerment for further strategic conversation provision, revenue

management, and impending event administration. *Fon Long Nan* conservation methods gained from the seminar included publicizing the dance history and spreading the dance information to all communities for the people to broadcast it on online social networks, which is the easiest and the fastest channel. If these recommended methods were effectively used as specified by the conservation policy, *Fon Long Nan* could be sustainably preserved.

Introduction

Fon is a word in a northern Thai dialect that means natural or nature-simulated body movement performance. *Fon Long Nan* is a local performance of the Nan Province in the North of Thailand, which displays ways of living a life with the Nan River as a major source of diets, utilities, and transportation. Consequently, there are many ceremonies related to the Nan River, particularly boat racing. Boat construction and decorations are completed by drawing, painting, and carving; music and dance are also essential elements of the boat construction. Later, the term *Fon Long Nan* was generated and it has been used to refer to the dance performed on an oar being paddled along the Nan River.

In 1926, Mahabhromsuradhata, the ruler of the Nan Province, went to Chiang Mai to welcome King Rama 7th and he observed the dance in the royal palace. When he went back to Nan, he asked Noi Bunyok to create *Fon Nan* (the Nan dance pattern) to train his children to dance in extraordinary occasions. Once the town ruler's authority ended in 1932, *Fon Nan* was spread outside the palace. At the beginning, the original dance pattern was well preserved. Years later women were permitted to dance on a race oar; thus, *Fon Nan* was reconstructed into various patterns and its name was finally changed to *Fon Long Nan*. After that, dance teachers who specialized in the central Thai dance standardization adopted the standards to *Fon Long Nan* and publicized this version to students and civil boy scouts, which resulted in the wide spread performance of standardized *Fon Long Nan*. In 2008, the Office of Provincial Culture held the town's wisdom project to promote *Fon Long Nan* by recruiting experts in *Fon Long Nan* to participate in the dance standardization to ease the dance pedagogy. This triggered *Fon Long Nan* patternized by the Nan's cultural office, and it was included in a local curriculum for teachers and students in any educational institution located in the Nan Province.

As mentioned earlier, *Fon Long Nan* has long been part and parcel of people's life in Nan. Yet, the increasing industry and technology had an impact on the Nan culture, resulting in the

increase of other cultures and the gradual decrease of the original *Fon Long Nan* pattern. In addition, elder dance teachers and professionals did not have any younger generations to inherit *Fon Long Nan*. If the local Nan people do not see the significance and legacy of the dance, it is possible that *Fon Long Nan* will be completely wiped out. Therefore, this research aims to study the history, development, status, and attitudes of the Nan people toward *Fon Long Nan* to collect strategic proposals regarding the sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation and submit them to organizations pertinent to cultural conservation, development and support. If the proposals are effectively used, it is possible to help retain *Fon Long Nan*.

Objectives of the study

1. To study history of *Fon Long Nan*
2. To investigate the status of *Fon Long Nan* and the attitudes toward *Fon Long Nan*
3. To explore the methods of how to conserve *Fon Long Nan* and strategic proposals

Methodology

The data of this qualitative research was collected in two forms: documents and fieldwork, as described in detail below.

Collecting documents included: research theories, historical theories, folk performance development theories to explain the history of *Fon Long Nan* development, theories of cultural dissemination to explain the methods and steps of cultural distribution, theories of thoughts and attitudes, and theories of participation in *Fon Long Nan* conservation. The data was gathered from documents in the National Archives of Thailand and the Ministry of Fine Arts, including official documents, announcements, orders, books, and related research studies. This data was used for a historical analysis.

Besides document gatherings, fieldwork was also used for data collection. It included 5 parts as follows.

1. In-depth interviews with 14 experts of *Fon Long Nan*.
2. Observations of *Fon Long Nan* performances in various events such as royal boat racing, Krathin ceremonies, guest welcoming ceremonies via photographs, video recordings, and field notes.

3. Questionnaire survey with 450 subjects randomly selected from 477,912 Nan people; 30 people from each district, 15 districts total. The number of subjects selected in this study was based on Taro Yamane's scale. The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.95. The survey was done to investigate the status of *Fon Long Nan*, the attitudes toward it, and ways to preserve the dance.

4. Media construction and a research report entitled *Fon Long Nan: The Cultural Dance in Nan Province*. The media were circulated to community leaders and teaching professionals to be used in school pedagogy under the local curriculum.

5. A brainstorming seminar of strategic proposals for sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation.

Results

According to *Fon Long Nan* historical documents and fieldwork, the results show that the history of the oar dance was first inscribed in 1902, when the town ruler, Payakarnmueng, and his people migrated from Waranakorn (the Pua District, nowadays) to Wiang Phuphiang. In this migration, there were processions of rafts and oars along the Nan River. These rafts carried belongings and musical instruments, as well as officials and town people. While travelling, some male people stood up and danced on the oars to relax.)Aphichayakul 2(. Women could not stand up and dance on the oar because of the local northern beliefs that did not allow women to stand while men were sitting. Additionally, standing and dancing on the oar was at risk of accidents. Because of limited space, the dancers could not move their feet very much)Aphichayakul 8(. Later, this dance was chronologically developed; the clear evidences of which were initially found in the period when Nan was a colonized town ruled under Rattanakosin's supervision, followed by the period when the town ruler's authority was revoked and the current period.

1. The Development of *Fon Long Nan*

Based on the historical study, the researcher categorized the dance development in those periods into 4 patterns, as follows: 1) the dance on the racing oars performed by the locals and by the royal officials; 2) the dance in the royal palace; 3) the dance outside the royal palace; and 4) the dance standardized by the Cultural Office in the Nan Province. The dance details are described below.

Period 1: The Dance on the Racing Oars

The evidence of dancing on the oar was noticeably found in oar racing ceremonies that were part of the northern Thai Buddhists' merit making tradition called *Bun Salakaphat* or *Tan Kuay Salak*. These ceremonies were performed in the hope that they could send offerings to the dead. Generally, the tradition began right after the lent and it lasted for about one month. It was a rainy season when the tide was high so people from different districts could commute easily by boat to visit one another or to participate in any chores. After the task was completed, oar racing was arranged for the participants to relax or cling to friendship. This finally became a traditional routine of the Nan Province. In oar racing, the winner boat rowers often stood up on the oar and danced to celebrate their victory. Consequently, it was possible that the oar dance and the oar race simultaneously occurred. However, it was not obvious to pinpoint the exact time when the first boat racing originated. Provided that the oldest oar, *Sue Thao Tha Lo*, was built in 1816 and that antique boats were found in several villages (Pholsantikul 56), it is implied that the first oar race took place over 200 years ago.

Observations from photographs of the town ruler Maha Bhromsuradhata's dancing on the oar when visiting Kromphra Nakhorn Sawan Phinit in 1917 revealed the dance pattern like a crow spreading its wings, which was part of *Fon Lai Ngam*, the dance performed by Tai Lue people who migrated from Sip Song Panna in China to Nan Province a long time ago (Thammathi 12). Recently, Komsan Khanthason had collected *Fon Lai Ngam* procedure and found 12 positions: 1. *Wai* – Worshipping; 2. *Ded Bua Ban* – Picking a blooming lotus flower; 3. *Bua Ban Lo* – Lotus blossom; 4. *San Kiewklaw*- Hairstyling; 5. *Chang Kham Thung* – Elephant crossing; 6. *Jarakhe Wad Hang* – Crocodile kicking; 7. *Ka Tak Peek* – Crow spreading wings; 8. *Muan Mai Tai Sok* – Spinning the elbow; 9. *Muan Pak Sai Hai* – Putting vegetables in the jar; 10. *Mek Bang Wan* – Cloud preventing the Sun; 11. *Mae Lai Ngam Soong Tam* – Main high – low position; and 12. *Chang Choo Nguang* – Elephant raising the trunk. In any of the above patterns, the feet were in a still position or in a position in which one foot was on the oar floor and the other was on the oar's side edge.

