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## Preface

In 2013, H.J. Manzari and Amparo Alpañés from Washington & Jefferson College, together with Elgin K. Eckert from the Umbra Institute and Angela Tumini from Chapman University came together to organize the first *Bridges Across Culture: An International Conference on Arts and Humanities* that took place in Perugia, Italy, from June 27<sup>th</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2013.

The “Bridges” conference was created as 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. The conference served as a place for scholars and experts with cross-disciplinary interests related to arts and humanities to meet and interact with members within and outside of their own particular disciplines.

All areas of arts and humanities were invited: American Studies, Art History, Ethnic Studies, Film, History, World Literature, Popular Culture, Postcolonial Identities, Religion, Theatre, Visual Arts and Cross-disciplinary areas of arts and humanities.

Among the many papers that were presented, Amparo Alpañés, Angela Tumini and Timothy Wagner selected a few whose high intellectual quality effectively represented the level of cross-disciplinary conversations that took place during the conference. W&J student Lauren E. Virgin made a valuable editing contribution to the manuscript. The selected and edited papers are presented here in this book.

In Chapter One, Peter Scheperlern studies sex and evil in the movie *Antichrist* by Lars von Trier and he exposes the idiosyncrasies of the director. Isabel Valiela compares Clint Eastwood’s *Gran Torino* with Sebastián Borensztein’s *Un cuento chino* and their similarities in terms of structure and message about minorities.

Chapter Two deals with Art and offers the analysis of Piotr Gryglewski and Ewa Kubiak on sacral painting in Poland. Gérard Teulière brings the reader’s attention to the evolution of shape and color in Latin American contemporary painting.

The reflection on fictional narrative is presented in Chapter Three, in which Anamarija Brzica and Nikica Mihaljević explore the importance of wartime Sarajevo as a setting in the contemporary Italian novel. Francesca Calamita investigates the presence of eating disorders in Italian women’s writing of the 1930s and 1940s. Sylvia Carullo studies *The Ugly Christ*, Alicia Yáñez Cossó’s novel, in which the maid Ordalisa, the main character, challenges the value system imposed on her by her employers. H.J. Manzari exposes the elements of parody and grotesque in post-Trujillo Dominican literature as a way of uncovering the Dominican identity. Leila Anna Oujji delves into the importance of Islam in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Maureen Tobin Stanley analyzes the novel *The Carpenter’s Pencil* to uncover the critical portrayal of Franco’s times in the attention given to art and hagiography in Manuel Rivas’ novel.

Chapter Four explores communication in today’s media. Antonio Eduardo Favale reviews the use of English in speeches to negotiate contexts. Camilla Nigmatullina studies how the modern mass media in Russia expresses religious values. Viktor Sidorov reflects on the power of the media sphere in today’s world.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, ponders the decisive moments that can change a life, or fail to do so. Robert-Louis Abrahamson studies R. L. Stevenson’s life and his essay on Irish politics. Marie-Christine Michaud explores the similarity between Mexican Americans and Italian Americans in terms of their shared transnational experience.

Amparo Alpañés, Angela Tumini and Timothy Wagner 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.

Amparo Alpañés

Pittsburgh, August 2016.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **CINEMATOGRAPHIC BRIDGES**

## **After the Fall: Sex and Evil in Lars von Trier's *Antichrist***

Peter Schepeleern

University of Copenhagen

Peter Schepeleern is an associate professor in the Department of Media, Cognition and Communication at the University of Copenhagen. He has published in Danish and English, mostly on Lars von Trier, Dogma film, and New Danish cinema. Among his publications in English are contributions to *Purity and Provocation: Dogma 95* (2003), *Visual Authorship: Creativity and Intentionality in Media* (*Northern Lights, Film and Media Studies Yearbook* 2004), *Transnational Cinema in a Global North: Nordic Cinema in Transition* (2005), and *The Schirmer Encyclopedia of Cinema* (2007).

During the last twenty-five years, Lars von Trier, who invented his “von” as sarcasm when he was a teenager, has explored the possibilities of cinematic expression and storytelling in a line of challenging works. Since his beginning in the 1980s with the so-called Europa Trilogy he has enjoyed international attention. It continued with the TV serial *The Kingdom* (1994), the daring melodramas *Breaking the Waves* (1996) and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000); in between he made *The Idiots* (1998), Trier’s contribution to the so-called Dogme 95 movement that he established, followed by later accomplishments such as *Dogville* (2003), *Antichrist* (2009), *Melancholia* (2011), and *Nymphomaniac* (2013/2014), his most recent film.

In contemporary art film, Trier has played the role of the scandalous genius, the controversial auteur, but at the same time he managed, with his Dogme concept, to remain synonymous with contemporary Danish cinema (though nearly all his films are English language productions).

Typical elements in Trier’s work are his mixture of mainstream genres—like horror, melodrama, and comedy—into a highly personal art film universe, so to say refashioning the avant-garde. The films focus thematically on idealism and disillusion, on martyrdom and self-sacrifice, and on suffering in an allegorical landscape. They are expressed with an ambiguity that invites very different interpretations. In the following article the focus shall be on one of Trier’s later films, *Antichrist*, that he himself called “the most important film of my entire career” (Trier “Director’s Confession”).

### **Chaos reigns**

When it premiered at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival, *Antichrist* became a major topic of conversation due to its scariness, its violent plot elements, and particularly its controversial perspective on women. The film, affirming Trier’s position as one of the most innovative and controversial filmmakers in contemporary world cinema, was accompanied by a statement where the director explained that his work was the result of a mental depression. He referred to his “inferno crisis” and explained that the images of the film “were composed free of logic or dramatic thinking” (Trier “Director’s Confession”).

The film begins with an astonishing slow-motion scene (shot in black and white with ultra-high-speed camera: 1000 frames per second and with the Händel aria “Lascia ch’io pianga” as the only sound) where a man and a woman, in the script called *He* and *She*, have sex while their two-year-old son climbs out of his bed and falls to his death from an open window. Because the woman cannot recover from her grief, the couple retreats to their small cabin, ‘Eden’ in the wild forest, where the husband, who is a therapist, will treat her. However, this stay in the Garden of Eden *after the fall*—after the fall of the boy, after the fall of innocence—is not successful. The plot thickens, as nature appears more and more demonic. When the man discovers that the woman apparently consciously tormented the child by putting his shoes on the wrong feet, she gets highly aggressive with him. However, when she in a flashback realizes that she actually *saw* the child on its way to the window but did not intervene, she becomes aware of her own evil, which she punishes in a drastic way before the man strangles her and burns her body at the stake.

*Antichrist* is an ambiguous work, a statement of considerable obscurity. “Chaos reigns,” mutters the talking fox with a beastly roar. No doubt about that and this chaos can easily spread to an interpretation of the film. But that shall not prevent me from suggesting how we can explain the film’s controversial and demonized depiction of female sexuality, which goes as a dangerously short-circuiting wire through the whole Trier oeuvre and seemingly, by all accounts, will continue to emit quite a lot of sparks.

This paper will focus on themes of female sexuality, the evil of woman's nature, and the evil mother, by examining Trier's personal and cultural horizon with roots in his fascination with the European *fin de siècle*—mainly Nietzsche, Strindberg, Ibsen, Munch, and Freud—as well as in his own, little known very early work.

### The woman in Trier's work

In Trier's first feature films—*The Element of Crime* (1984), *Epidemic* (1987), and *Europa* (1991)—as well as the TV film *Medea* (1988), women are presented as false, deceitful, and deadly. By contrast, men are weak, disillusioned idealists predestined for inevitable downfall. Then, in the mid-1990s, Trier's women-pictures suddenly took a turn. They became submissive, self-sacrificing and good: e.g. Bess in *Breaking the Waves* and Selma in *Dancer in the Dark*. Somehow, they triggered Trier's international breakthrough. When the tormented idealist men of the early films were replaced with dedicated emotional women, often of a rather naïve simplicity, his films abandoned the limitations of art film and appealed to a much wider audience, even though they kept the experimental art film elements intact. With the exception of the not entirely successful comedy *The Boss of It All* (2006), all of Trier's films since *Breaking the Waves* have a female protagonist.

For instance, Grace in *Dogville* can be seen as a combination of the two types of women: for a long time she is the self-sacrificing victim who patiently endures the physical and sexual abuse of the village people. But in the end, spurned by her gangster father to resort to a vengeful fury, she orders them all to be killed.

It is a question, of course, if these characters actually *are* women. As an echo of Flaubert's famous statement: "Madame Bovary – c'est moi!" Trier has said: "I've always been the female character in all my films" (Badley 149). And talking specifically about the woman in *Antichrist*, he once admitted: "Perhaps she isn't so much a woman" (Trier, personal conversation).

The women in his films share common bad luck in their personal relations to a significant other. Sexuality is represented as a separation device. Bess in *Breaking the Waves* must give herself to men she has no feelings for. In *Dancer in the Dark* Selma ignores the interested man. The men in *Dogville* abuse Grace and her relationship with Tom results in his execution. Justine in *Melancholia* only seems able to surrender herself fully to the cold light from the threatening planet. And *Nymphomaniac*, his new film, announces directly in its title that we can expect yet another woman with alienated relations.

I believe that the whole situation between the sexes is much more complicated than we would normally think. Perhaps this is because the force of sexuality is the strongest force in all of nature. So this influences everything – even motherhood, and that definitely comes to the surface in *Antichrist*. (qtd. in Waddell n.p.)

Both in the early films and in the more mature work, sexuality appears as a dark entity; it appears as an omen coming from the woman that will eventually lead the man into the abyss.

### Men who Hate Women

Originally, however, *Antichrist* was not a story about female sexuality, but an allegorical depiction of the world as an evil place. Back in 2004, producer Peter Aalbæk Jensen, co-founder of the company Zentropa, announced that Trier planned "a yarn about the great lie, that it was God who created the world. In reality it is Satan himself" (Ravn). Trier, who had not approved of this being revealed, angrily dropped the project again.

Trier, who has suffered from anxiety attacks since his childhood, was hit by a mental depression in 2006 and felt that the *Antichrist* project could work as a kind of therapy (qtd. in Wachthausen). It was initially planned that the film should be about a female therapist and a male patient (a biologist who has become afraid of nature). It was also conceived as a satanic religious allegory where the forest is "a kind of reversed Garden of Eden."<sup>1</sup> But during the project—and in the midst of Trier's depression—the concept was changed. It was still about nature's evil, but mainly about female sexuality as the essential example of nature's evil. It was Adam and Eve in Eden, but now Eve was evil...

Working on *Antichrist*, Trier received help from research assistants, who presented him with a vast material of misogynist statements through the ages (cf. Laura). But the view on women and women's sexuality in *Antichrist* is

primarily connected to the *fin de siècle* in European culture, an important source of inspiration for Trier at the beginning of his career. Seeing women as fatal *Idols of Perversity*,<sup>2</sup> the woman both as bearer of illness, folly, and collapse, as well as seduction and temptation, became a huge trend in the *fin de siècle*—in philosophy, in literature, and in painting. There was a whole group of outstanding men who somehow hated women—mainly Nietzsche, Strindberg, Ibsen, Munch, and Freud (not to mention the notorious misogynist Otto Weininger)—and saw sexuality as an alluring and fatal power.

According to Foucault, the 19th century bourgeois society saw sex as

An object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. (Foucault 69)

But also in a modern writer as Susan Sontag, sexuality is identified as demonic:

Tamed as it may be, sexuality remains one of the demonic forces in human consciousness - pushing us at intervals close to taboo and dangerous desires, which range from the impulse to commit sudden arbitrary violence upon another person to the voluptuous yearning for the extinction of one's consciousness, for death itself. (Sontag 57).

The She of *Antichrist* possesses these qualities: She is weak and vulnerable, faints, depends on male help, shows symptoms of folly, and attempts to use her lust to draw the man into the abyss. She combines the saintly vulnerable woman with the lusty and deadly femme fatale.

But also more directly, *Antichrist* relates to the fin de siècle pictures.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was especially important to Trier. Trier recently wrote a film script about his Film School years using the pen name Erik Nietzsche, and in 2013 Thierry Frémaux, the leader of the Cannes Film Festival called Trier “the Nietzsche of world cinema.”<sup>3</sup> But let me point out that Trier's main connection with Nietzsche was not so much the reading of his work – he never read Nietzsche's *Antichrist* – but he was fascinated by Liliana Cavani's 1977 film *Beyond Good and Evil*, which centres on Nietzsche's relationship to Paul Rée and Lou-Andréas Salomé; the film was more about sex than philosophy (Trier in conversation).

August Strindberg (1849-1912), another mad genius of the era and a great cultural hero of Trier's, also left his mark on *Antichrist*. Trier had actually read his work as a young man and Trier's first published work—the article “At the Edge of Insanity in Holte,” printed in a local newspaper in 1976 when he was 19—focuses on the eventful summer of 1888 that Strindberg spent at an estate close to Trier's childhood home in Søllerød, outside Copenhagen.

The article ends with this:

The old truth about the floating boundary between genius and madness must once more be taken out if it is not so that man's cry for genius is just a wish for abnormalities for man's own soothing and that there so is no boundary at all between brilliant intellect and raving lunacy. (Trier “På vanvidets rand i Holte”).

When Trier talked about his 2006 depression as his “inferno crisis,” it was a reference to Strindberg's famous “Inferno Crisis,” thereby giving his own crisis a cultural prestige and acknowledging his general attachment to Strindberg, including his notorious rabid view on women:

I was really fascinated by Strindberg's totally preposterous attitude to women. Much of it was about the power struggle between men and women, and I could see myself in him. That is, his hot temper and his childish behavior to the opposite sex and his self-declaration as genius. (...) That I *loved*. (qtd. in Thorsen 124)

But it is not only the struggle between the sexes and the theme of infernal depression that connect *Antichrist* to Strindberg. Additionally, the theme of wishing the child dead is present in Strindberg's work (and in real life since Strindberg had his own dead baby [Lagercrantz 616]). The child as a hindrance on sexuality, the child as an obstruction in the lives of adults, the demonic feelings of a mother—all these themes can be found in Strindberg's plays. In the drama *Brott och brott* (*There are Crimes and Crimes*, 1899) the man's new girlfriend wishes his child dead: "Another woman's child! And for the sake of it I am to suffer. Why must that child block the way where I want to pass, and must pass?" she asks, and actually the child dies (Strindberg *There are Crimes and Crimes*).

In Strindberg's famous *Ett drömspel* (*The Dream Play*, 1901), the woman, a Goddess sent from Heaven to Earth, realizes that marriage and family life are hard. The disillusioned man states: "And the child that was to become a link and a blessing – it becomes our ruin." (Strindberg *The Dream Play*).

The theme of the dubious mother—a mother that seemingly prefers sexuality to motherhood as in *Antichrist*—is touched upon in Strindberg's one-act comedy *Leka med elden* (*Playing with Fire*, 1897), in a dialogue between the young wife and her male house guest. Here the young mother's forbidden wish that her child should die is problematically connected with sexual pleasure.

She: But this monotonous life, without work, without excitements, without anything happening! Do you know that I am so cruel sometime that I wish for a great sorrow; that there was a plague, a fire ... that my child died! That I died myself!

He: Do you know what it is? It is idleness, excess of earthly happiness, perhaps something else,

She: What?

He: Lust [or: Lecherousness]

(Strindberg *Leka med elden* 433, my translation).

The theme of the neglected child, pushed away as an obstruction to the sexual passion of the parents, is also present in the work of the other great *fin de siècle* dramatist of Scandinavian theatre, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). In his late play *Lille Eyolf* (*Little Eyolf*, 1894) the nine-year-old boy has been paralyzed and walks with a crutch, because he fell from the table as a baby. We understand that the accident happened because the parents had sex: "You ... lured me to you (...) I forgot the child in your arms" (Ibsen), says the husband who feels guilty. The mother, however, confesses that she would rather be without the son, because she feels he stands between her and the husband. The child eventually drowns. Moreover, in his highly symbolic drama *Fruen fra Havet* (*The Lady from the Sea*, 1888), Ibsen presents the woman as an unpredictable being driven by the power of natural forces and seduced by uncontrollable longings.

While he did not draw consciously from Ibsen, Trier was directly inspired by a great picture in Scandinavian *painting* of that era: the work of Edvard Munch (1863-1944). Indeed the young Trier admired and imitated Munch's style in his own attempts at painting. Munch is also mentioned in Trier's early article on Strindberg and he later said: "I was very taken with Peter Watkins' [1974] portrait of Edvard Munch in the television program he did. It was a revelation. When I saw it, I had to go and paint – and scrape the paint with the handle of the brush as well. Strindberg's and Munch's madness was the height of artistic romanticism for me then," he later told (qtd. in Björkman: 28).

Trier has stated that *Antichrist* among his films is "the one that comes closest to a scream" (qtd. in Romer), referring to Munch's famous painting (1893) (cf. Wachthausen). In *Antichrist* She claims that she heard the scream of nature—"the cry of all things that are to die!"—a direct reference to Munch's picture: His 1895 lithograph version *The Scream* has a motto in German: "Ich fühlte das große Geschrei durch die Natur" - "I felt the great scream throughout nature" (Templeton XXI).

Munch's paintings generally present the woman as a dangerous being, a fatal force for men, cf. Pictures such as *Madonna* (1894-95), seen as a secular woman in the moment of conception—in the etching version there are semen cells in the frame around the Picture—or *Vampire* (1893-94), sucking the power out of men, or *Death of Marat* (1907), where the nude Charlotte Corday stands beside the murdered Marat, signifying that, contrary to historical facts, he was not murdered in his bathtub but in bed.

*Antichrist*'s connection to the *fin de siècle* view is obvious, but it is worth noting that a modern critic like Camille Paglia, whose opinion Trier also had access to in the research material (cf. Laura), has similar views on the demonic nature of female sexuality especially in *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1990),



which became centre of heated debate with its provocative readings against the feminist and politically correct viewpoints of the time.

We are voyeurs at the perimeters of art, and there is a sadomasochistic sensuality in our responses to it. Art is a scandal, literally a “stumbling block”, to all moralism, whether on the Christian right or Rousseauist left. Pornography and art are inseparable, because there is voyeurism and voracity in all our sensations as seeing, feeling beings. (Paglia: 35).

Paglia quotes from both her mentor Geoffrey Hartman: “Great art is always flanked by its dark sisters, blasphemy and pornography” as well as Nietzsche: “Almost everything we call ‘higher culture’ is based on the spiritualization of *cruelty*.” And her conclusion from the chapter—“Western art is a cinema of sex and dreaming. Art is form struggling to wake from the nightmare of nature” (Paglia 39)—could well serve as a summary of *Antichrist*.

### ***Antichrist* and Early Trier**

As we have seen, the provocative connection in *Antichrist* of desire and death, of pleasure and pain has connections to a tradition in European culture, but it also traces way back to early Trier.

Young Trier was fascinated by Pauline Réage’s novel, *L’histoire d’O* (1954), which chronicles the masochistic pleasure a woman derives from pain and promiscuous submission. Trier also admired de Sade’s *Justine*, the story of a young girl who repeatedly abused by high-ranking men, as well as its sequel, *Juliette*, Justine’s sister who enjoys perversion and kills her own newborns.

*Antichrist* harkens back to two well-hidden, but significant films, the 30-minute long *The Orchid Gardener* (1978) and *Menthe la Bienheureuse* (1979),<sup>4</sup> both made independently as private productions by Trier during his university years. Here the female characters display a rather enigmatic and threatening sexuality. *Menthe*, freely adapted from *The Story of O*, depicts a woman in chains being whipped. *The Orchid Gardener* focuses on a young tormented artist, played by Trier himself: a pedophile molester/murderer who is seen with an SS outfit and in women’s clothes. He is drawn to a woman who may have two impersonations and who is—or is not—a certain Eliza. In one scene he seems close to caressing or to strangling her; in another scene, she prepares to punish him with a whip containing slime and salt.

During this period, when he was 19-20 years old, Trier also wrote two novels. One of them—the title translates as *Eliza or The Little Book about the Delightful and the Vulgar* (1976)—touches on the theme of the witchlike woman. Some of this, rather incoherent material, was used in *The Orchid Gardener*. But other material from the novel, unused in *The Orchid Gardener*, finds its way into *Antichrist*.

In the novel, the male narrator visits an actress after watching her in a theater performance. He finds her ugly and disgusting, calls her “the witch,” but nonetheless becomes ensnared in her web. In one scene, he meets her young son:

Suddenly a blond lad appeared and came to me and I immediately recognized his mother in his shining eyes. (...) Then I noticed his feet and I saw to my horror that this otherwise well-shaped boy had reversed shoes, that is the left shoe on the right foot and vice versa. (...) I looked at the culprit and knew that *she* had given him the reversed shoes on, every day, until his feet had assumed such a form.<sup>5</sup>

Trier’s novels were returned by several publishers and have remained unpublished. He has also kept the two films from the university years out of sight from a mainstream audience (they had only a few private screenings back in the 1970s). But *Antichrist* makes it clear that his early apprentice work contains much that is still important to him. *Antichrist* is a look back in despair to early inspirations and early obsessions. Recently, he acknowledged the significance of his early work: “Actually I think (...) that *Antichrist* quite well referred back to the first film I made, *The Orchid Gardener* – with the masculine and the feminine ...” (qtd. in Thorsen: 374).

Just as *The Orchid Gardener* presages *Antichrist*, *Menthe la bienheureuse*, with its story of sexual submission and masochism, anticipates *Nymphomaniac*. It is perhaps symptomatic that these personally rejected works make themselves visible again when he suffers a depression.

### Evil Mothers

Trier identifies the theme of the film as “a mother-child relationship that is a kind of battle and where evil is present” (qtd. in Thorsen: 369). In several conversations with film critics, Trier has pointed out that *Antichrist* draws on personal material. “Everything that I’m doing is based on stuff from way back. So no wonder that everything looks the same. It all comes from the same [sources]” (qtd. in Badley 161). When he was asked: “Are you the little boy whose mother lets him die?” he confirmed: “My mother didn't give me a childhood. She was magical to me of course, but she did not take care of me. If I were to say, will I die tonight, she would say ‘Perhaps.’ Her ambition to tell the truth was more important than protecting me. (...) There is a lot of guilt in my female character” (qtd. in Badt). Trier thus reminds us that art also can be an act of revenge.

Children in several of Trier’s films are often portrayed as suffering victims with the evil mother as a recurring theme. For example, in *The Element of Crime*, she appears as the prostitute Kim who has deserted her little boy: “How can one do it?” asks an old lady. In Trier’s adaptation of Euripides’s *Medea* (1988, based on a manuscript by Carl Th. Dreyer), the classical evil mother murders her two boys. In *Breaking the Waves* the mother denies her daughter entry in the house. Selma in *Dancer in the Dark*, though, sacrifices herself for her boy. Yet generally, the theme of the evil mother is present in Trier’s universe, culminating in *Antichrist* where She realizes her own evil.

There is also a little boy in Trier’s forthcoming film *Nymphomaniac*, a five-hour epic about “the erotic life of a woman from the age of zero to the age of 50.”<sup>6</sup> The protagonist, the woman Joe (Charlotte Gainsbourg), has a child, a little boy, but often she will leave him alone at night while she visits a ma who beats her. In a rare example of Trier referencing himself, there is a scene, again with the Händel aria as heard on the soundtrack, where we see the little boy sitting up at night in his bed, awakened by light reflections from the snowplow in the street. As his curiosity is aroused, he crawls out of the bed and approaches the open balcony door. He stands up at the railing, dangerously reaching out to the falling snow as the father, who has returned, manages to rescue him at the last moment; the fall prevented.

### Shared Perversity

Trier has pointed out a certain scene in *Antichrist* as his favorite scene: the lovemaking at a tree filled with lifeless (male) limbs, a motif that originally was planned for his opera project, Wagner’s *The Ring of the Nibelungen* in Bayreuth. (Wagner, of course, is another of the grand misogynists). Here desire and death are presented in one enigmatic shot that became the icon for the film:

I am quite fond of the moment when Charlotte goes out to the woodland and masturbates whilst her husband looks on, unsure of what to do. I think the atmosphere at this moment is very unique—it is a beautiful sequence also but it is also quite strange and even scary. (qtd. in Waddell).

An interesting point, though, is that Trier’s description of the scene is incorrect: We do not see that the “husband looks on, unsure of what to do.” He is not framed looking at her; the *camera* looks on.

Already in *The Orchid Gardener* there is a mysterious scene where a young woman is seen masturbating alone in a room, while a child cries ...

Reflecting over the role of sex in the cinema, one could claim that it implies two different perversities. Sex scenes appeal to the *voyeurism* of the audience (*our* perversity, one could say). But they can also be seen as the result of the director’s perversity, when he—not unlike the decadent Sir Stephen in *The Story of O*—can dictate what sexual acts the actors/actresses shall perform. We can meet in collective perversity, so to say.

The perversion motive would continue to occupy Trier, even when it was not always very explicit in his films. In a twenty-nine-page treatment for *Breaking the Waves*, dated 1992, four years before the premiere, Trier describes a scene where Bess, who has complied with her paralytic husband’s wish that she indulges in erotic experiences that she

subsequently can tell him about, is picked up by a man who takes her out into the forest: “Just follow the stream until you get to the cabin,” (Trier 20) he says. And there she is molested and abused by three middle-aged men and a woman. In the next scene, outside in the forest, she is raped, nearly drowning in a stream. The scenes, which have disappeared in the final film, are reminiscent of *Justine*, but also akin to the situation in de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* (filmed by Pasolini as *Salò*), where a handful of middle-aged men and some women commit atrocities on a group of young women and young men at a remote estate in fascist Italy. It should be mentioned that this film only had a short run in Denmark in 1976, but was re-released in 1999 on the initiative of Trier—the only time he has been co-importer of a film.

### Trier as a Freudian artist

With its complex web of dreams, shamanistic journeys and speaking animals, put in relation to all possible and impossible cultural and historical inputs, *Antichrist* is an ambiguous ink spot of self-therapy, anxiety pictures, and the woman’s potential for evil. *Antichrist* is a return, a revival of the complexity and perversity of the early universe, a portrait of the artist as a young man. The universal and the private converge in a project where the *middle-aged* neurotic Trier is in search of the *young* neurotic Trier. In other words, the younger lad catches up with the older man in a retrospective movement, so to say putting the shoes on the wrong feet—with 30 years delay.

In *Antichrist* She refuses to hear about his dream and asks sarcastically: “Freud is dead, isn’t he?” We can understand it as a dismissal of the relevance of Freud’s work, especially about *The interpretation of Dreams*. But there are obvious connections between *Antichrist* and Freudian concepts. According to Freud, the woods and wild nature had a sexual meaning in dreams, where he interpreted the forest as related to pubic hair: “The pubic hair of both sexes is depicted in dreams as woods and bushes. The complicated topography of the female genital parts makes one understand how it is that they are often represented as landscapes, with rocks, woods and water” (Freud “Symbolism in Dreams” 156).

Additionally, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is applicable here with its ideas about the connection between the sex drive and the death drive becoming relevant subtext for *Antichrist*. And summing up Trier’s road from *The Orchid Gardener* to *Antichrist*, it is striking that his career rather precisely matches with Freud’s classical profile of the artist (who for Freud, necessarily had to be a man).

The artist, says Freud, in one of his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* from 1917, is

An introvert, not far removed from neurosis. He is oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. He desires to win honour, power, wealth, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means for achieving these satisfactions. Consequently, like any other unsatisfied man, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and his libido too, to the wishful constructions of his life of phantasy.

The true artist, says Freud,

Understands how to work over his daydreams in such way as to make them lose what is too personal about them and repels strangers, and to make it possible for others to share in the enjoyment of them. (...) If he is able to accomplish all this, he makes it possible for other people once more to derive consolation and alleviation from their own sources of pleasure in their unconscious which have become inaccessible to them; he earns their gratitude and admiration and he has thus achieved *through* his phantasy what originally he had achieved only *in* his phantasy – honour, power and the love of women. (Freud 376).

Young Trier’s first projects were filled with anxiety, perversion, and sexuality in an un-clarified mixture that was far too extreme and bizarre to illicit a response. The publishers refused the early novels and both the Academy of Arts and the Theatre School rejected his applications. But even though Trier has told how his fellow students at the University, when they saw *The Orchid Gardener*, only had one perplexed question to him – “Why?” – the film actually helped get him into the Danish Film School (Bondebjerg 212).

And from the perversities and the traumas of *The Orchid Gardener* and *Menthe the Happy One* (as well as in early paintings and novel drafts), far too personal and too extreme to be accepted by others, Trier found artistic and

technical command with *The Element of Crime* and *Europa* and subsequently, professional respect. When he finally, with *The Kingdom* and *Breaking the Waves*, achieved wide international recognition and even popularity, it was not because his neuroses now were less explicit, but because he now understood how to communicate them in a more universal way. He is aware of this: “As for the provocative themes, in that respect I haven’t changed at all. I still deal with exactly the same things, but in a more controlled way” (Bondebjerg 212-13).

With *Antichrist*, the merger of private and general neuroses reached a temporary peak. The film was vilified and damned by many, but at the same time, it reaffirmed Trier’s status at the top of the global auteur directors. And when Charlotte Gainsbourg won the prize as Best Actress at Cannes, it signified that the character, no matter how horrible ‘She’ might seem, was nevertheless considered somehow plausible. The private neuroses and anxieties were accepted as something of general relevance.

## Epilogue

Female sexuality is, as we have seen, presented in Trier’s work as an area of endless mystery and alluring perdition. Some years ago, he told his French biographer, Jean-Claude Lamy, “with age the feminine mystery gets a bit more clear” (Lamy 193). But that remains to be seen. The new film *Nymphomaniac* is a five-hour long investigation of female sexuality that appears as scary and mysterious a seer.

One could ask: What about *male* sexuality? It hardly gets any attention at all from Trier, except in *Sauna*, a forty eight-second long commercial made for a tabloid Copenhagen newspaper, *Ekstra Bladet*, in 1986.<sup>7</sup> The camera roves in the men’s section of a sauna where a young man discovers that a tiny opening with wire gauze on the wall allows him to look into the women’s section. On the other side, the strict matron notices the eyes behind the gauze and angrily lines up all the men in order to find the culprit. He stands there, hiding his erect limb under a newspaper. The catch line says: “What would we do without Ekstra Bladet?” Here we get Trier’s judgement on male sexuality. It is a very simple thing: no death and no demonic fall into darkness – just desire, with a visual angle.

## Notes

1. *Antichrist* working paper (author’s collection).
2. Cf. Bram Dijkstra. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*. Oxford 1986.
3. Frémaux in Ekko, cf. <http://www.ekkofilm.dk/artikler/nyt-ekko-med-alt-om-cannes/>
4. The films can be found at ubuweb.com
5. “Eliza eller Den lille bog om det dejlige og det tarvelige”, manuscript, p. 74 (author’s collection).
6. <http://www.trustnordisk.com/film/2013-nymphomaniac?page=3>
7. A technically inferior version can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qI3l4d8qOg>

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## A Cow, a Car, and the Shadow of the Past:

### Sebastián Borensztein's *Un cuento chino* and Clint Eastwood's *Gran Torino*

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#### Introduction

The films *Un cuento chino* (2011), by Argentine filmmaker Sebastián Borensztein, and *Gran Torino* (2008), by the U.S. actor and filmmaker Clint Eastwood, are quite different in national context, style and structure, but they also show a remarkable resemblance, particularly because both plots revolve around intergenerational male relationships involving an older national character and a young Asian man. The protagonists are Roberto and Jun, in the Argentine film, and Walt and Thao, in the U.S. film. Both films tell of a modern day encounter of two cultures and the way in which the past and the present engage with each other when one is in unfamiliar territory. Paradoxically, this encounter with the "other" has the unexpected effect of jolting the older national characters towards the discovery of their hidden selves.

In *Un cuento chino*, Roberto is a bitter middle-aged man in Buenos Aires who keeps to himself, attached to his monotonous life as a hardware store owner, unable to establish any real relationship with other people. In *Gran Torino*, Walt is a retired autoworker in Michigan who is bitter about something which one can only guess is related to his life experience. They both have an unexpected encounter with an alien culture. Roberto is just sitting eating his lunch near the airport in Buenos Aires, when a taxi stops near him and violently expels a young Chinese man onto the ground. Walt is sitting with his dog Daisy on his front porch when he observes that new neighbors are moving in next to him. They are a Hmong family whose young son Thao, goaded by his cousin's gang, will soon break into Walt's garage, trying to steal his *Gran Torino*, a vintage American car. The plots of these stories will trace the development of a strong bond that begins with rejection and ends in friendship, which by itself is not original, since many films use such plot developments as their basic narrative structure. Precisely because the underlying plot structure is so common, the viewer is compelled to explore the unique aspects of each film as they surface through their commonalities. There is also a powerful symbolic element in each film: the cow in *Un cuento chino*, and the car in *Gran Torino*. These symbols have multiple layers of meaning and function as unifying agents that provide thematic cohesion to each work.

These two films share common elements: the way in which the past and the present come into play in unfamiliar territory; the way masculinity is perceived by the national culture and how it influences the lives of men such as Roberto and Walt, made even more complex by an encounter with a younger, foreign man who carries his own culture's concept of manliness; the impact of war on a nation's men, and how such a national trauma becomes lodged in the psyche of ex-soldiers; and the all-encompassing theme of the exclusion/inclusion of otherness through the complex interplay between the staunchly rooted national character and the foreign newcomer. This interplay is manifested in a variety of ways, from the language differences that inhibit communication, to the way that food acts as a venue for acceptance of a relationship that was previously rejected. It is not a coincidence that the English title for *Un cuento chino* is *Chinese Takeout*, giving prime importance to the scene where, thanks to the Chinese takeout delivery person, Roberto and Jun finally are able to communicate on a very significant level. In the same manner, Thao's Hmong family repeatedly offers their abundant food to their neighbor, Walt, who initially rejects it but eventually accepts an invitation to their home and enjoys their feast. Both Roberto and Walt initially guard their home against strangers, yet through force of circumstances, they allow the intrusion into their private space to take place, literally and psychologically. These films delve into the issue of crossing borders into otherness and the multiple ways in which differences are negotiated.

### Roberto de Cesare

Roberto de Cesare leads a very solitary life in Buenos Aires, limiting his activities to a meticulous daily routine at his home and the hardware store, *Ferretería de Cesare*, which he inherited from his Italian immigrant father. Roberto has certain daily activities that fill his day. He prepares his food, then sits down to eat, followed by his after-meal activity of perusing recent arrivals of international newspapers. Among them the Italian newspaper L'Unità, which his father used to read. He looks for unusual stories, ones in which he can somehow imagine himself in a role. For example, in one story he is the man making love to a woman in a car, but they inadvertently release the break and fall down a cliff. In another story, he is a barber who accidentally cuts the throat of his client who, in his imagination, is one of his regular clients at his hardware store and whom he detests. This reading habit is one way of entertaining himself by projecting his own desires and feelings in a controlled and safe way, in the comfort of his home. When he goes to sleep, he always turns his light out at exactly 11:00pm. In a flashback near the end of the film, the viewer finds out that this was the time on the clock on the first night that Roberto got home as a young soldier, back from Falkland Islands War in 1982, only to find out that his father had recently died while Roberto was away. His father's death, the killing of enemy soldiers, plus the death of his friend and the ill treatment of the defeated Argentine soldiers at the end of the war, left Roberto in a state of deep depression. Another detail of Roberto's life which explains his melancholy nature is the fact that his mother died when she gave birth to him. He keeps a portrait of her and collects intricate glass-blown figurines, slowly adding new pieces to his mother's original collection. At his hardware store he works alone, obsessively counting the nails in the boxes that are delivered to him, constantly complaining out loud about being deceived or about a client who questions the weight of a bag of nails. His small hardware store is representative of a bygone era, one which Roberto refuses to leave. He seems to be happiest in the self-imposed confinement of the tiny spaces of his home and store. His favorite lunch break activity is to sit outside near the airport and watch the airplanes fly by, a spectator safely eating his lunch while watching the world fly around him.

### Walt Kowalski

Walt Kowalski is a retired autoworker who lives in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. Since he no longer works at the Ford factory, his life is limited to the house he once shared with his recently deceased wife and his 1972 Gran Torino, which he built himself when he was working. He has two adult sons with whom he does not relate very well. When his family comes to visit, they are more interested in getting him out of the house so they can sell it than with his well-being. His granddaughter goes as far as to ask him for his Gran Torino once he is dead. This materialist selfish attitude is very evident, providing an explanation for Walt's frustration with his own family. Walt wants to be left alone in his house with his dog Daisy and his Gran Torino in the driveway. He likes to drink beer and read the newspaper in his front porch. He has a special relationship to his car, a symbol of the value of hard work, as well as the aesthetics of the classic American muscle car. The Korean War has had a strong impact on him. In a conversation with the young priest, Father Janovich, who tells him that war makes men do terrible things, Walt responds by saying "The thing that haunts a man the most is what he isn't ordered to do." Walt suffers from a bad conscience of atrocities committed, not because of a superior's orders, but because in a war, as Walt says, there is no time to think, one has to act quickly. Finally, near the end of the film, Walt tells Thao that during the war he shot a young Korean boy who "just wanted to give up, just like you." When Sue, Thao's sister, tells Walt that he is a role model for her brother, Walt simply answers, "I'm not a good man." This is a man troubled by his past, but his past also represents a national stain on the history of the treatment of enemy soldiers. Critics Mark Roche and Vittorio Hösle make the following commentary on the way this theme is treated in *Gran Torino*:

Whereas Germany, for example, was forced, as a result of its defeat in World War II, to integrate the most shameful facts of its past into its history books, many Americans do not know the extent to which Japanese and Korean soldiers were killed after having surrendered. To Eastwood's credit, he remembers this fact in *Gran Torino*, showing how the memory of it, repressed as it is, can still haunt the perpetrator more than half a century later (Roche and Hösle 673-674).