Period 2: The Royal *Fon Nan*

The key dance performer in the Nan royal palace was Bunyok Sonmuengkaen or Chao Noi Bunyok who worked for the town ruler (duke) Suriyapongsa Phalitdech and his successor the town ruler Maha Bhrom Suradhata as a civil engineer, poet, and dancer. In 1926 Chao Noi Bunyok

followed Duke Maha Bhrom Suradhata to join a blessing ceremony of King Rama 7th and his wife held in Chiang Mai (Mattayomburut 22). In Chiang Mai royal palace, Chao Noi Bunyok could watch the dance managed by Princess Dara Rasami, daughter of Duke Intharawichaiyanon – the town ruler of Chiang Mai. Princess Dara Rasami learned Thai dance in the central royal palace from 1886 to 1916, when she was a consort of King Rama 5th (Kanchanacharee 52). After returning to Nan, Duke Maha Bhrom Suradhata asked Chao Noi Bunyok to teach the royal children to perform *Fon Lai Ngam* by means that was more suitable for females. The adapted *Fon Lai Ngam* was then called *Fon Nan*, after the name of the town. So far, Yan Songmuengnan, Chao Noi Bunyok's grandson, has inherited *Fon Nan* in 6 positions: 1. *Wai* – Worshipping; 2. *Bang Wan* or *Kerng Na* – Sun Preventing; 3. *Bid Bua Ban* – Picking a blooming lotus flower; 4. *Kiewklaw* - Hairstyling; 5. *Ka Tak Peek* Crow spreading wings; and 6. *Son Ton Son Plai* – Rolling threads

Period 3: *Fon Nan* Outside the Royal Palace

In 1932 when Thailand transformed from an absolute monarchy to a democracy and the reigning authority of town rulers was cancelled, Nan belonged completely to the nation. Thus, the town ruler's relatives and servants moved out of the palace, resulting in the dispersion of *Fon Nan* outside the palace. The dance was popular among local folks in such crucial occasions like making merits, oar racing, town's guest welcoming, celebrating, and other various customs to help unite the villagers and community folks. Afterward, *Fon Nan* became increasingly prevalent. In 1956 women could dance on the racing oar for the oar-beauty contest. The dance performed on the oar by women was called *Fon Long Nan*. The name *Fon Long Nan* was so commonly used that it also included *Fon Nan*. In a while, *Fon Long Nan* was standardized and used to train students and community boy scouts. It spread quickly. When the demand of *Fon Long Nan* was high, a *Fon Long Nan* competition between communities began. The differences in environment and culture, as well as the oral or unprinted dance pattern descriptions, triggered many adaptations and innovations of *Fon Long Nan*, which resulted in diverse *Fon Long Nan* styles among villages.

Period 4: *Fon Long Nan* Standardized by the Cultural Office of Nan Province

In 1908 the Board of National Culture in the Ministry of Culture posited that the Cultural Office of Nan Province conserved and publicized *Fon Long Nan* as desired by the Crown Princess Sirindhorn. Therefore, school dance teachers and local professionals were recruited to help

renovate and standardize *Fon Long Nan*. To set a standardized *Fon Long Nan* that would be easy for youths to practice, both adaptive and creative techniques were used. As a final point, the standard *Fon Long Nan* had 9 positions: 1. *Wai* – Worshipping; 2. *Kiewklao* – Hairstyling; 3. *Bang Wan* – Sun Preventing; 4. *Bok Boi Thewada* – Worshipping angels; 5. *Mae Thoranee Rood Muay Phom* – Worshipping Mother Earth; 6. *Kep Bua Thawai Phra* – Picking a lotus for monks; 7. *Pla Liam Had* – Fish on the riverbank; 8. *Ka Tak Peek* – Crow spreading wings; and 9. *Pha Lad* – Steeping cliff.

Up until now, the standard 9-position *Fon Long Nan* has been well approved and generally used to welcome royal family members and town guests. It has also been performed in important events.

So far, *Fon Long Nan* has been a cultural dance performance of Nan Province. Consequently, it was vital to investigate its status and value realizations to help preserve it suitably and sustainably.

2. The Status of *Fon Long Nan* in Nan Province

The results from the questionnaire survey show that *Fon Long Nan* was performed continually in all districts of Nan Province. Most participants had watched the dance and recognized its value. See Table 1.

The Status of <i>Fon Long Nan</i>		
Issues	Results	
	Yes	No
You have heard of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	90.4%	9.6%
You have watched a <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performance.	79.8%	10.7%
Issue	Yes	No
<i>Fon Long Nan</i> is interesting.	87.3%	3.1%
Issue	Yes	No
You know about the history of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	28.4%	62%

The Status of <i>Fon Long Nan</i>					
Issue	1 time	2 times	3 times	4 times	> 4 times
How many times have you seen a <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performance?	6.4%	10.2%	9.6%	4.9%	49.1%
Issues			Results		
Resources of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> Pattern and Positions					
- Parents, relations, ancestors			28.4%		
- Traditional events and temple fairs			13.3%		
- Teachers			5.3%		
- Guide books, historybooks, and legends			4%		
- The Provincial Assembly, the Cultural Assembly			2.4%		
- Exhibitions of official organizations and schools			0.9%		
- Internet			0.7%		
- National musicians, <i>Fon Long Nan</i> musicians and dancers, cultural community, the library on the Nan riverside			0.7%		
			0.2%		
Perceived Causes of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> Survival					
- The conservation and inheritance of it from generation to generation			34.4%		
- Being the local art of Nan Province and the masterpiece of <i>Fon Long Nan</i>			18.9%		
- Being the unique tradition, culture, and wisdom of local folks			18.7%		
- No idea			12.7%		
- Being a beautiful and tender performance			10.0%		
- School curricula			3.6%		
- Being arranged by government and private organizations			1.8%		

Table 1: The results from the questionnaire survey regarding the status of *Fon Long Nan*

Source: Responses from 450 participants from 15 districts in the year of 2014-2015

The results from Table 1 show that 49.1 percent of the participants had watched *Fon Long Nan* more than four times in festivals, traditional ceremonies, school events, parades, hotel events, and on walking streets. This indicated that *Fon Long Nan* was considered as the Nan cultural dance because it was recurrently performed in local festivals, traditions and districts and local people were familiar with it. Nonetheless, 60 percent of the participants tended to have limited knowledge and understanding of *Fon Long Nan*. Although some had known about it, the resources were mostly spoken descriptions from close relatives, generation to generation, public relations of the events, and teachers, respectively. If all Nan people have profound understanding of the history and values of *Fon Long Nan*, it is likely that this dance could be well preserved via the people's participation in and dedication to its propagation.

3. Nan People's Recognitions of *Fon Long Nan*

Recognition occurs when one repeatedly experiences the stimulus in one's surrounding area. One then receives it and brings about a perception, learning, and recognition, correspondingly. The recognition leads to the ability to cherish, appreciate, and conserve (Bunyaphluek 16). For that reason, this survey of Nan people's recognitions of *Fon Long Nan* was conducted with 450 participants in 15 districts of Nan, using questionnaires with a 5-point rating scale. The results were demonstrated in Table 2.

Statements	Agreement		
	\bar{x}	SD	Level
1. You would like <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to be resolutely part of Nan Province.	4.36	1.04	high
2. You think <i>Fon Long Nan</i> is Nan's treasure.	4.07	1.11	high
3. You love and cherish <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	4.02	1.22	high
4. You do not want <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to transform.	4.00	1.26	high
5. You appreciate and wish to watch <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	3.90	1.07	high
6. You want to know more about <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	3.90	1.00	high
7. You firmly believe that <i>Fon Long Nan</i> is useful for Nan people.	3.89	1.13	high

Statements	Agreement		
	\bar{x}	SD	Level
8. <i>Fon Long Nan</i> can reflect the ancestors' wisdom.	3.83	1.15	high
9. You are proud to watch <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	3.83	1.29	high
10. You conserve <i>Fon Long Nan</i> by being a good follower, supporter and audience member.	3.64	1.35	high
11. You can participate in <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation.	3.44	1.29	moderate
12. You can help conserve <i>Fon Long Nan</i> by publicizing it.	3.39	1.15	moderate
13. Public and private organizations participate in <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation and promotion activities.	3.29	1.18	moderate
14. You can help conserve <i>Fon Long Nan</i> by succeeding to the dance pattern.	2.33	1.48	low
Total	3.70	0.85	high

Table 2: The recognitions of *Fon Long Nan*

Source: The summary of results from a questionnaire survey with 450 Nan people in 15 districts in the year of 2014.

The results in Table 2 show that the participants's recognitions of *Fon Long Nan* was in a high level ($\bar{x}=3.70$). The results indicate that the participants highly agreed that *Fon Long Nan* performance was persistently part of Nan Province because it was Nan's treasure that reflected the culture's appreciation and values. Besides, they agreed that the original *Fon Long Nan* should be preserved. The finding goes in line with the principles of behavior in that most people had consistently received and been familiar with the performance since they were young, so they could recognize the cultural values of *Fon Long Nan*. Accordingly, they cherished, cared, and maintained the dance in ways that best suited their situations.

4. *Fon Long Nan* Conservation

The conservation behavior of 450 Nan people from 15 districts was investigated through three open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire. The results show their methods of preserving *Fon Long Nan* as revealed in Table 3.

Participation in <i>Fon Long Nan</i> Conservation	No. of participants	%
1. Publicizing <i>Fon Long Nan</i> via spoken introduction and description of its history and significance	88	19.6
2. No participation in <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation	84	18.7
3. Being a good audience member	78	17.3
4. Promoting <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performance during any event	55	12.2
5. Encouraging children and new generations to practice <i>Fon Long Nan</i>	49	10.9
6. Self-performing <i>Fon Long Nan</i>	38	8.4
7. Being a musician or teacher of <i>Fon Long Nan</i>	20	4.4
8. Participating in <i>Fon Long Nan</i> activities, e.g. joining the parade and the event administration	16	3.6
9. Studying <i>Fon Long Nan</i> and keeping hold of its information	14	3.1
10. Forming a <i>Fon Long Nan</i> club in the village	6	1.3
11. Publicizing <i>Fon Long Nan</i> via the internet	2	0.4
Total	450	100.0

Table 3: The number and percentage of participants participating in *Fon Long Nan* conservation

Source: Results from the questionnaire survey with 450 Nan participants from 15 districts in the year of 2014

Methods of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> Conservation	No. of participants	%
1. No methods of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation	98	21.8
2. Publicizing the history of <i>Fon Long Nan</i>	76	16.9
3. Encouraging new generations to succeed to <i>Fon Long Nan</i>	71	15.8
4. Encouraging public and private organizations to arrange <i>Fon Long Nan</i> in various festivals	55	12.2
5. Providing <i>Fon Long Nan</i> teachers and professionals in schools and communities	31	6.9

Methods of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> Conservation	No. of participants	%
6. Pushing <i>Fon Long Nan</i> as part of the school subject - local music and dance performance	29	6.4
7. Teaching <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to interested individuals	16	3.6
8. Taking children to watch <i>Fon Long Nan</i> in various events	15	3.3
9. Self-performing <i>Fon Long Nan</i>	13	2.9
10. Participating in <i>Fon Long Nan</i> administration, e.g. providing financial support and joining the parade	13	2.9
11. Publicizing <i>Fon Long Nan</i> in a VDO format on the internet	10	2.2
12. Public and private organizations holding the <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performance	8	1.8
13. Setting up <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation clubs	7	1.6
14. Preserving the original <i>Fon Long Nan</i> and its traditional clothing	5	1.1
15. Modifying the <i>Fon Long Nan</i> pattern to make it more beautiful	3	0.7

Table 4: The number and percentage of participants in each method of *Fon Long Nan* conservation

Source: Results from a questionnaire survey with 450 Nan people from 15 districts in the year of 2014

The results in Table 4 show that most Nan participants participated in *Fon Long Nan* conservation by means of introducing the history of *Fon Long Nan* to others (19.6%), being a good audience (17.3%), and supporting *Fon Long Nan* during various events (12.2%), respectively. However, the fact that 18.7% of the participants had no participation in *Fon Long Nan* conservation is compatible with the fact that 21.8% of the participants had no method of preserving *Fon Long Nan*. This triggered a brainstorming seminar for strategic suggestions of sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation with the intention of finding ways to educate these participants and foster their positive attitudes toward *Fon Long Nan* and their desire to help preserve *Fon Long Nan* for the long run.

5. Strategic Proposals of Sustainable *Fon Long Nan* Conservation Methods

Culture is a part of many people's lives, so their participation in cultural management is vital. In other words, those who experience ethnic trouble in their community should know how to deal with it better. Hence, a brainstorming seminar of strategic proposals of sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation methods was held on May 28th, 2015, at Nan Trueng Jai Hotel. There were 70 stake holders of *Fon Long Nan* who were willing to attend the seminar. They were Vice Governor of Nan Province, representatives from Nan's Office of Culture, districts' cultural councils, tourism promotion groups, and Waranakhorn Fan Club, including local scholars and artists, as well as teachers from 30 educational institutions. The outcomes gained from the seminar are shown in Table 5.

No.	Issues	No. of participants	%
1	Administer projects of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> promotion in all communities to enable all Nan people to perform <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .	17	16
2	Issue a requirement that <i>Fon Long Nan</i> be part of local education curriculum at all levels. The contents of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> should include its history, backgrounds, evolutions, and standardization. Although the regulation previously existed, the subject was optional. Some schools taught it, while others did not.	14	13.2
3	Arrange <i>Fon Long Nan</i> contests in all educational levels and communities. This should help motivate more interested people to perform the dance and join the competitions. The reward might provoke those who knew how to perform <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to practice more, and the contests could help those who did not know about perform <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to know more about it as audience members.	11	10.4
4	Train teachers about <i>Fon Long Nan</i> in the same official curriculum with the same number of teaching hours and standard <i>Fon Long Nan</i> pattern. It should be assured that all trainees complete the training course and receive a certificate of training.	8	7.5
5	Arrange <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performances by community people and students in various traditional events such as oar racing and community events. All communities and schools should send their members, not hired representatives, to perform	8	7.5

No.	Issues	No. of participants	%
	<i>Fon Long Nan</i> . This should arouse every school and community to enable its members to perform <i>Fon Long Nan</i> .		
6	Recently, <i>Fon Long Nan</i> pattern has been transformed into many patterns with various dancewears. Because of its unique pattern and dancewear, <i>Fon Long Nan</i> should be preserved in its original pattern and dancewear with no alterations.	8	7.5
7	Form <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation clubs in every district for interested people and prospective heirs of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to meet and find ways to preserve <i>Fon Long Nan</i> . Also, there should be a monthly meeting for members of all the clubs.	7	6.6
8	Promote the value of Nan's cultural conservation.	6	5.7
9	Consistently provide the revenue from public and private organizations for the budgets for <i>Fon Long Nan</i> musical instruments, standard dresswear making, food and beverage, as well as travel expenses.	6	5.7
10	Produce <i>Fon Long Nan</i> promotion mass media, e.g. distributing VCDs of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> 's history and the standard pattern to all schools, public institutes, and interested persons and making video clips of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> to publicize them on online social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube.	6	5.7
11	State sectors such as the cultural offices of the province and districts should set a strategic plan of promoting and conserving <i>Fon Long Nan</i> . The state organizations have to give an order of this conservation since at the beginning many people might not realize the significance of <i>Fon Long Nan</i> conservation, and thus they might offer inadequate cooperation.	6	5.7
12	Admire wise folks and youths who knew <i>Fon Long Nan</i> so that they could be proud and dedicated to preserving <i>Fon Long Nan</i> persistently.	2	1.9

No.	Issues	No. of participants	%
13	Nan's governing offices should form a meeting to set a <i>Fon Long Nan</i> community focusing on healthy dance, and <i>Fon Long Nan</i> should be part of the dance.	2	1.9
14	Any events in public and private organizations such as even openings, tourists' welcoming, and stage performance should include <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performed by students and <i>Fon Long Nan</i> professionals for their income support.	2	1.9
15	Have a knowledge management meeting regarding <i>Fon Long Nan</i> performance and culture.	2	1.9
16	Play <i>Fon Long Nan</i> music via the community speakers every day to make people familiarize with its rhythm.	1	0.9
	Total	106	100

Table 5: The number and percentage of strategic proposals of sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation

Source: Summary of the brainstorming seminar between participants regarding *Fon Long Nan* promotion and conservation in Nan Province on May 28th, 2015.