### The Burden of History

The protagonists in these two films have lived through some of the most dramatic moments of their respective countries' history, the Falkland Islands War and the Korean War, both of which left an indelible mark on their psyches. This experience prohibits them from adjusting to both their personal circumstances and to the changes taking place in their societies. Roberto cannot keep up with his clients' demands for a wider variety of tools. Walt is upset because his son works for a Japanese car company. Even their taste for food is limited to the quintessential national staples, meat and *dulce de leche* for Roberto, and beef jerky and beer for Walt. On a symbolic level, Roberto and Walt personify the burden of history in their generation. The films revolve around the notion of maladjustment to a contemporary world,



which is conveyed through a foreign intrusion in the lives of these two men. The intrusion is further complicated by the fact that the “intruders” are coping with pressures of their own.

Unlike most immigration films where the focus is on the immigrant’s experience, these films center their attention on the older, national protagonists. It is important to observe how the younger characters contribute to the transformation of these protagonists. That Jun is just arrived from China, and Thao was born in the United States of immigrant Hmong parents, is a significant difference between the two films, since Jun is therefore much more helpless in his circumstances than the American-born Thao. Nevertheless, the two young men are part of the immigrant experience and have an impact on the older men. In both films, there is a transition in which a dominant older protagonist first rejects, and then assists the newcomer, to a point later on where the newcomer assists the older man to face his most profound wounds and inadequacies. The hierarchical plane in this relationship is leveled when the older protagonist acknowledges the newcomer’s values and perspective on life. As Walt would say, “God, I’ve got more in common with these gooks than I do with my own spoilt rotten family.” This transformation is also aided by the role of the two main female characters in these films, Thao’s sister Sue, and Mari, who is in love with Roberto. The two women serve as intercultural intermediaries. Sue invites Walt over to her house next door, where all her Hmong neighbors are invited, and where Walt tries their food for the first time while she gives him a lesson on her culture. Sue is very important in the film because when she is violently beaten and raped by her cousin’s gang, Walt decides to change course and sacrifice himself in an effort to protect Thao and Sue from future violence. In *Un cuento chino*, Mari repeatedly visits Roberto’s hardware store, inviting him and Jun for dinner and taking Jun for a tour of Buenos Aires. Most importantly, it is Mari who first suggests they get Chinese takeout food, breaking away from Roberto’s rigid routine and also opening up the situation for the most important moment of the film, when Roberto learns of Jun’s tragic loss of his fiancée. As friends of the older protagonists, both women are morale boosters, telling them that they are good people. Although the protagonists are men, women play an important role as initiators and facilitators for change away from isolation and stasis.

#### A Cow and a Car

The film *Un cuento chino* begins in a very unexpected way. The scene takes place on a lovely lake in China, showing a young couple happily talking in a small boat. At one point, the young man turns around to reach for an engagement ring, and when he returns, a cow is seen falling from the sky, killing the young woman on the boat. The next scene is of the outside of the hardware store in Buenos Aires, upside down, which turns right side up just before we see Roberto in the interior of his store. Nothing prepares the viewer for this switch of worlds. It is not until Roberto has his chance encounter with Jun that the audience begins to connect the first scene in China with the rest of the film. Roberto and Jun struggle to communicate, since Jun knows no Spanish and Roberto knows no Chinese. Roberto reluctantly takes Jun to his house and attempts to find Jun’s uncle. He only learns about Jun’s tragic loss of his fiancée near the end of the film, when a Chinese restaurant deliveryman takes food to Roberto’s home and is asked to translate. At that point it is Jun who takes the initiative in the situation, asking Roberto about his strange reading habit. Roberto explains to Jun why he reads all those articles about strange events all over the world, stating that life makes no sense since all of these strange incidents occur with no reason. Jun disagrees, saying that everything does make sense to him. To prove his point about the absurdity of life, Roberto reads him the news of a cow falling on a boat in China and killing a young woman. Visibly moved, Jun tells Roberto that he was the young man in the boat. Roberto is stunned by this coincidence. In light of Jun’s capacity for maintaining a positive attitude towards life in spite of his tragedy, Roberto begins to move away from his sheltered existence. As stated before, another character who is instrumental in the gradual change in Roberto is Mari. In spite of his reticence toward her, Mari becomes increasingly involved with him and Jun. During the dinner at her brother’s house, she shows Jun and Roberto photos of Olga, the cow she keeps in her farm outside of Buenos Aires. For an instant, we see Jun’s face darkening, obviously remembering the cow that killed his beloved. At the end of the film, the picture of the cow gains symbolic value when Jun is getting ready to leave Roberto’s house to go live with his uncle. Before leaving, Jun first paints a large image of a cow on the patio wall, an image resembling Mari’s Olga. After Jun leaves, Roberto sees the giant image of on the wall and decides to go see Mari in her farm, where he finds her milking her cow. Even though Jun was exposed to the barrage of memories brought on by Mari’s photo of Olga, it did not prevent him from painting that image, a final message left for Roberto to decipher: the possibility of transcending the past.<sup>1</sup> The cow image operates at the subconscious level for both men, because of the emotions aroused by a tragic memory for Jun, and a loving memory for Roberto, as he ponders what that image means for Jun and for himself. Jun has taken that pain-producing image and transformed it into an agent for Roberto’s happiness. When Roberto drives to Mari’s farm at the end of the film, it is a giant step for him, taking him away from his self-imposed isolation on both a spatial and temporal level. The cow in this film has a double function, signifying the chaos and pain of life as well as the connections that bind people and help them get through their hard times.

In *Gran Torino*, the vintage car in Walt’s driveway is also a vehicle that connects the characters and provides depth of meaning. It is an object desired by many of the characters in the film, for different reasons. To Walt, it represents the best aspects of his life and his most cherished values. Walt’s prime of life was also the U.S. automobile industry’s prime of life, and in that connection he finds great pride and solace. In one of the front porch scenes he is sitting next to

his dog Daisy and says, while looking at the Gran Torino, "Ain't she sweet." The car also attracts the attention of the gang of Hmong men, who manage to get Thao involved in stealing it. Walt discovers Thao and threatens to shoot him. Because of this unfortunate encounter, Thao has to work for Walt around his house, an arrangement that begins a slow bonding between the two men. Walt discovers that Thao is a decent young man who is fatherless and could use some paternal advice. He shows Thao how to fix things around the house and even instructs him how to speak "like a man" at the neighborhood barbershop. One of the main tensions in this film comes from pressures placed on Thao by two opposite forces: He must be an obedient son to his traditional family's wishes, but he is also challenged by the gang to be manly by committing a crime. Walt sees this situation and decides to instruct Thao on his own concept of what it means to be a man.<sup>2</sup> *Gran Torino* contains ethically difficult circumstances for both Walt and Thao, as they grapple with gang violence and questions regarding their own masculinity. In this ethically complex context, the symbol of the car is multilayered. Walt is attached to the traditional American value of pride in workmanship represented by the Gran Torino. However, his car also represents his rejection of the foreign, as seen in the way he scoffs at his son for working for a foreign automaker. He also identifies his car with the American "brand" of masculinity. The car is an object of desire and a bone of contention across cultures and generations. The tension and violence increases, and in the end Walt dies as he lures the gang members into a situation in which they will be caught committing a crime, thus removing the danger they represent for Thao and Sue. Thao will inherit the Gran Torino from Walt, and in the last scene of the film he is driving it with Walt's dog Daisy next to him by the Michigan waterfront.

The cow and the car work symbolically in these films to bring together the past and the present, as well as the national and the foreign. They reconcile on both counts. Roberto, through his encounter with Jun, overcomes his stunted personality related to the loss of his parents and the experience of war. Even though Walt is struggling with his own post-war demons, his relationship with Thao allows him to redeem himself, beyond the constraints of past mistakes, symbolically attaining redemption when he is shot and his arms extend in the form of the crucifix. Jun and Thao also benefit from their respective relationships with the two older men, learning to overcome their initial difficulties and beginning a new and well-adjusted life. Jun is able to find his uncle and, most importantly, process his past tragedy through his relationship with Roberto. Thanks to Walt's fatherly attention and ultimate sacrifice, Thao can now live a life free of violence. The inclusion of otherness is a central theme, as the older national characters are forced to acknowledge the humanity of the "other" through force of circumstance, and in that process they become more humane themselves. The cow and the car serve as vehicles for transformation, contributing to the psychological strength that permits the protagonists to move beyond what seemed like an insurmountable obstacle, the shadow of the past.

*Un cuento chino* and *Gran Torino* manifest the subtle changes associated with the increased proximity of formerly distant peoples. In this contact zone, Roberto and Walt represent their respective nations on the threshold of the new millennium. The films provide both an inward look into the characters' deepest wounds, at the same time displaying the collective readjustments of a globalized world in which someone from a different world is suddenly in your house, or is your next-door neighbor.

## Notes

1. The film begins with a surprise and ends with a surprise related to the falling cow incident. At the end of the credits there is an old Russian newscast of a real event in which thieves had tried to steal cows by loading them onto a plane, only to discover that the weight was too heavy. They let the cows fall from the plane, killing the people on the boat on which they fell. The reality of this incident lends another layer of significance to Roberto's concept of life as an absurd game of chance.
2. Drucilla Cornell analyzes masculinity in Eastwood's films, stating that it is a constant inquiry: "...Eastwood's films work with... symbols ... in order to engage masculinity with the most profound moral and ethical issues facing us today. Over and over again he returns us to that simple question: what does it mean to live a life as a good man in a complex and violent world?" (Cornell, p.ix).



Fig. 1-3 Roberto observing Jun and Mari.



Fig. 1-4 Walt and Thao.



Fig. 1-5 and Fig. 1-6 Food as a tool to create a sense of community



Fig. 1-7 The cow.



Fig. 1-8 The car.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BRIDGES OF ART**

## Sacral painting of Central Poland in the Baroque era — between art history and culture anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

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PhD Ewa Kubiak — art historian, since 2002 at the Department of Art History at Lodz University (Poland). In 2002, she defended her doctoral dissertation (*Residences Bishops of Włocławek*) at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Since 2002, she has started working on Latin American colonial art and has presented results of her research during various Polish and foreign conferences. An author of numerous articles on colonial art, she has been published in Polish and Spanish. She was a recipient of the Lanckoroński Foundation Fellowship (Rome, 2004) and two fellowships of Foundation for Polish Science (Brazil 2006; Argentina 2008).

Currently collected material can be used in discussions on a few important problems, concerning the very artistic value of described objects. It can be assessed in the scale of the researched region, but also with the use of the comparative material from other regions. It is, however, necessary to emphasize that the research into Polish Renaissance and Baroque painting is still substantively challenging. In the first place, we must realize that preserved pieces are incomplete. They are a small part of former palace collections or sacral design. Historical disasters as well as changes in fashion resulted in the reduction of the material. In Polish reality, these are sacral objects that provide the most important and the best-preserved examples of bygone art (Walicki Michał; Michał Walicki, Władysław Tomkiewicz and Andrzej Ryszkiewicz; Karpowicz Mariusz).

The analysis of the material collected in a precisely defined area has allowed the researchers to assess the material better and more thoroughly. Systematic development of a painting catalogue leads to interesting observations. Outside the iconographical and painting sphere, it gives an opportunity to understand the broad historical and cultural context in which these works were created. They refer to a territorial context, or a mutual impact of regionally neighbouring centers. It is also important to consider the whole painting arrangement of researched parish centers. Sacral furniture, which transformed throughout the centuries, reflects changing fashions and users' needs, corresponding with challenges of different periods. We can also identify the examples of inspirations drawn from local works, which were perceived as old and precious ones and thus treated as models (Jurkowlaniec Grażyna). Transformations made in modern times must be definitely analyzed in accordance with recently formulated postulates of Mainrad von Engelberg<sup>2</sup>. To his mind, examples of modern transformations of sacral objects should be referred to as *renovatio*. This had an utterly different meaning in the Baroque, when at times, despite the lack of formal references to the past, modernized objects were associated with the local history. Using a rhetorical pattern, Engelberg suggested three "national" modes. The modes – Italian, French and Austrian ones – characterized different attitudes towards older works and their relationship with new structures. The first one may be related to practices associated with a commonly used notion of "baroquization" [Germ. *Barockisierung*]. As a result of these practices, new forms inspired by Italian Baroque almost obscure older works. The interior is subdued to stucco decorations, wall paintings, and objects of small architecture (portals, altarpieces, tombstones). This type of great-scale modernization appeared in the late seventeenth century. The "French" model proved to be different, considering previous, mainly gothic solutions and introducing modern elements as contrasting ones. The "Austrian" mode was called "historizing" and its characteristic feature was the creative combination of medieval and modern elements. Clearly, suggested schemas were not limited to the named countries. Furthermore, in Engelberg's concept, the observations referred to modern times, with particular consideration to examples from the eighteenth century. That is why these suggestions, formulated in relation to historical buildings in Southern Germany, should be carefully applied in the Polish environment. It seems that scheme of practices taken in the Baroque period in the field of Polish art was closest to "baroquization" and the French mode (Pencakowski Paweł 124-158). The latter, usually limited to providing interior with new type of equipment, appeared in the early seventeenth century. Practices of the time may be associated with reforming post-Tridentine postulates, which concentrated more on functional and liturgical issues than on indicating specific stylistic costume<sup>3</sup>. It was only before the mid-seventeenth century that the outstanding achievements of Baroque Roman art resulted in more complex and formally rich programs,

which may be analysed in the mode of baroquization. Researched sacral interiors are the evidence of later modernizations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which bear testimony to changing fashions and needs.

Consequently, collected historical material may be divided into a few problem groups. One group is comprised of objects functioning as natural furniture of sacral interiors. Preserved paintings either served as elements of an altarpiece, or, less frequently, functioned as independent decorations. This aspect includes a question of preserved altar complexes, whose natural supplements were paintings. What is more, in some cases we can research complexes of altars that were created at a similar time. In the area of Central Poland, we can find such a complex of altars in Szadek. They perfectly illustrate images of sacral interior from the early seventeenth century. It is clear that the main aim was to organize the interior of the church, shaped according to liturgical needs. In the early seventeenth century, the scale and form of the gothic hall of Szadek church still constituted a satisfying architectural setting for new altars. Yet, their numbers and dedications illustrate the complexity and wealth of a local society that had religious brotherhoods within. What is more, those days the interior of Szadek church was used as a place of meetings of Sieradz Voivodship's regional diet. Consequently, it was well known on a regional scale and could efficiently shape ideas of post-conciliar innovations. Paradoxically, the complex was preserved in an almost unchanged state because of the economic collapse of the city in the late seventeenth century. Due to that, no great-scale modernizations were carried out later on and the church's furniture remained untouched (Różalska Ewa 111-148). [Pic. 1]



Fig. 2-1. Szadek, parish church interior. (Photo Piotr Gryglewski).

Discussing particular church arrangements, we should pay attention to the topography of the objects. It resulted from specific liturgical needs attributed to a particular church. Those needs were determined by a church's dedication as well as by developing cults and foundations. The main altar's design usually referred to the church's dedication. However, due to Marian cult popularity, images of Saint Mary were usually highlighted, while images of saints were placed in a sliding panel or in a finial. The example could be Chruślin, where a church is dedicated to St Michael, yet it is an image of Mary with the Child, which was venerated and thus covered with a so-called "dress" and metal applications. Similarly, in Złaków a church is dedicated to All Saints, but a picture of Mary is highlighted in the main altar. The theme of paintings was influenced by a local tradition and the popularity of particular saints. Here, the most popular one was St Roch, and the second place belonged probably to St Valentine.

What is more, the changing religious attitudes or "trends" caused redefinition and gradual modernization of some artworks. An important supplement was venerated paintings. Veneration was connected with applying some designs and adding votive offerings (Jagła, Jowita). Thanks to such a process, the liturgical axis of a church, emphasized with a main altar, was supplemented with side and chapel altars, which grew in number throughout the centuries, establishing a sacral topography of a church. It was shaped by subsequent altaria (remuneration attributed to the altar, which guaranteed systematic liturgical service), societies, and private burials.

Numerous paintings are depictions of Mary, some of them being valuable from the cultic point of view, decorated with so-called "dresses" and votive offerings. One of such paintings from the early seventeenth century is Mary with the Child in the main altar in Chruślin. The painting belongs to a type of *Salus Populi Romani*, particularly popular in the Republic of Poland from c.a. 1600 (Moisan, Krystyna 85-89). In the eighteenth century, the painting from Chruślin received a silver "dress" supplemented with crowns and votive offerings. Probably in the mid-twentieth century the painting made on canvas was cut. The main depiction and fragments showing angels were then stacked on a gilded background. [Fig. 2]





Fig. 2-2. Chruślin, parish church, the main altar, Mary with the Child, 17<sup>th</sup> century, a metal dress, Mid-18th century. (Photo Piotr Gryglewski).



Fig. 2-3. Waliszew, parish church, the main altar, Mary with the Child, 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Photo Piotr Gryglewski).

The *Salus Populi Romani* type became the base of the composition located in a church in Oszkowice, which dates back to the mid-seventeenth century. A more artistically modernized layout can be found in the main altar of the church in Waliszew, where the painting is supplemented with a metal “dress”. [Fig. 3] The example of a preserved “dress” can be seen on the painting of *The Virgin and the Child with St Anne* in the main altar in Śleszyn. *St Nicolas* from the side altar in Bąków Górny. The phenomenon of metal application design popularization can be illustrated with an example of a procession float with a depiction of the Holy Family from Bielawa. There is another painting of *The Virgin and the Child with St Anne*, dating back to the seventeenth century, in Waliszew. We should pay attention to a distinguishing, sharp outline of Saint Anne’s face. The popularity of this painting in the local area is reflected by the fact that a depiction of *St Anne* on a procession float from three hundred years later was made on the pattern of the model from the seventeenth century. A precious “dress” is also preserved on the picture of *St Anthony* in Złaków Kościelny. The painting on canvas was made in the seventeenth century. It was probably originally placed on unpreserved side altars of the church in Złaków. The oldest, upper part of a preserved “dress” dates back to the early eighteenth century; newer, bottom fragments come from the early nineteenth century. The preserved metal applications bear witness to lively cult of painting. During the restoration carried out in 2009, stripped elements of the church were cleared and supplemented. An interesting solution is the exposition of a preserved “dress” and the painting in separate frames [Fig. 4]





Fig. 2-4. Złaków Kościelny, parish church, left – Picture of St Anthony, 17<sup>th</sup> century, right – a precious dress from the Picture of St Anthony, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. (Photo Piotr Gryglewski).



Fig. 2-5. Kaszewy, parish church, St Roch, 17<sup>th</sup> century. (Photo Piotr Gryglewski).

There is a wide group of preserved paintings of St Roch. They date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but, more importantly, some paintings were commissioned in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Documented historical material proves that this patron saint was exceptionally popular. Among those depictions, we can mention a painting from a finial of a side altar in Bąków Górny and in Bielawa, from a side altar in Kaszewy from the seventeenth century [Fig.5] and in Złaków Kościelny. St Valentine from Łęki Kościelne is an interesting example of an eighteenth century composition.

An interesting phenomenon is the permanence of this sanctified topography. It can be traced thanks to inspections held in churches in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The arrangement of particular altars and depictions was not accidental, but resulted from the tradition or from the connection with architectural elements. Such was the character of chapel altars or altars connected with particular church crypts. What is more, during architectural modifications, extensions, or erections, churches frequently retained an old topography. However, it did not always mean preservation of original furniture. Sometimes only precious elements were saved (Złaków), yet old paintings were re-used more often. Paradoxically, interior modernizations carried out in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for large amounts of money resulted in far reaching transformations and destructions of old altars.

Another interesting issue concerns the seventeenth and nineteenth century forms of historicism. The first one relates to the interest in medieval art, and re-usage of older depictions, which were installed in new altars (Jurkowlaniec, Grażyna 210-271). Church modernizations at the break of the seventeenth century often strived to preserve earlier precious elements of old altarpieces (sculptures, paintings), which were re-installed in the new structures. On the one hand, such operations protected old, valuable cult depictions, while on the other they allowed for emphasizing long-lasting cult traditions, which was particularly important c.a. 1600, the time of religious arguments. Re-usage of older cult paintings always had a unique character resulting from local needs and traditions. The most famous examples of such operations come from the Greater Poland area. One of them is a main altar in Kobyłina (1613), which is a setting for a triptych devoted to St Stanislaus from c.a. 1518. In nearby Koźmin, a relief from the early sixteenth century was fit in a central part of structure made before 1635. The main altar in Kościan constitutes a setting for a triptych from c.a. 1525. It is interesting, a composition of an old gothic altarpiece prevailed in a seventeenth century finial. Similar practices were employed in Krzywina (1628) or Śmigiel (1645). Similarly, in a side altar of St Anne in Szadek, a gothic sculpture of The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne (lost) was placed in a finial of a side altar. Historicism visible in paintings from the nineteenth century is also appealing. It was connected with church modernizations in the late nineteenth century, when furniture was decorated with the subsequent depictions, which were iconographical and technical copies of works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An interesting example of artistic historicism from the nineteenth century is a collection of altar paintings from the parish church in Żychlin. The paintings, signed mostly by Warsaw painter August Strunge, were made in 1863 and 1864. Apart from their formal qualities, one must notice that they were stylized for modern painting. Iconographic compositions with St Stanislaus Kostka or St Valentine referred to popular types from the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Certainly, there were some more contemporary elements, such as clothes of orans in the picture depicting St Valentine. At the same time, the painter

retained technical features of good painting style from one hundred years before, the example being modelling of the crucifix or details of liturgical clothes of the Saint. Similar technical solutions may be found in other pictures depicting St Adalbert, St Anthony, and St Mark.

Other objects that can be analyzed in the category of modernization are painted plaques from the mid-twentieth century (polychrome on the walls of the church was made by Zofia Baudouin de Courtenay c.a. 1930) in modern altars from the church in Chruślin (the main altar from the first half of the seventeenth century and two side altars from the late eighteenth century). They interestingly supplemented the polychrome, which was made at that period in the sixteenth-century interior.

Coming back to the question of iconography, we must point out that even in such small and provincial regions we can find pieces of art that transgress commonly accepted iconographical patterns. There are only a few of them. Prevailing themes of church paintings are Mary, Christ, and Saints, yet some depictions fall outside general classifications. One of them is a depiction of the Holy Trinity, which can be found in Central Poland, in Skomlin, around Wieluń, and in Boczki Chełmońskie near Łowicz [Fig.6].



Fig. 2-6. *Allegory of the Holy Trinity*, Skomlin, 1776, parish church; *The Holy Trinity*, a procession float, Boczki Chełmońskie, 1768, Old Church of St Roch in Boczki Chełmońskie (photo Ewa Kubiak)

In Skomlin church, the depiction is an element of the scenes presenting the life of St Philip – it illustrates a conversation between St Philip and Jesus, which can be called “the Mystery of the Holy Trinity”.<sup>4</sup> St Philip appears on the pages of the Bible during the Last Supper, asking Jesus: *Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us (J, 14:8)*. In reply, Jesus explained that who has seen Him has also seen the Father, because He is in Father. The depiction was provided with a couplet:

*Philip asks JESUS shew us the FATHER  
Hath seen me Philip, I am all Trinity.*<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to a biblical source, according to which a conversation between the apostle and Christ took place during the Last Supper, the polychrome shows a cozy situation. This scene, happening only between two main characters, is placed against a background of a desert landscape, with outlines of buildings probably of Jerusalem marked far on the horizon. St Philip is depicted according to a Christian tradition: a middle-aged, long-haired man going bald. He is dressed in beige clothes covered with a brown robe. He is standing sideways, addressing Jesus, which is marked with his open mouth and hands pulled out towards the Christ. The picture of Jesus is placed *en pied*, frontally to the onlooker, in a hieratic position, with a right hand placed on the heart and a left hand kept away from the body. A dogma about God’s unity was illustrated by a Skomlin artist through referring to the iconographical type of the “monstrous” Holy Trinity: Jesus has three faces; one of them is depicted *en face*, while two others are on the sides, seen only partially in profile (an outline of a nose, a moustache and mouth). Christ’s head is surrounded by a radiating nimbus.

An illustration of a described biblical scene can also be found in homilies from that period. A few books from a reference library of the church in Skomlin were identified. Although their list is quite laconic, we can find the following record there: *Homilies by rev. Rychłowski one volume [Kazania XaRychłowskiego tom jeden]*<sup>6</sup>; probably a book with homilies, titled “*Kazania na Święta całego Roku. Z Różnych Doktorow y Authorów ku zbudowaniu dusz ludzkich zebrane y napisane przez X.FranciszkaRychłowskiego,*” published in Cracow in 1677. There are three homilies for the day of St Philip and St Jacob, two of which refer to the conversation between Jesus and Philip, explaining the mystery of the Holy Trinity. According to the title, the first one concentrates on the words: *Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us,*

(Rychłowski Franciszek 205-2010) while the second one explains Christ's words: *Hath seen me Philip, hath seen the Father* (Rychłowski Franciszek 210-2015).

Urban VIII forbade picturing the Holy Trinity as a picture with one body and three faces in 1628 in "Breve Solitudine Nostrae." Existing pictures were then ordered to be destroyed (Witko Andrzej 48-49, Morales de Gómez Teresa and García Riveros Patricia 28). But already, "in 1570, several years after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Johannes Molanus published *De Picturis et imaginibus sacris liber*, a guide to the orthodox representation of themes and subjects in Catholic art," where we can read that "Picturing the Trinity as a man with three faces – or with three heads – was strictly forbidden as a *diabolic fiction*". (Stratton-Pruitt Suzanne 124; about representation of the Trinity with three faces see also: Mujica Pinilla Ramón 37). We also know a later edition of this book from 1771 (Molanus Jan van). However, such depictions occasionally appeared mainly in popular, folk, and provincial art—in places that were mentally or geographically distant from Rome; there are thus some exceptions to the rule. Vatican's order reached particular European countries with some delays: in 630 a depiction of the Holy Trinity presented as one body with three faces appeared in two Spanish Trinitarian books by Pablo Anzara. The author follows an iconographical pattern, developed before and known as early as in 1515 (Jurgis Baltrušaitis 42), presenting not only the abovementioned "three-faced" picture, but also the symbols of the four Evangelists placed in the corners of the depiction and a triangle with three circles filled with the names of the Holy Trinity, symbolizing the mystery of three Divine Persons (Witko Andrzej 49). Such an iconographical motif was used relatively often among "monstrous" representations of the Holy Trinity. However, after 1649, Francisco Pacheco, publishing his treatise "Arte de la pintura," remarks that presenting the Holy Trinity as one person with three faces *makes sagacious people outraged and leads ignoramuses to mistakes*.<sup>7</sup> The artist compares the depiction to a three-headed Gerion or "devil's fantasies." Such depiction of the Holy Trinity could sometimes lead to Inquisition trials, as it was in the case of sculptor Esteban Jamete (Domínguez Bordona Jesús 31). [Fig.7] Monstrous depictions of the Holy Trinity were extremely popular in the colonial painting of South America, where even the most famous and respected artists took up the topic. One of them was the painter Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos, working at the area of the Viceroyalty of New Granada [Fig.7] (Morales de Gómez Teresa and García Riveros Patricia 28-29, Llanos Vargas Héctor 135-137). Similar depictions can be found in museums of Peruvian Lima or Bolivian Sucre [Fig.8] (Amodio Emanuele 102). A ban on depicting the "monstrous" Holy Trinity reached Latin America as well and was sometimes reflected in art. A depiction from the church of Señor Jesús de Gran Poder in La Paz was repainted; two faces and a triangle with the names of God, the Son and the Holy Spirit were removed.



Fig. 2-7. *The Holy Trinity – Christ with three Faces*; graphics from the book by Pablo Anzara (1630); Gregorio Vásquez de Arce y Ceballos, circa 1680, Museo de Arte Colonial, Bogotá, (photo E. Kubiak).





Fig. 2-8. The Holy Trinity– *Christ with three Faces*; unidentified artist, Peru, Cuzco, circa 1750-1770, Museo de Arte de Lima; unidentified artist, Museo Colonial Charcas; Sucre (photo Ewa Kubiak) *Carmelite Gradual*, father Stanisław of Stolec, 1644; in the collection of Carmelite Monastery "na Piasku" ("on the Sand") (photo. J.J. Boyce).

Depictions of the “monstrous” Holy Trinity were not popular in Poland; there are only a few representations of the Holy Trinity as one body with three faces. The depiction that most closely resembles graphic and artistic images known in Latin America is an illumination from the Carmelite Gradual from 1644 made by father Stanisław from Stolec.<sup>8</sup> [Fig.8] The painter must have known some graphic images similar to the wood engraving from 1515. Other depictions can be found in the town of Boczki near Łowicz. [Fig.6] It is a very unique representation in Polish folk art, as it presents the Holy Trinity in the form of *a face with three mouths and two pairs of eyes*.<sup>9</sup> Similar depictions are known in Austrian folk art, also in 1979. Marian Sokołowski mentions representations having a similar compositional pattern, which can be found in Palikowski’s collection in Lviv. The painting dates from 1768, which is inscribed on the base of the procession float: *Fondator Barteomi Rzesny 1768*.<sup>10</sup> Another example is a seventeenth-century painting from the collection of the National Museum in Poznań.<sup>11</sup>

Monstrous three-faced representations tempted artists with their oddity and a multitude of interpretations. One of the most famous allegoric non-religious compositions is Titian’s “Allegory of Prudence,” [Fig.9] stored presently in the collection of the National Gallery in London. It is considered to be an emblematic representation of Time. The first who attempted to explain its iconography were Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl in 1926<sup>12</sup>; since then, according to Stefano Pierguido, it has been the most discussed artwork by Titian from an iconographical point of view. It is mysterious, yet provided with inscriptions (*praeterito, praesens, futurâ*), featuring a triple depiction of a male face and three animal muzzle that still attracts art historians<sup>13</sup>. Frances Yates reminds us that under human effigies at different ages (from an elderly man, through an adult, to a lad) we may see a different symbol of time – three animal’s heads: a wolf, a lion and a dog, illustrating the past, the present, and the future. The author writes that this representation may also symbolize a virtue of prudence and its three elements: *memoria, intelligentia, and providential* (Yates Frances 62). Quoting numerous interpretations of the painting goes beyond the scope of this article. Our sole aim was to mark how complex interpretations of a single iconographical concept may be.



Fig. 2-9. Titian, Allegory of Prudence, 1565-1570, National Gallery, London.

At the end of this part of our disquisition, we would like to throw a “cultural bridge” not only over Europe (Poland) and Latin America, but also over the Baroque and modern times by presenting a commercial motif designed by Ron English in 2001 from the logo “Absent and Absente,” the brainchild of Michel Roux. [Fig.10] English is an American contemporary artist and the author of the popular brand imagery and advertising of famous concerns. He used a *self-portrait of Vincent van Gogh from 1889* (Musee d’Orsay, Paris) and multiplied his face, producing a monstrous image similar to those banned in modern representations of the Holy Trinity. On the one hand, the artist used the face of Van Gogh, who was famous for his avocation for absinthe. It is a well-known fact that this alcoholic drink was notorious for its popularity among artists of the end of nineteenth century such as Vincent van Gogh, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, and Edgar Degas, as well as poets like Oscar Wilde and Edgar AllanPoe.

On the other hand, the reference to the iconography of a three-faced human-monster introduced a mystical and fairy-tale motif, a feeling that may be experienced by everyone after consumption of the beverage. **Grande Absente 'Absinthe Originale'** was introduced to the American market in 2007, created with the legendary botanical *Artemisia Absinthium* and boasting an alcohol content of 138 proof (69%). Maybe not everyone will first associate it with a banned representation of the Holy Trinity, but everyone will consider a three-faced image to be surprising and attention-drawing, even (or especially) while drinking alcohol.



Fig. 2-10. Brainchild of Michel Roux, 2001, Ron English, poster in the one of the restaurants in Naxos's Port, Greece, (photo Ewa Kubiak, 2013).

To sum up, we would like to come back to the area of Central Poland and Baroque painting. After analyzing this modest iconographical material we can see that, as far as art is concerned, presented paintings are not particularly valuable, yet the research connected with them cannot be abandoned. Paintings from the region of Central Poland are important not only in the respect of methodology of research into the history of art (iconography, stylistic forms, connections, and repetitions of compositional patterns), but also from the point of view of ethnohistory; they provide the source of the research into the history of religion, cult, or social structures, which are always reflected in painting, not only in the scope of presented topics, but also their functions and localization in the church itself and in the region, or even on a European scale.

#### Notes:

1. The topic was carried out within the project "Inventorying of modern painting works in former Łęczyca Voivodeship" financed by the National Centre of Science (Narodowe Centrum Nauki NCN 4262/B/h03/2011/40).
2. (Engelberg Meinrad) These issues were discussed in a similar way by Polish researcher of plastic art and architecture of the Renaissance and the Baroque (Jurkowlaniec Grażyna, 109-176; Pencakowski Paweł; Gryglewski Piotr).
3. The example of such practical understanding of post-conciliar arrangements are the following instructions: Jacob Müller, *Ornatus ecclesiasticus, hoc est, Compendium praecipuarum rerum quibus quaevis rite decenterque compositae ecclesiae exornari, ac redimiri debent: omnibus ecclesiarum praelatis & rectoribus, per totam Ratisbonensem diocesin cum primis necessarium, latinè & germanicè, adiectis etiam quarundam suppellectilium picturis* (Monachii: Ex officina typographica Adami Berg, 1591); (Krasny Piotr, 2010) On the topic of transferring reformatory concepts to Poland (Krasny Piotr 2006: 119-148; Czyżewski Krzysztof).
4. Analysis of the Holy Trinity's depiction from Skomlin was presented in the article in Polish (Ewa Kubiak and Agnieszka Świątosławska 98-101).
5. *Filip JEZUSA prosi chcey pokazać Oyca/Kto mnie widzi Filipie, we mnie cała Troyca.* (Rosin Ryszard 105).

6. Archiwum Diecezjalne we Włocławku (ADW), *Status Ecclesiarum et Beneficior in Decanatibus Rudensi et Wieruszoviensi Archidieceasis Gnesnensis (...) Annis 1810 et 1811*. Sign. AAG, Wizytacje, Wiz.133: 344.
7. (Pacheco Francisco 562) Depictions of the “monstrous” Holy Trinity were also discussed by Germán de Pamplona (Pamplona Germán de, 52) with illustrations in his book: 23-26.
8. *Graduał Karmelitański z 1644 roku o. Stanisława ze Stolca* [manuscript] Library in Monastery of calced Carmelites in Piasek in Cracow.
9. (Krzysztofowicz Stefania 60), a depiction of the Holy Trinity from the procession float is mentioned in the Catalogue of Art Monuments without any characterization (Łoziński Jerzy 116).
10. The other side of the procession float depicts an image of Saint Mary of Tursk, also with the inscription: *Obras. Cudowny. Matki. Boski. Turski. Znaleziony Wewsi. Tursku. Wpowiecie. Wroku Pańskim. 1764*. This information concerns the original depiction of Saint Mary of Tursk, which was “miraculously” brought from Lenartowice to Tursk on the Eve of Pentecost in 1764. Original image is a four-part woodcut depicting Saint Mary from Maria Zell and St Michael Archangel as well as St Catherine and St Barbara; on the topic of a depiction and the history of Saint Mary of Tursk (Prokopek Marian, Ewa Fryś-Pietraszkowa and Anna Kunczyńska-Iracka 295-296; Błaszczyk Stanisław 32-35).
11. “Alegoria Trójcy Świętej”, a painter working in Poland, No Inv. MNP Mp 2390. A painting of unknown origins was a gift to the Poznań Society of Friends of Learning before or in 1923 (Suchocka Dorota 116).
12. Panofsky complemented his interpretation in a subsequent work (Panofsky Erwin and Fritz Saxl 177-181; Panofsky Erwin 146-168).
13. In the article by Stefano Pierguido from 2006 see current publications on the topic of the painting (Pierguidi Stefano 186-188).

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**“Al Sur de los Colores.” New trends of Color Field Painting in Latin America**

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*“The basis of an aesthetic act is the pure idea –  
For it is only the pure idea that has meaning”*

Barnet Newman

Studying some similarities between the work of Olivier Debré (1920-1999) and those of Rothko and Newman, a French critic said once that he was “the most American of the French painters”. In fact it could be demonstrated that, in spite of these formal resemblances, the inspiration of that artist took root in the landscapes of the Loire’s valley (Hindry 1995: 16) ...

Certainly, this anecdote can help us not to fall into the trap of formal likenesses and consider the work of some contemporary Latin American artists as a simple imitation of proposals formulated in the middle of the twentieth century by the school of New York (1).

Indeed, although most of the decisive ideas of Modern Art were enunciated in the earlier 20th century, it is also true, as George Kubler (Ruhrberg 2000:349) said, that a formal sequence can never be excluded by the exhaustion of all its possibilities, within a coherent series of solutions.