The data from the questionnaire survey of *Fon Long Nan* conservation and the data from the brainstorming seminar regarding strategic proposals of sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation showed that all parties in Nan Province had various methods for preserving *Fon Long Nan*. Potential methods included publicizing information about the historical significance of the dance, creating conservation projects within the communities, and setting the requirement of *Fon Long Nan* in the local curricula in all educational levels so that all youths in new generations can perform *Fon Long Nan*. Even though these strategies need to be supported and pushed by the state sectors with cooperation from private sectors, the urgent strategy should be the propagation of the precise *Fon Long Nan* history, its characteristics, and dance positions so that people can publicize them via online social networks conveniently and quickly. In addition, it was proposed that state and private enterprises arrange *Fon Long Nan* competitions in various festivals for the local people and tourists to observe and know more about the cultural *Fon Long Nan*. The strategic proposals that the participants help complete would be submitted to people and organizations related to

cultural conservation, development, and empowerment, e.g. Nan's Governor, the town mayor, the provincial office of culture, 15 district offices of culture so that they can use these proposals to set plans, revenues, and activities in the future. If these proposals are in actual use, it is likely that *Fon Long Nan* can be sustainably preserved.

Conclusion

Fon Long Nan has long been part and parcel of Nan's people's lives since their immigration. It has also been evolved in various patterns; for instance, *fon* on the oars performed to relax while migrating, *fon* on the winner racing oar performed for self-congratulation, *Fon Nan* innovated by Chao Noi Bunyok in 1926 to perform inside Nan's royal palace, and *Fon Long Nan*, which was the adapted *Fon Nan* after the town ruler's authorities were cancelled in 1932. This particular version was performed outside the royal palace. Around the year of 1956 women could first dance on the racing oars join in the oar-beauty contest. Later, the name *Fon Long Nan* included the *fon* on land as well. In 2008, Nan's Office of Culture took part in setting the standard *Fon Long Nan* pattern and its characteristics. The standard dance had 9 positions, some of which were adapted from existing *Fon Long Nan* positions and some of which were innovated to make them easy to practice and propagate. This pattern of *Fon Long Nan* has been performed in various essential events up to now.

Currently, *Fon Long Nan* is a cultural dance of Nan Province and it has been demonstrated in many key events. Therefore, most Nan people recognized the name of *Fon Long Nan*, but they had limited knowledge and understanding of its history. Most Nan people were familiar with *Fon Long Nan*, and realized and appreciated its cultural value. Thus, they broadcasted and introduced *Fon Long Nan* history and significance to others, were good audience members, supported *Fon Long Nan* performances in various events, and encouraged children and youths in new generations to practice it. However, some of the people did not participate in any *Fon Long Nan* conservation and possessed no means of preserving it. Therefore, a brainstorming seminar was held to find sustainable *Fon Long Nan* conservation methods from Nan's participants and organizations that are associated with *Fon Long Nan* culture. The strategic proposals of *Fon Long Nan* conservation gained from the seminar will be submitted to public and private sectors responsible for *Fon Long Nan* conservation to set a strategic plan of the conservation with monetary budgets and its forthcoming propagation activities. The propagation activities included spoken descriptions of

Fon Long Nan history, enabling all the Nan people to perform *Fon Long Nan* so that they could teach their children to further inherit *Fon Long Nan*. The key strategy is broadcasting the accurate history, elements, and dance positions of *Fon Long Nan* so that people can use them to publicize via online social networks, which is the easiest and the fastest channel. In addition, it was proposed that state and private sectors arrange *Fon Long Nan* contests in various festivals so that more Nan's people and tourists could witness the cultural dance. It is hoped that the strategic proposals will be used in practice, and *Fon Long Nan* can be sustainably preserved.

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«*The Italian branch of India*»: Gabriella Kuruvilla' s literary work
torn between the two identities

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Two generations of Italian immigrant authors

As Alfredo Luzi underlines, from the first half of 20th century till the last few decades, Italy has undergone a notable transformation from the country of emigration (to Argentina, United States, Canada, Australia, etc. and from the south of Italy to its north) into a country of immigration, as a consequence of a deep sociological change. [Luzi para 4] This change has influenced particularly the literary production of this country in which we note that the immigrant literature has recently, especially in the last two decades, developed a lot, with some features common to all migrant writers, in particular, a presence of the concept of dualism, which is perceived mainly in the contrast between the Italians and the immigrants – new residents of this country, as well as the antithetical feeling of the immigrants, who feel the conflict between the host country and the country of origin. Besides, we frequently notice in the texts of these authors the autobiographical elements as well as the emotions that accompany the experience of adaptation, like feelings of loneliness, abandonment, repression, as well as loss of identity.

It must be underlined that only starting from the early 90's, we may speak of immigrant literature in Italy, and by this we understand the literature written in Italian language by the authors whose mother tongue is non Italian [Frabetti para 2]. Anna Frabetti also points out to the fact that, even when the migrant writer does not write about the migration in the first place, still, in his or her writing it remains central the awareness of this experience at least in the memories of the ancestors, and this experience is structured on the idea of change and metamorphosis [Frabetti para 3].

It is important to underline that today in Italian literature we may speak, although not without protests and disapprovals by some literary critics, of the "literature of the second generation", in contrast to the first phase of immigrant literature, which consists of literary works written by the children of immigrants who arrived to Italy in the '70s and '80s, and these were born in Italy or arrived to Italy while very young [Ellero 3]. What distinguishes them, according to Paola Ellero, in the first place, from the migrant writers, is the fact that they did not choose the country to which

they would actually immigrate, but it was their parents' decision. Therefore, the question of the language that they speak and in which they choose to write, since they speak mainly Italian from the early years of their life, becomes of the fundamental importance, because it is the choice of the language of expression that spurs in them the conflict which makes them feel, on one hand, that it is natural to express in Italian, while, on the other hand, they feel to neglect the language of their ancestors. Besides, the migrant writers who arrived to Italy in the '80s or '90s are characterized by the fact that in their work it is present the perception of the host country as the only possible one which can give them possibility to work and live in peace, since that country is the only one that can provide them the conditions for better life. On the contrary, in the so called "writers of the second generation" we find an attitude diametrically opposed to them, since they feel more the present social and economic crisis and are more critical towards the host country, which, at the same time, ceases to be the host country, but becomes their motherland. Therefore, they are not characterized by the patience and the forbearance as those who feel the need to integrate in the society in order to create the conditions for remaining permanently in that country, but they are much more critical and exigent towards their society and do not feel any restraint to express their criticism.

The contemporary Italian authoress that we take into consideration in this paper, Gabriella Kuruvilla, according to some critics, can be described as the authoress of the "literature of the second generation", although there are not many texts in which there are clearly listed the immigrant writers of the so called "first" or "second generation of immigrant authors in Italy". Namely, she was born from an Indian father and Italian mother and lives the Italian culture and society from the very beginning of her life. Kuruvilla was born in Milan, and she is an architect and journalist, as well as a painter. She has been writing articles for several newspapers and magazines and has two passions: writing and painting. In 2001 she published, under the pseudonym Viola Chandra, a novel *Media chiara e noccioline*. Like Laila Wadia, another immigrant authoress, Kuruvilla also participated in writing of the collection of short stories *Pecore nere* in 2005, having written two short stories, entitled *Ruben* and *India*. In 2008 she published a collection of short stories *È la vita, dolcezza*, while in 2010 she wrote the book for children *Questa non è una babysitter*. In 2012 she published *Milano, fin qui tutto bene*. [1] In Kuruvilla's paintings, a recurrent motif is the city, while there is always present a stamp of both countries to which she feels connected, India and Italy. Her paintings present us the city as the human body, and this

characteristic will be important in the analysis of her literary work. She is also frequently influenced by the important recent social and political events in the Italian society, which are represented in her paintings by using the symbols and the colours of India. [2]

This means that the perception of the Italian society of this authoress is different than in the authors of the so called "first generation of the Italian immigrant literature", since, as a daughter of a mixed couple she does not have to carry a burden of being an immigrant but has an indirect experience of immigration. From that fact we could suppose that Kuruvilla would live the conflict between the two identities in a much easier way than those who immigrate to Italy, but that is not the case; contrary to this hypothesis, in her work she constantly faces the questions of dual identity and this process will be characterized by the specific elements and motifs which are continually repeated. Namely, in the case of Kuruvilla's work, the dual identity is lived with more complexity and in a much more painful way, focusing mostly on searching the way in which these two identities could live peacefully in one person, and not as a consequence of the choice to emigrate and leave behind the culture of departure and to accept the culture of destination, but as a consequence of the fact that she is a daughter of a mixed couple and has to face what she has inherited as dual cultural heritage. As what regards the narrative style, Kuruvilla's tone is very painful, reflecting all the insecurities connected with dual identity that the children of mixed couples may face in their life.