Thus, many artists -- for example Newman and Rothko, the concrete minimalists, the painters of the Hard Edge, Ellsworth Kelly (n. 1923), Binckly Palermo (1943-1977), or Josef Albers (1888-1976) with their *Tributes to the Square* (1958-1964) – may have, from a formal point of view, a relationship with the suprematism of the *Squares against colored background* of Malevitch (1913-1915). This painter, when getting rid of the object, asked one of the main questions of Modern Art: “what must we paint, -- apart from the essential, that is to say: shape, color, and light?”

Some artistic tendencies never stopped developing permanent variations. Some of the most interesting appear today in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, through genuine styles using the notion of Color Field.



Among these Latin American artists who can be studied from different angles emerge some personalities, such as the “spacialist” Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) and César Paternosto (1931) in Argentina; the Uruguayan Nelson Ramos (1932-2006); the Italian-Brazilian Waldemar Cordeiro (1925-1973), also precursory painter of the Brazilian concretism and the computer science art; the Brazilian Amélia Toledo (1926), and the “school” of Guadalajara, an informal group of different personalities like Silvia Guzik (1957), Eduardo Mejorada (1969) as well as the Cuban Rafael Torres Correa, and above all the Salvadoran female painter Adis Soriano (1961), who has concentrated on developing this style (2).

## 1. The notion of Field

These contemporary artistic trends deserve an exegesis, to which the concept of *Color Field* can offer a coherent key, or at least a starting point for hermeneutics, as long as we don’t limit ourselves to considerations about the medium and if we open epistemological perspectives.

This concept of the Picture as a space and field of color was defined and developed by Clement Greenberg in the *Partisan Review* in articles about American painting. This critic proposed that the space of the painting is an “uninterrupted continuum” which connects everything to everything instead of creating a separation: thus, the Picture should not be seen like an object, but as a field (Greenberg 1988: 191).

We must remember here that the concepts of field and continuum, before being used by Greenberg to qualify the space of the painting, are data from modern physics (3), in particular the Quantum Theory of Fields and the Restricted Relativity Theory, which are contemporary with the birth of modern art. These two theories, which had caused discussions between Bohr and Einstein, are still opposing (Hawkins and Penrose 1997: 177 sq.), opening the exploration of other ways. However, what is essential for us is that they both imply considerations about the vacuum, conceived at the same time as source and minimal state of energy, and about creative forces, light, time, and space-time. In other words, the two theories imply a certain vision of the universe, which, as Prigogine wrote, announces the “end of certainty” in the visible world and the traditional concepts of matter, space, and time (Broken 1993: 97; Barrow 2001: 236; Trinh 1988: 153; Prigogine 2001),

As a matter of fact, the study of continuity, which invariably brings the concept of infinite (Knife 1995: 33) and then the idea of an absolute referent, echoes the intuitions of many artists and to some speculation of philosophical thought, that aesthetics (Kant 1764, Burke 1757) expresses in terms of *sublime*: “The beautiful is the symbol of morality, just like the sublime gives us an idea of the infinite” (Jiménez 1997: 154)

## 2. Lines and limits

Referring to Newman’s work, Greenberg (1988: 246) explains that the old concept of edges in a Picture is abolished. The edges are repeated inside the Picture, and they make the Picture, instead of being only duplicated. The edges of the largest paintings have exactly the same function as the lines inside: to divide, rather than to separate, neither to enclose nor to bind.

This definition may concern our artists, mainly Adis Soriano, in whose works the edge of the Picture seems to belong to the compositions; in many of them, it doesn’t enclose them but repeats their lines, composing a variety of singular geometries, sometimes fitted into others, as if in a corridor without end. In other artists’ works, multiplied lines frame the field of color. So, we can speak of an *overdetermination* of the line: either the line abolishes the concept of edge, or on the contrary it intensifies it. This overdeterminating method recalls the antiphrastical process well known in rhetoric (euphemism becoming hyperbole and vice versa), but also in mythocritics (4) or psychoanalysis (*Verneinung*) (5).

First, we have to observe that the categories of linearity and “liminality” naturally obey a biological and neuronal determination, as the works of Kuffler, Hubel, and Wiesel in mental sciences and the neuroaesthetics confirm (6). The consequences of this remark are evident in painting. In art history, an important discussion dealt with “circumscription.” This notion appeared for example in the first discussions on icons and their capacity to express what cannot be represented, ever in the fifteenth century in the *Treaty* of Alberdi, (1999: 76 sq.) with the words of “orlo” and “perigraphhein.” Thus, it is not surprising, as some biologists emphasize, that we see “better” in terms of borders:

“Degas, Cézanne, Matisse recognized the consubstantial, fixative, demarcative nature of the lines that symbolize the edges. The recent researches on visual cortex demonstrate that it clearly sees using edges or limits. Limits like those we see in Mondrian’s work seem to produce a cortical shock, greater than those we feel in the nature” (Hall 2003: 112).

Some solutions to what Rodhfuss called in 1944 “the problem of the frame” (7) were proposed by the Madí group, in Brazil and Argentina. In later kinetic artists, like Carlos Diez Cruz (cf. *infra*), we can find the will of exploring the relation between the eye and the brain, mainly from the chromatic point of view.

But the linearity of the edge conceptually deletes the separation, or on the contrary, insists on the notion of limit. This separating or “diaretical” (8) concept is not only a physical or a space data. It is extremely discriminating in the organization of the human mind to determine the sense we give to the world, since it allows us to distinguish and separate. It is a constituent notion of the *psyche*, and in terms of cultural anthropology, this separating or “diaretic” scheme belongs to the celestial (or uranian) essence, upward and luminous as we shall see later (Durand 1984: 178).

The underlining is another important form of the linearity. We actually notice that in almost each work of Adis Soriano (op. qtd), the geometric section is underlined by a long rectangle, or a thick decorative line, which is abstract but formally expressionist.

The care the artist puts in painting these details gives them the appearance of true miniatures, pictures within the picture, or works inside the work, that can recall the art of illuminating manuscripts, or more probably some pre-Columbian decorative friezes, are deeply studied by this Indian artist. These friezes may be geometric (like on Mitla’s pyramid), picturative (on the murals of Bonampak and some pyramids covered with Xiucóatl), or have an undulating linearity (pyramid of Xochicalco), or a hieroglyphic aspect (in Mayan codex), etc. In any case, they separate spaces, delimit fields -- and therefore concepts -- and so acquire a cosmogonist meaning (9).

Therefore, these parts of the paintings must not be considered as easy ornaments, but as vitalist and full-of-life counterpoints to the absolute geometry of the whole composition. They are something like a colorful and sensual manifestation of the existence walking towards the essence, even though this phenomenal manifestation is always dominated and directed by the abstract line. The movement created by the line guides the eye towards a vacuum that we can perceive as depth and “no action” (Blofeld 1994: 47 sq.), in the Chinese meaning of the word (*wu wei*).

### 3. Verticalities

The separation of the Picture in two equal parts by an infinite and vertical line (called the “zip”) must not be seen as a closure, but as a flashing opening. This solution, frequent in Newman, was proposed by some Latin American artists; for example, Nelson Ramos in Uruguay, in his *Vertical series* of 1972, that initiate a process of multiple explorations of techniques and styles. These works are essentially fields of white painting, divided by materialized, also white, vertical lines.

In the works of Nelson Ramos, the verticality is the syntagma of a Pictorial language exploring the possibilities of the line, rather than a symbol or a plastic elaboration of a spiritual idea. Nevertheless, it uses a process of optical resetting (inheritance of the constructivism and the kinetic art) that involves the spectator's vision. The linearity does not lack conceptual depth, since it causes the meeting of the mental space (of the line) with the real one of the objects (Kalenberg 1997: 14-15).

In Silvia Guzik's works, the Picture is sometimes horizontally separated between a field of color and an abstract expressionist part (*Punto y raya, Rosas rojas*, 2006; *Expulsado*, 2007) almost picturative (*Agua y Arena*, 2007), but in many cases it is marked by verticality (*Paralelos a color*, 2006). In Adis Soriano, the verticality sometimes uses the symbolism of the ladder (*climax*), which develops a rich polysemy. Let's remember that the mystical tradition has always insisted on the ascending way, as we can see in El Greco's paintings or read in some authors (Luis de León: *En la Ascensión*; John Climacus, *Holy Ladder* or *Scala*; San Juan de la Cruz: *Ascent of the Carmelo*), etc.

In other works, the eye is directed, through concentric reflections, labyrinths, and mirages, towards the depth created by the reduplication of squares, as an invitation to a psychological trip, whose vehicle could be the mandala. This well-known picture from India and Tibet, frequently corrupted by the New Age exoticism, has been deeply studied by historians of religions and psychoanalysts (symbolism of "center" in Mircea Eliade, "psychagogical" meaning in Karl Gustav Jung, etc...). Adis Soriano explains that she wants her works to act like mandalas, or as "brain tranquilizers," which are exactly the words used by Matisse to define painting (10).

The transcendental and meditative feature of the Color Field Painting has been often emphasized by artists who associated their work with a spiritual quest expressed through proportions, rhythms, and color, sometimes in different cultural areas. Mark Tobey discovers the Chinese wisdom and stays in a Buddhist monastery. Barnett Newman, initially influenced by the *Zohar* and the Kabbala, seeks the immediate and sublime experience by exploring the art of Kwakiutl Indians. Mark Rothko tries to give life to the space through the color, and wants the ego to disappear in the extension, a notion that also comes from the Far East, and that he calls the "experience of tragics."

Adis Soriano is very interested in Japan. She learned and developed a specific paper technique called *washi zu ki*, which is a part of her work and also includes a meditative dimension. Outside the Color Field Painting, Amélia Toledo dedicates herself to investigations with a philosophical nature about light and the proportions of the universe. For example, she studies objects of contemporary Art like *Sete Ondas* (11), whose materiality tries to reflect the link between the visible and the invisible world, as a poetic dream upon the nature of matter (Ribeiro 2010: 1648).

## 4. Spirituality in art

### 4.1. Light and color

We may remember here that the painters of "spirituality," like Johannes Itten (1888-1967) or Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), gave a particular function of color. Delaunay created the chromatic theory of *simultaneism* (based on the "simultaneous resistances" of Chevreul) before opening himself towards the *orphism* and the creation of "windows," which are geometrical constructions deeply studied by the critic Françoise Roy about Adis Soriano's art (Roy 1997: 16).

Vassili Kandinsky (1866-1944) also emphasizes in his *Notes and Writings* the importance of meditation and contemplation. Actually, his "circles of colors" are very close to the mandalic principle (Sers 1989: 37). Kandinsky preaches a search for "the inside Essential by eliminating any outside contingency" and analyzes the relation between color and form in the following way:

"This inevitable relation between color and form brings us to observe the effects of form on the color: the form, strictly speaking, even when it is perfectly abstract or looks geometrical, has its own inner resonance. Form is a spiritual being which owns properties that identify with it" (Kandinsky 1989 (1954): 116).

Let's remember that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, white was for the Venezuelan painter Armando Reverón the metaphor of the absolute light and the essential search (Bayón 1990: 30; 1991: 93-94). This chromatic quest was not a simple influence of tropical light -- as some authors (Lucie-Smiths 1994: 31) seemed to believe: rather it may be compared with the spiritual obsession with blue (*L'Azur*) in Mallarmé's poetry some years before, or in Yves Klein's paintings in the middle of the twentieth century; where the blue leads to "a perfect serenity." Concerning Nelson Ramos, Angel Kalenberg (1997: 18) speaks of a process of "purification of the pigment" which aims to extend its materiality and transform it into light.

The light, so deeply present in Adis Soriano (as in Newman's works and the "transcendental experiences" of Rothko), is taken to its maximum brightness level when applying several color layers with a fine brush, in a process that the cultural anthropologist Gilbert Durand (1989: 39) would probably call "epiphany of light through the colour."

In her work, Amelia Toledo wants the spectator to "enter into the color" and become a part of it, "living it":

"A proposta de Amélia Toledo é que o visitante atravesse a cor, se deixe envolver por ela, vivendo-a, uma das muitas possibilidades oferecidas por sua obra, extensa e perturbadoramente multifacetada" (Farias 2004:XX)

Thus, the luminosity produced by the field of color is transformed into an inner experience (12) that may recall the symbolism of some spiritual traditions where color and light are Beauty. According to this philosophy, the soul that contemplates is illuminated and becomes identical to the contemplated object. "You see yourself – says Plotin in the Eneades – shining and full of intelligible light; or rather, you become a pure light, a light being, without any weight" (13).

This experience, concerning painting, could be expressed with almost identical words by phenomenology:

"The vision of the painter is no longer a glance towards "outside", a physical-optical relation with the world. The world is no more facing the painter as a representation. The painter is rather born with things, as a concentration and a 'coming to the self' of the visible ('venue à soi du visible')" (Merleau Ponty 1964:69).

#### 4.2. Variations and series

To further analyze these concepts, we need to consider the association of Color Field and geometry. Some authors insist that fundamental physics nowadays seems to move towards an interface between mathematics and metaphysics (Nicolescu 1998: 119). On the other hand, contemporary science stresses that the reality of the universe can be more and more compared with mathematical precision, as the physicist Roger Penrose emphasizes: "The more we deeply understand the laws of nature, the more it seems that the physical world vanishes, leaving us almost nothing else than mathematics" (Penrose 1999: 18-19).

The mathematical precision mentioned by Penrose originates of course from Euclid. However, in the title of a work, Barnett Newman seems to follow an anti-euclidean concept (*The Death of Euclid*, 1947), belonging to another tradition, in which the world is seen as the reflection of the "divine proportion." The Uruguayan Joaquín Torres García looked for the same path with esoteric and constructivist paintings of squares, supposed to be a reflection of the Pythagorean Golden Section.

So, if we follow this trend based on geometry and rhythms, we understand that the perfection of the work is conceived as the best expression of the relation with mathematics.

Actually, one of the characteristics of Adis Soriano's Color Field painting, studied from a diachronic point of view, is its rhythmical nature, both serial and variable, although these antagonistic principles are mitigated by the action of colors and intervals. On the one hand, as a deep permanent base, the solid color seems to pre-exist ontologically to each work and resolve into a particular manifestation: changing colors or tones, sometimes texture, from the violent solidity of the color field to the milky fuzziness of a cloud. On the other hand, a geometry (as well as a phenomenology) is in process, and gives birth to a squared or rectangular mathematical being. The very friezes appear, in the different Pictures, submitted to variability, because of their directions, intervals, disposition, and number.

Series and variation create, therefore, inside and outside dynamics and rhythms, that seem to be the basic feature of several contemporary art trends, for example the kinetic art of Carlos Cruz Diez, in his works on squares and colors (*Fisicromías, Cromosaturaciones*). But at the same time, we are not far from the Pythagorean vision of the world based on proportions and numbers.

Nevertheless, if variation does exist, we need to define *what* varies, and with regard to which invariant. Beyond the geometrical Indian art tradition, we understand now that the referent of those series may be an immeasurable source, although it may be modeled through infinity of variants. The painting expresses a search after an Absolute: either through platonic or neo-platonic concepts (the search after Beauty or pure idea, evoked by Barnett Newman), or according to the Aristotelian concept of *arké* (Bos 2009: 39 sq.), or primary archetype.

Thus, the abstract and impressionist geometry of our artists (particularly Adis Soriano), is a continuous pursuit of the perfection in proportions that reproduce, until the infinite, an archetype that cannot be visually perceived, except through its own variations.

By this way, the Latin American painters we mentioned are not only scattered members of an informal school, but also artists who express an original view in contemporary art, in the borders of spirituality, cosmology, and aesthetics. At the center of this thought, we find the range of colors and the principles of Color Field Painting that may be considered as starting points for a spiritual quest, and may confirm the intuition of Cézanne: "The color is the place where our brain and the universe meet" (14).

## Notes

(1) Morais: « A vocação construtiva... » 1997: 25-39.

(2) Cf. Adis Soriano in her series *The Mind* (2003), *In Movement* (2003), *Passages/To flow* (2007) and the *Song of the color* (2010); Silvia Guzik in several significant Pictures (cf. *infra*) and Amelia Toledo (series and exhibitions *Na Cor/Com a Cor*, 1992; *Cortes na Cor*, 1993; *Peles da Cor*, 1998; *Viva Cor, Caminhos da Cor, Campos de Cor*, 2009, *Horizontes*, 2012).

(3) Yet in Maxwell, but developed overall by Planck, Niels and Bohr in the Quantum theory.

(4) We can mention for example the symbolic isomorphism of the apparently opposed complexes of Agatha and Diana Polymastes, or the symbol of the "blind seer" we analyzed in precedent works through the dimension of its symbolical grammatology (antiphrasis).

(5) Freud 1925: 218-221.

(6) Works of Steven Kuffler (1950s) on the physiological paradigm of the visual field and the differentiated activation of the center/surround ganglion cells of the retina, before those of Hubel and Wiesel (1980s) on the "edge cells" and they thalamic relays (Hubel 2002: 260; Changeux 2008: 123 sq.; Livingstone 2002: 63-65; Kolb & Wishaw 2002: 295 et 299 sq.).

(7) Rothfuss 1997 (1944): 57-58

(8) Cf. Greek: διαίρεσις *diairesis*, "division". Term often used by Gilbert Durand. (1984, *passim*).

(9) Moreover, the Aztec *Xiucóatl* (the circular fire snakes we can see for example on the famous Stone of the Sun) were conceptually linked to the dialectics of the “light clearing the shadow”, and Tonatiuh, god of the Sun, was himself guided by a *Xiucóatl*. (Millet & Taube 2003: 188; Matos Moctezuma et Solis, 2002: 414).

(10) “Un calmant cérébral” Cit. from Matisse in Barou, 1995:16; Interview with Adis Soriano, Mexico, May 2003.

(11) *Sete ondas, escultura planetária*, 1993, Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo.

(12) *Lumen* and not only *lux*, as neoplatonics wrote. Cf. the aesthetics of Grosseteste of Lincoln, or Saint Bonaventure, in Eco 1987: 86-88. We can also remind the notion of *beldad* and not only *belleza*, used by the Spanish neoplatonics poets of the Renaissance.

(13) Plotin 1984: 72 (VI, 9).

(14) Quotation from Cézanne by Paul Klee, cit. in Merleau Ponty, 1964: 67.



Fig. 2-11 Adis Soriano - *En Movimiento, 11* – Oil on canvas, 100 x 80, 2007

### Main iconography

#### GUZIK Silvia (1959, Mexico)

-*Rosas Rojas*, 140x200, mixed techniques, 2006, Private collection

-*Expulsados*, 70x80, mixed techniques, 2007, Private collection

-*Agua y Arena*, 150x150, mixed techniques, 2007, Private collection

-*Paralelos a color*, mixed techniques 2006, Private collection

#### RAMOS Nelson (1932-2006, Uruguay)

-Series *Verticales* (1972 à 2004): this title concerns works of different styles and techniques).

#### SORIANO Adis (1961, El Salvador)

-*La Mente*, Series of 10 Pictures 70x30, mixed techniques on wood (2003), Private collection

BridgesAcrossCulture2013

-*En Movimiento*, Series of 10 Pictures 100x80, mixed techniques on canvas (2003), Private collection or artist's property

-*Passages/Fluir* Series of 10 Pictures 80x60, *Washi zoo kei* and mixed techniques on wood and canvas (2007), Private collections

-*El Canto del color*, Series of 18 Pictures 100x120 et 100x80, acrylic on canvas (2010), Private collections or artist's property.

<http://www.adis-soriano.com>

### **TOLEDO, Amélia (1926, Brazil)**

*Campos de Cor*, series (2009) in: Exhibitions *Viva Cor*, Nara Roesler Gallery, Sao Paulo, (August-September 2009)

*Caminhos das Cores* (series and installation, 2009) et *Minas da Cor*, Quadrum Gallery, Belo Horizonte (May-June 2010)

*Na Cor/Com a Cor*, Ibeu Gallery, Copacabana, 1992

*Cortes na Cor*, Modern Art Museum of Rio de Janeiro, 1993

*Peles da Cor*, São Paulo Gallery, Sao Paulo, 1998

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **NARRATIVE BRIDGES**

**Wartime Sarajevo as a character: the importance of the setting  
in the contemporary Italian novel**

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## Introduction

If we want to analyze the importance of the setting in the contemporary novel, we cannot avoid taking into consideration Robert Park, an American urban sociologist and a founder of Chicago School of sociology, and his idea of the city seen as a social laboratory in which it is possible to study the most typical processes of the contemporary society<sup>1</sup>. That theory permits us to perceive the city as a ‘spatial organism,’ which consists of different elements and in which the balance between animal and vegetal species, as well as between individuals and the environment, is established, thanks to the competitive cooperation.

Therefore, its results explain why, in the contemporary novel, the place or the city determines the character of the persons. However, there are also studies that contradict that assumption and claim that it is the character of the individuals that influences the city in which they live (Parker 106).

Although the authors of the novels analyzed in this paper, Cannavacciuolo and Mazzantini, intended to present and discuss the war problemacy, they depict the city in these literary texts as a character that is even more important than the actual characters themselves. This happens because the city is presented as the effective representation of the tragedy and suffering, which gives the possibility of analyzing the motif of pain and violence in the text from a different angle. In the novels analyzed, the protagonists arrive to a new town which is to be discovered and which, by the development of the plot, gradually transforms into a familiar and domesticated place, even though the period described is the wartime.

Unlike the common in the 19th century Italian novel, the contemporary novel makes the public space focused, so that the private space entwines with the public space. According to Hana Wirth-Nesher, it is not that the “outside” has simply been substituted for “inside”. It is that in the contemporary literature “home” “is a shifting space, a provisional setting, an intersection of public and private that is always in process” (Wirth-Nesher 20). Moreover, for Wirth-Nesher it is important to place emphasis on the following fact:

[...] the problematizing of home and of indeterminacy of public and private realms affect both the theme and the form of modern urban novels. The private self in conflict with a public world and public space, a self bent on carving out a suitable private enclave, is replaced by a self that both constructs and is constructed by the cityscape. At times the plot itself unfolds as a sequence of perceptions of place, of actual movement through the cityscape and "readings" of the urban environment (21).

Therefore, when drawing attention to the setting, it is possible to see that in the modern urban novel the cityscape is actually inseparable from the self.

Furthermore, in these novels we face the construction of the public space through the confrontation of the suffering of the characters and their private tragedy. The characters create the image of the city as a result of their various temporal and spatial movements in the setting; more precisely, the gap between the spatial and the temporal constructs the image of the city which, on the other hand, influences the characters. Wirth-Nesher states, "in the gap between the seen and the remembered lies the tension of the novels" (66), but here in the gap between the lived, the suffered, and the remembered the tension is created.

Cannavacciuolo's and Mazzantini's cities are represented as the city of military sound, of desire for food, and of lack of everything. The characters are attracted to it, but, at the same time, they are asked to face fear since access to the city is denied by the Serbian soldiers. The city of these novels is not the city of immigrants, but instead the city of foreigners who rediscover themselves in a new situation, facing the war violence, and, what is actually new to them, the general suffering. Sarajevo is also represented as the city of multilingualism, because the languages present in the narrative discourse are Bosnian and Italian. This permits the narrative structure to organize in a few-layer framework not only on the lexical level, but also on that of the characters and setting. Sarajevo is also presented as the city of specific war sounds, which divide the city into different zones. Therefore, we can conclude that by intertwining the private suffering and the suffering of the city, private and public space interact and new spaces are being mapped out, which can be seen both on a lexical, thematic, and structural level.

One of the differences between the two novels analyzed, *Il soffio delle fate* and *Venuto al mondo*, is in the role of gender of characters in the urban space, although we can not say that the reading of the cityscape in these novels is exclusively gendered. Therefore, it may be said that the representation of the cityscape is not only visual, but also gendered. In Cannavacciuolo's novel, there are mostly male pictures, and they are primarily perceived visually from the reader. They are never anonymous or passive and silent. On the other hand, in Mazzantini's novel, the female main character behaves as the male characters do in Cannavacciuolo's novel; she is not described as a passive picture, and she is completely perceived visually.

We may conclude that in these novels Wirth-Nesher's thesis that in the urban novel the setting is a potent counterforce to a character is confirmed; it is inseparable from the selves that populates these worlds (203). However, not less important is that the plot and the character that are set into motion are disrupted by the force of the place. The collapse of public and private is represented by buildings, streets, and other landmarks which are intertwined with the habits and customs of the local people. Therefore, this study searches, in two Italian contemporary novels, for the individual differences among various characters' perceptions and relations towards the city of Sarajevo, giving us a wide range of utopical and dystopical visions of the setting. However, it also focuses on the transformations of the city which causes changes of both characters and the plot.

### **1. City image as revelation of the personality of characters**

In the novel *Il soffio delle fate* (*The breath of fairies*) by Angelo Cannavacciuolo, the story of the three brothers is entangled with the war scenes of Sarajevo in the 90s. The three different personalities not only mark different attitudes towards life, but also denote three different aspects of the city, connecting its social and geographical elements in the narrative discourse. The cityscape in this novel is represented through Jovan, the commander of the army which has surrounded the city; Bećir, a musician and member of Sarajevo philharmonic orchestra; and Tom, a journalist, born in Sarajevo but raised in America. Although at the beginning of the novel the differences between them are underlined, the spatial element is revealed to be the bond that ties them together. It becomes obvious that, as the plot moves on, it is the city that helps them find out the hidden aspects of their personalities. Eventually, we will come to the conclusion that each of the characters represents one aspect of the city: Bećir, as a musician, points out its emotional aspect, it is the "emotional city" that he narrates; Tom indicates the "formative city" because the city plays a decisive role in the formation of his personality; and Jovan denotes the city in which the character's personal project is carried out.

That is why the parts of the narrative discourse, as well as the parts of the city that Bećir refers to and that he is connected to, are more static; the author focuses mostly his thoughts and his memories, especially when he recalls past events and remembers his mother while she was alive. It is important to stress that Bećir gets to know the changes in the urban environment through sense perception, more precisely through the sense of hearing<sup>2</sup>, which results in creating a negative opinion of his city:

On the contrary, Bećir was listening and thinking that there the life mattered less than nothing, less than in any other part of the world. He also wondered if it was worth crying for Bosnia [...] if it was worth crying for his destroyed home, for his music bouncing around in the rubble, for the pain and the blood of its people, now too accustomed to those horrors. The natural response [...] was that it was not worth the effort. (Cannavacciuolo 43).<sup>3</sup>

In the text, the city sounds which help Bećir to create the image of the city are stressed, but those sounds are often not pleasant: screaming of the wounded, mothers shouting while looking for their children, i.e. the sounds of the war and of the suffering. Antithetically, there are also pleasant sounds, like his music: music is the sign of resistance, which unites all the residents of Sarajevo, regardless of their religion or nationality:

[...] in Sarajevo they continue to live and to hope. This is the response of the people flocked in droves to yet another concert of the Philharmonic. In this theatre of pain, this is the answer of a handful of musicians, who, with their music, launch a signal of unity and hope. A sign of resistance, an act of love, a response to the aggressors, like if they wanted to tell them: you will fail, you will have to kill us all for Sarajevo and that will be impossible... (Cannavacciuolo 149).

The inhabitants of Sarajevo consider the orchestra the good spirit of the city: “[...] the people need to believe that somebody or something is protecting them...” (Cannavacciuolo 37). The music gives meaning to their lives and it alleviates the suffering. But, first of all, it is the message that they communicate through the sound: the unity of the musicians, their coherence and interconnection, essential when fighting against the conquerors. That is why the theater not only represents the inner place in which the musicians hide from the enemy, but also the spiritual center of the city, or the base of the “emotional” city, from which they respond to the attack. But the theater is also the city itself, because in the text Sarajevo is described as the stage of the world, where each person has one important role. That’s why the music is “the activity itself” (Cannavacciuolo 29); it is the “movement” that can “make the body softer” (29). Because of this, Bećir’s perception of the city gives the reader the possibility to discover the “emotional city,” leaving aside other aspects of that urban space.

In that way, Sarajevo becomes essential for understanding Bećir’s thoughts and feelings<sup>4</sup>. But also, from Bećir’s reminiscences, it is possible to comprehend the image of the city in the past in contrast to its present image. On one hand, there is the Sarajevo of his childhood, the idyllic place:

That summer morning the dawn cloaked the houses [...] and the dew watered little meadows between the tombstones in the cemetery and the pebbles of basalt squealing under the uncertain hooves of the horses. [...] From the baskets of the vendors the pleasant scent of mulberry fruits was floating in the midair, while the most insolent smell of čevapčići spread bold above and below the district [...] the clear sky was crossed by the shining flight of white doves. In the air it persisted a cheerful chatter of children chasing each other festively [...]. (Cannavacciuolo 176).

Besides being a Picturesque place in Bećir’s visual memory, the scent of the city reveals to him its other aspect, hidden to the visual perception: it brings to him the memories of the traditional cuisine, recalling the positive aspects of the urban environment. Time ago Sarajevo was also the “garden full of flowers, one next to the other, the beautiful ones and the ugly ones” (Cannavacciuolo 101). It was also the mixture of different nationalities which all lived in peace: “[...] Sarajevo, [...], where the respect has ancient roots and where it persists the habit to exchange the visits and the gifts for religious holidays” (Cannavacciuolo 80). On the other hand, there is the Sarajevo of the present; the city from which Bećir wants to escape, since he does not want to be involved in the events around him; he cannot accept the humiliating condition of the city, having Sarajevo become the city of the race for the survival.<sup>5</sup>

Tom, on the other hand, born in America but of Bosnian origin, is assisting one of the American journalists who arrived to Sarajevo in order to make short movies about the wartime city. In his job, he needs to be as objective as possible, so his visions of Sarajevo give the author the possibility of depicting the city without a subjective imprint. Therefore, Sarajevo represents for him the opportunity to show his ability at work, and that is why his sight of the city will determine his relations to everything around him. On the other hand, his ‘job’ is also an insight into himself, since he wants to discover his family history, and thus understand some aspects of his personality. Therefore, when observing the cityscape from Tom’s perspective, the reader has the opportunity to approach the city from the eyes of those who,

looking at it with a positive attitude and expecting an improvement of the personal self, create an image of the city. Hence, the city contributes to the formation of his identity. Because of this, the character points out its “formative” aspect, which cannot be achieved easily, since he feels foreign both in New York and Sarajevo. Therefore, he starts looking for his past among the districts of the city. He created the first image of it from his mother’s story, in which Sarajevo was described as a “basin with flowers” (Cannavacciuolo 50). It results that, differently from Bećir, Tom’s roots could be reconstructed only thanks to his mother’s memories, and not from the direct contact with the spatial element. Hence, his present vision of the city contrasts strongly with the idyllic past.

His first actual contact with Sarajevo is in the cemetery in Kovači, where he confronts the war and starts to feel the need to experience the city in all aspects:

Tom found himself walking along the avenue leading to the center, and what appeared at first an impalpable veil of mist, gradually started to wrap him completely. He noticed with wonder that he was not afraid of the mist, he felt it on the skin like a light caress, like a gentle touch of a mother who tenderly cradled him in her arms [...]. In his eyes, the city seemed a dull grey color, enough to believe that even the walls suffered the fear and the unhappiness (Cannavacciuolo 54).

While strolling across Sarajevo, Tom absorbs its every detail and internalizes the pain he discovers, so that the suffering allows him to become conjoined with the city. The fog has transformed Sarajevo in the big grey mood and it has become the metaphor for the pain that is always present over it. From that moment on, Tom starts to feel like a native of Sarajevo. The images from the memories created upon the stories told have been subject to transformation:

It was not any more the colorful city that his mother had told him about [...]. A bleak geometry of lines and parabolas inexorable, traced by grenade blasts, had replaced the soft diagonal and curves in parallel [...] that city, his city, had undergone a tremendous urban metamorphoses (Cannavacciuolo 54).

At that particular moment, the colors are only the reminiscent of the past, while the war is the only reality, and the inhabitants are “the people, used to cohabit with the danger” (Cannavacciuolo 58). Eventually, Tom will discover that his father was the same one as Bećir’s and Jovan’s, and Sarajevo will become the symbol of family and of traditional values: “that city which, due to its character, was able to unveil out of the blue what was buried in the darkest caves of the memory; the city in which, ever since, anyone who was passing through it, discovered his own destiny [...]”. (Cannavacciuolo 129). Thus Tom detects that, in the midst of misery and sadness, there is life; only at that moment he starts to notice colors in the clothing of inhabitants, as well as in other aspects of the city, and becomes one with Sarajevo:

He felt, once again, that sense of belonging to everything around him. Now everything counted, the brown earth and its rocks, the sky painted in blue, the things that were enclosed in the middle, the leaden waters of the river down in the plain, and the aching Sarajevo (Cannavacciuolo 249).

Therefore, when the war is over, both his revival and that of the city take place, and his insight into his personality is complete. Hence, when we confront the urban space from Tom’s perspective, we are facing the “formational city,” since it contributes largely to the formation of the characters’ identities, which helps to reconstruct both the characters’ personalities and the city.

The third character, Jovan, the army commander, has a fixed position in the plot on the mount Trebević<sup>6</sup>; this position completely influences his vision of Sarajevo, allowing the reader to have the perspective of the city from the spatial distance. On one hand, Jovan is like any other soldier: a ruthless man and one of the snipers who does not hesitate to shoot children. It is clear that Jovan embodies the war and all its consequences. On the other hand, however, it seems that Jovan is not completely pitiless; from his memories we can discover that he was once interested in arts and that he was fond of Bećir’s music. At present, however, his dominant position over the city is stressed:

From the mountain, through the thick blanket of fog, Sarajevo appeared to Tom wrapped in a white burial cloth. In the old district of Baščaršija the tapering fingers danced in the air of smoke, [...]. The synagogue was crying

the same tears as the catholic cathedral, while Beg's mosque and Alpaša's showed the minarets broken as pencils (Cannavacciuolo 15).

The scene that Jovan sees in front of him is the worst image of the war: nobody can be spared, and soldiers see Sarajevo as a city reduced to rubble inhabited by people who just hope to survive. But besides the battle in Sarajevo, there is also a battle going on inside Jovan: although he is a soldier involved in shooting civilians, reducing every kind of life to death, his memories of the past resuscitate his love for art and for life in general. Therefore, with the war experience he starts to feel torn between two antithetical parts of his identity.

Jovan's position on the Mount Trebević, however, permits him to thoroughly study different parts of the city: "the riverside with the Library, the first houses of Baščaršija with the minarets, the Austrian district with at its center the bell tower of the Catholic cathedral, and, finally, the Orthodox church of the Most Holy Mother of God [...]." (Cannavacciuolo 240). The city he sees is, just as for Tom, often-shrouded in mist, the so-called "il soffio delle fate" (261), or breath of fairies. Jovan spends his time observing the mist and feels as if it has already entered into his mind. He thinks that it has been transforming his memories and fears. He feels isolated like the Mount Trebević is isolated from the rest of the city: covered with the snow, it prevents the descent to the valley and it permits no one to come near. In the same way, Jovan has hidden all his emotions and does not allow anybody to approach him; therefore, the mount is the metaphor of Jovan's solitude: near Sarajevo, but totally isolated from it.

Even for this character, as for the other two, the mnemonic mechanism is fundamental to the perception of the city: Jovan frequently evokes the image of the city from his youth. He recalls to memory the past smells different from those of burnt houses nowadays; in his memory, different nationalities all lived together in peace. While evoking his memories, he starts to change and feel compassion for the people of Sarajevo, and he refuses to shoot civilians. His last contemplation before dying is that of the city; he finally understands that from the early years of his life he has been connected to the city in a special way. Therefore, in the last scene, Jovan's death makes him identify totally with the city, symbolically transforming his sacrifice into the sacrifice of all the residents. That last scene spurs us to conclude that in Jovan's case we may speak of the "self-realization" city, since this character's personal project is connected with his perception of it.

We may conclude that not only are different images of the city created in the novel, but also, synchronic and diachronic displacements in the story permit the exchange of the utopian and dystopian representations and the ability to map out new spaces on a thematic and structural level.

## 2. City as a mirror of pain

In the novel *Venuto al mondo (You came into the world)*, the motif of the unrealized motherhood is intertwined with the suffering of the city and its inhabitants in the wartime. The changes in the city, from the past peaceful town to the chaotic center of massacre, follow and mirror the changes of the main character, Gemma. She morphs from the ingenuous girl to the deeply afflicted woman with no possibility to experience motherhood. Past and present are intertwined not only in the narrative discourse, since the plot constantly moves from present to past and vice-versa, but also in the representation of the character, since Gemma constantly reevaluates her past decisions.

In this novel Sarajevo is described from different points of view: from Gemma's (Italian woman visiting Sarajevo), who is constantly comparing the present aspect of the city to the two past ones: one before the Bosnian war and one during that war; from Pietro's (Gemma's son), from whose perspective the reader can only see Sarajevo as it appears at the present moment, more than ten years after the war; from Gojko's (Gemma's friend, native of the city), which offers the resident's perspective, who constantly perceives the city, following all its changes. It is Gemma who visits Sarajevo many times, so her character observes the city in its various periods, giving the reader the possibility to experience it from different temporal levels.

Often, Sarajevo is seen as a symbol of fusion of life with death. Gemma, in particular, builds a strong bond with the city, although she wasn't born there. After coming back there, although the war transformed Sarajevo, she still finds some aspects of the city that she once knew. In her perception, she is not able to separate the images of war from the images of Sarajevo in the peacetime, since the war has already become the inseparable part of it, "where the past is a burden making a noise, like a can tied to a foot" (Mazzantini 297). From what she sees, although the war ended more than ten years ago, it still seems to Gemma that the war has not yet ended: "The old grey buildings of socialist realism are still standing, balconies one across the other as files torn off in a public office. The holes of the shells covered with patches of plaster (Mazzantini 22).

The consequences of the war are still visible: every day the ruined buildings recall the suffering. The life goes on slowly, showing that the pain cannot be easily forgotten:

In the geometric menagerie of ancient Austro-Hungarian palaces the traffic flows with difficulty, while people cross wherever it happens by touching the cars moving at a crawl. The trees have grown again, young trunks without the past. I look at the shops. New windows next to those sad ones, tidy, much emptier than ours. Consumerism has taken advantage in the spots of this city to be reconstructed, of his face corroded by the war like by an acid (Mazzantini 23-24).

The city aspect reveals that for Sarajevo's residents, it is not easy to bury the past; the wounds are still open. However, Gemma comes back to Sarajevo with her son, who wanted to discover his past; therefore, she starts telling him about the past of Sarajevo, in order to reveal him the truth about his origin: "[...] red spray paint on the asphalt. These are the roses of Sarajevo, they are testimonies of death and grenades" (Mazzantini 100). The places where the grenades exploded have been filled up with red paint so that the citizens recall the victims of war and think about the symbol of hope, of better life in the future, i.e. the hope of rebirth. For Gemma, the war is still strongly present in Sarajevo's everyday life. Even in children's faces she sees war: "[...] those boys that now seem to me ugly and dull, with their suits of acrylic, their mottled cheeks, their firm eyes that engulf envy [...]. They are all sons of the war, the age is that one, mothers with cancer, unemployed fathers, alcoholics" (Mazzantini 178). It is the children that carry the burden of the past; they have gathered all the negative aspects of the war in their young lives. It can be seen from their appearance; for Gemma, they are the offsprings of war ("[...] they seem made of a poor material, the expired one... of flesh without light, of debris and dust" (Mazzantini 178)).

But there is also something positive in the cityscape: Gemma notices that, despite everything, the customs and tradition have not vanished:

It is the road that leads to the mosque of Gazi Husrev-Bey, droves of girls with headscarves goofing around, pushing each other. Behind the madrasa, in a courtyard full of small arches, there is an exhibition of the local artifacts. Hanging by a thread, a long line of tunics with embroidered bibs form a multi-colored tent (Mazzantini 25).

The tradition continues to mark the life in Sarajevo; it can be seen in the streets, in the minarets, in the courtyards.

Life in Sarajevo is symbolized also in Gemma's son, Pietro. Gemma had tried to get pregnant for many years, but with no success. Instead, she tried to find a woman who would give birth to a child and give it to her in exchange for money. That is what happened with Pietro. His birth seemed impossible, like a miracle, which parallels with the rebirth of the city during the war, which also seemed impossible. The main idea that the reader can see is that Pietro embodies Sarajevo and that Sarajevo is Pietro.

Although Pietro does not perceive the city positively, and he feels superior in front of it because of its poverty and backwardness, he is also afraid of the city and thinks that somehow it can harm him; however, despite the fact that death was ruling in Sarajevo in the wartime, despite all the danger that threatened life, and despite the destiny that was denying Gemma's motherhood, Pietro was born, like Sarajevo which is reborn despite everything, in order to mock the war.

## 2.1. Pre-war Sarajevo

While in *Il soffio delle fate* we see the synchronic vision of the city, in this novel we see the diachronic one: one before the war, one during the war, and one after the war.

When Gemma arrives for the first time to Sarajevo, the Olympic games are taking place there, and it is probably the most prosperous period in the history of Sarajevo. The city is decorated and organized in the way that it seems

fascinating for the visitors, as if there were continuous parties or the continuous celebration of life. Tradition merges with modernity: “[...] all those brand new buildings, and that stupid red wolf, symbol of Sarajevo ’84, next to the huge poster of Tito” (Mazzantini 45). But, in spite of the cheerful atmosphere, sadness can be seen in the eyes of its residents:

[...] On that sparkling stadium there was a metallic hood with some stale sadness which neither the lightness of gestures of majorettes, nor jumps of the small athletes on the ice-skates were not enough to dissimulate (Mazzantini 46).

Consequently, from Gemma’s perspective, who observes the city periodically, we follow Sarajevo’s transformation in different periods. As a contrast to Gemma’s viewpoint, the author gives Gojko’s point of view: the same urban environment constantly as its resident for many years. By contrasting the diachronic and synchronic representation of the city, the author creates not only the complete image of Sarajevo, but also reconstructs the lives and the personalities of the characters.

Gojko’s point of view of Sarajevo is completely different from Gemma’s; he defines it as “*the border between the East and the West, the Jerusalem of the East ... crossroads of ancient cultures and avant-garde*” (Mazzantini 47). Thanks to Gojko, Gemma discovers different hidden aspects of Sarajevo: “[...] the old public toilets, Dervishes’ houses [...] the traditional tombstones called *stećci*, Bogomils... he knew every fissure, every legend” (Mazzantini 31). For Gojko, Sarajevo is the perfect place to live, where all the residents have learned to cohabit in peace. But Gojko also points out some other aspects of Sarajevo: the *underground* Sarajevo. In these spots, the tradition mixes with the poverty and inertness, in a kind of self-centered stratum of the urban environment. It seems that, by pointing out to the city aspects hidden to a common visitor, the author wants to primarily stress some hidden aspects of the characters’ identity.

The character of Gojko gives the author the possibility of revealing different customs and proverbs that also represent a significant aspect of tradition in Sarajevo. For example, in the Second World War and afterwards, in Sarajevo the name Walter did not mean only a person’s name, but also the symbol of all the residents of Sarajevo and their unity; all the residents of this city were Walter. Hence, Walter impersonated the resistance of people in Sarajevo and their need for freedom, or, better to say, their conviction that the unity and coherence among these people cannot be destroyed. That is to say that every person in Sarajevo is important for the community, and that is the most important belief in this city. The name Walter stands, hence, for the verve of Sarajevo, for its soul. That is why Gojko always stresses that the community is important, and nothing else: “There was that inscription dragged by many hands WIR SIND WALTER, we are Walter... all the city embraced in one heroic heart” (Mazzantini 302). Walter is, hence, the symbol of strength, toughness, and resistance against those who intend to predominate over the people of Sarajevo.

Besides that, it is important to underline that in the story we follow Gemma’s transformation towards the city and its residents, from the initial partly suspicious attitude, to the totally benevolent one. This openness can be seen in every aspect of Gemma’s life, not only regarding her opinion of the city. It becomes clear how Mazzantini uses the urban element to influence the characters and spur them towards the change. Gemma herself confirms: “That night in Sarajevo was the night of the last farewell to some other woman, a rachitic beggar which I had defeated, which did not live inside me anymore” (Mazzantini 66). Therefore, Sarajevo does not only impersonate the rebirth for its residents or for Pietro, but also represents the place where Gemma has changed.

## 2.2. Sarajevo in the wartime

When the war starts, Gemma is in Rome, and she learns about the news from the media: “We see it in the television every night, the war, and these are the real news. It is near because it happens at a distance of a few miles across the sea, but it is distant because it buzzes on TV screen” (Mazzantini 205). But since the memories of Sarajevo did not leave Gemma in peace for even a minute, and she kept in memory every building and every street, she felt the need to go back to Sarajevo. The war unites Gemma with the city:

The war is like this. To reduce everything to the same nothing, a public toilet and the cloister in the same pile of rubble, a dead man next to a dead cat (Mazzantini 209).



Gemma sees that in Sarajevo there are no differences between people and animals, since they all fight to survive:

It is important to be in shape if you want to go back to Sarajevo, you have to know how to run, you have to have strong lungs to skip the death, to leave it to somebody older, less in shape than you" (Mazzantini 341).

There the differences between the people disappear: they all struggle for life. For Gemma, it was like a racetrack where only the strongest win.

When Gemma arrives at Sarajevo in the wartime, it is the city where death reigns and she asks herself:

Where is the sound? The tolling of bells, the cry of Muezzin? Where is the smell? [...] The strong smell of the spices and of čevapčići? Where is the car smog? Where is the life? (Mazzantini 348)

Sarajevo has become the "ghost town" (369). Missiles now destroy the places that once were important to Gemma: "Our coffee bar was not there any more. Pulverized. Hit in the center by the grenade. There remained only the spectral hole, some futurist metal wrapped" (Mazzantini 306). Hence, it seems to Gemma is witnessing the progressive decline of the city:

We run on this futuristic car to face the future, which maybe will be made of the leftovers of what remains from before. The sky is ice, the dark blue that begins to glow from inside. I look at the landscape of fallen and pierced things. Houses like blackened chimneys, tangles of iron, skeletons of cars, of trams... hard facades of social housing, which now seem like burned cardboard. (Mazzantini 346)

Now the only colors of Sarajevo are black and grey, while the only sound is that of the silence, filling the gaps between the sounds of grenades. The life in the city seems extinct; what remains is only the skeletons: "A bird falls on me, a tired bird which perhaps has no longer even a branch where to rest on" (Mazzantini 350-351). "The parks have no longer trees. In a short time the city was stripped of its green. Everywhere there was the noise of saws, of branches dragged like large brushes in the rubble" (Mazzantini 353). Sarajevo loses the battle against death:

So the life dies, the trees fall one by one. The wood is collected for the winter to come, and in the meanwhile we makes space for the dead... now that they bury them everywhere, in the parks, in the football field of Koševo, because the cemeteries are not enough. Everywhere there are those mounds, dark spots of loose soil (Mazzantini 353).

But even as it seems that there is no way out of the war, not everybody has lost hope. Again the symbol of Walter becomes important. In the meantime, Walter became the goal of snipers around the city: "*It is the symbol that they want to kill... the symbol [...]*" (Mazzantini 381). The resistance of Walter was the only thing that kept people in Sarajevo alive and helped them not to surrender: «"We are together... it is important to stay together."» (Mazzantini 251). Sarajevo was never only the city, nor the field of war; Sarajevo is all of its residents together:

You had to show your closed fist with the middle finger to those people there, to the club of the three-finger Chetniks. It was the message for them, *tuck it in your ass your sniper rifles [...]*. The city seemed empty, while then it reanimated, as a pasture. On the wall of a house an inscription appeared: WE DID NOT DIE TONIGHT (Mazzantini 313).

We arrive at the conclusion that in the novel Gemma's personal struggle, the one for the child, intertwines with the struggle of the city for freedom.

## Conclusion

What we are actually focusing on in this paper is the importance of the choice of the setting for the plot and for the character, in order to achieve a bigger impact on the reader when presenting the suffering and the pain in the wartime, which is the central motif of both of the novels. The representation of the suffering moves from the individual to general level and vice versa, showing that the individual pain cannot be separated from the suffering of the whole society, and that it becomes a part of the body of the individuals. It is the body that is suffering, but not only the body of the characters, but also the body of the whole nation involved in the war. Therefore, the city is seen as the body, and in the text it is represented as an organism (for example, Holiday Inn is “dark womb”; the “Ponte vecchio” is the “white skeleton”, etc.).

The city, as well as the characters, is exposed to the change and it contributes to the movement of the plot itself. In both novels there are three main characters, and each of them symbolizes one aspect of the city, embodying, each of them, only one characteristic: the “emotional city,” the “formative city,” and the “self-realization city”. Namely, Bećir and Gojko represent the “emotional city,” since they know Sarajevo as its residents and they perceive the city as a living organism; Tom and Pietro represent the “formative city,” since the city helps them delve into their personality, discovering and defining it, while Jovan and Gemma represent the “self-realization city,” since they both find themselves in the city in order to fulfill some private goals and realize personal projects.

We can conclude that in this article we confirm the starting point from Robert Alter’s studies, which asserts that the pressure of life in the urban centers stirs the individual to define and exteriorize his identity, as well as Guido Borelli’s assertion that the disquieting postmodern city is presented in the contemporary novel equally as the character, i.e. the city is seen as an organism, which changes in a large scale the function and the development of the plot.

## Notes

1. Cfr. Park, Robert E., Burgess Ernest W. *The City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925.
2. According to Mieke Bal, it is the sense perception that is involved in the representation of space, especially sight, hearing, and touch (Bal 133).
3. All the quotations from the texts written in Italian have been translated into English by Nikica Mihaljević.
4. Chines and Varotti point out that the inner life of characters is defined by the representations of the environment, urban or natural, and that the environment can create the atmosphere useful for portraying the character’s personality (Chines and Varotti 117).
5. Lynch emphasizes how an insecure environment can damage the character: “A good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. He can establish a harmonious relationship between himself and the outside world. This is the obverse of the fear that comes with disorientation; it means that the sweet sense of home is strongest when home is not only familiar but distinctive as well.”(4-5).
6. The mount of Trebević is one of the mounts surrounding Sarajevo. In the past, it had different roles in the lives of its inhabitants: in the 1980’s, during the Olympic Games in Sarajevo, it was one of the most important places of the city, since different sport events took place there. But during the wartime, the army snipers were positioned there in order to shoot the inhabitants.

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## Bird-like-eating Attitudes, Fat-shaming, and Ideal Body Shape in Italian Women's Writing of the 1930s-1940s.<sup>1</sup>

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### Contemporary Italian Women's Writing, Feminism, and Eating Disorders

Contemporary feminist researchers, such as Kim Chernin (1981, 1985), Marilyn Lawrence (1984), Morag MacSween (1993), and Susie Orbach (1978, 1986, 2009) read anorexia nervosa as a complex consequence of women's position in patriarchal culture as well as a pathology related to identity; employing different theoretical approaches, they suggest that women who suffer from eating disorders are protesting against their socio-cultural role through a contradictory and self-arming behavior. In their multidisciplinary analyses, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating, and other atypical relationships with food and body emerge as an unidiomatic language adopted by women to communicate what words cannot express.

Eating disorders thus become paradoxical instruments of self-empowerment: on the one hand, unconventional eaters develop abnormal attitudes towards their bodies, but on the other hand, by employing this metaphorical language, they critique the social constrictions and highlight the cultural contradictions of women's position in patriarchal culture. Feminist explanations of eating disorders started developing in the late 1970s, when women began to discuss the female body in relation to notions of gender. They emphasize the hierarchical aspects of the social order and echo some psychiatric perspectives, for example the pioneering work by Mara Selvini Palazzoli, who, in 1963, saw one of the possible origins of alimentary pathologies in societal expectations and cultural norms placed on women by patriarchal authority. As demonstrated in my recent monograph, contemporary Italian literature is a powerful looking glass to discuss eating disorders from a gendered and feminist perspective; indeed, since the late nineteenth century, when anorexia was officially diagnosed by the medical discourse, Italian women writers such as Neera (1848-1918), Sibilla Aleramo (1876-1960), Wanda Bontà (1902-1986), Natalia Ginzburg (1916-1991), and others have presented in their fiction a variety of female characters who experience a troubled relationship with their body and food.<sup>1</sup> In each case, this representation is coupled with the portrayal of the rebellious feelings that the characters experience towards women's predetermined social roles. The anorexic symptoms displayed by these characters become the means to voice an unspoken protest against the socio-cultural constrictions imposed on Italian women ever since its Unification (1861). Several scholars in multidisciplinary contexts have suggested that anorexia has existed under various guises for centuries as a self-destructive but arguably also a self-empowering response to issues related to the construction of female identity in different historical times. For example, according to the historian Rudolph Bell, whose analysis focuses on the so-called holy anorexia or *anorexia mirabilis* of well-known medieval saints, such as Saint Catherine from Siena, "whether anorexia is holy or nervous depends on the culture in which a young woman strives to gain control of her life" (20). Similarly, the medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that "to religious women food was a way of controlling as well as renouncing both self and the environment" (5). My contribution to the debate on eating disorders, female identity, and self-empowerment focuses on the fictional depiction of anorexia in the popular romance by Wanda Bontà *Signorinette* 'Young Ladies' (1938) where the protagonists display significant pathological attitudes towards their body and food.<sup>2</sup> I argue that by starving and pursuing a slim body, these young women reject the repressive social role imposed on them by Benito Mussolini's fascist regime, which shaped Italian culture and society in the 1920s to 1940s. Framing my analysis of *Signorinette* in contemporary feminist discourse on eating disorders, I shall demonstrate that trapped into their social position as angels of the house, the young protagonists of Bontà's novel, similarly to the anorexic saints described by Bell and Bynum as well as postmodern girls, question their identities through their bodies and food in a desperate attempt to shape a female identity which significantly differs from the one promoted by fascist ideology.

### 'Exemplary Wives and Mothers': Accomplishing and Discussing a Societally Sanctioned Feminine Role

The Italian fascist regime, along with the Catholic Church, contributed to prescribe the boundaries of the ideal femininity of the 1920s to 1940s by encouraging women to become<sup>3</sup> "spose e madri esemplari," or 'exemplary wives and mothers'<sup>4</sup> and in doing so, to serve their homeland and therefore support Mussolini's regime; indeed, being responsible for

<sup>1</sup> An earlier and significantly shorter version of this essay has been published in *Ad Maiora. Selected Papers from the Victoria University of Wellington School of Languages and Cultures Postgraduate Symposium 2011* (edited by Sarah Leggott & Marco Sonzogni) Wellington: Dunmore Publishing, 2012.  
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incrementing the population and giving birth to the future Italian soldiers, women played a central role in the Duce's expansionist campaign. As Piero Meldini and Maria Antonietta Macciocchi remind us, during the dictator's regime Italian women's main duty was often mentioned in his public speeches. In particular, I would like to call upon a famous expression from the Decalogue of the "Piccole Italiane," or 'Young Italian Women': "La patria si serve anche spazzando la propria casa" ('You can also serve your country by cleaning your own house' (qtd. in Meldini), *Sposa e madre esemplare* 48; Re, "Fame, cibo e antifascismo" 165-66) which exemplifies the Italian fascist ideology of womanhood. However, it is important to note that the fascist propaganda was ambivalent about women's social role. Initially, Mussolini supported women's emancipation, but he changed his philosophy over the years (Macciocchi 32).<sup>5</sup> For instance, it is worth noting that in 1919 Mussolini promised women's suffrage, but in 1923 he reduced his original proposal;<sup>6</sup> Italian women gained their right to vote only after the Second World War, used for the first time in occasion of the 1946 referendum, which was held to choose the future form of government of the country. On the one hand, paradoxically, Mussolini encouraged women's contribution in national associations and sport competitions from their childhood; but, on the other hand, he reminded them to embrace their traditional roles of wives and mothers.<sup>7</sup> As Victoria de Grazia notes in her pioneering monograph on Italian female identity in fascist times, "the dictatorship only added to the confusion by making incompatible claims on young women, who were supposed to be at once responsive citizens and subordinate family members, both involved in the public life of New Italy and submissive to paternal authority" (117).

From the mid-1920s to the early 1940s, the regime reinforced the traditional model of Italian womanhood of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and gradually promoted the picture of a curvaceous female silhouette, which could perform all the aforementioned duties: large hips and big breasts were synonymous with fertility, thus communicating straightforwardly women's social role to the Italian society of the time.<sup>8</sup> In our postmodern times, the traditional narratives of femininity in relation to body shape are still divided in similar categorizations; as the anthropologist John Townsend demonstrates, in western culture curvaceous hips are considered indicators of fertility,<sup>9</sup> exactly as it happened in fascist times. As Stephen Gundle notes in his study of female beauty from the Unification of the country to present-day, the female images proposed by lower-class fascist magazines, such as "Gente nostra," or 'Our people,' portrayed beautiful peasant women with long dark hair and a curvaceous body shape, who were physically the opposite of the masculine "donna crisi," or 'crisis woman' of the early twentieth-century with her thin body, mediated from Northern European and Anglo-American cultures. However, magazines addressed to a middle-class female readership displayed images of more sophisticated, thinner movie stars (80-106). De Grazia's monograph suggests that women's bodies under the Duce's dictatorship were "an issue of state" (210), and with her curvaceous silhouette, the ideal fascist woman looked like "maternity incarnate" (213). The complex relationship between female social freedom and women's body shape is exemplified by Scipio Sighele, a sociologist of the early twentieth century, who, even before the rise of the fascist regime, had stated:

Those who aspire to emancipate themselves, those who through intelligence, activity, or will have acquired a more or less legitimate reputation, have something masculine in their physical persons as in their moral physiognomy. One would say that in them a male soul lives and moves. One would say that they feel as men and that is precisely this male consciousness that forces them to ask for spiritual liberation (qtd. in Spackman 36).

Similarly, Umberto Notari, a well-known Italian journalist who supported Mussolini's ideology on the superiority of the Italian race, talked about the relationship between Italian womanhood and body shape in these terms:

Neither the employment of women in offices, in factories, in universities, nor the excessive emphasis on sport, not poor quality reading matter and films have 'masculinized' Italian women in the same way as elsewhere [...]. The hybrid pseudo-intellectual, aestheticized, psycho-pathetic product of the so called 'modernity' that is to be found above all among the women of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Slavic race in Italy does not exist or exists in insignificant proportions [...] (qtd. in Gundle 102-3).

In this passage, Notari makes indirect references to the American flappers, the French *garçonnes* and the British bachelor girls who enjoyed more social freedom and socio-cultural acceptance than the Italian *maschiette*. As we have seen, the socio-cultural discourse of the time suggested that a masculine body shape was synonymous with freedom from the cultural conventions on womanhood imposed by the patriarchal society and Catholic ideology; following this logic, therefore, the fascist regime may have attempted to control women's role by promoting a curvaceous female silhouette which could fulfill the virtues of the character of the so-called 'exemplary wife and mother.' It is interesting to note that even if sport associations were promoted nation-wide, their purpose was "to form good Christian mothers who were physically and morally healthy, hence capable of creating a generation of equally good and healthy Italian" (qtd. in de Grazia 218). Remarkably, a very interesting press release by the regime reveals the answer:

[S]i è fatto invito di scrivere articoli contro la moda della siluetta... d'ora in poi la pubblicazione di fotografie di donne magre porterà senz'altro al sequestro... Dare incarico ai letterati di scrivere novelli o bozzetti o trafiletti che prendono in giro le donne magre (qtd. in Guida 22).

We have encouraged you to write articles against the trend of the slim silhouette ... from now on the publication of Pictures of thin women will lead without doubt to censorship... Request scholars to write drafts, sketches or short articles that make fun of thin women.

Gundle remind us that in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (published from 1929 to 1937), written under the direction of

Giovanni Gentile, the so-called crisis woman was described as someone who, by losing her natural curvaceous shape, “abandons her vocation for motherhood” (89). Nevertheless, Irene Brin, pseudonym of Maria Vittoria Rossi (1914-1969), a cosmopolitan journalist of the time, who in the 1950s collaborated with Diana Vreeland and wrote for the New York based *Harper's Bazaar*, noted that wealthy women were already pursuing a slim body shape by engaging in plastic surgery and strict dieting. It is interesting to note that the cult of slimness and the glorification of thinness, a postmodern global phenomenon, was already influencing women's food choices under Mussolini's dictatorship:

E tutte mangiavano insalata ed aranci, senza olio, senza zucchero. Tutte si pesavano, si confrontavano le cinture, parlavano di diete difficili da seguirsi alla mensa familiare, sognavano partenze per rinomati luoghi di cura, dove il digiuno fosse consentito e vigilato (115).

All women ate salad and oranges, without oil, without sugar. All women checked their weight, compared their waists, talked about difficult diets to follow at home, they dreamed of holidays at well-known spas, where starvation was allowed and monitored.

Furthermore, Brin added that female starvation and emaciation were already perceived by the collective imaginary of the upper class of the time as positive and distinctive traits:

[...] Le gote cave, gli zigomi sporgenti, gli occhi profondi, l' amarezza del sorriso, erano non solo distinti, ma ammirevoli: le fanciulle divenivano eteree e si ammalavano di stomaco. I medici assicuravano che il digiuno procurava, inevitabilmente, l' alito fetido: i giornali umoristici deprecavano la «Signorina Crisi». Ognuno conosceva la tragica fine di una donna ambiziosa, morta generalmente, di consunzione, per essere dimagrita troppo (115-16).

Not only their hollow cheeks, prominent cheekbones, deep eyes, bitter smiles were remarkable, but they were also admirable; young ladies became ethereal and felt sick to their stomach. Doctors guaranteed that starving themselves was the cause for bad breath; humorous magazines disapproved of the behavior of «Miss Crisis»; everyone knew the tragic end of ambitious women: they generally died of consumption, having lost too much weight.

Brin's writings focus on the upper-class context, however, I would like to suggest that as the ideal feminine body becomes thin, women free themselves from the traditional role of wife and mother, styling themselves as independent “crisis women.”

According to Patrizia Guida (41), who has analyzed Italian literature over the Duce's dictatorship with a particular emphasis on women's writing, the fascist regime had a permissive attitude towards popular romance, as it often portrayed women who recalled the ideal female character proposed by Mussolini's ideology<sup>10</sup>. However, Meldini notes that women's writings of the time depicted often-ethereal pictures with a slim silhouette that displayed bird-like-eating attitudes (*Le pentole del diavolo* 101-11). As I have stated earlier, food, the female body, and their representation recall women's traditional disposition to take care of others and maternity; therefore, food consumption and the development of a curvaceous body were the means by which women could achieve the virtues of the femininity of the time. Indeed, according to Meldini, the fictional depiction of the anorexic behaviors of the 1930s and 1940 fictional protagonists and their rejection of traditional domestic duties could be read as a rebellion against the societally approved feminine role of the time (111). As we have seen, domestic chores were the quintessential responsibilities of the ideal fascist woman who, by taking care of others' needs, was serving the homeland. Refusing to embrace domesticity can be interpreted therefore an act of rebellion against a society which claimed women were to become ‘exemplary wives and mothers’ and to embrace submissively their female destiny<sup>11</sup>.

### Experiencing Fat-shaming and Achieving Slimness

In *Signorinette*, Bontà presents three young protagonists: Iris, Renata, and Paola, who do not embody the virtues of the character of the ‘exemplary wives and mothers’. First of all, the *Young Ladies* do not dream of getting married and having children; secondly, they are very focused on their studies and hope to become soon teachers. Significantly, this career-oriented attitude finds correspondence in their slim body shapes. Paola is the only overweight character in the novel; however, she follows a diet in order to lose weight. This detail is highlighted by the author several times; indeed, Bontà does not follow the aforementioned fascist press rules which suggested to ban the portrayal of thin women from publication, but significantly in a variety of passages her third-person narrator comments sarcastically about Paola's curvaceous shape. Paola is labeled as “quella ragazza grassa,” or ‘that fat girl’ (17), and she is constantly embarrassed by acquaintances' and friends' comments on her physical appearance. Remarkably, Paola is the only teenager in the novel to attract an older man, Renata's uncle, who describes her as the ideal woman; Paola, indeed, reminds him of the curvaceous girls whom he used to befriend during his adolescence. Young healthy women were used to represent the magnificence of the Italian race in the fascist parades in Rome; with her curvaceous body, Paola could have aspired to march in front of the Duce, however, while seemingly wishing to participate, she only mentions this aspiration once, while her ambition to lose weight becomes an obsession. She exercises regularly and refuses to eat high-caloric food to achieve the dream body shape. By portraying Paola as overweight and at war with her body, Bontà's narrator echoes the present-day practice of fat-shaming; in doing so, the Italian writer seems to embrace a view of the ideal female body that does not align with the one proposed by fascist ideology. The cultural denigration of fat, that is central in contemporary western culture, is depicted through Paola's body shape that was born in the 1920s. One of the anorexic women interviewed in 2009 by Andrée Dignon in *All of Me: a Full Picture of Anorexia*, suggests that her troubled relationship with food is undoubtedly related to the fat-shaming she experienced over her adolescence: “When I was younger I used to get bullied a lot for being fat...they used to call me

names and everything [...] even my own sisters used to pick up on me for being fat ... my friends would join in and make fun out of me as well ... they made fun of me cos they could always get a boyfriend when they went out and I couldn't" (157). This is exactly what - years before and in an Italian context that is supposed to embrace her body - Paola experiences at school, with her friends and acquaintances every day. The practice of fat shaming cannot be considered a form of physical abuse; however, the psychological damages that emerge from Dignon's interview are comparable to those experienced by Paola in Bontà's writing. At the end of the novel, Paola dies of a mysterious illness. The narrator does not reveal the name of the pathology; however, her schoolmates believe that her condition has something to do with her eating habits: "sarà l'anemia," or 'it must be anemia' (217). This episode allows Paola's friends to understand the cruelty of their comments on her body shape and to see "that fat girl" as one of them. Comparing the social meaning of anorexia and the cultural understanding of being thin in contemporary era, Susie Orbach argues:

Achieving slimness is an important factor. It is a visible proof of the woman's success. But it is the achievement, not the thinness, which is psychologically important. The anorectic is so used to experiencing herself as unsuccessful that her now obvious ability to wield power over her body is a fantastic achievement. She has succeeded in making her body smaller and smaller where, patently, so many others fail (*Hunger Strike* 91).

This passage applies also to Paola's behavior. She does not inhabit her body; therefore, achieving slenderness is a way of showing her self-control, exactly as a present-day anorexic would do. She demonstrates to her friends that she is not "that fat girl" anymore, and that she has the willpower to dominate her desires. However, it is worth noting that Paola's anorexic behavior is not only the consequence of her troubled relationship with her body, but also a way to express her deepest feelings. In the development of eating disorders, achieving slimness is only one of the multiple social and psychological factors, which could lead to an atypical relationship with the body and food. For Paola, losing weight means reaching her friends' "social status" and showing them that she does not represent the ideal "giovane italiana," or 'Italian young lady,' who will embrace maternity submissively, but a dynamic teenager willing to build a career and attract the same age suitors, exactly as her friends Iris and Renata do. In this infinite quest to find her new self, Paola reminds us of the former anorexic Sheila MacLeod, who in the introduction to *The Art of Starvation* reveals:

I have decided to meet the phenomenon in meeting my former self and attempting to recall what was actually going on before the onset of the disease and during the time that it was taking its course. I was trying to resolve something, trying to prove something and, through the language of my symptoms, to say something. Whether she knows it or not, and however obliquely metaphorical the language of her symptoms may appear, the anorexic is trying to tell us something, and something quite specific about herself and the context in which she exists (IX).

Similar to MacLeod, Paola attempts to say something through her troubled relationship with food, and in doing so she employs the same controversial mechanism, both self-destructive and self-empowering, that characterizes the development of present-day eating disorders. Bontà does not employ the contemporary medical terminology to describe her pathology; however, the symptoms displayed by her character resemble those displayed by present-day anorexics, bulimics, and overeaters.

A similar situation, where women's body attempts to communicate something about identity and deepest feelings, occurs in *Amore Nemico*, or 'Enemy Love' (1951), a post-war novel by Bontà. In the following passage, the protagonist, Barbara, reveals her desire for a slim silhouette, even if her curvaceous body shape is associated with the ideal model of femininity of the time and its virtues:

- Sono forse brutta? [...]  
 - Ma sei cretina, sai! [...] Angelo Folchetti dice che sei il vero tipo della ragazza tedesca quando è bella. «Una vera donna» dice lui, «nata per essere moglie e madre...» [...]  
 - Preferirei essere più piccolina, più espressiva, più eccitante... e detesto essere paragonata a una tedesca fatta per la prolificità! (10-11)  
 - Am I ugly? [...]  
 - You are stupid, you know? [...] Angelo Folchetti says that you are the true model of the German woman when she is beautiful. A «true woman» he says, «born to be wife and mother». [...]  
 - I would prefer to be shorter, more expressive, more exciting... and I hate to be compared to a German woman born to be fertile!

A thinner body would prevent Barbara from being identified as a perfect mother, exactly as a slim body shape would free Paola from being seen by her friends and acquaintances as the ideal woman of a past era. Paola and Barbara in women's writing and MacLeod in the social arena speaks unidiomatically with their bodies and attempt to communicate through them what their cultural contexts do not allow them to say with the conventional language of words.

### **Anorexia and Rebellion**

According to Meldini, Iris is the quintessential bird-like-eating character in *Signorinette*; indeed, she constantly refuses to eat, especially her stepfather's meals: "trovava troppo unto e sostanzioso il brodo preparato dal signor Amilcare [...] voleva soltanto le minestrine preparate dalla mamma" ('she found too fat and rich the broth prepared by Mr. Amilcare [...] she only wanted soups prepared by her mother') (48). Iris and the contemporary anorexics share a similar approach towards food; as we have seen, both nourish themselves only with low-calorie dishes, but significantly show affection to

their loved ones through food. Present-day anorexics divide food into specific categories and only a little amount of it is considered safe by them (MacSween 211). However, they like feeding others:

[...] [The anorexic] shows concerns for the food needs of those close to her. She cooks and shops for them, and discusses recipes, dinner party menus and the latest restaurants. [...] She gives to others what she so craves herself. Her need for food is converted into satisfying those needs in others (Orbach 82).

This moral categorization of food is also related to other socio-cultural factors; contemporary society tends to divide food into good and healthy or fat and bad. Good food, such as fruits and vegetables, become synonymous with self-control and willpower, while bad food, such as desserts and chocolates, are equated to gluttony, which is in turn related to lust in the collective imaginary. In the development of eating disorders, this division reaches the highest degree when the anorexic attempts to show to her family, friends, and acquaintances that she is able to dominate her desires and in doing so excel where usually many other people fail. An interesting episode of the novel, where Iris looks after her beloved friend Gisella, particularly reflects this attitude:

Iris, tutta commossa, stette a vedere, come Gisella addentava di gusto il panino zuccherato e la cioccolata. Ne offrì anche a lei, ma Iris non ne aveva affatto voglia: si sentiva come una madre che vede mangiare il proprio bambino e gode del suo appetito (128).

Iris, deeply moved, watched Gisella biting with relish into the sweet sandwich and the chocolate. She offered them to her, but Iris did not fancy them; she was hungry but she did not feel like eating: she felt like a mother who is happy to see her child eating and enjoys his appetite.

Iris nourishes herself by looking at Gisella, who is eating something prepared by Iris herself. Furthermore, in this passage, Iris gives her friend what she craves for herself. and in doing so she gives food a metaphorical meaning.

Iris often prefers reading and writing poetry to eating the delicious food that her stepfather prepares for her. Amilcare labels Iris as “professoressa,” or ‘professor’ (26) to highlight his stepdaughter’s passion for literature. This is a significant detail, which also relates to her questioning of her female identity through the few tools she has at her disposal. Achieving a higher education than the one offered generally to women by the regime could be read as further attempt to critique the ideal femininity of the time. It is also significant that the young protagonist of Paola Masino’s (1908-1989) *Nascita e Morte della Massaia*, or ‘Birth and Death of the Housewife’ (1945)<sup>12</sup>, reads secretly in her trunk while she eats some stale bread. The theme of anorexia in *Birth and Death of the Housewife* has been analyzed by Lucia Re and Enrico Cesaretti, who, with different methodological approaches and from different perspectives, interpret the protagonist’s attitude towards her body and food as anorexic and subversive. As we have seen, Bontà’s *Young Ladies* not only question their social role by pursuing a slim silhouette, but also undermine social expectations by pursuing a career as teachers. At the same time, Masino’s *Housewife* nourishes herself only with stale bread and metaphorically hides in her secret place to acquire an alternative culture to the one offered to women by the fascist regime.<sup>13</sup>

*Birth and Death of the Housewife* questions fascist ideology on women’s social role from childhood to adulthood by describing the miserable existence of an exemplary wife with a satirical tone. In particular, Masino questions motherhood in several passages of the novel and more specifically in a significant excerpt where the young housewife compares herself to edible meat available at the butcher’s and at the market; in doing so, she suggests that one day her body will be treated in the same way. By associating women’s body to edible meat, the rebellious character expresses her disagreement with the cultural perception of womanhood that, as we have seen, equates women to instruments who produce new soldiers for the country, exactly as the edible meat embodies the tool that nourishes the family. Furthermore, later in the novel, the reader discovers that the *Housewife* is not fertile. In the light of this detail, the first image of meat represents only the first attempt to question the fascist ideology of womanhood, while the housewife’s most explicit undermining of the regime is expressed by her impossibility to procreate (Rorandelli 385-98). Moreover, according to Enrico Cesaretti, the *Housewife*’s sterility represents “the most powerful ‘starving’ and truly ‘anorexic’ attitude” (“Nutrition as Dissolution” 149-50). Concerning maternity and the protagonists’ rebellious behavior, Lucia Re recalls another image where the *Massaia* ‘Housewife’ with her thin body and her skinny breasts is surrounded by twelve children who are waiting to be fed (“Fame, cibo e antifascismo” 167-68). This description again questions the fascist motherhood ideal by portraying a slim housewife who cannot nurse her children and therefore cannot supply new soldiers for the Duce’s army. As Re suggests, “il corpo della Massaia, da sempre anoressico, rimarrà diafano e bianco, ribelle, sterile”: ‘the housewife’s body that has always been anorexic, will remain ethereal, white, rebellious, sterile’ (175). Her body is unable and unwilling to perform its expected duty, as the body of a perfect housewife of the time was expected to do.