It is particularly important to stress that Kuruvilla always chooses to write in the Italian language, but her characters often point out how they regret that they cannot speak the language of their Indian ancestors, which seems to be strongly connected with the fact that they do not accept the ignorance of a part of identity that they have inherited. However, the recurrent motif of her texts is the struggle to bring together the dual identities, which cannot be marginalized. Not less important is that the main motif of her work will be the body, which is lived, on one hand, as a medium for making peace with the "body" of their motherland, and on the other hand, as a demarcation line between her identity and her parents, as well as the rest of the society. In this sense, her work is paradigmatic of the writers characterized by the dual identity. However, what will be of fundamental importance in Kuruvilla's work is that her main attention is on the materialization and physical representation of body, so the pain that her characters feel is strongly connected with their perception of a body. A body becomes the externalization of suffering present in characters first of all since they cannot find the way to make peace with their ancestors, who are

alter ego of the homeland. In this sense, the body may symbolize the society or a part of the society which cannot find the way to integrate in the rest of the society. Hence, the materialization of the pain through the body, which is housing an individual identity, inevitably points out to the urban space, housing one community. Therefore, it results that Kuruvilla's battle is not only personal and individual, but it has to do with the community in general, not only the Italian one.

Before starting the analysis, we must stress and take into consideration that we classify this authoress as a "migrant authoress of the second generation", not because she has immigrated to Italy, which is not the case, but since the first generation of these authors was characterized by the individualization and description of the difficult life conditions of the immigrants in the '90-ties in Italy [3], while this second generation concentrates more on trying to valorise both cultures and both countries, that of the origin and of the host country, in which their parents immigrated. [4] We also have to underline that, since Kuruvilla is half Italian and has been living in Italy since she was born, many critics doubt whether she might be defined as a «migrant writer» at all. Therefore, the aim of this analysis is also to point out to the differences which we note in the recent authors in Italy, like Kuruvilla, which focus on the questions of migration.

A body placed between two worlds and two cultures

In an interview, Kuruvilla defines herself

I am the daughter of an Indian father and Italian mother. I live between two worlds and two cultures, profoundly different. I was born and raised in Italy, which is my 'real' country, while India, where I have been recently with my son, is the land of dreams and desire: the place to which I belong and do not belong. [5]

In the collection of short stories, *È la vita, dolcezza (That's life, honey)*, she faces the issues of dual identity of those who live in one society, but do not completely feel to be the part of it, with numerous autobiographical elements inserted in the texts. The authoress focuses on the relation between a body, as a reflection of the individual identity, and the future of the whole community. The body externalizes pain caused by the interaction of these dual identities, which constantly tend to dominate one over the other. We call to mind that Salvatore Natoli speaks of the pain as "the evidence that establishes itself as a *bridge* between the individual and the universal" [Natoli 32] which points our attention to the universality of pain that is readable in Kuruvilla's work since the

internal dissension of her female characters symbolizes the universal suffering of immigrants which confront the social, cultural, and ethnic duality.

One of her significant texts is a short story *Barbie*, in which it is focalized the narrator's problem of confronting and dealing with the dual identity. This problem reflects also on the female character's children, born from the relationship with an Italian, for which she sees the problems in the future because of their dual ethnicity and feels the need to change children's social identity in order to solve her individual identity scission: «Ashima and Sandip were born, and they will soon become Paola and Luigi. I have asked the court to change their names, in order not to bias their lives. The others will not make fun of them, and they will not feel nor different nor wrong. Simply equal and integrated.» [6] Her children are perceived as an “extension” of her identity, or, more precisely, a result of her need to satisfy her boyfriend's necessity for ethnic difference. Namely, while describing her relationship with the Italian boyfriend, she stresses that «[h]e had the Italian branch of India. He wanted to create other branches, so Ashima and Sandip were born.» [7] In this, the act of creation becomes fundamental, since the body that can give birth is focused, as well as the bodies themselves which are the result of this creation. On the other hand, the body is used as a tool for confronting the other, and this story underlines that the possibility to procreate of a female body transforms into her punishment, because once the children are born, the relationship comes to an end.

Valérie Baisnée analyzes the importance of body in self-narration and she underlines that a body may be used for social control, due to the fact that

[t]aking the body as an object has always been a double-edged sword for feminists, for women have traditionally been defined as the body. Over the mind/body opposition that informs our thinking has been superimposed the male/female dichotomy, so that mind is associated with male and body with female. Other dualisms (race, class, etc.) also add force to this phallogocentric reading of the body to make it a powerful form of social control. By focusing exclusively on the body the feminist discourse risks reinforcing these dichotomies. A reading of the body in literature may then be a means of reasserting traditional roles for women, and therefore be used as a tool of subjection against them. [Baisnée 11-12]

That hypothesis is represented in Kuruvilla's works, the body, as seen in the novel *Barbie*, is being used by the male character to reinforce the ethnic difference and to imbed the female character in the traditional role of a caring mother, while he gets the possibility to abandon them and leave her

for another woman. However, in Kuruvilla's texts, those characters who are questioning and, consequently, reinforcing the dichotomies male-mind/female-body, are primarily female characters, since they do not succeed to respect themselves and to confront men, due to this traditional predominance of men.

The balanced relationship between the two characters in *Barbie* cannot, consequently, be achieved, since the ethnic difference of the woman represents the basis of this relation, underlining the diversity as its main element, which, once it gets "transformed" into children, with the offspring ceases to be a diversity, but becomes an aspect more familiar to men. Male character focuses exclusively on woman's corporeality, and his interest in the ethnic diversity is practically based on the need for his personal change: «He did not seek for a social revolution, but for the individual change. He wanted to get lost in order to find himself [...]» [8] Hence, the female body becomes used at two levels: first, as a tool of communication with other characters, second, as a tool for the control over the others. Once the change has transformed into something normal and familiar, it is not felt as necessity any more and the male character does not need it any more.

Moreover, in the text, the characters are put on the opposite sides of the relation, which is based on the following contrast: one of the characters looks for the diversity, while the other avoids the diversity. It means that, while the male character seeks for the personal transformation in another ethnic group, the female one, on the other hand, wants to lose this "double" aspect of her identity in order to find herself in the balance of only one ethnicity («I told him that I am an Indian but that I am not Indian any more. He did not understand me.» [9]). Therefore, through the relationship with the member of the other ethnic group, the female character tries to rebuild the personal identity, so it is clear that this short story gives the examples of the personal identity strongly linked to the ethnic identity.

Recently, many researchers have been studying the identity formation and one of them is Ruthellen Josselson, who has been analyzing the identity development in women. From her studies it results that the environment has a significant influence on the development of identity of women. [10] Her theory incorporates James Marcia's division in four identity groups according to certain personal and social traits connected with the identity choices and commitments. If we take into consideration Marcia's division, Kuruvilla's narrative voice of the short stories *È la vita, dolcezza* could be defined as the "identity moratorium", since the identity experiences the crisis, but being in front of multiple choices, does not feel confident to commit to a sense of identity, and lives

constantly the anxiety and the struggle to find the way to get out of the crisis. [11] So in Kuruvilla's characters, who partly reflect the authoress' identity, we may find the inner contention present in the constant identity formation due to the dissension between the intrapsychic conflict and interpersonal and social conflicts. Torn between them, Kuruvilla's characters confirm that in the contemporary society we can only speak of the deconstruction of notions on stable identities.

It is important to underline that, from the beginning of the story *Barbie*, the attention is given to the body as the materialization of this dual identity and as the incarnation of the impossibility to live both of the identities at the same time: «[...] I check my profile in the shop window, my body wrapped in jeans and undershirt. I look at it with a sideways glance, as if I pretended indifference.» [12] In this character, there is constantly present the need to observe and to control her own corporeality, which, in fact, is the confirmation of the absence of self-confidence, due to the much attention given to the others. So the reader often gets the feeling that the characters like this one are disturbed by their body and want to get rid of it. The reflection in the mirror, on one side, represents a kind of "physical pursuit" of their identity, so they start feeling hunted by this physical representation of themselves. On the other hand, the confirmation of the material presence of the body guarantees the feeling of stability for them, since the basis for her relation with others is always and primarily on the body. Therefore, later on, the refusal of her body is replaced by the need for her lover's body, which is the one that gives her the feeling of security and protection: «I was always thoughtful, with the thought sunk in his body. Dependent on his body, body of an ancient teenager who was able to keep me for more than two hours on the edge of orgasm, smiling lightly [...]» [13]

In the refusal of the self, we find, partly, the consequences of the hegemonic attempts to marginalize and annihilate the female identity as well as the identity of the persons with the dual ethnicity, so through the physicality of their body and the forced attention to it, it is being evoked the loss of identity and the necessity of its restoration, as well as the social and cultural connectedness to it, which manifests through flashbacks, intrusive memories, and through the constant struggle to survive within the body which is felt, at the same time, as familiar and non-familiar.

Beyond the questions of female identity

However, the question of the restoration of the loss of identity and the instability of the self is not only gendered in Kuruvilla's work because in another short story, *Nero a metà* (*Half black*), by the means of the motif of discrimination, Kuruvilla speaks of the impossibility of the character, in the case of the crisis, to find the balance in the intrapersonal dimension, since the character is not able to first accept the disbalance in the familiar relations in order to become able to find the way to face the social discrimination. Therefore, he cannot aim for the emotional equilibrium neither:

[...] I know Latin to perfection, but that bitch teacher is racist and conservative beyond measure. It is obvious that I, the son of a mixed couple, and, for more, separated, with my dark skin and not so clean family criminal record, cannot go beyond an F minus minus. It is the two minuses that make me pissed, she just can not give me a passing grade, it is contrary to her religion. [14]

I get only an F minus minus, I will never get a D, even though I am the best student in the class, only because the Latin teacher is racist and conservative and she wants to throw me a crowbar between the teeth and to punish me because I am the son of a mixed and divorced couple. [15]

The discrimination described in these paragraphs is connected with the social hierarchy, which allows that the differences remain the basis for the marginalization. An institution like a school in the text applies social rules imposed by the dominant members of the society, which transforms some individuals, because of the skin colour and as children of divorced couples, into victims. Therefore, here we have the example of double marginalization, though the character focused is the male one.

It is important to stress that a personal identity in Kuruvilla's story is not constructed through the relation with the father figure but through the father's ethnic indefiniteness. As a son of an immigrant, the character has to face his father who denies his own origin, in the attempt to integrate and to become Italian. Therefore, the tension here is also on the body, i.e. on the character's refusal of the body, and, in this case, it is a male body that is suffering. Besides, the burden of dual identity is so strong in Kuruvilla's characters, that these characters are fighting with themselves throughout their life:

I would like to take his head and slap it against the mirror and then scream: «What the fuck is your skin colour? Tell me. What the fuck is your skin colour?»

He has deleted everything, starting from himself. Those are his children, my brothers. But he has denied his family, poor and dirty, to be accepted and adopted by an affluent and disinfected society. Disinfected. He dresses like an Italian, he eats like an Italian, he thinks like an Italian. He thinks he is an Italian. He needs to feel equal to others while being totally different from them. Sometimes he exaggerates, for sure. Like a fag who wants to be a woman and becomes a parody of a woman. I don't know how to help him, stop him, bring him back to his origins. His origins, which are totally mine. I take the responsibility of being black, being a half-breed. [16]

The tension in this quotation is on the negation of the tradition, which is implied in the process of immigration.

The revolt felt by the character is a consequence of the hierarchy present in the family of the character, where he is forced to face and accept the consequences of the imposed decision of the parents. The negation of the possibility to decide spurs the individual towards the inner conflict with his self, from which he cannot find the way out. The question of the absence of the father's responsibility oppresses the individual till that point that he assumes the double responsibility, as a child and as a parent, which becomes an unbearable burden.

The anger of this character functions as an example of emotional dislocation, connected exclusively with the instability of the split identity, consequence of his intrapsychic conflict, which results in the refusal of the father's figure and, at the same time, in the need to identify with him (this relationship reflects the presence of the elements of avoidance and adaptation at the same time): «I really want to burn a car in order to blow up, and then feel a part of a group.» [17] The need to become the part of the group results from the insecure and instable position of the individual in the society. The idea of the traditional family does not exist anymore and it is substituted by the society, or, better, by the ethnic group in which the individual has to find the way to be integrated. Only if he manages to become a part of that group, maybe he can find the possibility to restore the emotional equilibrium. Hence, his emotional connection with his father has been shifted into his relation to the society, in which the release of anger confirms that he has become the part of one unit.

That the question of the body discriminated and violated is not only gendered in Kuruvilla's work, nor it is only the problem of ethnic diversity, is confirmed in the short story *Stupro (Rape)*, where the character, while looking for her roots and discovering her father figure, in order to give balance to her identity, gets raped, first by some black people, than by some white ones. The act of rape by the first ones and the second ones is equalized, since it is described with the same words,

depicting the same actions, and, finally, denouncing all of them, i.e. everyone who tries to dominate over any aspect of an identity, physical, emotional or social one.

Another motif, always present in Kuruvilla's work, is that of the co-presence of the two languages and of the split identity between these two languages, one spoken in the country of origin and one in the host country, which always interweaves with the dual identity:

It's your fault if I do not know Malayalam. I told you: «Teach me, it is important for my life.» I am angry with myself and with you, now that I will need an interpreter in order to find out who you were.

I have a problem of split identity: I cannot say I am half Indian if I do not know anything about this half that belongs to me, if I have to look for into the writings that I do not know how to decipher. [...] I want your past, the one that you have erased, in order to anchor me to the present moment, in which you do not exist. [...] I want to be able to say: «I am half Indian», feeling an echo of the truth that resonates in my words. [18]

The emptiness that the lack of language knowledge causes, points to the interior hollowness which cannot find the way to be fulfilled. In the fact that the father in the short story *La casa*, as seen from the example, has been hiding for a long time a part of his identity to a child, not teaching his daughter the language of their ancestors, points out to the aspects of the father's identity that continue to be hidden to the narrator=character, which reinforce the character's conflict with the social norms and the society in general and hinder her the possibility to regain the balance. Moreover, from the above examples we may see that in Kuruvilla's work what persists is the regret for the past actions which continue to torture the characters in the present since the balance between the two identities cannot be achieved.

Not less important is that the motif of the forced maternity is present in Kuruvilla's work, and it is often associated with the condition of a woman constrained to be only wife and mother, i.e. her freedom is denied. This is the case, for example, of the short story *Matrimonio (Marriage)*, in which the problem of the arranged marriage in India is focused, and the characters are challenged by the fact that they feel the need to avoid this combined marriage, although that means to oppose openly to their parents. Here, a female character, «a denied woman» as Kuruvilla calls her, is compared to a flag, she is the male's personal achievement, the demonstration of his predominance and success:

Mary is beautiful, as only a teenager can be. She has a sour body, which begs for affection and tenderness more than for marriage and pregnancy. But marriage and pregnancy is what she is asked for, that is what is imposed to her. The affection and tenderness, if they ever arrive, will be free gifts, in front of which she will have to bow, with her hands together, palm to palm and fingers against fingers, like if she were saying a prayer, bowing her head and raising her eyes only to say thank you, in the most silent, gentle, modest, submissive, possible way. [19]

The body is used as the means of commerce, it is the object that passes from one owner to the other, and it is repressed and silenced. It is reduced to its physical dimension, while the emotional and the psychical ones are entirely futile. Therefore, the imposition of the submission to the male character results in the extrapsychic conflict, in which the self feels the whole environment against, but here this conflict is lived silently because the individual is reduced to the body which cannot but obey, and can be saved only by the choice of the male character to avoid the arranged marriage and to marry another woman. However, Kuruvilla offers the possibility of salvation of this female body, since in the end it is the man who chooses to avoid the social impositions and decides to marry with the one which seems more convenient to him.