### Conclusion

In Masino’s writing, the critique of the stereotypical model of femininity imposed by Mussolini’s ideology is more direct than the one depicted by Bontà in *Signorinette*; *Nascita e morte della massaia* is a sophisticated literary text written by an antifascist intellectual, while *Signorinette* belongs to the category of popular romance, that as we have seen, was a literary genre tolerated by the Duce. However, it is significant that both writers question relationships with food and female identity as conceived by the fascist regime through their protagonists’ anorexic behaviors. Furthermore, the *Massaia* and Paola’s deaths at the end of the novels represent the impossibility of achieving a different womanhood from that imposed by the Duce’s regime. In different literary contexts, the authors portray an alternative model of femininity that in the Italian social context of the time was problematic to achieve. The messages of freedom written on the protagonists’ bodies reveal women’s anxiety about their roles, but at the same time their death discloses the authors’ awareness of



women's trapped socio-cultural position.

The young protagonists of the humorous *Signorinette* and the *Massaia* with a more sarcastic and explicit attitude, while appearing to embrace the virtues of the woman's character of the time, self-empower themselves<sup>14</sup> by "trying to synthesize contradictory elements in their social position through the creation of an 'anorexic body'" (MacSween 2), and adopting an anorexic behavior as a way to show their unease with the role imposed on them by the patriarchal authority. As Orbach suggests, "the anorexic is in protest at her condition" (*Hunger Strike* 82-83) and Bontà and Masino's protagonists are in protest of the socio-cultural roles imposed on them by Mussolini's ideology of womanhood. Their troubled relationship with food and their bodies become a language which allows the protagonists to say what they were not allowed to express in words by the cultural and social norms of the fascist regime and to propose an alternative form of female identity.

### Notes

1. Anorexia nervosa entered the contemporary medical discourse in the late 1800s, when it chased to be identified as a religious form of fasting, *anorexia mirabilis*, to become a medical condition, *anorexia nervosa*. The first medical reports on anorexia nervosa were written by the French physician Charles Laségue in *De l'anorexie hystérique* (1873), William Gull, one of the physicians of Queen Victoria, in *Anorexia Nervosa* (1873), and the Italian Giovanni Brugnolo, head physician of the hospital of Bologna, in *Sull'anoressia* (1875); they are traditionally labeled as the fathers of the illness.
2. Wanda Bontà published her first novel, *La fatica di vivere* 'Working hard to live,' in 1928. Since then, she has become a prolific writer and well-known journalist; she wrote for the popular weeklies "Grand Hotel" and "Grazia." Bontà has been neglected both by contemporary literary critics and the public. She is mentioned by Eugenia Roccella in *La letteratura rosa* (1998) and in Sara Teardo's doctoral dissertation (2009). I recently published her short biography in *Enciclopedia delle donne* 'Women's Encyclopedia.'
3. I have used the expression adopted by Piero Meldini (1975).
4. Except where stated otherwise all translations are mine.
5. For a detailed analysis on the ambivalent female social role in the fascist era, see Victoria De Grazia.
6. For an overview on the debate on women's suffrage, see Macciocchi, 43-47.
7. For an exhaustive study of women and sport in the fascist era, see Gigliola Gori.
8. An interesting analysis by Carlalberto Grillenzoni, "È brutta e sciammanata, sarà sicuramente prolifica" 'She is ugly and slovenly, therefore she must be prolific' (1931), relates female body shape, elegance, fertility and chances to get married. This study reveals that a curvaceous female body shape is not synonymous with fertility; according to Grillenzoni, the most fertile woman is the one with a regular body shape. However, he suggests that elegant women are less keen on giving childbirth and getting married. Women with "toilettes accurate o vistose" 'good-looking and garish outfits' appear to be less interested in taking care of the children and the husband and spend more time for themselves. Qtd. in Meldini *Sposa e madre esemplare*, 185-92.
9. On the connection between curvaceous shape and fertility in postmodern western culture see, in particular the chapter "What Do Men Want? Men's criteria for choosing partners" in John Townsend's *What Women Want, What Men Want*, 103-120.
10. On women's writing and censorship in the fascist era, see Lucia Re, "Women and Censorship in Fascist Italy: from Mura to Masino" in Guido Bonsaver and Robert S.C. Gordon, 64-75. In particular, on the well-known case of the novel *Sambadù amore negro* (1934) by Mura (1892-1940) see also, Guido Bonsaver, *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, 95-107.
11. Food and body as instruments of protest against patriarchal ideology of fascist time in narrative fiction by women have been analyzed by Enrico Cesaretti in the article "Nutrition as Dissolution: Paola Masino's *Nascita e morte della massaia*", and Lucia Re's "Fame, cibo e antifascismo nella *Massaia* di Paola Masino". Cesaretti's analysis focuses on the "aesthetic/hermeneutical aspects" of the "anorexic attitude" of the protagonist, while Re discusses the political and gender perspectives (143- 62).
12. The novel was previously published in installment on the magazine "Tempo" 'Time' from the late 1941 to the early 1942.
13. For a view of the fictional depiction of hunger and literary works of the fascist era see, Enrico Cesaretti "Indigestible Fictions", 5-20. For a detailed analysis about "literary hunger" in *Nascita e morte della massaia* see, Cesaretti "Nutrition as Dissolution"; see also, Re "Fame cibo e antifascismo", 166.
14. Eating disorders as instruments of self-empowerment in Cultural Studies have been analyzed extensively in the French context by McEachern and Furst, and in the English context by Krugovoy Silver. In Italian Cultural Studies there has been little investigation on the connection between anorexia, identity, and empowerment.

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**“The Visual Arts in Yánez Cossío’s Prose: Ekphrastic Exercises in *The Ugly Christ*”**

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In *The Ugly Christ* (1995),<sup>1</sup> Alicia Yánez Cossío centers her attention on the problems of Ordalisa, a humble Ecuadorian peasant, —perhaps of indigenous origin—who, as a child, left the countryside area to make her living in the city as a maid. The novel offers a series of concepts put in opposition, such as *beautiful-ugly, just-unjust, and surrendering-inflexible*, brought to life in its characters, who appear to live in conflict within their own reality of values. On one hand stands Ordalisa, quiet, defiant, and always trying to set herself free from the crass materialism that suffocates her identity. Opposite her are her employers, representatives of the Ecuadorian middle class, to whom the writer clearly directs her criticism. Their house is the symbol of an environment ruled by traditional moral values rooted in ancient customs and beliefs. As the novel progresses, the maid and her employers clash with one another, altering their safe living space. In the end, the illusionary firm house that shelters the protagonist and her employers collapses. And, as Amalia Gladhart well observes, Ordalisa succeeds in breaking all the barriers of her rigid surroundings to discover a new one (Gladhart 155-56). Indeed, she finds an environment that seems to respond to her needs for her dreams to relocate herself and be appreciated for her personal gifts and skills. Consequently, she devotes herself to design her new life, in line with her own values and ideals.

There are two aspects of the novel that come to the foreground. One is the narrative discourse; the other is the literary portrait of the protagonist. Concerning the discourse, the narration is in charge of an omniscient narrator, whose comments alternate with a lively and sharp dialogue between the protagonist and a “friendly” voice—called “the voice” in the novel. Regarding the portrayal of the female model, the author clearly shows her interest in contemporary Ecuador by having created an Ecuadorian working-class heroine and by giving voice to her and, through her, to all those who, like her, have been silenced. “The voice” with whom the maid speaks—according to Jung, *animus*, precious intimate friend (Jung 175)—, encourages Ordalisa to pursue her artistic interests, since, as this intimate friend itself states to her, it notices and understands her constructive spirit of initiative, “[her] wish to leave a mark on her way through life, her desire to break free from mediocrity” (126).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the female picture is individualized by her creativity, expressed through her natural artistic inclinations and her appeal for artistry. Curiously, despite the limitations of her work as a maid, the protagonist successfully cultivates and develops such features. About the maid’s creative vein, readers learn that this trait blossoms circumstantially in connection with an old and grotesque wooden Christ picture that she has inherited from her mother (10). The statuette is so grotesque that Ordalisa cannot find a place for it because it will ruin the humble decoration of her new room, in her employers’ house (36, 37). Likewise, “the voice” regularly joins its comments to those of the protagonist and the omniscient narrator to point out the ugliness of the carved picture.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, moved by an intense aversion to her deformed Christ, Ordalisa is determined to give it a makeover to improve its appearance.

In this study, I propose a reading of the novel from an ekphrastic perspective. Considering the traditional concept of ekphrasis as a verbal description of an event or any real or artistic object, here the sculptured wooden Christ stands as the artistic object that is literary portrayed to make it visible to readers.<sup>4</sup> It is important to notice that, in the novel, while the protagonist is orally describing the parts of the body of the statuette, she inserts descriptive narrations that contribute to characterize those parts and make them visible to readers. Remarkably, these supplementary descriptions—that contribute to visualize the parts of the Christ—appear to transform themselves in front of the readers’ eyes, making them envision dramatic scenes of the Passion of Christ with the Virgin present in some of them, widely reproduced in Christian art. These fictive paintings can be evoked by readers due to the analysis of the particulars of the figurine provided by the narrator. Such descriptive approach contributes to understand that, in this ekphrastic exercise, visuality seems to bear a double function: first, as a means to represent the external appearance of the ugly Christ, and,

also, as a way to allude to moments of the Passion of Christ with the Virgin present in them, scenes that are widely represented in Christian art. Regarding the ekphrastic treatment of the novel, the visual discourse that one can distinguish in it seems to be based upon notions of classical rhetoric, as illustrated in *Institutio Oratoria* by Quintilian, one of the fundamental pictures of rhetorical theory.

In Ordalisa's story, her bedroom is a significant reference that appeals to the reader's imagination.<sup>5</sup> The writer appears to use the maid's bedroom to guide her readers to distinguish two juxtaposed scenographic planes that move around one single axis: the wooden Christ. First, on the immediate plane—fictional visual area—, readers are able to observe a scene with the protagonist in her bedroom, involved in a confidential dialogue with an invisible being, whom, according to the omniscient narrator, she hopes it were God (102). The woman is in solitude and only in the company of the grotesque figurine. In this setting, as she scrutinizes the statuette, the maid verbally portrays the deformity of each part of her wooden Christ. This descriptive process subtly directs readers to a secondary plane: imaginary dimension in the novel. In it, readers are able to appreciate a handful of mental images,<sup>6</sup> hastily described, that result from Ordalisa's analysis of the parts of her deformed figurine. Ordalisa's interior visions—derived from the work of her own imagination while she is in front of her deformed Christ—are gradually displayed before readers through the protagonist's descriptive narrations or those of the omniscient narrator. The narrative descriptions are brief and sketchy. By highlighting the ugliness of the statuette, they stimulate the readers' imaginations and help them recall scenes of moments of the Passion of Christ. In these ekphrastic passages, the writer mixes specific visual elements with allusions to postures, gestures, and movements that lead readers to evoke works of Christian art of Renaissance Europe. This dynamic verbal representation guides readers to visualize these scenes, and to intimately participate in them due to their deep involvement in the interpretive process.

Considering the protagonist's natural artistic interests, true to her aesthetic purpose to embellish her grotesque figurine, the maid first attempts to untangle its dusty matted hair and then washes and braids it. However, the woman must still overcome the "mixture of repulsion and fear, anxiety and ambivalence," with which she reacts to the ugly face of her Christ and to its disproportionate body and limbs (13). Always moved by her aesthetic artisan disposition to make a more engaging statuette, Ordalisa aims to stay away from creating an agonizing Christ similar to that one "by Grünewald." Gravely, the narrator informs readers about the horror experienced by the maid at the disturbing painting of Grünewald's Christ, artwork that she recalls seeing in an art book (90).<sup>7</sup> In contrast to Grünewald's dying Christ,<sup>8</sup> the Christ picture envisioned by the maid radiates tenderness, submission, stoicism, and compassion (91).<sup>9</sup> Hence, faithful to her particular mental view, the maid devotes herself to restoring her wooden statuette.

With this project in mind, Ordalisa starts polishing one of the distorted legs of the figurine. As for the creative effort that leads to this first step, it is relevant to underline the presence of an enigmatic creative power that "mysteriously" guides the incipient artist's hand. It is by way of this power that the maid successfully completes the reshaping of one of the legs of the Christ. About the existence of this particular creative energy, the writer seems to use this concept to eventually offer readers a scene that would lead them to recall the episode of the grieving Virgin Mary, holding the dead Christ in her arms. Due to its specific aesthetic details, the literary representation invites readers to envision an image that could well be considered an illustration of the Vatican *Pietà* (1498-1499), the sculpture by Michelangelo (1475-1520).<sup>10</sup> In this circumstance, an immediate reading of this narrative segment permits readers to distinguish the image of the maid in her room, kneeling down on the floor, "looking at the crucifix lying on her lap," while she caresses one of the figurine's legs with her hand.<sup>11</sup> The static scene that the literary painting exhibits is solely disrupted by the gentle movement of the maid's hand, which is caressing the leg of the wooden Christ picture. The literary passage that shows the protagonist kneeling down on the floor, alone in her room, gazing at the crucifix on her lap and caressing its leg, demands attention to individual details that take on new meanings. The leg that Ordalisa caresses has then been restored and, as a result, it looks "long," "smooth," "strong," and "delicate." The omniscient narrator renders a generalized description of this feature and presents it through a series of similes that suggest facts of Jesus' life, as narrated in the Gospels: "She wanted to create smooth legs like the ones she kept envisioning: the ones of someone who had walked on the land leaving some prints that cannot be seen but that can be understood ..." (88).<sup>12</sup> It is also said that the recently polished leg "was long, smooth, strong and delicate like the one of someone who had covered impossible distances and had been able to walk on the water without sinking" (123).<sup>13</sup> Actually, through the use of similes that individualize the feature of the leg and contribute to rhetorically emphasize it, the omniscient narrator seems to focus the attention on this feature, thus making readers relate it to Jesus' legs. On one hand, with the selective choice of a few details, the narrator artfully inserts certain biblical teachings and makes readers turn to and reflect on particular concepts, such as *persistence*, *faith*, and *hope*. These notions delineate the model of Christ as "the only way that leads to salvation." Moreover, the similes act as a device that amplifies the image of the restored leg, then characterizes the leg as "smooth" and "delicate," hence leading viewers/readers to ponder on Jesus' fragility and helplessness on the cross. On the other hand, the adjective "strong," qualifying the leg of the statuette, would contribute to emphasize Jesus' firmness and strength of character to bear the torment of the crucifixion.<sup>14</sup> To sum up, by means of the synecdoche of the graceful leg of the wooden Christ, the writer guides readers to visualize a scene that they know: the iconographic representation of the dead Christ in Virgin Mary's arms. Thus, they would contemplate this imagined Picture as if they were in front of the artwork itself. Once more, in this literary fragment, the ekphrastic exercise achieves

visuality through the rhetorical *evidentia* or *enargeia*. The fictitious sketch of the *Pietà* appeals to the readers' emotions, leading them to participate in the dramatic scene and identify with it.<sup>15</sup>

The descriptive narrative segment that originated as a result of the polishing of the deformed leg of the figurine and blossomed in the vision of Michelangelo's *Pietà* represents a notable example of ekphrasis or *evidentia*, since its vivid description within the narration is an excellent translation, by way of words, of the work of art that reproduces the model of Virgin Mary grieving over her dead Son. This is an "allusive ekphrasis" (De Armas 22) because the artwork itself is not described in detail nor is it even mentioned. Such ekphrasis exists because of the verbal description that displays, in front of readers, the moment in which the protagonist, after waking up, appears kneeling down "with the crucifix on her lap." The scene displayed in this literary segment places readers in an immediate plane—the visual plane, in the novel. The set of visual elements and comments about the refined leg of the wooden figurine subtly refer readers to a second plane—the imaginary plane, in the novel. In this secondary plane, readers can contemplate a mental vision, of a scenographic type, seemingly inspired in traditional iconographic representations of Virgin Mary's grief, illustrative of the religious European art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, of which Michelangelo's *Pietà* stands as the most classic example. In Yáñez Cossío's *Pietà*, the descriptive statement about the spontaneous movement of the maid's hand, caressing the wooden Christ's leg, is worthy of special consideration. At first, this gesture appears to respond to the protagonist's state of wonder and joy because of her successful restoration of the figurine's leg. However, the reference to the maid's kind touch of the leg of the statuette proposes a secondary meaning. Once the episode of the sketch of the female model with "the crucifix on her lap" is completed, the visual and mental planes—immediate and imaginary planes respectively—seem to become cleverly juxtaposed, gracefully guiding readers from the narrative piece to the narrative painting that shows the dramatic moment of Jesus' Passion. Symbolically, the highlighted particular of the maid's hand on the leg of the icon suggests the visual tender and dramatic gesture of the Virgin's hand, as it can be noticed in Michelangelo's *Pietà* at the Vatican.<sup>16</sup> The set of details included and the relationship among them stir the reader's emotional sensitivity and include them in the scene, touching their souls and their compassionate natures.

In the literary text, the picture of Ordalisa as a sculptor would constitute the bridge that connects the literary and artistic iconographic representations of the theme of Mary's anguish. Deeply moved and disturbed by the deformity of the statuette and true to a vision of ideal perfection, the primary objective of the maid's artistic endeavor seems to respond to the creative passion that dominates her. Her dream is to embellish her figurine according to "an image that [does] not disappear from her mind" (102-103).<sup>17</sup> Due to the lack of appropriate manual implements, Ordalisa decides to buy some tools to carve the wood. By way of a simple enumeration, readers are informed that the protagonist has bought certain carpentry instruments. The omniscient narrator informs readers that, at night and once in her room, the maid starts her work by first using some of these implements to finally adopt the gouge (93, 101). In this brief descriptive piece, the details of the carpentry instruments direct the reader's attention to visualize the protagonist in solitude, in the quietness and penumbra of her room, bending over the bed—as a kind of workbench—, with several carpenter's tools. Succinct and barely outlined, the narrative piece can be read as an ekphrastic text that functions as an allegory. The female picture, alone in her dim room, concentrated on her carving, delights readers because of her dedication to her artistic work as well as to the creative act. She is surrounded by her carpentry tools, which symbolizes the allegory of sculpture.<sup>18</sup> In this scene, the omniscient narrator's laudatory expression enhancing the maid's hand and the gouge deserves attention. The comment given about the inner power guiding the hand that spontaneously moves the gouge—a hypothetical epigram of the emblematic literary Picture—stands as a praise to the work accomplished and enhances the female model. Consequently, the female image is brought to the foreground because of her manual skills that point at her innate ideas. In addition, the pair *hand-gouge* marks a clear distinction between craftsmanship and art since the technique of polishing the wood is transformed into art by virtue of the superior power of the intellect that moves hand and tool. In other words, the artist's intellectual activity sublimates the handwork of carving and polishing and turns it into art. Moreover, the mentioning of the binary terms *hand-instrument* insinuates a process of evocation of concepts that, consequently, centers the reader's interest in the artist more than in the artwork. As a matter of fact, Ordalisa, as a sculptor, must carve the statuette to liberate the mental image from the wood that holds it—an image that is evident to the maid when she observes the figurine. Indeed, she works with this purpose in mind, faithful to the abstract image and with her hand moved by a superior power. Her artistic achievement is heightened by the omniscient narrator's statement, through remarks that noticeably seem to echo Michelangelo's Neoplatonic aesthetic concepts:

[Ordalisa] Suddenly, she realized that it was not necessary to close her eyes and concentrate herself. The ideal legs were not in her mind any more. [...] They were present in the same piece of wood. It seemed to her that she was simply removing a transparent cover to disclose the leg that was there (117).

[...] She rejected the whole string of vain ideas that cut in between her eyes and the wood of the crucifix. She saw again the leg that was introduced in the outer leg and she had to peel it off as if she were removing the skin from a fruit. At last, the leg was free (123).

These narrative segments seem to indicate that Ordalisa, presumed disciple of the Italian artist, comprehends the act of carving not only as a manual labor, but also as an intellectual effort by which she works the wood to set free the ideal image imprisoned in it.<sup>19</sup> This precious example of ekphrasis (De Armas 22), together with rhetorical *evidentia* or *enargeia*, helps the writer convince her readers and incorporate them into the allegorical design of the protagonist as a sculptor.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the author vividly portrays the protagonist in her creative act, who, totally devoted to the mental image that possesses her, aspires to embody her vision in her wooden Christ sculpture.<sup>21</sup> This allegorical ekphrastic exercise contributes to the magnification of the female model as well as to the heightening of the writer's picture.

To summarize, in the ekphrastic instances that have been analyzed in this study, the ugly wooden Christ is apparently used as a pretext or inspiring object for Yáñez Cossío to create and develop her narrative descriptions and also as a referent for her audience to read and apprehend her text. In the novel, the ekphrasis initially appears to be primarily the verbal representation of Ordalisa's icon. As such, the descriptive ekphrasis is used to orally depict the grotesque figurine, the only love token of her deceased mother. Later, the ekphrasis moves beyond its traditional use and seems to acquire a distinctive emblematic value by allowing different interpretations. Precisely, new ekphrastic instances arise—allusive ekphrasis, allegorical ekphrasis—when the writer has her protagonist examine the statuette and, consequently, display a series of visions. In its new functions, the ekphrasis appeals to readers' imagination and fosters further analysis and several interpretations. These ekphrastic writings first induce readers to imagine the protagonist in the privacy of her bedroom, in solitude, and in a confidential dialogue with an invisible being. Gradually, the writer guides her readers to picture the protagonist as an artisan and as a sculptor, totally involved in her restoration efforts. In these literary scenes, Yáñez Cossío also draws her reader's attention to the carpentry instruments used by the maid, particularly to the gouge. Furthermore, and concerning the protagonist's work as an artisan and a sculptor, the author brings forward to her readers, first, the difficulties of the protagonist to refine the deformed icon and, second, the enigmatic force that drives hand and gouge. So, by moving away from the figurine—the ekphrastic visual object—the writer seems to step beyond the initial epideictic objective of the descriptive fragments that censure the deformity and ugliness of the wooden Christ to attain an aesthetic and intellectual purpose. To achieve this goal, Yáñez Cossío prepares a scene in which she verbally portrays her protagonist totally dedicated to her creative process while dwelling upon the problems that she encounters during the artistic refinement of her icon. Moreover, the author resorts to the literary device that points at the gouge carving the wooden Christ moved by the mind more than by the hand, thus contributing to heighten Ordalisa's picture as a sculptor. The multiple ekphrastic exercises seem to ultimately induce readers to envision the Vatican *Pietà*, a sculpture that presents the dead Christ in Virgin Mary's arms. Curiously echoing Michelangelo's Neoplatonic aesthetic concepts, Yáñez Cossío seems to aim at emphasizing the message saying that her fictive artist works by responding to innate notions and images. Indeed, Ordalisa, inspired by these concepts and visions, has been able to artistically polish the distorted leg of her icon, by diligently releasing the ideal leg from the wood. Hence, her artistic accomplishment can be understood as the result of an intellectual process that impelled her to make of her artwork a transference of her own subjective and personal vision. In this sense, by making the female protagonist the emissary of aesthetic notions, the writer brings to the forefront her character's portrayal as an artist. Furthermore, and by virtue of her protagonist, the author shares with her readers her own knowledge on art and her journey as an intellectual, not as an artist, but as a writer. In addition, and presumably driven by the same inner incentive of her character, who feels impelled "to leave a mark on her way through life (126)," through her female model, Yáñez Cossío intimately dialogues with her readers and confides to them the interests, difficulties, efforts, and achievements concerning her own creative process, ingeniously, though perhaps unintentionally, highlighting her talents and inventiveness. There is an eloquent literary montage that surprisingly extols the writer's creativity.

## Notes

1. The novel was published in 1995. All the references correspond to the 2000 edition. All translations corresponding to this book are mine.

2. Following Carl Jung's contributions on the interpretation of men's and women's dreams, Ordalisa's touch of optimism and positive attitude at the possibility of being an artist appears to come from the area of her unconscious that transcends her personal psyche. Considering the particular initiative and the creative inner drive that characterize Ordalisa, Jung explains such features by referring to the *animus*, present in women, as follows: "[...] *l'animus* ... prezioso amico intimo, che la arricchirà della qualità maschili dello spirito di iniziativa [...]. [uno] spirito di iniziativa, e la capacità di svolgere un'attività pianificata. [...] La pienezza creativa del loro [delle donne] *animus*—nel suo aspetto positivo—si esprime talvolta tramite pensieri e idee che stimolano gli uomini a nuove imprese." About the *animus*, see Jung, (175).

3. As the narration progresses, while the maid works in the wooden picture to stylize it, she creates a series of verbal portraits of the statuette with the apparent intention to guide readers to perceive, as clearly as possible, all the irregularities and defects of the Christ figurine. In this sense, the iconographic literary representation of the wooden

model could be incorporated into the tradition of the verbal portrait whose epideictic objective is to praise or blame someone or something. “Epidictico.” *Diccionario del español actual*. 1999. About the epideictic genre, as regards Quintilian, also see Russell, (2:103 and 3:313).

4. In ancient rhetoric, originally the ekphrasis referred to a verbal description of a fact or any real or artistic object. Thus, the details were essential because the purpose was to make visible to the public the event or the object verbally described. About the traditional notion of ekphrasis according to ancient rhetoric, see De Armas, (16 and 28).

5. “The bedroom” and “the bed” contribute to put in evidence the use of a traditional narrative discourse: the author’s distance from noises and disturbances and the search for shelter into the quietness of the bedroom or a room, in order to evoke a memory that will be later elaborated in the literary work. See, for example, Dante, *Vita Nuova* or Petrarch, *Il Canzoniere*.

6. In the novel, the protagonist dialogues with the friendly voice and the central point of their talk is the ugly Christ. Gradually, the personable dialogue between the protagonist and “the voice” induces in the former a mental image of Christ—a vision that she will be delineating progressively— that arises while she analyzes the parts of the statuette. The maid’s imaginative process brings to the forefront the method that Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) proposes in his *Spiritual Exercises*, to help out his readers in their effort to mentally elaborate the image of Jesus Christ crucified. As regards the picture of Christ on the cross, that the believers attempt to create while they speak in a friendly way with God, see Ganss, (40-42). In his study *Visión y símbolos de la pintura española del Siglo de Oro*, Julián Gallego, on referring to St. Ignatius’ inner images, points at the originality and value of the intimate dialogue between the believer and the picture of Christ on the cross. Concerning the Ignatian dialogue, see Gallego, (179-87). Roland Barthes analyzes the Ignatian imaginative process and its resulting inner images and explains that Ignatian contemplation, as well as individual meditation, contributed to the formation of a “strictly visual view” of a scenographic type (‘composición viendo el lugar’), oriented to lead the believers’ imagination toward the mystic union with God. About the Ignatian inner images, see Barthes, (54-61).

7. Mathis Gothardt Neithardt (c. 1475/1480-1528), “or rather of a creative spirit ‘Grünewald,’” German painter of religious works. *The Isenheim Altarpiece* is one of the works that the artist completed by 1515. The altarpiece has three parts; the central panel, with its lateral wings closed, exhibits the *Crucifixion* (c. 1515). Grünewald’s composition is on display at the Museum of Unterlinden, at Colmar, Alsace, France. Concerning the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, consult Andrée Hayum’s work, (10). By means of verbs like “to see” and “to look at,” the protagonist captures the readers’ attention and drives them closer to the model of Christ of Grünewald’s *Crucifixion*. And, consequently, she invites them to participate in the moving scene as if they were standing in front of Grünewald’s disturbing painting. The narrator’s comments about the psychic and emotional impact that the drama reproduced in the religious painting causes in the maid also contribute to the readers’ emotional response to the fine literary sketch of the artistic representation. This literary approach allows to incorporate the descriptive narration of Grünewald’s Christ into the ekphrastic tradition. As regards this kind of description, Alistair Fowler explains the following: “From Philostratus and Pliny the Elder onwards, descriptions of art are aimed to elicit strong emotions in viewers, who were to enter into the creative illusion by imagining the mimesis as actually taking place before their eyes” (77).

8. The short fragment that shows the picture of Christ of Grünewald’s *Crucifixion* allows the writer to share with her readers her knowledge about the Christ on the Cross of the Renaissance painter, Christ model that corresponds to the late medieval period. Hayum, in her study on the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, includes the valuable commentary of the art historian Wilhelm Worringer, who observed in Grünewald’s work a great interest in reproducing the expression of feelings, a tendency that was typical of some countries of northern Europe. According to Hayum, Worringer qualifies this work by Grünewald as follows: “Here Grünewald enters with a Gothicness that ‘comports itself as a painterly pathos.’” As for this Christ’s picture, Hayum comments: “Modeled in part on the gaunt and blemished hanging Christ of the type of the late medieval *Pestkreuz*, the *Crucifixion* presents death in its imminence [...]” About Grünewald’s Christ picture style, see Hayum, (37 and 125).

9. Always in her room, the maid confides in her friend “the voice” and tells her that her effort to restore the Christ figurine responds to her natural drive to create a true Christ, an original one, so that she can have it close to her in order to constantly remember the consequences of human folly (91). Her interest is to make an expressive and eloquent Christ and, at the same time, personal and intimately hers. Her Christ statuette will contribute to make everyone reflect on Jesus Christ’s immense pain and sacrifice on behalf of all human beings, she wants it to be a figurine that would evoke piety and keep alive the memory of humanity’s mistakes. Curiously, and as regards the effect that her picture will make in the observer, the protagonist’s inner view of the model of Christ appears to resemble those of the Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591). As regards, the mystic’s statuettes, his pictures of Christ on the Cross call forth compassion and encourage devotion. Therefore, guided by a similar mental vision, Ordalisa starts her work on her wooden picture to embellish it. The Spanish scholar Emilio Orozco Díaz considers Saint John of the Cross’s (1542- 1591) work as a sculptor and sketcher and he says that “the artistic activity [known as having been done by the saint] is



limited to the representation of Jesus Christ crucified.” Orozco Díaz explains that, for the mystic, Christ on the Cross represents a fundamental theme in order to achieve his own contact and union with Christ. Concerning St. John of the Cross’s wooden figurines, Orozco Díaz emphasizes the saint’s conviction of the absolute need of the presence [in the Christian individual’s soul] of “the spitting image of Christ crucified.” The critic adds that such conviction moved the saint’s hands to carve on the cross the image that he had, “[following St. Teresa’s statement] ‘sculpted in his heart.’” The Spanish scholar also informs about a well-known drawing of the image of Jesus crucified, done by St. John of the Cross, entitled *Christ Crucified*, in which the model of Christ appears “foreshortened and seen from above.” About this representation, the critic adds that it offers a “tragic image of the picture hanging on the cross.” As for Ordalisa’s potential model of Christ, her attempt is to create an image that would coincide with the Christ picture drawn by the Spanish mystic regarding its effect on viewers. And, in line with this model, the image of Christ that Ordalisa is anticipating to create should make believers/viewers tremble and also elicit their empathy and compassion. On the subject of the work *Christ Crucified*, by Saint John of the Cross-, see Orozco Díaz, (50-60). Translation of quotations by Orozco Díaz is mine.

10. As regards the theme of Virgin Mary’s anguish with Jesus dead in her arms, Émile Mâle refers to the iconographic representation of the Virgin sorrowfully looking at her dead Son while she holds Him on her lap. Mâle explains the following: “Les artistes de la fin du moyen âge et dans les dernières années du XV siècle, come le prouve la Pietà de Michel-Ange à Saint-Pierre de Rome, reproduit la Vierge, après la Descente de Croix, avec son Fils étendu sur ses genoux.” Concerning the iconographic representation of Virgin Mary mourning over the dead body of Christ, see Mâle, (284-85).

11. The narrative segment that refers to the mysterious creative power that moves the artist to create, which, at the same time, seems to lead readers to envision the artistic creation of the model of the Virgin mourning over the dead body of Christ, the narration reads as follows: “[Ordalisa] startled herself awake. Her body had gone numb. After the struggle between the wood and the hand, she had surrendered completely to exhaustion and had spent the night knelt down on the pillow and with the crucifix on her lap. The Christ and she herself were frozen to the marrow” (123).

12. Here, the narrative piece appears to be pointing at the biblical image of Christ as “the road or the way that leads to life” (*HarperCollins Study Bible*, Matt. 7.13-14, John 14.6).

13. These comments direct readers to the episode reported in the Bible about the time when Jesus walks on the water (Matt.14.22, Mark 6.48-51, John 6.16-21).

14. This literary representation of the model of Christ would be illustrated by the carved Christ of the work entitled *Crucifix* (c. 1492-93), attributed to Michelangelo (1475-1564), in the Basilica of Santa Maria del Santo Spirito in Florence, Italy. In their analysis of Michelangelo’s wood sculpture, Cristina Acidini Luchinat and Kathleen Weil-Garris Brandt underline the fragility and fineness of the carved picture of Christ by saying: “[...] L’esile corpo del Cristo, poco più che adolescente, sembra ispirarsi alla predicazione del Savonarola, che esortava a raffigurare l’inerte vulnerabilità del Redentore [...]” About the Santo Spirito *Crucifix*, see Luchinat and Weil-Garris Brandt, (34).

15. Quintilian elaborates on the rhetorical picture *evidentia*—that does not simply consist about narrating but mainly in vividly describing the real scene—and he underlines the value of emotions, that must be felt and expressed as if one were participating in the narrated events: “The heart of the matter as regards arousing emotions, [...], lies in being moved by them oneself. [...] Consequently, where we wish to give an impression of reality, let us assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who really suffer [...]. [...] The first thing, then, is that those feelings should be strong in us which we want to be strong in the judge [the reader], and that we should ourselves be moved before we try to move others. [...] The person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotions will be the person who has properly formed what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them ‘visions’), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us.” As for the vividness of the image and the emotions that this one arises in the observers, see Russell, (3: 61). It should be brought to the forefront that the apparent literary sketch of the scene of the Virgin’s anguish, with her Son dead on her lap, is illustrated by Michelangelo’s sculpture *Pietà* (1498-99), in Saint Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City. Concerning the iconographic representation of the theme of Virgin Mary’s mourning, with her dead Son, Émile Mâle explains that, after the Descent of the Cross, Virgin Mary received her Son in her arms and, once she had closed His eyes and removed the crown of thorns, she kept Him on her knees. And, Mâle adds that the Virgin remained looking at her Son on her knees for a long time. About this visual representation of the Virgin with Christ on her lap, see note 10 of this work.

16. As for the iconographic representation of the theme of the Virgin’s pietà, Émile Mâle explains that, around half of the sixteenth century, artists, although with minimal variations, were faithful to reproducing the model of the Vatican Michelangelo’s *Pietà*. In these artworks the Virgin is sometimes represented looking at the sky, with her eyes full of tears; other times, the model of the Virgin can be seen gazing at her Son and, by means of the eloquent gesture of her left hand, she appears to invite the viewers to reflection, to mercy, and piety, since with her hand, the Virgin might intend to be saying: “Voilà ce que les homes on fait de lui.” In reference to the iconographic details of the *pietà* theme,

see Mâle, (284-85).

17. The reference to the notion of the ideal legs that the protagonist bears in her mind appears in several sections of the novel: “[...] the vision [of the legs] was there with the certainty that the legs were of oak ...” (87); “[Ordalisa] had so much hope in making some smooth legs like the ones that she continued seeing: they were like those of somebody who had walked on the land [...]” (88); “[while she polished] she felt the illusion to preserve the image that did not disappear from her mind” (101).

18. For the allegorical representation of *sculpture*, Yáñez Cossío has selected the most representative illustrative signs by offering a list of the basic sculpture tools: gauge, burin, chisel, and buril. In the novel, concerning the body position of the female image and other details, the allegorical literary portrait appears to be slightly different from the model that painters, poets, and sculptures were expected to follow. About the allegory of sculpture, see Ripa, (399).

19. The Neoplatonic theme of the pre-existence of the image/form or idea and the dialectics of “hand and instrument” appears in a sonnet by Michelangelo to Vittoria Colonna, and also in a madrigal related to this poem. The first four lines of the sonnet enclose the motif of the pre-existing idea/form: “Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto / c’ un marmo solo in sé non circonscriva / col suo superchio, e solo a quello arriva / la man che ubbidisce all’intelletto. [...]” The same topic can be found in the first four lines of the madrigal: “Si come per levar, donna, si pone / in pietra alpestra e dura / una viva pictura, / che là più cresce u’ più la pietra scema; [...]” In his sonnet, the poet Michelangelo refers to the form or image that is imprisoned in the stone, like the soul in the body. To free the soul from the prison of the body that holds it represents a process that is identical to the one that will liberate the form or image from the block of marble that contains it—create the artwork from the marble block. As regards the pre-existing idea/form or image and the dialectics of “hand and instrument,” see Buonarroti, (212-13).

20. This is a reference to the original concept of ekphrasis of ancient rhetoric, according to which the notion of ekphrasis was applied to a verbal description of a fact or of any real or artistic object. In such ekphrastic exercise, details were essential because the purpose was to make visible to the public the fact or object that was verbally described. About this kind of ekphrastic exercise, see De Armas, (16 y 28).

21. As for the verbal description and rhetorical *evidentia* or *enargeia*, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian explains: “*enargeia*—regularly defined as ‘an expression which brings the object signified under our eyes.’ [...] Greek synonyms are *hypotyposis*, *diatyposis*; Latin *evidentia*, *illustratio* and also *demonstratio* [...], and *imaginatio* [...], what Cicero calls *illustratio* and *evidentia*, a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking about something as exhibiting it.” As regards rhetorical *evidentia* or *enargeia*, see Russell, (3: 61). Also, about rhetorical *evidentia* or *enargeia* and about the vividness to be conveyed in the presentation of the facts, Quintilian states that this effect can be reached following certain suggestions: “This same vividness can be obtained by describing the incidental features of a situation. [...] All eloquence is about the activities of life, every man applies whatever he hears to his own experience, and the mind finds it easiest to accept what it can recognize” (3: 379-81). In addition, concerning the use of *enargeia*, Murray Krieger comments that “Creating *enargeia* [...], [consists of] using words to offer a description that is so vivid that it will put—[...]—the represented [described] object before the internal eye of the reader (listener).” In relation to ekphrasis and *enargeia*, see Gilman et al., (146). The translation of Krieger’s explanation about *enargeia* is mine.