One of Kuruvilla's most significant works is the short story *Aborto (Abortion)* in which the questions of identity are lived through the representations and the acts of the body with the particular attention to the ending of the life. As it is suggested by the title, a character is put in front of the question of abortion, but this abortion refers not only to the decision not to give birth to a child, it refers to the acceptance of the obligation to give up life in general, i.e. to abort life. Even the spatial element, i.e. the city itself, in this prose work is related to the body; namely, since the body replaces the urban space and is lived as a meeting point between the characters, it functions as the substitute for the city. Besides, in this short story the female character is placed in opposition to the male one, since she is Indian and he is Italian, and therefore, the “meeting point” of the two is in the emotion that connects their bodies, although they are aware that «we all know that to mix the races is wrong. It means forgetting who we were and who we are to create men and women without history launched as meteorites crazy, and discoloured, in future.» [20] Being the male character a street cleaner, the attention is focused on the fact that he collects things discarded by other people on the streets and on the fact that the litter is left all over the city, as a metaphor of a men's complete alienation from his environment which can be seen in the lack of care for anything but the self. The individual does not care any more for the social and common wealth, which can be seen in their relation to the public space. In the same way in which the residents of

the city do not care for the space around them since they see it filthy and unpleasant, the female character of this short story lives her body as a symbol of impurities, because of her skin colour, «discarded» by others, which, according to her perception, only her boyfriend “wants to recycle”. Moreover, from the very beginning of the story, according to the female character’s opinion, the body ceases to have its function to procreate, being completely discarded, in the same way that a city in the postmodern society does not have its function anymore to keep together people living in a civilized way: «If there is no money there can’t be children. And nobody should come to me and say that to procreate is natural. It is natural only if you can afford it. And nobody should say that abortion is a murder. To kill is to abort life of those who were born.» [21] This means that the body in Kuruvilla’s texts ceases to have its primary function, as well as the urban space ceases to have its function, i.e. to serve as a space that houses one community used to living together. Hence, it is clear why the whole story takes place in the interior spaces, neglecting the outside area.

The negation of the body and of the procreation is connected with the negation of the dual identity itself: «A mestizo son means to impose diversity, a provocation. It means to pollute the past in the name of future, it means not to respect the earth because you want the sky. It is the dirty white. The stain imprinted in the body of his nephew and niece, which mocks the pride of grandparents.» [22] Therefore, with a symbolic act of cutting her hair, the female character wants to break all the ties with the past which means for her parents to deny their ethnic culture and tradition («The Indian daughter had died, and had been replaced by a western clone. The horror and revulsion, but also the shame.» [23]) Hence, if the female character gave birth to “a mestizo son”, this would mean that not only she damages her body, which in this way “contaminates” with another ethnicity, but also that she destroys the relationship with her parents, as well as that she ruins the tradition and the customs of her ethnic group: «By ruining myself, I was ruining them, because of the law of transitive property, I suppose. Because I was them. I am them.» [24] In order to give birth to a child, she has to renounce to one tradition and separate completely from her parents and her ancestors, since in their livers there is no place for a child that is not able to carry on the tradition of their ethnic group.

Therefore, the need for the new identity is transferred to “the need for the new body”, like a new beginning:

They are against the contamination. He and I are contaminating my mother and my father, with our crazy initiative to procreate. The non-willed initiative [...]. But we continued insisting in the cause in order to obtain the result. We continued to have sex without precautions till the moment has arrived when we have to pay the price. To free my body from the shame suffered. [25]

This means that the “new” body is needed by the female character in order to free herself from the constraints of the tradition, but the “new” body, at the same time, deprives her of an identity, i. e. it denies her any identity. She concludes that

[T]here is a lonely woman who struggles to become from a child an adult. I can go along this long road only accompanied by a man, not by a boy, or, even less, by a girl. I would see myself reflected in her till I start to melt and lose myself in her eyes, her mind and her body. In her reflection. And I would end up hating her because she has deprived me of my identity. To have my identity. [26]

Conclusion

Kuruvilla says that «[i]t's a question of lack. A lack of synchrony and a lack of balance. A lack of respect. For who you are and for what you know. For what could be and for what you will be. For the roots and for the flowers.» [27] So every problem in her texts arises around the contraposition between the tradition and the identity, which has to face the present and the future, but cannot abandon the past, and between the body that the characters live, and which they cannot accept. The characters constantly look for the confirmation of the acceptance, which they may perceive only through the corporeality, but this one results as not plausible.

It seems that the construction of individual female identity is connected, in Kuruvilla's work, mainly with two elements: the representation of body and the lack of knowledge of the language of the ancestors, i.e. of the country from which the character's parents emigrated. But we may ask a question, what about the thirdness? Besides the dual oppositions that strongly mark her work, it seems that these characters are looking for the recognition of the third ethnic identity which is not reducible neither to the first one nor to the second one. The advantage of the thirdness, and by this we do not understand Peirce's pragmatic pluralism, lies in the fact that it would not have to be reduced to neither one of the two genders, and in this way it would avoid the automatic submission. In Kuruvilla's texts, the reader often has to confront the question of thirdness that the characters look for, but cannot attain in their life.

From the analysis, we may see that, in her work, the authoress often focuses on the characters which are, similar to immigrants, although they are not necessarily immigrants, but still, because of some aspect of their character or identity, they are marginalized and exposed to the atrocities of the social and moral rejection, as well as often subject to the discriminatory mechanism, due to the impossibility of establishing balance in the intrapersonal relations. Hence, we may say that Kuruvilla points the attention in almost every her work to the imbalance in the characters of her “literary society” and she does it mainly through the representations of the body. This means that in Kuruvilla’s literary work we can find rarely examples of the attempts of how to regain balance among the characters, since the authoress is mostly concentrated on the issues of difference, ethnic, gender or social, which, in her work, constantly divides characters and makes them focus more on the issues of the dual identity perceived as the split identity which cannot be integrated in the society. Actually, the story of her characters is the story of the bodies, since only bodies can externalize the scission of the dual personality in them. However, her insisting on these topics is not always described as an ethnic question, but it is more a question about the human and his role in the postmodern society in general. In this, the representation of body becomes fundamental, being the externalization and the manifestation of the inner dissatisfaction; it is, actually, the materialized form of the lack of balance, present in the characters because of their persistent inability to accept the dual identity. In all her work, Kuruvilla cannot avoid being concentrated more on the questions of dual identity and the persistence of imbalance due to the intrapersonal and intrapsychic conflict, then on finding the way out of this crisis. It seems that the possibility that the crisis of her characters ends with overcoming the mental conflict is not sustainable at all.

Notes

1. Cfr. <http://www.ilgiocodeglispecchi.org/libri/autore/kuruvilla-gabriella>. 1st October 2015.
2. Cfr. http://www.cittametropolitana.mi.it/export/sites/default/talentiextravaganti/doc/gabriella_kuruvilla.pdf. 8th November 2015.
3. “The issues addressed in the first instance by the migrant authors are often – but not always – social issues related to the problems of difficult integration, homesickness felt for a country of

origin sometimes seen as mythical; to loneliness, racial problems, the questions of identity, typical for those who move between two (or more) languages and cultures. There are also portraits of Italy, country of dreams and disillusion.” (Frabetti, Anna. “«Un ruscello timido»: la letteratura italiana della migrazione”. p. 3. Web. 14th May 2015.