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## Trujillo, Parody, the Grotesque and the Contemporary Dominican Narrative.

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In a letter written to Jesús de Galván, apropos of *Enriquillo*, José Martí writes, “Leyenda histórica no es eso; sino novísima y encantadora manera de escribir nuestra historia americana” (Valerio-Holguín 191). Martí’s letter serves as a reminder of the long-debated issue of the writing of history and fiction in Spanish–American letters. Martí’s fascination with the “leyenda histórica” as a way to reflect on Latin American history and culture underscores an essential aspect of fiction writing in the Americas. In fact, it is by way of its fiction that Latin America has come to challenge its own historical records and national identities. In the Dominican Republic, just as in other Latin American nations, writers and critics struggle to reexamine the political and cultural factors contributing to their historical demise. Many contemporary Dominican authors have focused on attempts to depict and analyze their historical reality in crisis. Like others in Latin America, Dominican writers fulfill the role of literary anthropologists as they attempt to uncover and decipher the various sets of values identified with their national culture. It is precisely for this reason that the novels produced after the death of Trujillo and the frustrated revolution of 1965 take an introspective direction. They undertake a search for the motives behind the present Dominican identity crisis and attempt to analyze and better understand the century’s past history. Dominican novels like *Musiquito: Anales de un déspota y de un bolerista* appear as possible tools for this exploration. In essence, these novels expound a sincere concern for the island nation as well as for the problem of personal legitimacy. Like Juan Preciado in Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*, the characters in these works search for an identity that is intrinsically linked with a search for the father or *patria* as the problem of legitimacy at the root of understanding their origins.

*Musiquito: Anales de un déspota y de un bolerista* (1993), by Dominican poet and satirist Enriquillo Sánchez, serves as a postmodern response to these earlier texts that attempt to better understand the skepticism towards Dominican historiography. The novel’s penchant for satirizing a period that appears quite similar to that of the dictator Trujillo, for questioning the “truths” behind the histories of the Republic, along with its carnivalesque plot and characters, would seem to categorize it as one of Latin America’s New Historical Novels.<sup>1</sup> Its re-creation of the Dominican Republic under a dictator and distorted references to Trujillo’s corrupt practices, not to mention the novel’s parody of official histories, would suggest such a classification, yet the incorporation of mythical time and popular culture raises the work to a metafictional level that blurs the traditional distinction between fiction and history. Nonetheless, the task at hand is to examine the postmodern approach assumed by Sánchez in his portrayal of the mythical Dominican ruler, Porfirio Funes.

*Musiquito* raises the question of historical writing and historiographic metafiction in postmodern Caribbean studies. The narrator of this curious tale, the son of Musiquito, tells the story of the comical and absurd reign of the fictional Dominican despot Porfirio Funes, and his bolero-composing companion, nicknamed Musiquito. Porfirio Funes is a deranged and lascivious dictator whose uncontrollable *eros* rules the island republic. At base, the novel is founded on the premise that any prose narrative, Dominican or other, is a fraud; that each sentence and paragraph defrauds the reader of any possible truth; that truth, in the postmodern sense, is in crisis. Moreover, in this historiographic/ metafictional work, the narrator’s concern with historical knowledge reflects a postmodern attitude in which “undecidability” is paramount (Shaw 175). The protagonists of the novel are Musiquito and Porfirio Funes. Aguasvivas, a.k.a. Musiquito, is a *bolerista* who contextualizes, in the form of the *bolero*, the events documenting the life of the fictional Dominican dictator Porfirio Funes. Funes is a fictional composite of many dictators who have ruled the Dominican Republic, from Pedro Santana through Trujillo, and Balaguer.<sup>2</sup> Yet a number of more obvious references would link him more to Trujillo than any other (Valerio Holguín 193). Even so, Sánchez’s fictional character appears to be closer to that of the Patriarch in García Márquez’s dictator novel, *El otoño del patriarca*. The similarity is reflected in the novel’s concern with the true nature of absolute power and the need for people to create a supernatural leader who represents a sense of destiny and a source of control for all of the seemingly unpredictable absurdities that dominate life. In addition, the two fictional dictators share an attraction to prostitutes and are often ruled by their uncontrollable libidos.

The novel begins as the narrator, the son of Jacinto Aguasvivas (a.k.a. Musiquito), sets the scene. The story opens with the young narrator gazing at the bloodstained guitar that once belonged to his father. In this retrospective narrative, nostalgia takes over as the young Aguasvivas recalls years gone by and the first *bolero* his father composed in his honor. Writing in the novel serves as a refuge for the young boy, whose “testimonial” initiates a personal search. The blood that stains the guitar serves as a double metaphor, first for the blood shed by his father and Funes in the ambush that killed them and also for the thousands of lives lost while his father played boleros, which documented the heinous deeds of the tyrannical dictator. Sadness and despair force the young narrator to contemplate the blood’s origin as well as his own link to his father:

Pertenece a Porfirio Funes, *El Poblador*, o pertenece a mi padre. No sé. Lo verosímil es que esta sangre pertenezca a El Poblador. El se abrazó a la guitarra cuando le habían despedazado el diafragma, pero mi padre se la arrebató en el acto, herido en el páncreas y en las ingles por las descargas apocalípticas del tiranicidio. No sé. Aunque parece sangre de dos hombres, es la misma atroz y acosada sangre. Lo aclaro a tiempo para que nadie después alegue inocencia (9).

The passage above cements the search for the father as an underlying theme of this novel. It recalls the retrospective journey taken by the young Juan Preciado in Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*. Both novels begin with the son deciding to research his past after the death of a parent. Contained in the threads of both novels is a ruthless father picture that flouts the law and enjoys all of the women he desires. The narrator’s search for the “truth” regarding his family history appears to warrant further investigation “para que nadie después alegue inocencia.” This last phrase alludes to a secret or cover-up on the part of the authorities in order to conceal the true familiar relations of those belonging to the dictator’s bloodline.

This initial paragraph sets the mood for the bloody, yet comically grotesque, story that follows. As the narrator contemplates the bloodstained guitar, he is not quite sure to whom the blood belongs. His inability to establish a “bloodline” is linked to an overarching sense of doubt about his legitimacy, his family, and his identity. The repetition of the words “no sé,” “no sé,” indicates the boy’s inability to establish the source. In addition, the difficulty encountered by the narrator in precisely linking the blood to his father or the dictator foreshadows the obstacles the narrator encounters throughout the rest of the novel in distinguishing what he remembers as history and what he himself has invented as fiction. Hutcheon reminds us that “historiographic metafiction offers only questions, never final answers, inscribes mutual interrogations within the texts themselves” (42). As the novel progresses, the narrator’s search for the father serves to legitimize his existence and also functions as an allegory for the Republic’s preoccupation with its own identity. The use of the word “verosímil,” or “truth-like,” when addressing the issue of whose blood actually stains the guitar, reinforces the fictional nature of this narrative by placing in question the story’s link to factual events. Slowly, the reader is drawn into the novel and into a compact with the narrator, since neither reader nor narrator is able to distinguish between the “truth-like” stories of the Dominican duo (dictator and chronicler) and the “official histories” that may serve as a background for the tale.

Throughout the novel, Sánchez parodies an authoritative notion of Dominican history and historiography by incorporating carnivalesque elements, sexualizing, and desexualizing the characters in the novel. This strategy is evident in the ritualistic manner in which Porfirio Funes deflowers Dominican virgins.

Sólo que El Poblador no las hacía mujeres con su órgano divino. Las hacía mujeres con el meñique. Primero les acariciaba el pubis intacto y eterno con la mano derecha, sumergida en lociones de tocador y perfumada con lavanda francesa y, ora con el meñique, ora a veces con el índice, cargados ambos de anillos rituales... (12-13).

The “anillos rituales” paint Funes as a kind of *santero*-like picture, whose bewitching sexuality makes “real women” out of these young ladies. The ritual rings serve as a link to Funes’ hidden past and the African heritage he so conveniently hides by covering himself in white powder before appearing in public. Ironically, his African ancestry would link him with the exotic and the forbidden, but Funes’ prowess does not exhibit such heritage. The scene described in the novel is almost cult-like, and it is obvious that Funes takes on a sort of “teen idol” status with the young deflowered girls of the republic. What is truly ironic is the perverse way in which the randy dictator robs them of their virginity: he uses either his pinky or index finger. Clearly, this is an attempt on the author’s part to parody the dictator’s sexuality as well as masculinity, or lack thereof. One instance in the novel recalls that “Funes fue el autor de diecinueve vírgenes, sometidas sin ñoñerías a las inquisiciones del meñique, a las babas del héroe, a las soberanías sucesivas del chulo sin solución de continuidad” (22). Of course, the key parodic element is that he does not use his penis during his sexual interludes. The image painted of the “héroe” is diminished by his use of the “little” finger in his sexual encounters, over and over again. The sardonic language employed in the passage above is essential to Sánchez’s parody of the dictator picture. The paradigmatic structure serves to deconstruct the myth of the dictator in so much as each phrase builds on the next. The juxtaposition of the images of authority and power suggested by the *inquisiciones*, *héroe*, and *soberanías*, with the terms *babas*, *meñique*, and *chulo*, works to degrade and mock his character and the sacredness of his authority. In these episodes the women are seen as toys and objects of the dictator, underlining the paternalistic/misogynistic nature of Dominican cultural history. Nonetheless, the protagonist’s attitude with respect to women reflects his own errors in appreciating history.

The novel's parody of the abuse of power in the Dominican Republic is evident in the satirical portrait of the sexually driven dictator. Porfirio Funes's uncontrollable desire for women reflects a greater love: the love for the self. The narcissistic qualities of the dictator, common to all dictators in novels from Latin America, serve as an appropriate target for the author's attack on the hierarchies that have governed the Republic for decades. Each time the narrator describes the great accomplishments and builds up the heroic-seeming qualities of the dictator, they are quickly torn down. We may take for example his rampant sexuality and reputation as a "ladies' man." The mystique, which surrounds this Dominican Don Juan, is that of a playboy, but after all the bragging and praise, we are told that:

Porfirio Funes no alcanzaba los cinco pies de estatura. Tenía los ojos verdes, el pelo canoso y era altivo y arrogante, abusador y sagaz. Los cachetes le caían sobre el cuello y exhibía manos quizá de violinista (13).

This caricature of the dapper dictator does him no justice as the possible romantic hero of a *bolero* or a *novela*, or a nation. His appearance is quite comical and his elfin-like height and basset hound-like face serve to deconstruct the myth of his person and break down his political authority. It also alludes to the dictator's need to cover up or conceal identities, which on a larger scale parallels the narrator's preoccupation with his own identity, one covered up by a cultural history reliant upon deceptive appearances. In the multiple transformations of the dictator, we see the mocking derisive spirit of the carnival manifest itself throughout *Musiquito*, where the identities of Funes and the "mad man" are deliberately blurred.

The Porfirio Funes the public knows and adores is a mythical hero, one who makes use of disguises and masks. Even so, his fame continues to grow throughout the novel:

Su popularidad aumentaba de todas maneras. Era Dios. Alguien exclamó a tiempo: «Dios y Funes». Sólo que Dios tenía muy poco espacio en la fórmula salvadora y dejó a Funes solo (111).<sup>3</sup>

Funes's desire to know all, to see all, and to control all culminates in his being likened to God and eventually surpassing Him in importance: "Sólo que Dios tenía muy poco espacio en la fórmula..." As he "displaces" God in the formula, the dictator is raised to a new level: that of omnipotence. But we must not forget that it is God that abandons him, "tenía muy poco espacio en la fórmula salvadora y dejó a Funes solo". Ironically, not even God can find it in his heart to forgive this wretched soul. Funes may equal "Dios" but his actions are much more like those of a devil, a characteristic very common of the dictators in more famous novels, such as *El otoño del patriarca* and *Yo el Supremo*.

Nonetheless, Funes, like Trujillo and other dictators in Latin America, tries to establish an image of benevolence, in order to raise himself to the stature of a national hero. A perfect example of the ironic and ludic efforts on the part of El Poblador to help the Dominican Republic progress socially and economically is offered by the search for "modernity." Funes's desire to modernize the nation brings about the construction of the first television station on the island, and naturally, he directs and oversees all levels of its construction: "Funes dirigía cada paso. Establecía la programación, soñaba transmisiones espectaculares..., discutía los alcances de la nueva civilización..." (64). Funes dreams of making progress but his efforts only bring the people of the Republic one island station that they would eventually dub the "Canal de la Patria." Modernization and "popular culture" merge as television takes on a higher meaning and a greater importance, in that it becomes directly linked to Dominican cultural history. During the initial televised program of the "Patria," first time viewers declare in jubilation: "«¡El progreso es! ¡Este es el progreso!», proclamaban. «¡Estamos viviendo el progreso! ¡Somos el progreso...!»" (66). If we look carefully at the structure of these sentences, we take notice of how they progress both grammatically and syntactically; the change or conjugation of the verb "to be," *ser*, takes on an almost personal and all-encompassing nature. This progression serves to suggest how those in the path of progress are slowly transformed by Funes and his power and ultimately become part of its machine. The exclamations begin with "El progreso es," in which progress is the subject, but then slowly transforms the "we" of "somos el progreso" into the subject. This all-embracing "we" suggests that the nation as a whole benefits from this progress. Ironically, there are only a few television sets throughout the island and only a handful of citizens can actually enjoy such modernization. This kind of wordplay is common throughout the novel and serves to mock the feeble and self-serving projects initiated by the powerful dictator. Of course, if there were any money to be made from this venture, Funes and his family would be the only ones to profit, in keeping with the monopolistic nature of his rule.<sup>4</sup> Everything to do with national television revolves around the dictator and this is yet another way of controlling and manipulating the national culture.<sup>5</sup>

Todo el país giró alrededor del Canal de la Patria, que giraba alrededor de Funes, decidido a hacer de sus locutores, de sus músicos, de sus bailarinas, de sus astros, de sus boleristas y de sus muñequitos, el primer hechizo de la república (67).

If television could become the opium of the masses, then he could use it to control and entrance his subjects.

If we accept the premise that the "island" is a metaphor for identity, then the image that Porfirio Funes establishes in the following passage reinforces the narcissistic qualities characteristic of any dictator. They are quite common in Latin American dictator novels, where the Patriarch in each case establishes himself as a symbol of the identity of the whole nation. Not only is Funes obsessed with himself, but his ego encourages him to believe that he

himself is the quintessence of Dominican identity. The young narrator tells us: “‘La insularidad-decía Funes—Es deliciosa y omnívora’. Él era la ínsula” (29). The image of the “island” repeats itself as references are made to neighboring islands and cities that are “island-like.” A little later in the story, the narrator reveals how Funes’s obsession grows and his desire to be the center of the universe takes his authority to another level: “había soñado una república imperial. Los islotes adyacentes fueron convertidos en provincias ultramarinas y bautizados con inusitada pompa... ‘como afirmó Copérnico—le comunicó en un parte de solemnes lisonjas—la Tierra gira alrededor del sol y los isleños alrededor de Su Excelencia’” (30). In this example, Funes envisions himself as the center of the universe, and his island nation becomes the pivotal point around which the whole world revolves. We perceive to what extreme Funes’ obsession with power and control could take him, if only in his dreams. Yet, we cannot forget that a large part of the identity crisis/historical problem that remains unresolved by Dominicans is the simple fact that they must share the island with their western neighbor, Haiti.

At one point in the novel, in an effort to improve public health and to boost his image as a benevolent ruler, Porfirio Funes chooses to attack one of the nation’s problems—malnutrition. Logically, if you want a developing nation to progress, it would make perfect sense to address this issue. However, in a richly comical scene, Funes orders everyone to consume a new vitamin-enriched soft drink ironically called *Sweet Nation*. This wonder drink contains all the daily vitamins and nutrients for a healthy individual. The English label given to this drink automatically links it to the idea of “American” progress and development. *Sweet Nation* becomes a fad that magically sweeps the country after its invention by a group of Argentine nutritionists:

Los *Sweet Nation* eran embotellados en tres sabores: frambuesa, uva y merengue, un invento local que tuvo un éxito arrollador, incluso en las playas extranjeras. Poseían todas las vitaminas y una buena dosis de minerales y debían suplir las carencias de una dieta baja en calorías con la efervescencia de sus carbohidratos reforzados. (...) y para(...)producir glóbulos rojos y para galvanizar las olvidadas y secularmente preteridas células del cerebro (31).

The label given to this magical elixir is laced with irony; it sweeps the nation and turns into a cultural icon. How can an island, steeped in racial prejudice and inequality, define itself culturally when suggesting it is a country of harmony or a utopia? In addition, it becomes the source of an incredible income that “pertenecía a un consorcio que encabezaban él, su mujer—doña Rosa Aguirre y Cerda—, su madre inmarcesible y serenísima y el Ministro de Marina y de las islas Adyacentes, el comodoro Mamila Yanes Funes, su primo hermano.” (32) This monopoly, typical of Dominican rulers, helps describe the corrupt methods that continue to pervade the country’s large industries. More ironic than this is that the more the author’s ludic and distorted history of Porfirio Funes’ monopolies resembles real life under the reign of Trujillo, the more Sánchez makes it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. This historiographic narrative, not unlike others of its kind:

Refutes the natural or common sense methods of distinguishing between historical facts and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity (Hutcheon 93).

It is no surprise that Funes would want absolute control over all aspects of the republic. In another anecdotal episode, the young narrator reveals Porfirio Funes’ hatred for blacks. Race is always a risky subject, and in the Dominican Republic, a nation of mulattoes and blacks, the situation becomes more delicate. Nonetheless, Funes detests blacks, and in an effort to stamp out cultural and racial differences in his country, he hires a Swedish scientist, Neils Boëring, to concoct a magical lotion to whiten the skin of any Dominican, black, or mulatto. Hence, in the novel, he is dubbed the savior of the white race - for he was able to achieve what leaders for centuries had failed to do:

Después de cuatrocientos años inicuos y nefandos, lo habían al fin logrado. Eran blancos. Hacía cuatrocientos años que esperaban ser blancos. [Y]...en menos de tres años el suyo sería un pueblo mediterráneo y antes de cinco un pueblo victorios[a] y concluyentemente ario, asombro del universo, de los hombres, de la ciencia y de los más altos preceptos estéticos que la humanidad había burilado con delectación y esmero durante los siglos metódicos e inescrutables (41).

In this grotesquely disturbing passage, Funes is shown attempting to eliminate any sense of cultural heterogeneity in the country. The years preceding his reign of power are described as “inicuos” and “nefandos” and reflect the presence of a black history. However, complete Europeanization in three years would not be enough for the power-hungry Funes. The term “ario” recalls past images of a dictator like Hitler, who not only wanted to achieve world domination and control, but also wanted to establish the “perfect” race. Funes wants the Dominican Republic to become the center of the world so that for once Europe will have to follow in *his* footsteps. But the following passage reveals the true nature of this island nation, as the dictator consults government officials as to whether or not complete extermination of a race of people would be possible:

Quería saber si era apropiado modificar la identidad de un pueblo que secularmente había sido negro y mestizo, convirtiéndolo en un pueblo de blancos de la noche a la mañana con una loción milagrosa (39).

The true cultural identity of the Dominican nation is “negro y mestizo” in contrast to the Aryan version Funes would like to envision. Although this is a novel about a fictional dictator, we cannot help but see the similarities between him and the real life Trujillo. It is known that dictator Trujillo, in his fever to rid the island of its African heritage, practiced and promoted anti-Haitianism. Under Trujillo, Dominicans and Haitians were said to have nothing in common, and those of Haitian blood or ancestry were considered to belong to the “other” group (Mateo 147-48).<sup>6</sup> This marginalization was meant to instill a sense of pride and nationalism in hearts of the “real” Dominicans. Therefore, the portrait Sánchez paints of Funes is not unlike Trujillo, at least according to the historians like Mateo and Cassá. Ironically enough, Trujillo was a mulatto and had to deny and ignore his heritage to be accepted by the bourgeoisie. Also, he was known to cover himself in talcum powder before going out in public, to appear “whiter.”

Continuing his efforts to rid a whole nation of its black citizens, El Poblador makes another attempt to relieve the island of these “undesirables.” In order to achieve this, he consults a Danish metaphysician who performs the task. The engineer explains to Funes that in order to eliminate blacks from Dominican history, he must first go back to Africa and begin the history of humanity from another point. Funes sees no problem in eliminating blacks from history, as the young narrator explains:

en pocas semanas, *en la historia nacional no existió Haití ni existió la trata negrera*, así como no existieron los filibusteros ni existió Toussaint L’Ouverture. *Los fue expulsando minuciosamente de la imaginación, de los cotos en ocasiones ilegibles de la imaginación* (79). [Emphasis added]

Here, Funes is able to achieve a historiographic massacre as he eliminates the black race from textual existence. The removal of Toussaint L’Ouverture and the slave trade from Dominican history destroys any chance of slave rebellion and wipes the historical record clean. This would eliminate any documentation of the Dominican Republic under Haitian rule and the hatred and loss of national pride that came with it. Present history is made to overshadow past history, which also eventually disappears from Funes’s eyes. This passage is characterized by intertextual references beyond those of L’Ouverture and the colonial slave trade. It parodies “official” histories in that it alludes to the ability to modify and even alter a nation’s cultural history. This textual massacre is reminiscent of the famous October 1937 massacre in which Trujillo ordered the assassination of Haitians wherever they were found in the Dominican Republic. More than 18,000 Haitians died at the whim of the maniacal Dominican general. In this same chapter, the Danish metaphysician (a clever insertion of the metaphysical in the metafictional by the author) explains to Funes that:

los hechos históricos, una vez consumados, sólo existían en la imaginación ética de los hombres, de modo que bastaba soñarlos de otra manera para que desaparecieran de las crónicas mendaces (79).

With history altered, the Dominican Republic would slowly become a different nation and all the past prejudices and problems would disappear. The use of the phrase “crónicas mendaces,” or false chronicles, raises the issue of truth as represented in any Dominican history and reinforces the postmodern idea of the “crisis of truth.” By calling into question the veracity of Dominican historiography, Sánchez once again reflects a concern with the process of historical writing in the Dominican Republic and alludes to the possibility of alternative histories.

The narrator forces us to lose faith in his “papeles de mierda,” even if we relied upon the authenticity of these pages. To close with the word *mierda* reduces everything we have read up until the end to shit or waste. Ironically, the word *mierda* seems to be one that is used repeatedly throughout dictator novels and carries with it an overtone of despair. In addition, the closing action of *Musiquito* is reminiscent of the fiction of Cortázar and Borges, in which the adversaries or strangers are united in one fate.

La vida está carísima. Mi chofer, que me maneja el concho del transporte público por tres pesos diarios y me entrega siete para que comamos la nostalgia y yo, ha aprendido a engañarme cuando hacemos las cuentas tanto como yo mismo he aprendido a engañar la memoria, que ya es apenas, en mi caso, memoria del olvido. Yo no me salvo, pero tampoco se salva Funes ni se salva Musiquito. Toda escribanía es una venganza (117).

The narrator’s words reflect the postmodern questioning of historical contexts as significant and determining and thereby problematize the whole notion of historical writing. It is a paradox which characterizes all postmodern discourse, as is suggested by the phrase “memoria del olvido”; an oxymoron that raises the question of how one can “remember” things “forgotten.” More so, such an implication suggests that there can be no single, essential concept of genuine historicity no matter what the nostalgia for the subject may be.

In true postmodernist style, Sánchez blurs the line between history and fiction as he leaves us hanging on to the last few pages, which we are told mean nothing. This display of characteristics, both historiographic and metafictional, would link this text with others of the same tendencies, as Linda Hutcheon suggests:

...to what I have been calling historiographic metafiction, for these are novels whose self-reflexivity works in conjunction with their seeming opposite (historical reference) in order to reveal both the limits and powers of historical knowledge. To challenge history or its writing not to deny either. It is not that truth and reference have ceased to exist; it is that they have ceased to be unproblematic issues (223).



Nonetheless, *Musiquito: Anales de un déspota y de un bolerista* serves to elaborate a new form of conceiving the dictator in Latin America, and more importantly, it revisits the need for challenging hegemonic Dominican histories. Sánchez's approach would suggest that since all fiction is invented, so is history, because it is manipulated and re-created and, hence, belongs to the same kind of fabrication as Sánchez's novel, or to the "memoria del olvido." In the tenacious ambiguity that places it between fiction and history, between transgression and the law, the work is a good example of writing as a "pharmakon," in which we perceive the ability to mean something and its opposite. As readers of the novel, we are challenged to question the "truthfulness" of the texts we read and to rethink the entire notion of historical reference and its privileged tradition in Dominican letters. The identity in crisis, reflected in the narrator's search for the father in this novel, mirrors an even greater crisis: that of a nation searching for a cultural history to call its own, and on another level, one that may link it with the other nations of the Spanish Caribbean.

## Notes

1. Seymour Menton's *Latin America's New Historical Novel* defines and establishes a set of characteristics that suggest a trend of "New Historical Novels" written throughout Latin America during the latter part of the 20th century. Sánchez's novel does not fulfill all of the prerequisites for such classification but it does, however, contain some of the characteristics of a "New Historical novel." The novel does subordinate the mimetic recreation of a historical period, similar to the rule of Trujillo. Its author consciously distorts history through omissions and exaggeration. The metafictional quality of the novel is apparent as the narrator reflects on the creative process of his own text. In addition, the presence of the Bakhtinian concept of the carnivalesque and parody is used to deconstruct the dictator throughout the novel. More importantly, all of these elements are fundamental in Enriquillo Sánchez's (re)creation of Trujillo in the story of the maniacal Porfirio Funes.
2. The name possibly derived from a combination of Mexico's dictator, Porfirio Díaz and Borges's Funes, *el memorioso*.
3. This quote, "Dios y Funes" is an obvious play on the famous neon sign at the entrance of President Peynado's house that read "Dios y Trujillo". It also recalls Balaguer's famous speech "Dios y Trujillo". See Jesús de Galíndez, p. 39.
4. Trujillo's brother, José Arismendi "Petán" Trujillo was the owner of the best radio station and the only television station in the country. See Jesús de Galíndez, p. 198.
5. José Alcántara Almánzar, a leading short story writer, critic and Dominican scholar, reminds us in his study *Los escritores dominicanos y la cultura*, of the totalitarian control Trujillo exercised over the country. Quoting the Dominican historian Roberto Cassá he writes: "Fue una dictadura de la burguesía como clase, sólo que con una versión muy original, debido al control que el déspota ejercía en los sectores dominantes. El dictador y su familia controlaban la mayor parte de las industrias y sectores productivos del país, homogeneidad que les permitió amasar una inmensa fortuna dentro y fuera del país, calculada en cientos de millones de dólares en pleno apogeo del régimen" (186).
6. Trujillo's sadistic massacre of Haitians in 1937 has inspired a great deal of writing. In Balaguer's 1947 study *La realidad dominicana*, he stresses the importance of Dominican attachment to Hispanic culture and what he sees as a Haitian threat to Dominican racial, political and national integrity.

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## The Role of Islam in Dante's *Divine Comedy*: Questioning the Limits of Salvation

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Born in Toronto of Italian and Iranian heritage, Leila Anna Ouji developed a fascination with the interaction, conflict, and collaboration between East and West at an early age. This led her towards her doctoral work on Orientalism in Dante and the overall perception of Islam through the medieval Christian lens. In addition to her research on Dante, Leila is also interested in concepts of salvation and ecclesiastical corruption in medieval and early renaissance texts, particularly in Boccaccio.

Christendom's general casting of the Middle East as a place steeped in sin and otherness ultimately influenced even the most open of minds, including that of Dante Alighieri. However, Dante's perception of Islam cannot be summarized as being an overall polemical one. Although a product of a Christian society, Dante must not simply be approached as a supporter of Christianity and ipso facto as an advocate against Islam. Instead, Dante uses the presence of Muslims in the *Divine Comedy* in order to raise complex theological questions. While many of Dante's contemporaries adhered to the notion that Islam was a religion to be disdained, Dante stands apart in his willingness to look beneath the rigid conceptions of the Other. By conducting an in-depth analysis of each of Dante's references to Islam, I aim to demonstrate what the poet's portrayals of Islam reveal about his perceptions of the Muslim world and how this new otherness fits into his theological system of salvation.

The most significant portrayal of Islam in Dante's *Comedy* is undoubtedly reflected in the description of Mohammad and his son-in-law Ali in canto 28 of the *Inferno*. Upon reading these lines, one cannot help but be struck by the gruesome Picture painted by Dante:

Già veggia, per mezzul perdere o lulla,  
 com' io vidi un, così non si pertugia,  
 rotto dal mento infin dove si trulla.  
 Tra le gambe pendevan le minugia;  
 la corata pareva e 'l tristo sacco  
 che merda fa di quel che si trangugia.  
 Mentre che tutto in lui veder m'attacco,  
 guardommi e con le man s'aperse il petto,  
 dicendo: "Or vedi com' io mi dilacco!  
 vedi come storpiato è Mäometto!  
 Dinanzi a me sen va piangendo Ali,  
 fesso nel volto dal mento al ciuffetto (*Inf.* 28. 22-33).<sup>1</sup>

Mohammad, the most holy Prophet of the Islamic faith, is transformed into a vulgar image of suffering, with his body torn open from his chin to his anus. While Ali is forced to endure a similar fate, only on a smaller scale, his face split open into a gaping wound, sliced from chin to forelock. Next to the revolting image of Conte Ugolino gnawing on the skull of Ruggiero (*Inf.* 32.124-129; 33.1-3) and that of Satan feeding on the bodies of three notorious traitors (*Inf.* 34.46-67), the portrait of the two mutilated bodies of Islam's prophets is arguably the grisliest of the entire *Inferno*.

Upon a first reading of this passage, one is inclined to view Dante as an anti-Islamic spokesman, using the pictures of Mohammad and Ali in order to underscore the negative traits that he identifies in all Muslims and consequently reinforcing the supremacy of his own Christian faith. Yet, on closer analysis of these lines, as well as every other reference to the Islamic world made in the *Comedy*, a much more complex, and not entirely negative, perception of Islam will emerge.

### 1. Dante's Fleeting References to the Muslim World

Asin Palacios began his quest to identify the direct influence of Islamic portrayals of the afterlife on Dante's *Comedy* with his controversial book, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, published in 1919, tracing the similarities between Dante's work and those of various Islamic scholars. Although the rest of this paper will look at each of Dante's references to Islam, my chief aim is unlike that of Asin Palacios. Rather than attempting to establish the amount of information that the poet borrowed from Islamic sources, I wish to clarify how Dante's knowledge about Islam formed his personal perception of the Muslim Other and how these perceptions took shape in the *Comedy*. While Dante's portrayal of Mohammad and Ali has usually acted as the focal point for most Dantesque scholars interested in Islam, I will begin by first analyzing those minor and often ignored references to the Oriental world, as these seemingly insignificant images will contribute to understanding the poet's depiction of the headship of Islam.

The first blatant reference to Islam occurs in canto 8 of the *Inferno*, as Dante the pilgrim and Virgil approach the gloom-ridden city, Dis, and catch a glimpse of the tall, flaming mosques looming in the distance:

Maestro, già le sue meschite  
 là entro certe ne la valle cerno,  
 vermiglie come se di foco uscite  
 fossero." Ed ei mi disse: "Il foco eterno  
 ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse,  
 come tu vedi in questo basso inferno (Inf. 8.70-75).<sup>2</sup>

This at once reveals that Dante, who had not travelled to the East, was well aware of the existence of mosques as centers of Muslim worship. Their visibility in the distance indicates that Dante had an architectural concept of a mosque, built with tall minarets used to call Muslims to prayer. Scholars such as Mary Alexandra Watt have interpreted the flames engulfing the mosques as the poet's attempt to equate the Islamic world with Hell (Watt 22). However, Dante may have merely borrowed the exact image of the burning towers from the *Book of the Ladder*. To summarize briefly, the *Book of the Ladder* is a Castilian translation of the original Arabic text, the *Kitab al-Mi'raj*, from the Hadith tradition, an account of Mohammad's night journey, guided by the angel Gabriel, through the underworld and eventually toward Paradise. Dante is believed to have been aware of this text – even if indirectly – through contemporaries such as Riccoldo da Monte Croce, who had traveled to the East. In the Latin translation, Mohammad sees that the devil's dominion is surrounded by tall towers and other buildings that burn with black fire: "muri, turre, moenia et domus omnes [...] de igne valde nigro, qui ardet continuo in se ipso" (Cerulli par. 150). Hence, rather than revealing Dante's hatred toward Islam, Dante's depiction of the burning mosques may have been an image which was readily available to him through his reading of the *Book of the Ladder* or his knowledge of it through Riccoldo da Monte Croce. Just as the tall blazing towers and walls in the *Book of the Ladder* guard the abode of the Devil, marking his profane territory, so too does Dante incorporate the burning mosques as the markers of a fortress dividing the transgressors of lesser sins (i.e. lust, gluttony, greed, wrath) from those of the far more grave sins (i.e. heresy, violence, fraud, treachery), including the greatest sinner of all, Satan, in the deepest pit of Dis. I would also suggest an alternative way of interpreting Dante's mosques, by considering them as representations of man's attempt to use his mortal intellect and skill to reach God, unguided by reason. Through the works of Avicenna and Averroes, medieval Europeans came to perceive Islam as a religion which exalts intellect above all else, thus allowing man the potential to achieve intellect equal to that of God (Akbari 268). The tall height of the minarets, visible to Dante and Virgil from afar, suggests man's longing to reach the untouchable intelligence of the heavens, for as best stated by Akbari, "The dangerous allure of Islam, for Dante, lay precisely in its elevation of intellect, and its promise of transcendent experience mediated through the mind" (269).

Most of Dante's allusions to Islam occur in the *Inferno*, for the obvious reason that non-Christians are generally incapable of salvation.<sup>3</sup> However, Dante mentions Muslim women in Canto 23 of *Purgatorio*, a place of redemption on the eventual path of salvation, and once again reveals his knowledge about the Muslim inhabitants of the Mediterranean and the Near East:

Tempo futuro m'è già nel cospetto,  
cui non sarà quest' ora molto antica,

nel qual sarà in pergamo interdetto  
a le sfacciate donne fiorentine  
l'andar mostrando con le poppe il petto

Quai barbare fuor mai, quai saracine,  
cui bisognasse, par farle ir coperte,  
o spirituali o altre discipline?

Ma se le svergognate fosser certe  
di quel che 'l ciel veloce loro ammanna,  
già per urlare avrian le bocche aperte (*Purg.*23.98-108).<sup>4</sup>

In the voice of his childhood friend Forese Donati, Dante draws attention to an underlying theme throughout the whole work: the state of corruption in Florence. In this case, he is focusing on the immoral nature of Florentine women. These lines indicate that Dante was aware of the modest way in which Muslim women were dressed. As a reader of Aquinas, Dante was most likely aware of the negative portrayal of Islam in Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, in which the saint portrays Mohammad as a man motivated by carnal pleasures and completely void of spirituality (2.1.Q.6.Art.7). Yet Dante chose not to focus on Aquinas' carnal depiction of the Prophet and instead referred to other sources. He may have learned about Muslim clothing through the translated suras of Mark of Toledo's Qur'an, from Riccoldo's writings on Islam, or from one of the many missionaries and merchants who had brought first-hand accounts of the Orient to Florence. By the early 1300s, these travelers began to realize that Islam was actually not a religion of licentiousness and that its women were in fact ultimate examples of modesty (Southern, "Dante and Islam" 136). This passage identifies Dante as a learned man who does not follow the prejudices of Islam held by many of his predecessors, while also revealing his ingenious attempt to use the otherness of Muslim women in order to highlight the negative traits of his own people. Dante knew that his contemporaries would tend to expect the worst and most barbaric behavior from these women and thus uses them to highlight the fact that even Muslim women are more respectable than Florentine ones. Although Dante may not be praising Islam, by presenting Saracen women as demurer than those of Florence, Dante strategically calls on his contemporary readers to recognize the need for change among themselves before trying to impose change on others.

A brief reference to the Orient is made in *Purgatorio*. In canto I the pilgrim describes the image and sensation before him after leaving the brutality of Hell behind him, and opening his eyes in Purgatory, a place of new hope:

Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,  
che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto  
del mezzo, puro infino al primo giro,  
a li occhi miei ricominciò diletto,  
tosto ch'io uscì fuor de l'aura morta  
che m'avea contristati li occhi e 'l petto (*Purg.*1.13-18).<sup>5</sup>

Dante calls on the image of the Far East, the untouchable Orient of Earthly Paradise, to arouse the sentiment of wonder and awe associated with this far-off place. While the image of the Near East or Muslim inhabited Mediterranean

would have conjured thoughts of fear and anxiety in the medieval man, Dante uses the distant Orient, with its exoticism and mystery, as a place yet to be explored and thus untainted and full of hope. Schildgen identifies Dante's use of a specifically Oriental gem, the sapphire, as a key detail; usually associated with India, the Western world tied the transparent blue of the gem to the early morning light believed to shine in the East (*Dante and the Orient* 123). Dante once again calls on another world for the sake of contrast: while the image of the modest Muslim women emphasizes the corruption of Florentine society, the calm-inducing blue light of the sapphire marks the shift the pilgrim feels as he leaves behind the gloom and hopelessness of the Inferno.