4. Ivi, p. 2.

5. Mazzocchi, Silvana. Appendice 4: intervista a Gabriella Kuruvilla sulla *Repubblica* “SPETTACOLI & CULTURA PASSAPAROLA / In libreria " E' la vita, dolcezza " , della scrittrice e pittrice Gabriella Kuruvilla”. “Storie di immigrati di seconda generazione: identità spezzata, desideri, malinconia. Una vita fra due mondi senza perdere le radici”, in: *Cultura e Civiltà. L'Italia – un paese d'immigrazione*, Milano, 23.07.2012. – 26.07.2012. (Nell’ambito del corso di cultura e civiltà di Nicoletta Grandi, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), p. 39. Web. 14th October 2014.

6. «Sono nati Ashima e Sandip, che presto diventeranno Paola e Luigi. Ho chiesto al tribunale di cambiare i loro nomi, per non compromettere la loro vita. Gli altri non li prenderanno in giro, e loro non si sentiranno né diversi né sbagliati. Semplicemente uguali, integrati.» (Kuruvilla, Gabriella. "Barbie." *È la vita, dolcezza*. Milano: Morellini Editore, 2014, p. 12.). (All the translations from the Italian original into English are by Nikica Mihaljević).

7. «Lui ha avuto la succursale italiana dell’India. Voleva creare altre sedi, così sono nati Ashima e Sandip.» (Ivi, p. 16.).

8. «Non cercava la rivoluzione sociale ma il cambiamento individuale. Voleva perdersi per ritrovarsi [...]». (Ivi, p. 14.).

9. «Gli ho detto che sono indiana ma che non lo sono più. Non mi ha capita.» (Ivi, p. 16.).

10. Cfr. Josselson R. (1987) *Finding herself. Pathways to Identity Development in Women*. San Francisco-London: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

11. Cfr. Marcia, James, E., "Development and validation of ego identity status." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 3:551-8, 1966. State University of New York, Buffalo, NY.

12. «[...] controllo nelle vetrine il mio profilo fasciato dai jeans e dalla canottiera. Mi guardo con un occhio sbieco, di finta indifferenza.» (Kuruvilla, Gabriella. "Barbie." *È la vita, dolcezza*, p. 12.).

13. «Ero sempre soprappensiero, con il pensiero affondato nel suo corpo. Dipendente dal suo corpo di adolescente anziano che riusciva a tenermi per più di due ore sul filo dell’orgasmo, sorridendomi con leggerezza [...]». (Ivi, p. 16.).

14. «[...] io il latino lo so alla perfezione, ma quella stronza della prof è razzista e conservatrice, oltre misura. Chiaro che io, figlio di una coppia mista, per di più separata, con la mia pelle scura e la fedina famigliare sporca, non vado al di là di un sei meno meno. Sono i due meno che mi fanno girare il cuolo: una sufficienza piena proprio non riesce a darmela, è contraria alla sua religione.» (Kuruvilla, Gabriella. "Nero a metà." *È la vita, dolcezza*, cit., p. 24.).

15. «Io prendo sei meno meno, e alla sufficienza non ci arriverò mai, anche se sono il più bravo della classe, solo perché una professoressa di latino razzista e conservatrice desidera sbattermi una spranga tra i denti per punirmi del fatto che sono figlio di una coppia mista e separata.» (Ivi, p. 26.).

16. «Vorrei prendergli la testa e schiaffargliela contro lo specchio e poi urlare: "Di che cazzo di colore sei? Dimmi. Di che cazzo di colore sei?"

Ha cancellato tutto, partendo da se stesso. Quelli sono i suoi figli, i miei fratelli. Ma lui ha rinnegato la sua famiglia, povera e sporca, per farsi accettare e adottare da una società opulenta e disinfettata. Disinfettata. Si veste all'italiana, mangia all'italiana, pensa all'italiana. Pensa di essere italiano. Ne ha bisogno. Ha bisogno di sentirsi uguale agli altri pur essendo assolutamente diverso da loro. A volte esagera, certo. Come una checca che, volendo essere una donna, diventa la parodia della femmina. Non so come aiutarlo, frenarlo, riportarlo alle origini. Le sue origini, che faccio assolutamente mie. Mi assumo la responsabilità di essere un nero, essendo un meticcio.» (Ivi, p. 27.).

17. «E ho tanta voglia di bruciare una macchina per far esplodere la mia rabbia, e sentirmi parte di un gruppo.» (Ivi, p. 28.).

18. «È colpa tua se non so il malayalam. Ti avevo detto: "Insegnamelo, è importante per la mia vita." Sono arrabbiata con me e con te, ora che avrò bisogno di un traduttore per leggere chi sei stato. Per sapere quale era la tua storia, e riempire di significati la mia.

Ho un problema di identità spezzata: non posso dire che sono mezza indiana se non conosco nulla di questa metà che mi appartiene. Se devo cercarla dentro gli scritti che non so decifrare. [...]

Voglio il tuo passato, quello che hai cancellato, per ancorarmi al presente, in cui non ci sei. [...]

Voglio poter dire: "Sono mezza indiana", sentendo che un eco di verità risuona nelle mie parole.»

(Kuruvilla, Gabriella. "La casa." *È la vita, dolcezza.*, cit., p. 34.).

19. «Mary è bella, come può esserlo un'adolescente. Ha un corpo acerbo, che chiede affetto e tenerezza, più che matrimonio e gravidanza. Ma matrimonio e gravidanza è quello che le si chiede,

che le si impone. Affetto e tenerezza, se mai arriveranno, saranno doni gratuiti, davanti a cui lei dovrà inchinarsi, a mani unite e strette, palmo contro palmo e dita contro dita, come se stesse recitando una preghiera, chinando il capo e alzando gli occhi solo per dire grazie, nel modo più silenzioso, dolce e modesto, sottomesso, possibile.» (Kuruvilla. Gabriella. "Matrimonio." *È la vita, dolcezza*, cit., p. 36.).

20. «Sappiamo tutti che mischiare le razze è sbagliato. Vuol dire dimenticarsi di chi eravamo e di chi siamo per creare uomini e donne senza storia lanciati come meteoriti impazziti, e scoloriti, nel futuro.» (Kuruvilla, Gabriella. "Aborto." *È la vita, dolcezza*, cit., p. 63.).

21. «Se non ci sono soldi non possono esserci figli. E non mi vengano a raccontare che procreare è naturale. È naturale solo se te lo puoi permettere. E non mi dicano che abortire è uccidere. Uccidere è abortire la vita chi è nato.» (Ivi, p. 64.).

22. «Un figlio meticcio è imporre le diversità, lo sgarro. È inquinare il passato in nome del futuro, non rispettare la terra perché si vuole il cielo. È lo sporco bianco. La macchia impressa nel corpo del nipote e della nipote, che deride l'orgoglio dei nonni.» (Ivi, p. 65.).

23. «La figlia indiana era deceduta, ed era stata sostituita da un suo clone occidentale. Orrore e raccapriccio, ma anche infamia.» (Ibid.).

24. «Rovinando me stessa rovinavo loro, per proprietà transitiva, immagino. Perché io ero loro. Io sono loro.» (Ivi, p. 66.).

25. «Loro sono contro le contaminazioni. Io e lui stiamo contaminando mia madre e mio padre, con la nostra folle iniziativa di procreare. Iniziativa non voluta, [...]. Ma ci siamo accaniti nella causa fino a ottenere l'effetto. Abbiamo continuato a fare l'amore senza precauzioni fino a dover pagare una cauzione. Per liberare il mio corpo dell'onta subita.» (Ivi, p. 67.).

26. «Esiste una donna sola, che da bambina fa fatica a trasformarsi in adulta. Questa lunga strada posso percorrerla con a fianco un uomo, non un bambino o, tantomeno, una bambina. Mi rispecchiere in lei fino a fondermi e a confondermi nei suoi occhi, nella sua mente e nel suo corpo. Nel suo riflesso. Fino a odiarla perché mi ha privata della mia identità. Di avere una mia identità.» (Ivi, p. 68.).

27. «Una questione di mancanze. Mancanza di sincronia e mancanza di equilibrio. Mancanza di rispetto. Per quello che sei e per quello che sai. Per quello che potrebbe essere e per quello che sarai. Per le radici e per i fiori.» (Ibid.).

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