## 2. Dante and the Virtuous Muslims

In Canto 4 of the *Inferno*, Dante enters into Limbo, the inner rim of the underworld, whose sinners are the ultimate outsiders, belonging neither to the realm of the damned nor that of the saved. The inhabitants of Limbo are those who did not receive the sacrament of baptism or those who had the misfortune of being born before Christianity, including Dante's guide, Virgil. Yet, among the souls trapped in the hem of Hell, three Islamic pictures stand out as exceptions to the rules of Limbo: Avicenna, Averroes, and Saladin. Dante's inclusion of these three men, born after the establishment of Christendom and aware of Christ's existence, proves worthy of an analysis.

Persian philosopher Avicenna appears in line 143 of Canto 4, alongside Andalusian polymath Averroes, listed among the revered sages of antiquity; the two men are the only philosophers in this group privy to Christian revelation. Regardless of his religion, Avicenna (c. 980-1037) was a respected and widely read philosopher in the Christian middle ages. Drawing from Islamic sources as well as from Greek sources such as Aristotle, Avicenna offered Christian scholars interpretations of classical works through an Islamic filter. Avicenna was renowned for his knowledge of astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, Islamic theology, logic, as well as Neo-Platonist and Aristotelian philosophy. Dante was a known admirer of the polymath, referring to Avicenna throughout the *Convivio*, from his theory on the density of the galaxy (*Convivio* II, XIV, 7), to his view on the nobility of the human soul (*Convivio* IV, XXI, 2).

Dante had an even greater admiration and appreciation for Averroes (1126-1198), for rather than just mentioning his name, the poet honors him calling him "Averrois che 'l gran comento feo" (*Inf.* 4.144). Referring to Averroes' extensive commentary on the Arabic translations of Aristotle, Dante is paying tribute to him for having made these ancient works accessible to him. For Dante, Aristotle's system of moral virtues proved imperative to his creation of the *Comedy*. Dante's fondness for Averroes is even more surprising given that the Islamic philosopher was from the Muslim and Christian inhabited al-Andalus. Being directly exposed to Christendom in his daily life, there is no denying that Averroes had an in-depth knowledge of the faith that he still chose to refute. Furthermore, Averroes was not received well by all. His commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* generated so much controversy in thirteenth-century Christendom that in 1277, a papal interdiction at the University of Paris prohibited it from being taught and circulated (Schildgen, "Philosophers, Theologians" 114). Yet, none of these factors had an effect on Dante's admiration of him. Even though Avicenna and Averroes' lack of baptism was volitional, Dante admits them into Limbo: the only "privileged" place in the Inferno, in recognition of the debt that Christianity, and specifically Dante, owed to these Islamic philosophers (Southern, *Western Views of Islam* 55-56). This highlights a certain level of tolerance in Dante, focusing more on the importance of rational thought and philosophical prowess than on religious practice.

To say that Dante was anti-Islamic would be an inaccuracy. Although this may seem to be a bold statement, Virgil's words to the pilgrim explaining the state of the souls in Limbo supports it:

Lo buon maestro a me: "Tu non dimandi  
 che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?  
 Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,  
 ch'ei non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi,  
 non basta, perché non ebber battesimo,  
 ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;

e s' e' furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,  
 non adorar debitamente a Dio:  
 e di questi cotai son io medesimo (*Inf.* 4.31-39).<sup>6</sup>

Virgil plainly states that those in Limbo did not sin; hence, according to Dante, Avicenna and Averroes' choice to follow Islam is not enough to identify them as transgressors. Dante ignores Limbo's rule to include only those who were involuntarily baptized or born pre-Christendom, reserving the best possible place of the underworld for Avicenna and Averroes, as brilliant philosophers who facilitated Dante in the development of his own work and in his understanding of Christian theology. The loophole, which allows Dante to keep Avicenna just outside the torments of hell, lies plainly in one word: philosophy. As elucidated by Akbari, "for Dante, these men's common allegiance to the pursuit of truth through means of the intellect makes them members of a single 'philosophical family' (filosofica famiglia [*Inf.* 4.132]), a family whose bonds continue into the afterworld" (266).

Dante's choice to grant Avicenna and Averroes a place in Limbo thus seems justifiable: he does not view the two Muslim polymaths as a threat to Christianity, but rather as facilitators of a certain knowledge that would have been inaccessible to him and his contemporaries. Yet, Dante's inclusion of Muslim military leader and sultan, Saladin, proves far more perplexing. Saladin (c. 1138-1193) had a particularly aggressive relationship with the Christian world. As a key player during the Third Crusade, Saladin seized Christian inhabited territories numerous times, most notably capturing Jerusalem in 1187. News of Saladin's military successes in Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia had reached the Christian West, and, although feared, he was also admired for his reputation as a just and noble commander. In fact, upon his invasion of the Holy Land, many Christians welcomed Saladin as their new and capable leader who would bring them stability and peace.<sup>7</sup> Like Avicenna and Averroes, Saladin voluntarily refused Christianity; yet, Saladin went even further, invading his Christian enemies. Regardless of Saladin's volatile anti-Christian position, Dante places him in Limbo among ancient sages who did not actively participate in the battle against Christendom. However, Dante does not simply list Saladin as a companion of these pictures of antiquity. Instead, Dante specifies the sultan's spatial position saying, "e solo, in parte, vidi 'l Saladino" (*Inf.* 4.129). Dante's decision to separate Saladin from his fellow residents in Limbo alerts the reader to consider the Muslim as a man possessing some unique characteristics.

During the Middle Ages, Saladin was regarded as a romantic picture; his historical role as an enemy of the Church was often ignored. Although the stereotype of the wicked Saracen was diffused throughout the West in the eighth century, there was a progressive softening of this image as the centuries moved forward and there was more contact with Islam. The image of the "noble Saracen" became more prevalent due, in large part, to the European chronicles and literary works inspired by the romantic picture of Saladin (Hoeppner Moran Cruz 181).<sup>8</sup> One of the most widely circulated sources on the Crusades during the 1300s was William of Tyre's (c. 1130-1186) Latin chronicle. With seventy-one known manuscripts, Dante was likely to have consulted William's account (Schildgen, *Dante and the Orient* 49). William's work presents Saladin as a remarkable military leader, able to unite the Muslims within his kingdom and beyond, in order to fight for a common cause (Krey 159). Saladin's lack of baptism renders him incapable of salvation, while his uniting abilities as a valiant leader allow him to escape the tortures of the *Inferno*.

Regarding the virtuous Muslims in Dante's Limbo, Dante disregards any conflict that they may have had with the Christian world as Avicenna, Averroes, and Saladin's place in Limbo is an honorable one. Dante's decision to assign them there does not reveal his hatred for the Muslims. On the contrary, the poet admires Avicenna and Averroes as non-Christian individuals worthy of recognition for their significant contributions to philosophy and indirectly to the interpretation of Christian doctrine. He elevates Saladin as a model of leadership and munificence for the West. Dante is thus tolerant toward these Muslims, even honoring them with a place among those who "non peccaro," and who in fact "hanno mercedi." Although the residents of Limbo are "sospesi" (*Inf.* 4.45) between salvation and damnation, in canto 7 of *Purgatorio*, Dante further emphasizes that they remain virtuous individuals in the eyes of God: "quivi sto io con quei che le tre sante / virtù non si vestiro, e sanza vizio / conobber l'altre e seguir tutte quante" (*Purg.* 7.34-36). Gregory B. Stone dissects these lines, explaining that Virgil differentiates between the theological virtues ("le tre sante") and the cardinal virtues ("tutte quante"); discussing his place in Limbo, Virgil explains that while his lack of Christian revelation leaves him without the theological virtues, his sinlessness allows him to possess the cardinal virtues (Stone 87). Consequently, Virgil's logic also applies to his comrades in Limbo, including the three honorable Muslims.

Therefore, Dante does not assign the stigma of the wicked Saracen upon the three Muslims in Limbo; instead he grants them the best possible fate for men who willingly rejected Christ.

### 3. Dante and the Headship of Islam

#### i) *The contrapasso*

Dante's placement of Mohammad and Ali in the deep bowels of Hell so close to Satan, the embodiment of all evil, seems to suggest the poet's extreme hatred for the two main pictures of Islam and thus for the religion that they helped to establish. However, upon closer analysis of *what* Dante condemns them for, it becomes clear that their vividly horrific fate does not identify Dante as an anti-Islamic medieval man. Dante's conception of Mohammad, the prophet of a new religion, as a schismatic may seem odd to modern readers. Yet, it is likely that the poet's source for biographical information on Mohammad came from the various polemical accounts such as the *Vitae Mahometi* (Martinez Gásquez 80). Such accounts presented Mohammad as a Christian monk or cardinal who, after failing to become pope, founded his own heretical religion. Dante's depiction of Ali as a schismatic as well indicates that Dante was aware of Ali's role in the split created between Shi'a and Sunni Islam. Although revered as a heroic figure in the Islamic world, Dante condemns Ali for his divisive acts, splitting the core of a once unified Islam in two. Each man's schismatic sin becomes manifest in his physical suffering in Hell. Mohammad, who in Dante's eyes created a major divide in the Orient, which quickly spread to the Mediterranean, has the Prophet's entire body sliced apart from his chin to his farting place, and his bowels placed vulgarly on display. Meanwhile, Ali, who created division on a smaller scale in the headship of Islam, is cut open only from his chin to his forelock. Dante's desire for a unified universal monarchy could not ever be realized with the existence of such divisive individuals.<sup>9</sup> This disunity was underscored as a weakness, giving hope to Christendom that Islam could possibly be defeated. However, this hope was easily shattered as Muslim forces continued to invade the West.

Mohammad and Ali's ripped open bodies, reflecting the schismatic nature of their sin, provide a prime example of Dante's *contrapasso*, the retributive law that governs his entire *Inferno*. Interestingly, Mohammad's canto is the only one in which the *contrapasso* is explicitly mentioned. French troubadour, Bertran de Born, utters the word in the final line of the canto (*Inf*:28.113-142). The word *contrapasso* is the vulgarization of the Latin term *contrapassum*, used by Aquinas in his *Summa theologica*. Aquinas developed the term as a substitution for the Greek word for "retribution" found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aquinas reserves a portion of his *Summa theologica* as a commentary on Aristotle's works, and he applies the philosopher's concept of retribution to the Old Testament's *lex talionis*, or "eye for an eye" (Aquinas 2.2,Q.61.Art.4). Medieval Christians viewed Judaism as an old religion that had been superseded by the doctrine ushered in by the birth of Christ. Moreover, its theology was considered to be based on the letter over the spirit, since it refuted the revelation of Christ and the Trinity. While the souls in Paradise are depicted by Dante through beams of glorious light, and the penitent souls in Purgatory are illustrated through images and carvings, or the "visibile parlare" (*Purg.* 10.95), the anguish of the damned souls in Hell is displayed in a very tangible manner: Dante encounters each soul as a physical, suffering body, enduring an eternal fate which appropriately reflects the sin committed during life.

Dante's illustration of Ali's punishment suggests that the poet had a far more in-depth knowledge of Islam than many critics have been led to believe.<sup>10</sup> Dante was likely to have consulted William of Tyre's chronicle for information on Ali; William's work explained the divide between the Shi'a and Sunni Muslims and the role that Ali played in this split (Tatlock 194). Furthermore, Tatlock notes that Dante's Ali recalls the account of Ali's death compiled by Arabic historians (193). In the Islamic accounts, Ali is killed when a sharp sword pierces the top of his forehead (Al-Jubouri 164). Dante may have borrowed this image of the "spada" as an essential tool required in Ali's punishment from an Islamic source. While most Latin accounts about the establishment of Islam ignore Ali entirely, Dante not only includes him, but also demonstrates that he knew about Ali's function in the religion. Dante's *contrapasso* for Ali mirrors the split he created in the headship of Islam, while also recalls the Islamic accounts of Ali's death. In no other line in this canto or elsewhere in the *Comedy* does Dante attack Muslim beliefs. Instead, in canto 28 he uses specific Muslim pictures, Mohammad and Ali, to highlight their sin of schism.

#### ii) Schism versus Heresy

Dante's choice to condemn Mohammad and Ali as schismatic instead of heretic is a significant detail. The heretics of the *Comedy* are found in canto 10, in the sixth circle of the Inferno, as individuals who lived denying the immortality of the soul. Aquinas differentiates between schism and heresy, indicating that since "every sin is a schism" heretics are always schismatic, whereas heresy specifically "divides man from the unity of faith" (1-2. Q.39, Art.1). Stone applies Aquinas' conception of schism versus heresy to Dante's Mohammad and Ali, asserting that their sin of schism does not equate to a lack of faith (56). Dante perceived Islam as a religion founded on a strong faith – so strong that it managed to unite many people to follow Mohammad and Ali's example of devotion and to respect them as leaders. Moreover, since Dante conceived Islam as an offshoot of Christianity, yet not a heresy, he could not possibly have hated a religion based on his own. Overall, Dante does not condemn the Muslim community, for their unified stance is precisely what allowed them to grow in strength, and is thus the model of what Dante longed for amongst his own people. However, while the followers of this religion are not to blame, its headship is at fault for their initial provocation of a division, which transformed the Mediterranean into a place of constant strife. For Dante, Mohammad is the nucleus of Islam; yet, the Prophet is attacked out of the poet's fear of division, not for the beliefs associated with his religion – otherwise, Dante would have surely placed him in the realm of the heretics.

Epicurus, Frederick II, and Guido Cavalcanti are all punished for their lack of faith in the afterlife. However, the schismatics of canto 28 are not all guilty of religious or faith-based sins of division. Pier da Medicina, Mosca di Lamberti, Curio and Bertran de Born are all considered schismatic for political reasons, responsible for divisions that lead to civil war and other political turmoil. Southern stresses that Mohammad and Ali's placement among the other political schismatics reveals that Dante had no interest in the theological nature of the sin ("Dante and Islam" 135-137). Moreover, Mohammad describes all his fellow sinners in the ninth bolgia as follows: "tutti gli altri, che tu vedi qui / seminatore di scandalo e di scisma / fuor vivi, e però son fessi così" (*Inf.* 28.34-36). It is significant that Dante does not discriminate between Mohammad and Ali and the other schismatics. The two Muslims are no guiltier than their Christian companions, indicating that their religion is an irrelevant factor in their fate. Southern takes this argument further, suggesting that Dante's view of Mohammad and Ali marks the beginning of a shift towards the secular thought that would dominate the Renaissance – and that "his appearance of sympathy comes from his disillusionment with Christendom" ("Dante and Islam" 137). The corruption of the Catholic clergy was something that Dante adamantly opposed; for Dante, the schism instigated by Mohammad was made possible because of this lack of Christian unity. Dante is not anti-Islam; he does not condemn the religion as a whole, but rather only those who create division, regardless of whether it is a religious or a political divide.

### iii) Mohammad as Simon Magus

One could argue that Dante's Mohammad may also be understood as a Simon Magus picture, a magician trickster, lacking any legitimate spiritual power. Simon Magus first appears in the Acts of the Apostles, wherein he is presented as a powerful sorcerer, demonstrating his tricks before the Samaritans, who were fooled into believing that he had a divine power and was their messiah (Acts of the Apostles 8:9-24). Although the biblical account of Simon Magus ends with the sinner realizing the error of his ways and praying for forgiveness, he became an emblematic picture for the sin of simony for having attempted to purchase the Holy Spirit. However, following the popularity of this account, Simon Magus' vices became greatly exaggerated, as medieval Christian writers accused him of promoting a variety of punishable ideologies, including sorcery, witchcraft, heresy, – and even Islam (Ferreiro 1).

Alberto Ferreiro stresses that Simon Magus became a malleable character whom Christian authors molded in order to support the claims they made against any "non-Christian" behavior that they deemed deplorable (3). In fact, even Dante has a designated place for the Simonists: in the third bolgia of the eighth circle of Hell, canto 19 – although interestingly, this is not where he chooses to place the Prophet. Ferreiro notes that the *Vita Mahumeti* and other Christian polemical texts associate Mohammad with the sorcerer, connecting the two as masters of deception who fooled their followers into accepting them as divine prophets (20).<sup>11</sup> Although Ferreiro does not explicitly link Dante's Mohammad to Simon Magus, Akbari points out a key and often unnoticed detail in canto 28 which identifies the connection between the two pictures. This occurs after Mohammad utters his last words to Dante the Pilgrim; at this point, Mohammad places one foot, which had previously been suspended in mid-air, back onto the ground: "Poi che l'un piè per girsene sospese, / Mäometto mi disse esta parola; / indi a partirsi in terra lo distese" (*Inf.* 28.61-63). Like Paolo and Francesca who stop themselves as they perpetually swirl in the wind in order to address Dante and Virgil, so too does Mohammad pause his eternal pacing in the circle of the schismatics to tell his tale. However, his raised foot seems odd here, as the natural stance for someone who stops himself mid-step would be a firm one with both feet on the ground.



Akbari associates Mohammad's suspended foot with the tradition of the suspended tomb found in the various Western biographical accounts of the Prophet (231).<sup>12</sup> In these Christian polemical texts, Mohammad's tomb is described as being suspended in air – only not by the force of divine power, but by several ingeniously placed magnets. The image of the suspended tomb is presented as a magician's attempt to mimic Christ's ascension, with the intent of highlighting the falsity of Islam's Prophet. Moreover, while Christ's tomb was found empty, Mohammad's still contains his body, which Christian apologists interpreted as an emphasis of his mortality and thus his inherent link with the terrestrial world, eliminating any possibility that he could be a holy prophet. As elaborated by Akbari, the Western accounts of the Prophet's life “describe the floating tomb of Muhammad, suspended in a parodic imitation of the true bodily ascent of Christ. This tomb, filled with the bones of the pseudo-prophet, is a carnal imitation of the divinely empty Holy Sepulcher; its apparently miraculous weightlessness is no manifestation of divinity, but simply a deceptive trick” (232).

The thirteenth-century anti-Islamic text *Liber Nicholay* specifically mentions Mohammad's foot as one of the contents of his tomb, describing it as an object worshipped by Muslims on pilgrimage. Akbari proposes that the Christian perception of Mohammad's foot as a venerable object may have come from crusader and missionary accounts of the Dome of the Rock, said to contain the Prophet's footprint made during the *Mi'raj* (233), which was misinterpreted as idolatrous worship. While the suspended foot conjures the image of the suspended tomb, the work of a Simon Magus-type picture, this does not necessarily indicate that Dante viewed Islam as a religion of sorcery. Instead, Dante's suspended foot may once again symbolize schism, as the Prophet's feet are separated, not on one stable plain. The concept of strength in unity is an underlying theme in Dante's *Comedy* and *De Monarchia*; hence, by Mohammad standing with one foot raised, his balance is off and his stance weak. Akbari's interpretation of the suspended foot as the poet's effort to recall the image of the floating tomb filled with Mohammad's body in order to underscore the overwhelming physicality of this new religion once again links Islam to Judaism, as a faith which placed more importance on the letter and thus the tangible (233). However, I disagree with this, for since Dante reserved the third bolgia of the eighth circle for the Simonists, and the fourth bolgia of the eighth circle for sorcerers, necromancers, astrologers, and false prophets – yet deliberately placed Mohammad elsewhere – Dante reveals that he does not categorize the Prophet under any of these headings. In addition, since Dante saw Islam as a schism of Christianity, he could not have condemned it for its ideologies, which were inherently linked to those of his own faith. Instead, I propose that the raised foot further amplifies Mohammad – and not his followers – as a schismatic, basing his religion on a divided and weak foundation.

### 3. The Heavenly Eagle

There is a complex passage in Paradiso 19 that is key to understanding Dante's approach to salvation beyond Christianity. In the heaven of Jupiter, Dante encounters the image of an eagle, which although composed of many souls, speaks to him in one voice, again underscoring the importance of strength in unity. The eagle addresses Dante's concern regarding God's justice and who qualifies as being worthy of salvation:

Ché tu dicevi: 'Un uom nasce a la riva?  
 de l'Indo, e quivi non è chi ragioni  
 di Cristo né chi legga né chi scriva;  
 e tutti suoi voleri e atti buoni / sono, quanto ragione umana vede,  
 senza peccato in vita o in sermoni.  
 Muore non battezzato e senza fede:  
 ov' è questa giustizia che 'l condanna?  
 ov' è la colpa sua, se ei non crede?' (*Par.* 19.70-78).<sup>13</sup>

The eagle notes that those born in the Indus, the distant periphery of the medieval world where non-Christians were known to live, and at no fault of their own, were unexposed to Christ's teachings. It raises the notion that such people may be innocent and pure-hearted even if they have not been baptized. The eagle goes further, by specifically

addressing the question of divine justice, offering an ambiguous response to the possibility of salvation beyond Christianity:

A questo regno  
 non salì mai chi non credette 'n Cristo,  
 né pria né poi ch'el si chiavasse al legno.  
 Ma vedi: molti gridan 'Cristo, Cristo!'  
 che saranno in giudicio assai men *prope*  
 a lui, che tal che non conosce Cristo;  
 e tai Cristian dannerà l'Etìòpe,  
 quando si partiranno i due collegi,  
 l'uno in eterno ricco e l'altro inòpe (*Par.19.103-111*).<sup>14</sup>

Here the eagle expresses both a conservative and tolerant view of salvation; it begins by stating what we would expect of a Christian authority on salvation, noting that the only ones who have ever been welcomed into “questo regno” were believers in Christ. Yet, soon thereafter, it directs the spotlight on those superficial Christians, individuals who have been baptized and identify themselves as Christians only when it benefits them, while completely disregarding the moral tenets of the faith. The eagle indicates that following Judgment Day, such souls will actually be further away from Christ than those who were never exposed to Him. The eagle goes even further that it will in fact be the non-Christians – and gives the example of the Ethiopians – who will judge these false Christians, for even though they have not received the sacrament of baptism, they lived just lives and thus are in a more privileged position than those Christians who claim the title but are not true believers. The eagle’s ambiguous explanation leaves the Pilgrim and the reader perplexed; although belief in Christ seems to be necessary for access into paradise, non-Christians are not completely shut out from earning God’s grace. Moreover, when it says that those admitted into heaven believed in Christ “né pria né poi ch'el si chiavasse al legno” (*Par.19.105*), the eagle further opens up the possibility of salvation to non-Christians. This line suggests that belief in Christ can be acquired even after death; hence, God’s grace alone is enough to grant any soul salvation. Therefore, God does not adhere to a system of justice, but rather, it is He who determines what is just; this suggests that the salvation of Muslims and other non-Christians is viable should He, God, will it.

Dante stands apart from his contemporaries in the extent of information he had about the Islamic Other. This in turn allowed him to understand that the followers of this faith were not polytheistic idolaters with lascivious motives, but rather individuals who were loyal to their monotheistic faith and traditions founded in modesty. Although Dante condemns Muhammad to a gruesome fate in the *Inferno* for having destroyed the unity that Christendom had been attempting to sustain since Constantine, Dante’s other references to Islam reveal a far less negative conception of the religion – and at times, even suggest admiration for some of its key pictures. The open-minded and almost tolerant approach of the poet becomes clearest upon the Pilgrim’s encounter with the heavenly eagle, where it is revealed that God’s justice does not adhere to the limited confines of what our human minds can comprehend. While the majority of medieval Christian accounts of Mohammad depict him as an impostor heading a sensually driven religion, Dante ignores these qualities. Instead, Dante incorporates Mohammad and Ali into the cosmology of his work in order to draw attention to and make sense of the divided state of his world.

## Notes

1. “No cask ever gapes so wide for loss / of mid- or side-stave as the soul I saw / cleft from the chin right down to where men fart. / Between the legs the entrails dangled. I saw / the innards and the loathsome sack / that turns what one has swallowed into shit. While I was caught up in the sight of him, / he looked at me and, with his hands, ripped apart / his chest, saying: 'See how I rend myself, / 'see how mangled is Mohammed! /Ahead of me proceeds Ali, in tears, / his face split open from his chin to forelock.”

2. "Master, I can clearly see its mosques / within the ramparts, glowing red / as if they'd just been taken from the fire." / And he to me: "The eternal fire / that burns inside them here in nether Hell / makes them show red, as you can see" (Inf. 8.70-75).
3. Roman military leader Cato the Younger (95 BC-46 BC) is an exception. Dante encounters him in *Purg.* 1 as the guardian of the mountain. Cato's place in *Purgatorio* has been the topic of much debate, for he was both a pagan and a suicide.
4. In my vision even now I see a time, / before this hour shall be very old, / 'when from the pulpit it shall be forbidden / for the brazen ladies of Florence / to flaunt their nipples with their breasts. / 'What barbarous women, what Saracens, / have ever needed spiritual instruction / or other rules, to walk about in proper dress? / 'But if these shameless creatures knew / what the swift heavens are preparing, even now / their mouths would be spread open in a howl" (*Purg.* 23.98-108).
5. "Sweet color of oriental sapphire, / hovering in the calm and peaceful aspect / of intervening air, pure to the horizon, / pleased my eyes once more / as soon as I had left the morbid air / that had afflicted both my chest and eyes" (*Purg.* 1.13-18).
6. "You do not ask about / the souls you see? I want you to know, / before you venture farther, / 'they did not sin. Though they have merit, / that is not enough, for they were unbaptized, / denied the gateway to the faith that you profess. / 'And if they lived before the Christians lived, / they did not worship God aright. And among these I am one"
7. For more on the Christian response to Saladin in Jerusalem, see Regan's *Saladin and the Fall of Jerusalem*, especially "The Siege of Jerusalem" (135-155).
8. The portrayal of Saladin as honorable and just continued after Dante's time. In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Saladin is depicted as the model of munificence in Day 10, story 9. This tradition persisted into the sixteenth century, as seen in Torquato Tasso's fair-skinned Saracen female warrior, Clorinda.
9. The Muslims were commonly regarded as scattered and disunited, contrasting the Christians who envisioned themselves united in a common faith (Akbari 221).
10. Southern concludes that Dante had little knowledge about Islam (*Western Views of Islam* 139) and even suggests that Dante confused the picture of Ali with the character of the heretical monk often found in the European biographies of the Prophet ("Dante and Islam" 138).
11. In his *Vita Mahumeti*, Enrico of Mainz incorporates a Magus picture into the biographical account of the Prophet, portraying him as the one responsible for leading the Prophet astray (Ferreiro 230).
12. The prologue of Mark of Toledo's translation of the Qur'an includes legends about Mohammad as an idolatrous trickster (Martinez Gásquez 86), which may have influenced Dante.
13. "For you have often asked: "A man is born / upon the bank along the Indus, with no one there / to speak, or read, or write of Christ, / ""and all that he desires, everything he does, is good. / As far as human reason can discern, / he is sinless in his deeds and in his words. / "He dies unbaptized, dies outside the faith. / Wherein lies the justice that condemns him? / Wherein lies his fault if he does not believe?"
14. "To this kingdom / no one ever rose without belief in Christ, / whether before or after He was nailed up on the tree. / 'But observe that many shout out 'Christ, O Christ!' / who shall be farther off from Him, / on Judgment Day, than such as know not Christ. / 'The Ethiopian shall condemn such Christians / when the two assemblies go their separate ways, the one forever rich, the other poor."

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**The Pórtico de la Gloria in Manuel Rivas' Spanish Civil War Novel *The Carpenter's Pencil*: Art and Hagiography as a Metaphor that Subverts the Glory of Franco's New Spain**

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*The Carpenter's Pencil* takes place primarily in the immediate post-civil war period in the political prison facing the Cathedral of St. James the Elder (patron saint of Spain) in the emblematic Galician city, Santiago de Compostela. Three bloody years of fratricidal conflict and the defeat of the legitimate Republican government in April 1936 gave way to the military rule of General Francisco Franco's nationalist dictatorship. The motto of New Spain proclaimed that the Iberian nation was "One, Great and Free." Nothing could have been further from the truth. Manuel Rivas, in his 1998 novel, *The Carpenter's Pencil*, utilizes art and artists, painting and Pictorial narratives, sculptures and scriptures to put into question the "glory" of post-civil war Spain so propagandized by the nationalist victors. The literary work incorporates an iconic architectural and artistic work: the Pórtico de la Gloria, the entrance into the Cathedral whose name connotes the entrance into "la gloria" or heaven.

In this essay, I shall study symbols of identities and ideologies depicted in Rivas' novel in light of theories by José Colmeiro, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Nora, among others, to explore the sociopolitical manipulation and subsequent ironic subversion of cultural icons. Rivas' novel scrutinizes Pierre Nora's theories and "inventories" of *loci memoriae* (places, historical pictures, emblems) that codify a quintessential Nation and create a symbolic realm, space, or place which roots or grounds identity. The symbols and spaces in *The Carpenter's Pencil* are polyvalent and, as such, subvert the meaning imbued to them by the nationalist rhetoric that legitimated carnage. Among the backdrop of the Francoist death squads that disappeared between 136,062-152,236 Republicans, a historical phenomenon that Manuel Rivas has termed the Spanish Holocaust (*Fuerza* 16), this Galician author ironizes the rationalization of institutionally sanctioned genocide.

Elucidating Derrida's theories on *hauntologie* (haunting origins or past), Rivas' novel, *The Carpenter's Pencil*, is a ghost story in which a secondary character, an executioner named Herbal, is haunted by the memory, phantasm, or hallucination of the unnamed painter, a political prisoner he executed under orders in the early months of the Spanish Civil War. Herbal's job as a military guard in the prison includes observing the incarcerated and routinely (mercilessly) shooting the unlucky ones under cover of night. Yet, Rivas presents to his readers a victimizer who is transformed after executing the painter (who "painted ideas" [47]), and who salvages a trophy: the pencil his victim perpetually wore behind his ear. This pencil, a metonymic extension of the decedent, becomes a vehicle through which victim and victimizer become one; the executioner feels, hears, and sees the ubiquitous presence of the absent artist. The pencil comes to symbolize the historical memory of those destined for extermination by the transgressors against humanity. Hence, the drawing implement used to represent and record visual narratives, appropriated by Herbal, speaks to the persistence of the ideas of those erased by Spain's genocidal victors; but it also becomes a reminder of the connection between victimizers and their victims, a statement to the fact that those who took countless lives under orders in the name of the Greatness of God and Nation may not have been entirely immune to the suffering and bloodshed of which they were agents. While the Francoist nationalists attempted to wipe out all traces of the Republic (symbols, ideas, and people), the memory, history and stories of the silenced hauntologically persist and, thus, subvert the propagandized greatness of New Spain.

Since the dictator's death in 1975, Spain has witnessed the transition to democracy with its concomitant "pact of silence," the accord to reconcile, the 1978 Constitution, and the 2007<sup>1</sup> Law of Historical Memory that denounces the military uprising and acknowledges the suffering of the victims of repression. The pact of silence safeguarded against retribution (or perhaps *retributive* justice), but if the past, as memory, is not recognized, then, *restorative* justice is impossible. Restorative justice demands acknowledgement of suffering, requires stripping away the layers of whitewash that blinded to the reality of genocide, and necessitates facing the unscrupulous confabulation of history by the victors, the blatant denial of their malfeasance and the erasure of memory of those who lost. Rivas' executioner is transformed as he awakens to feeling and sensibilities, as empathy begins to stir within him. We must ask ourselves if the killer, haunted by his victim, embodies (in literary form) a type of restorative justice.

Before exploring the vindication of memory and subversion of the nationalist construction of history through the manipulation of cultural icons, let us turn to Pierre Nora's conceptualization of history and memory. Nora differentiates between "real memory" and "history," between what he refers to as "our memory" and "dictatorial memory" which is "all-powerful, ... a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, likening the history

of its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth” (Nora 8). For Nora, collective memory and historical memory are vastly different. The former is personal and felt at an individual and group level, belonging to one and all; whereas the latter, the historical construction of memory, is taught and perpetuated. *Memory* is lived and experienced by an individual or group, it is in constant evolution, experienced subjectively in the present pertaining to what was; whereas *history* is a selection, solidified and perpetuated regarding the past and disseminated as purportedly objective (belonging to all, yet to no one).<sup>2</sup> Hence, as Nora asserts, it claims “universal authority” (Nora 9) and aspires to “annihilate what has in reality taken place” (Nora 9). Nora theorizes on “*lieux de mémoire*,” places or realms of memory such as archives, objects, monuments, constitutions, historical pictures, cultural icons, among others, and claims that “if history did not besiege memory, deforming and transforming it, penetrating and petrifying it, there would be no *lieux de mémoire*” (Nora 12). All *lieux de mémoire*, for Nora, are objects *mises en abyme* (infinitely self-reflective, cast into the abyss), reflecting, creating, and distorting their own image while making it appear eternal.

The Regime subsumed myriad symbols of Spain’s illustrious past. Let us recall Arturo Reque Meruvia’s (“Kemer”) 1949 mural “Allegory of Franco and the Crusade” depicting el Caudillo as a medieval knight, while Santiago Matamoros (Saint James the Moor Slayer) on his white steed hovers above him as a gallery of ecclesiastical and military pictures and symbols flank the victorious leader.<sup>3</sup> Yet in New Spain, the new-fangled infidels were the communists, anarchist, socialists, *catalanistas*, and *galleguistas* (like the political prisoners in Rivas’ novel).

If we ask ourselves what is myth making, but the creation of a narrative linked to identifiable symbols in order to glorify a belief system, then we discern that the myth making apparatus that created the cult to St. James the Elder (the Moorslayer, patron saint of Spain) is not that dissimilar to the Franco-nationalist rhetoric that exalted the Nation’s greatness, in reality a country torn apart by war, whose cruel government inculcated and preyed upon the fear of its constituency, stripped away the rights of those who were believed to hold “desafecto al régimen” and viciously disappeared tens of thousands of the collective domestic enemy now scattered throughout Spain in mass graves. José Colmeiro identifies three distinct moments in contemporary Spanish history that “shaped the construction of memory and collective identity”: 1) the post-bellum dictatorship, 2) the Transition to democracy, and 3) the subsequent process of integration into the European Union and globalization (24). Following the Civil War and the ensuing Francoist Regime, avers Colmeiro,

memory became a site of ideological struggle. Memories of the civil war were officially repressed, the war was rewritten as a religious Crusade, and historical memory was substituted by nostalgia for a long lost imperial past, when not literally exiled, as hundreds of thousands died, were imprisoned or disappeared in the post-war diaspora. A unified Spanish national identity was imposed from above (one culture, one language, one religion), as different national identities from the periphery (Basque, Catalan and Galician in particular) were subjugated, cultural rights suppressed and censored by the state apparatus. Repressed historical memory formed a vast corpus of oppositional counter-memories as forms of cultural resistance (particularly in literature, film and popular song) many of them produced clandestinely or from exile (Colmeiro 24).

Rivas’ work functions precisely as an oppositional counter-memory, carrying out a project of cultural resistance through the subversion of symbols (most particularly Christian symbols) appropriated and perpetuated by the Regime. The legend of St. James the Elder is essential to *The Carpenter’s Pencil* given the setting of Rivas’ work, the fact that his fictional painter sketches the twelfth-century Romanesque Pórtico de la Gloria superimposing the faces of his fellow political prisoners, and that, historically, the nationalists adopted and adapted the crusade motif in their rhetoric and imagery.

The twelfth-century Romanesque Portico of Glory is grounded in the *Pantocrátor* (the depiction of Christ in his majesty, in final judgment), surrounded by Old and New Testament pictures: Moses with the Tablets of Law, the four evangelists, Saint Paul, the orchestra of the Apocalypse, among others. Rivas’ novel transmutes medieval hagiography housed in the temple erected to Spain’s patron saint within a twentieth-century Iberian context and, thus, invites readers to contemplate and question the manipulation of cultural identity markers in the transmission of memory in the current era. The painter’s fictional artwork of the nearly thousand-year-old architectural entrance reads as follows:

The painter would talk about the Pórtico da Gloria. He had drawn it with the thick, red pencil he always carried, like a carpenter, behind his ear. Each of the pictures in the drawing turned out to be one of his friends from A Falcona. ‘You, Casal,’ he said to the former mayor of Santiago, ‘you’re Moses with the Tables of the Law. You, Pasín,’ he said to the one who was in the union of railway men, ‘you’re Saint John the Evangelist, with his feet on top of the eagle. Saint Paul, that’s you, my captain,’ he said to Lieutenant Martínez, who had been a border guard and then a councilor under the Republic...He went around everyone and showed them their likeness on the sheet. And he explained that the base of the Pórtico da Gloria was full of monsters, ...and hearing this they all went quiet...Herbal could feel their gaze fixed on his silhouette as he stood there, a silent witness. And finally the painter spoke about the prophet Daniel... ‘That, Da Barca, is you.’ (*Carpenter’s* 25-26)<sup>4</sup>

Given the fact that the author represents the Final Judgment with Christ, seated on his throne to judge the actions of the living and the dead and to sentence them accordingly, surrounded by pictures upon whom were placed the faces of victims of political persecution, we must consider the significance of the recontextualized powerful imagery. Is Rivas inviting readers to ponder what is just? The first biblical picture cited is Moses with the Tablets of Law, underscoring the Judeo-Christian code of moral conduct with its concomitant punishment for violation. The final picture, an allusion to the protagonist, is that of the prophet Daniel, who interpreted dreams, revealed corruption, and prognosticated the downfall of blasphemers in power. Such exponentially allusive depictions point to future justice.

While the Pórtico de la Gloria is the entrance to the cathedral, it is imperative to understand the miracle and legend surrounding the patron saint for whom it was erected. As legend has it, Santiago (the apostle St. James the Elder) was martyred in Jerusalem in 44 A.D. and miraculously appeared in 844 A.D. on the battleground of Clavijo (in La Rioja) to aid in the fight against Islam. In 1212, the battle of Navas de Tolosa (Santa Elena, Jaen) was utilized to confer religious relevance onto (in other words, consecrated) the combined political Christian efforts of the kings of Castile, Navarre, and Aragon (respectively Alphonse the VIII, Sancho VII, and Peter II), the Archbishop of Toledo (Rodrigo Ximénez of Rada), and Pope Innocence III who decreed the Reconquest a crusade.

Centuries later, fictional and factual nationalists also rationalize their ambitions as part of a holy mission. Herbal's commander pontificates: "We are fighting a relentless war against evil, the salvation of Christendom depends on our victory... [we are fighting] for God and country" (*Carpenter's* 45).<sup>5</sup> Overt parallels between the Spanish Civil War and the Reconquest include the fratricidal nature, the church-sanctioned political slaughter, and ultimately, the weight of the Pope in consecrating a Christian victory in order to construct history. Once the war concluded on April 1, 1939, the nationalist victory was consecrated with a mass. Victory Day, celebrated yearly, as Reig Tapia claims, definitively marked a new order (12) and was a feast day for the nationalist victors, a dastardly day of remembrance and a reminder that victory, not peace, was commemorated, that reconciliation was repudiated and the defeated were to be humiliated (11).

In Rivas' novel, the prison's chaplain in his homily during the High Mass states, "Today we are celebrating the victory of God." The narrator explains, "Authorities were in attendance and the governor did not want unpleasant surprises, insurrections of laughter or coughing, as had happened on previous occasions when some preacher had rubbed salt into the wound, blessed the war he called a Crusade and urged them to repent, fallen angels of the band of Beelzebub, and to ask for divine protection for General Franco" (84). The chaplain professed,

'the worst [sin] of...all ... that ... possessed a part of Spain in Recent years, betraying her essential being, is the Sin of History. ... This terribly pernicious ... Sin takes root ... in the ignorance of simpler folk, who are swept along by temptations in the form of revolutions and ludicrous social Utopias. ... And, as the Scriptures clearly tell us, the wrath of God exists .... God chooses the instruments of his victory. God's chosen ones'. The Chaplain read out the telegram Pope Pius XII sent Franco on 31 March, 'Lifting up our hearts to God, we give sincere thanks to His Excellency for the victory of Catholic Spain.' (*Carpenter's* 83-84)

When the pope's telegram congratulating Franco was read the captive audience, the prisoners began to cough in dissent (84), infuriating the chaplain. In the English translation from the original Galician, the narrator explains, "today was Victory Day and if things carried on as they were they would be celebrating it with a massacre" (The Castilian translation from *gallego* reads: "como la cosa siguiese así iban a tener que celebrarlo con una carnicería" [111 *Lápiz*]).

In Castilian to "say mass" is "celebrar la misa" (literally to celebrate the mass). The term "celebrar" (to celebrate) is ambiguous and polyvalent. Is the Victory Day, then, celebrated (as in with festivities) or is it consecrated (as in with a mass) or both? The other curious piece is the passage, "if things carried on as they were they would be celebrating it with a massacre" ("como la cosa siguiese así iban a tener que celebrarlo con una carnicería"). Here the term "celebrate" is ironic and, thus, paradoxical. If "to celebrate" connotes to have a festivity, massive death would be contrary to what those partaking in the celebration would experience. If "to celebrate" is being adapted from "celebrar la misa," and reapplied to "celebrating it with a massacre" ("celebrarlo con una carnicería"), then a direct parallel is established between the liturgy and the massacre/*carnicería* that could have ensued. Transubstantiation and communion commemorate an ontological moment in Christian doctrine: martyrdom, sacrifice, and redemption, in other words, the conferral of meaning upon ritualized and hegemonically sanctioned execution of an innocent. Is Rivas (and his translators), with these lexical choices, underscoring the innocence of these prisoners (for their only transgression is what was termed "desafecto al regimen")? Furthermore, are we the readers to understand that meaning is conferred upon their suffering and that their imprisonment (and unjustifiable potential demise) is not meaningless, but rather gains symbolic significance to a collective? Let's compare the term "carnicería" with "massacre." A massacre is the bloody eradication of a massive group of human beings. Such is not the case with the term "carnicería," whose possible

translations would include “slaughter,” “carnage,” and “butchering.” The Castilian<sup>6</sup> term, then, brings the reader closer to the concept of a sacrifice, the ritualized slaughter of an innocent whose death gains symbolic or iconic significance as it is believed to restore order or inaugurate a new one.

Curiously, Rivas, in the most complex fashion, subverts the Christian imagery previously employed by the victors who considered themselves messianic, saving Spain from the red beast. By donning the Christ-like image or by depicting the nationalist fight as a crusade, the Francoists seemed to be immune to the rational rebuttal of their beliefs. Yet the way to counter the consecrated imagery (and by extension rhetoric) of the genocidal victors is through the counter memory of cultural production. The following image in Rivas of the defeated’s “death train” perfectly transmutes and transforms the Christian symbolism usurped by the subjugators and underscores martyrdom rather than salvation and ironizes the point of departure. Da Barca was being transferred from Valencia (the prison hospital named Porta Coeli) to Galicia where his “crime” was “destacado elemento desafecto al régimen” (“prominent element opposed to the regime” [*Carpenter’s*]) and was sentenced to life imprisonment. It was “a transfer mission that would cause him to travel the breadth of Spain, on trains that crawled along like penitents with the cross on their shoulders” (*Carpenter’s* 145).<sup>7</sup> The name of the prison hospital, in Latin, is synonymous with that of the entrance to the Cathedral of Santiago. Both connote the gateway to Heaven. Hence the train on the locomotive equivalent of the *via crucis* lumbers and stumbles away from the promise of salvation, a fact further ironized when considering the nomenclature of the Regime’s Patronato para la Redención de Penas por el Trabajo in which the incarcerated, through hard labor, toiled toward (political) redemption.

Further subversion of the Regime’s penchant for consecration of their status as the chosen ones is evident in the profanation of the Holiest of Holies: the body and blood or the chalice and Eucharist. In one of the *sacas*, as the guards take out the prisoners about to be executed, a shiver runs down Herbal’s spine as a priest whom he had seen “alzar el cáliz en una ceremonia oficial y que ahora llevaba camisa azul y pistola al cinto” (71) was an accessory to this sanctioned extermination.<sup>8</sup> They scoured the jail “cosechando los hombres de una lista” (harvesting men) for the bitter fruit of death. Herbal territorially stakes his claim on Daniel Da Barca and ritualizes his assault, “Arrastró al doctor Da Barca hasta el arenal. Lo tumbó *de rodillas*, de un puñetazo en el vientre. Lo agarró por los cabellos. *Abre la boca, hostia*” (72, emphasis mine).<sup>9</sup> In this profanation of the act of communion, the quintessential rite of Catholicism, rather than articulate “body of Christ” and place the host in the kneeling communicant’s mouth, Herbal blasphemes the host, sticks the gun in Da Barca’s mouth and pulls the trigger. Da Barca, left for dead, is found the next day by the washing women. The jail’s chaplain comments on Da Barca, “Mother of God! It makes me want to believe in a miracle, a message. Even in hell there are certain rules... Wait until the court-martial. Then they can shoot him as God intended” (*Carpenter’s* 52).<sup>10</sup> The juxtaposition of court-martial and “as God intended” establishes an odd parallel: both allude to a sense of justice. The nationalists’ killing of the political prisoners can only be viewed as a type of punitive or retributive justice, underscored and subverted by Rivas, particularly as it refers to the execution of the character whose trophy is the title of the novel.

The painter who, following his death, becomes a part of his executioner, raises awareness of an altogether different type of justice. This is precisely why the transformation of Herbal, the character who embodies the two Spains, is so poignant. Herbal describes how the painter’s ghost became a part of him; he likens the experience to that of his uncle, a trapper, who would arguably feel compassion for the foxes he trapped and killed:

I’m sorry, pal... A look would flash between my uncle, the trapper, and his prey. His eyes would be saying, and I heard the murmur, that there was nothing he could do. This is what I felt before the painter... I murmured to myself that I was sorry... I don’t know what he thought when our eyes met... but I want to believe that he understood... [and] I blew off his head. And then I remembered the pencil. The pencil he carried behind his ear. This pencil (*Carpenter’s* 12).<sup>11</sup>

The writing implement is the vehicle through which emotion and understanding are transferred.

Throughout the novel, Herbal has chest pains and trouble breathing. Near the conclusion, Doctor Da Barca diagnoses him with a heart condition. At the end of the novel, we learn that he has finally “gotten things off his chest”: matters that he did not appear to have “tomado a pecho.” While cliché, the heart is a universal trope for feeling. Herbal’s pseudo confession can take place because of his connection to another human being. While his actions throughout the novel are motivated by fear or lack of self-esteem or envy, his bond with four individuals reveals his evolution. He “confesses” to Maria da Visitação, he “loves” Marisa (Da Barca’s fiancée) from afar (thus explaining his envy of Da Barca), he feels loyalty for his sister (who loses her mind in her abusive marriage) and the painter. Once Herbal has killed and internalized the latter, the painter assists him in cultivating his sensibilities and in making decisions based on a human connection rather than on fear. The painter reveals to him what it means to understand the suffering of others



through the poetic imagery of romantic artist Joseph Turner's painting: "His shipwreck of a slave traders' boat is the most astonishing image of the sea that exists. In it, you can hear the sea. In the shout of the slaves. Slaves who possibly knew no more about the sea than the rolling of the hold" (*Carpenter's*).<sup>12</sup> This is precisely the effect of Rivas' narrative; he paints the war from inside the prison, from inside the head of an executioner who hears the voices of the dead. The third person omniscient narrator elucidates, "When he felt the pencil, when they spoke of these things... the guard Herbal noticed how the feeling of breathlessness would disappear, as if by magic."<sup>13</sup> Rivas' poetic narrative illuminates, sheds light on what it really meant to be a political prisoner, to be persecuted, but also what it must have been like to be a blindly (and bloodily) obedient executioner, one of the persecutors. Not only is Herbal taciturn, not expressing his own voice much, but he is also, for all intents and purposes, blind. In spite of being a guard, the eyes and ears, so to speak, of the nationalist jailers, he lacks understanding. With more than 150,000 executed without justice, cast in unmarked common pits or graves throughout the Spanish landscape, fictional Herbal incarnates the hundreds and thousands of real life prison guards, the Brigadiers of Dawn, who carried out verbal orders without written stipulation or judicial process, obediently, turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to what they were doing and how their actions would impact their direct victims, the families, subsequent generations, the country and, remarkably, themselves.

The plot and character development contribute to a type of restorative justice, not retributive justice. Restorative justice begins with an acknowledgement of wrongdoing or transgression in the path to restoring the humanity or personhood of those harmed. Essential to this rehumanization is memory. While retributive justice would newly arouse and perpetuate hatred, restorative justice and reconciliation honor the suffering transpired without demonizing the transgressors. As Colin Greer claims, "acknowledgement is crucial if healing is to go on and if the undercurrents of conflict are not to be left simmering" (Greer n.p., qtd. in Faber 153). Denial leads to amnesia. For healing to take place, admission of what transpired is imperative before moving forward. Greer paraphrases Bishop Desmond Tutu with regard to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: "one way of making sure the past will continue to haunt society is to maintain that it is past" (Greer n.p. qtd. in Faber 153). In *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (1998), John Paul Lederach affirms that reconciliation can take place only in social (not political) space when sustained by four elements: truth, mercy, justice, and peace. The recently passed Ley 52/ of 2007<sup>14</sup> stipulates its purposes to include the recognition and broadening of rights of those who suffered persecution or violence during the war or dictatorship. Said law reiterates the spirit of reconciliation, concord (*condordia*), and pluralism of ideas stipulated in the 1978 Constitution while underscoring the "voluntad de reencuentro de los españoles" and the "vocación integradora" (p. 53410) (the Spanish will to reencounter and the integrative vocation, [my translation]).

Herbal's haunting perfectly elaborates in literary form the reencounter and integration of Spaniards, or in other words, of the two Spains. While Herbal might not have chosen to internalize his victim, the executioner constantly hears the dead painter's voice as his pencil –his legacy, rests behind his ear. The push to silence and erase, to quell and obliterate, or (to coin a neologism) to oblivate and relegate to the void of the unremembered was ineffective and fostered the need to express suffering.

Herbal's hearing of the painter's voice and his own suffering that results from his agency and complicity in a murderous regime could be viewed as hauntological imagery parallel to the phantom pain depicted in the novel. Phantom pain is the persistence of pain or feeling originating from a missing body part. In an episode in the infirmary, Herbal witnesses Da Barca minister to an amputee screaming from the excruciating pain in his right foot that had been missing for nine months (*Carpenter's* 88). When Herbal inquires of the painter if he knew of phantom pain, the ghost replies, "Apparently it's the worst pain you can get, a pain that becomes unbearable. The memory of pain. The pain of what you have lost" (*Carpenter's* 91). The hauntological depiction of the amputee's plight perfectly encapsulates the recurring theme of this entire novel: pain provoked by absence. The constant awareness of absence highlights its paradoxical (absent) presence. Like an artistic or literary palimpsest, a painted over image or scratched out writing, memory acknowledges not simply nothingness, but rather the deletion of something. Physical trauma such as a mutilation or amputation perfectly metaphorizes the effect of civil war: a previously whole body left incomplete and fragmented while the memory of able-bodiedness is fused with the remembrance of the traumatic act, and additionally, the lasting physical and emotional suffering is accompanied by the expectation to continue to function in the midst of implicit and explicit denial of the trauma.

While following Franco's death in 1975, the "pact of silence," and agreement on reconciliation, to not stir up the past, to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the Regime's persecution of its opponents were integral to the Transition to democracy, such state sanctioned silence and blindness denied the trauma suffered by half of Spain. In "Trauma y memoria de la Guerra Civil y la dictadura franquista," José María Ruiz-Vargas avers that the fierce repression and abuse of the defeated hindered the ability to overcome trauma and resulted in post-traumatic stress (n.p.).<sup>15</sup> Ruiz-Vargas offers that feeling the pain of others, vindicating historical memory, and recovering the wounded memory of the victims are inextricably linked and essential to healing.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, professors in bioethics and human rights, respectively Jodi Halpern and Harvey Weinstein, maintain that to heal following fratricidal conflict, one must feel the pain of others. Halpern and Weinstein affirm that "To reverse the destruction of social and familiar networks that normally sustain health and well-being, a process of rehumanization must occur. ... [The] promotion of empathy is a critical component

of reconciliation” (562). Furthermore, “healthy psychological and physical functioning requires overcoming the hatred ... this depends upon seeing their recent enemies in human terms” (Halpern and Weinstein 562). They stress rehumanization and empathy as critical to reconciliation, or in other words, “[seeing] former enemies as real people” (562).

Sebastiaan Faber<sup>17</sup> finds that the relatively recent Spanish cultural production that responds to the “pact of silence” has three salient commonalities: 1) the shock value of the facts revealed; 2) the resilience of the survivors; and 3) the level of denial among perpetrators, accomplices, and descendants. *El Lápiz*’s changing narrative voice, curiously, presents all three truths underscored by Faber. The varied narration glides between third person omniscient, Herbal’s inner monologue, and tales Herbal recounts to Maria da Visitação (an undocumented young prostitute who works at the bar-brothel owned by Herbal’s partner). In a profane simulacrum of a confessional, the executioner, haunted by the painter, bares his soul to one who while, perhaps not silent or silenced, is erased from societal importance by her multiply marginalized status: her race, her extreme youth, her illegal immigration status, and her low position in the sex traffic industry. These factors render her nearly nonexistent within society; as such, she is an ideal interlocutor (as a literary artifice) to whom present plot fragments in this polyphonic work.

The context in which Herbal breaks his silence (and implicit denial of his past actions) is the fictional current day. He is presently employed in a type of limbo, on the Luso-Hispanic border near Fronteira, bereft of any of the symbols of nationalism so fervently fought for. The bar-brothel is not a *lieu de mémoire*, but perhaps a *lieu d’oubli* (not a place of remembrance of monumental history and supposed greatness, but rather a locus of forgetting where past and present disappear into oblivion and nothingness). Hence, Herbal’s monologues eke out remembrance and memory, anchoring the plot in a character who contains within him the two Spains: himself (the role he played for the Regime) and the painter’s hauntological presence and voice attached to the pencil Herbal later bestows upon his multiply marginalized interlocutor.

Situated on the border during the time of democracy, the roadside brothel (locus of Herbal’s confession) and the timeless Cathedral (like all sacrosanct symbols appropriated by the Regime as *lieux de mémoire*) are at odds. While Francoism adapted Christian imagery to reconstruct the past and legitimate malfeasance, the pseudo confession in the border town whorehouse during the Transition destabilizes and de-sanctifies the previously consecrated History (with a capital H). By recounting what he saw, did and felt, Herbal is reliving the past. Given Nora’s use of *mémoire*, Herbal in the present relives and shares his subjective memory.

Franco’s use of *lieux de la mémoire* split Spain in two: the victors and the collective other, to be humiliated and dehumanized. Rivas artfully dedichotomizes the two Spains through the use of understanding and empathy. To empathize is to feel what another feels. By internalizing the painter, Herbal who had coldly followed murderous orders, is sensitized to the plight of others. Herbal is a damaged individual, a victim of physical and mental abuse as a child. By internalizing his cruel father’s negative regard, he appropriated it as his own. Without an autonomous sense of self-worth, the heteronomous merit conferred upon him as he rose in rank within the nationalist hierarchy was a pale substitute for unconditional positive self-regard. Yet in the ironic denouement of the novel, we readers learn that the jailer was later jailed for *murder*—not for heartlessly taking the lives of political prisoners under cover of night, but rather for avenging and killing his abused sister’s batterer. The painter’s ghost stayed with Herbal and was a constant reminder of sensibilities and feeling. Only in the curiously safe space of the roadside bordello to his multiply marginalized interlocutor during the Transition can the executioner verbalize the past and, hence, relive, feel, and face in the present moment what had been.

José Colmeiro underscores the “spectral nature of Spanish history;” and posits that Spain is a “nation full of ghosts,” (32), “invisible but ever present” (28), “still waiting recovery, resolution, and reparation” (32). Rivas’ novel indisputably denounces and subverts the nationalist drive to homogenize heterogeneous peoples, whitewash genocide and human rights violations, and indoctrinate those remaining on Hispano-Iberian soil following the defeat of the Republic with a sense of supremacy based on empty rhetoric and insidiously manipulated cultural icons. Herbal, haunted by his victim, awakens to the plight of those he killed, comes to feel and be possessed by understanding. If Spanish ghosts await justice and resolution, as Colmeiro indicates, Rivas’ empathetic executioner must be viewed as an invitation to consider restorative justice.

## Notes

1. The Law was approved by the Consejo de Ministros en 2006 and by the Congreso de Diputados in 2007.
2. For Nora, “Memory is life. ...in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting ... History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no

- longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past” (Nora 8).
3. While this work was commissioned for the Valley of the Fallen, it was purportedly turned down due to the artist’s Bolivian nationality. Today it can be found in the Archivo Histórico Militar, Madrid.
  4. “El pintor hablaba del Pórtico de la Gloria. Lo había dibujado con un lápiz gordo y rojo, que llevaba constantemente en la oreja, como un carpintero. Cada una de las figuras resultaba ser en el retrato uno de sus compañeros de la Falcona. Parecía satisfecho. Tú, Casal, dijo al que había sido alcalde de Compostela, eres Moisés con las Tablas de la Ley. Y tú, Pasín, le dijo a uno que era del sindicato ferroviario, tú eres San Juan Evangelista, con los pies sobre el águila. Y San Pablo eres tú, mi capitán, le dijo al teniente Martínez, que había sido carabinero y se metió de concejal republicano... Y así a todos, que salieron tal cual, como luego se pudo ver en el papel. Y el pintor explicó que el zócalo del Pórtico de la Gloria estaba poblado de monstruos, ..., y cuando oyeron eso todos callaron, ... Herbal bien que notaba todos los ojos clavados en su silueta de testigo mudo. Y por fin se decidió a hablar del profeta Daniel. ... Ése eres tú, Da Barca” (*Lápiz* 41-42).
  5. “Libramos una guerra implacable contra el mal, de nuestra victoria depende la salvación de la cristiandad... [luchamos] por Dios y la patria” (*Lápiz* 66).
  6. The Galician is almost identical to the Castilian *carnicería* and *celebrar la/a misa*.
  7. “una misión de traslado que le haría recorrer España todo a lo largo, en trenes que se arrastraban como penitentes con la cruz a cuestas” (*Lápiz* 184).
  8. The English translation omits the reference to the chalice and reads “a priest he had come across at an official ceremony, now wearing a blue shirt and with a pistol on his belt” (50).
  9. The English translation omits the allusion to Church liturgy, “He dragged Doctor Da Barca down to the sand punched him in the stomach and brought him to his knees. He grabbed his hair, ‘Open your mouth, for Christ’s sake” (51).
  10. “¡Virgen Santísima! Casi creería que esto es un milagro, un mensaje. Incluso en el infierno hay ciertas reglas... Que esperen por el consejo de guerra. Podrán fusilarlo como Dios manda” (*Lápiz* 72).
  11. “Lo siento mucho, socio. ... Entre mi tío el trampero y su presa había el instante de una mirada. Él le decía con los ojos, y yo oí ese murmullo, que no tenía más remedio. Eso fue lo que sentí ante el pintor. ... murmuré por dentro que lo sentía mucho, ... no sé lo que él pensó cuando su mirada se cruzó con la mía, un destello húmedo en la noche, pero quiero creer que él entendió [y], le ... reventé la cabeza. Y luego me acordé del lápiz [que] llevaba en la oreja. Este lápiz” (23).
  12. “La imagen más impresionante que existe del mar es su naufragio de un barco de negreros. Allí se escucha el mar. Es el grito de los esclavos, esclavos que quizá no conociesen del mar más que el vaivén en las bodegas.” (*Lápiz* 95).
  13. “Cuando sentía el lápiz, cuando hablaban de esas cosas, ... el guardia Herbal notaba que le desaparecían los ahogos como por ensalmo”
  14. The “exposición de motivos” of the Ley 52/2007, 26 de diciembre: “por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura” underscores the “espíritu de reconciliación y concordia” of the pluralism of ideas and resulted in the 1978 Constitution thus expresses the “voluntad de reencuentro de los españoles” and the “vocación integradora” (página 53410).
  15. Ruiz-Vargas asserts that “Lo terrible e injusto de la situación de posguerra fue que mientras los vencedores pudieron dedicarse plenamente a superar sus pérdidas, los derrotados física y/o moralmente y sus familias se vieron condenados al peor de los castigos: ser cautivos en su propia tierra, en su propio pueblo, en su propia casa, desposeídos de sus derechos y estigmatizados de por vida—el franquismo no incluyó en sus planes ni el perdón ni la reconciliación...desde el conocimiento actual sobre los trastornos y enfermedades del estado de ánimo, entender cómo aquella media España condenada al silencio y al sometimiento de sus iguales pudo sobrellevar, durante tanto tiempo, un destrozo emocional y moral tan profundo” (Ruiz Vargas n.p.).
  16. Ruiz-Vargas: “Porque la reivindicada ‘memoria histórica’ es la recuperación de la verdad desde la memoria herida de las víctimas. Sólo entonces, al demostrar que somos capaces de sentir el dolor ajeno, podrá empezar a cerrarse la brecha que sigue enrareciendo nuestra convivencia” (n.p.).
  17. Faber writes on works published or released from 2001-2004.

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**CHAPTER FOUR**

**BRIDGING COMMUNICATION**

### English at work in negotiating contexts.

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*"You must be the change  
you wish to see in the world"*

*Mohandas Gandhi*

The theme of negotiation in the field of International Studies is increasingly characterizing the current discussion on how to manage diversity and conflict in our age. Much diversity scholarship emphasizes on how racial, ethnic, class, gender, and sexual identities give rise to different ways of seeing the world.

The only alternative to a unifying vision that would imply a process of oppression seems to be the creation and maintenance of much more limited and less ambitious areas of inter-subjective agreement by a process of negotiation between agents whose way of seeing the world is different.

#### 1. *The Changing World*

The landscape in which international communication and diplomacy operate in the world has changed drastically, first, through the entry of multiple state entities into the diplomatic process in each country, and second, by the entry of non-state actors into the external relationships of each country. In addition, the process of increasing "democratization" has meant that there are many new players who do not know the old practices and style, using much more *open* language than before.

In our contemporary "post-traditional" society (Giddens), relationships and identities increasingly need to be negotiated through dialogue. Relationships based upon authority are in decline, and people's self identity, rather than being a feature of given positions and roles, is reflectively built up through a process of negotiation. The openness implicit in dialogical communication involves greater possibilities than the fixed relationships and identities of traditional societies, but also poses greater risks. This demands greater care over how language is used and greater sensitivity on how the participants in the dialogue are perceived.

There is an urgent necessity to know *the other, the other's specific context*. Many misunderstandings and negotiating disappointments are due to a failure to understand the broader and specific context from which the opponent starts. Of course the stronger side has a tendency to make a negotiation easy for itself, just as President Clinton in 1993 informed the UN that the U.S. would act multilaterally when possible, but unilaterally when necessary (Chomsky).

#### 2. *Negotiating Language*

By definition, negotiation is an exercise in language and communication, aiming at shared understanding where, as it commonly happens, there are different understandings and, even worse, different languages and cultures.

Raymond Cohen's *The Middle East Negotiating Lexicon* is a wonderful dictionary of key negotiating words in Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew, and Turkish. As the author declares (67-69), it is intended as a user-friendly reference for English-speaking observers and practitioners of negotiation interested in clarifying language and resolving linguistic discrepancies. As a matter of fact, the *Lexicon* is also a lucid picture of the cultural gap between the eastern and western world, giving account of *what is lost in translation*.

Focusing on the meaning of negotiation in contemporary English, Cohen points out the wide range of a semantic field that includes bargaining, debate, and overcoming difficulties – Oxford English Dictionary (X-3) – where compromise and concession are inseparable from negotiating. According to the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of negotiation, it is the very process of give and take, compromise, and mutual concession that legitimizes the outcome. On the contrary,

neither Arabic, Farsi, nor Turkish possesses a special term for “compromise” even if there are other functional equivalents. In the Middle Eastern paradigm of negotiation, “mutual sacrifice is not seen as something desirable in and of itself. Quite the reverse: who is enthusiastic about making a sacrifice? Thus an appeal to the Spirit of Compromise, as one might appeal to proof and justice, is literally meaningless in ME languages” (Cohen 82).

### 3. *Language and Culture*

Globalization is bringing together more and more people steeped in their own cultures and languages, all sharing complex economic, environmental, and other technical issues. In many cases code words summarize such issues, and phrases like “fair trade,” “social standards,” and “sustainable development” are used to mean things that are often removed from the literal meaning of the words or from their cultural contexts. Terms and words are often used irrationally and in violation of ethical precepts. They would need a sort of “resemiotization,” or a process through which meaning is negotiated and reconstructed each time the context changes. This also explains the interactive nature of the discourse comprehension, insofar as textual, situational, and cognitive resources are activated to derive meaning. World problems and events are interpreted in different ways, truths are not self-evident, and the increasingly negotiated nature of relationships demands highly developed dialogical capacities (Fairclough 136).

Moreover, while a single vehicular language dominates as the medium of discourse and communication, the levels of language competence are very different. It is almost unavoidable that cultural and semantic divergences across peoples remain unexpressed or misinterpreted or misunderstood. While the Western Powers or hegemonic classes possess a deep critical awareness of words and concepts, other countries and classes can be at loss for words in negotiating their own texts and contexts. How to face this operational dimension, closely connected with the political dimension, stands out as one of the big challenges of our age.

### 4. *Language and Diplomacy*

The problem of how to face reality and what to do when realities are so different, is also the reason why, from the days of Woodrow Wilson, the notion of “open” diplomacy has been considered as a kind of myth. While the concept of openness is generally offered as an absolute and desirable value, almost equated with democracy, it is widely recognized that language openness may often turn into a serious obstacle to negotiation and an excess of words which could take the place of real action.

An example of this excess can be ordinarily found in the UN General Assembly, where a multitude of resolutions have little consequence of action. The same can be said of the Non-Aligned Movement and G-77 in defending the position of the South in the debates with the North. This mountain of words contained in the documents often has the only consequence of preventing developing countries from stronger engagement on individual and collective tasks.

The theme of ambiguity is also often discussed with reference to its possible functions in the language of diplomacy. If negotiators can be explicit, precise, and clear, their language may also reflect the simultaneous pursuit of both precision and ambiguity. The flexibility of languages offers ample space to ambiguity, whether intentional or unintentional, thus leaving scope for alternative interpretations induced by contextual factors. One of the earliest and most influential of modern scholars on the subject has defined ambiguity as any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language (Empson). As a consequence of this, differences of competence in the language used may make the difference in negotiating contexts and texts, leading to negative, unequal conditions for the weaker negotiator.

On the other side, ambiguity can be strategically useful in a peace-agreement, where strategy is not concerned with the efficient *application* of force, but with the *exploitation* of *potential* force. A good example in this sense is the Rambouillet Accord Agreement – Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo – where the mediators maintained the integrity of the draft and at the same time made a small step towards elaborating, at a later stage, a compromise between the negotiating parties. In other words, “ambiguities make sure that, on the one hand, the parties retain their own individual perceptions as to how things should proceed and that, on the other, one common language is adopted, which both parties might later equally use” (Pehar 170). The same strategies of positive ambiguity could also be applied to metaphors and historical analogies in order to loosen the link between a source and its target, giving diplomatic language more chances to move between present, past, and future.

### 5. *Identity Claims and New Rhetoric*

Paradoxically, the very process of globalization has highlighted culture-specific reactions and identity claims. The development of a new school of rhetoric and interpretation has contributed to focus attention on power relations and asymmetrical cultural exchanges, promoting a vital discussion on the central issues of language, context, and action.

I.E. Richards, M. McLuhan, K. Burke, Ch. Perelman, and M. Foucault are just a few of the many seminal authors who have made major contributions to the development of contemporary communication theories. Their studies have opened new perspectives and ways of looking at language and discourse. The neo-Aristotelian rhetoric becomes the “study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (Richards 134-136), exploring the reasons why and how language has produced and still produces certain effects. According to I.E. Richards, metaphors are the essence not only of language, but also of thought itself. They can help us understand how our mind works and how we can control the world that we make for ourselves to live in. McLuhan’s powerful metaphor of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* is still the best proof and confirmation of Richards’ theory. Acting as an electric shock on the reader’s/listener’s sensory perceptions, it remains a central representation of the problematic complexity of cultural development through communication.

In 1951, K. Burke summed up in one word the difference between old rhetoric as *persuasion* and new rhetoric as *identification*. The task of rhetoric becomes the achievement of *identification* between men, through the use of verbal or nonverbal symbolic strategies. A better understanding of all the resources of language is seen as a function for development and cooperation among people for a better life.

New discursive means and methods of argumentation are increasingly developed to help larger and larger audiences in the sphere of action, proposing practical arguments as the required tool for disseminating ideas:

Only the existence of an argumentation that is neither compelling [...] nor arbitrary can give meaning to human freedom, a state in which a reasonable choice can be exercised .... The theory of argumentation will help to develop ... the justification of the possibility of a human community in the sphere of action. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 514).

As we move forward in history from the Classical period and the Aristotelian logic to the contemporary semiotic landscape (Kress and Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*), rhetoric comes to be increasingly considered as a means of transforming society, visualizing the different variegated truths of mankind, and implementing tools of action for freedom and justice against all petrifying dogmas. All historical knowledges are questioned in a kind of *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*), which reinforces the links between truth and discourse:

"Archaeology" would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and "genealogy" would be the tactics, whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play. (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 85).

*Bringing into play* all socially distorted communication, in order to move society towards full emancipation and justice, becomes the central role of rhetoric. Language is increasingly proposed as *the ethics of responsibility*, the word given to the *other* and accepted as *other*, the interaction inviting mankind to respect and equity. All this implies a real strategy of *action* for all people, including those who have been excluded from being able to utilize significant discourse on a subject of importance to them.

Both a development of Classical rhetoric (Van Dijk, *Strategies of Discourse*) and an extremely significant branch of linguistics (Clyne), the modern Discourse Analysis has undertaken the task to explain *how* language is a medium for action, something that shapes our own lives (Crystal), proceeding from social order into language, from context to text. Halliday’s work in that sense is a self-proclaimed attempt

to explain the linguistic process whereby the members construct the social semiotic, whereby social reality is shaped, constrained and modified – processes – which, far from tending toward an ideal construction, admit and even institutionalize myopia, prejudice and misunderstanding (126).



Typically, linguists – Austin, Searle, Levinson – define discourse as an *all-inclusive text*, something that is a socially and historically situated *mode of action*.

Multimodality distinguishes an approach to communication and textual interpretation based on *social semiotics*, a development of traditional semiotics which sees interpretation and technology-mediated communication as a process rooted in society (Kress and Van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*).

#### 6. *Hillary Clinton's Negotiating Appeal*

Political Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis have been working hard on the strategic use of political concepts and keywords, focusing on the process of meaning construction in the interaction of the text with previous knowledge and mental models (Van Dijk).

Like *complete* books, diplomatic texts are a network of texts in which the frontiers are never clear-cut. Like books, they are “caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences” (Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse* 23). They also represent, almost in visual terms, the story of how every human thing seems to make sense and to be “true” only within its epoch paradigms and panorama. The *semiotic landscape* of a text, like all geographical landscapes, will prove that all human social action is closely connected with the intrinsic characteristics of the land itself and with the culture-specific “directives” on how to use the land (Kress and Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal*).

The official speech held by Hillary Rodham Clinton, First Lady of The United States of America at the World Health Organization Forum on Women and Health Security, in Beijing, September 5 1995, is in the landscape of diplomatic speech-making at the United Nations. It is widely recognized that the UN is criticized for “appearing to be ineffective in times of emergencies; criticized for not having settled all the world’s problems; and criticized for not having lived up to Harry Truman’s hope that it would establish a worldwide rule of reason” (Saxton). On the other side, Saxton states as well that the United Nations “remains the most effective international forum for debate [...] Over the years, it has done much to improve the way the world behaves and the way it seeks to improve itself.”

From another point of view, the symbolic nature of the UN has been underlined, as far as it seems to be its most important characteristic:

“It will be said that the assimilation of the United Nations to drama – sacred or not – is no more than a metaphor. It is a metaphor and yet more than a metaphor, because the United Nations itself is a structure of metaphors. It may be safer to approach this structure in terms of recognized metaphor – the relevance of which one must try to demonstrate at every stage – than in literal and legalistic terms which tend, by their ordinary associations, to shut out from our recognition the elements of *fantasy*, *illusion* and *ritual* which make up so large a part of the actual life and function of the organization” (O’Brien and Topolski 18, emphasis added).

Hillary Clinton’s speech is constructed precisely in opposition to *fantasy*, *illusion* and *ritual*. She transforms all emotions into concrete, positive action in order to realize what all women across the world *need* and *want*.

If the “essential condition for the speaker who has set himself the task of persuading concrete individuals is that his construction of the audience be adequate to the occasion” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteka 19), it must be recognized that Hillary’s audience was perfect. More than 30,000 women had attended the preparatory meetings before the actual conference, and there were 5,000 delegates present at the Forum, not to speak of the mass-media international audiences. An American delegation leader rightly observed that this was not the world forum on Women, but the women’s forum on the world.

It must be considered that another recent world event, the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights, had already prepared the field for Hillary. On that occasion, the concept of female human rights was promulgated by women from all over the globe, intensifying networking about increasingly sophisticated future strategies. All main issues of the women’s movements were introduced in her speech, legitimizing and elevating them to the rank of human rights: “we cannot talk about equality and social development without also talking about *health care*.” (Rodham Clinton 236-237). “Talking” about health care for Hillary not only means introducing the women’s most cogent issues into the big world organizations, but also introducing them into a *program for action against all negations of human rights*: (lines numbered in diplomatic speech, from line 46)

“Scientists, doctors, nurses, community leaders and women themselves are working to improve and safeguard the health of women and families all over the world. If we join together as a global community, we can lift up the health and dignity of all women and their families in the remaining years of the 20th century and on into the next millennium.

Yet, for all the promise the future holds, we also know that many barriers lie in our way. For too long, women have been denied access to health care, education, economic opportunities, legal protection and human rights—all of which are used as building blocks for a healthy and productive life” (Rodham Clinton 46-57).

*Medical Care* becomes the strategic *keyword* to recall the dramatic conditions in which so many women live all over the world. By yoking human rights to the American faith in progress, science, and collective problem-solving she is also entitled to speak of injustice and abuse of every kind as if they were just “blocks for a healthy and productive life.” This also allows her to introduce the themes of sex and violence, the so-called “social and cultural attitudes” which the United States and the UN Agencies had been always reluctant to interfere with:

“Violence against women remains a leading cause of death among girls and women between the ages of 14 and 44 – violence from ethnic and religious conflicts, crime on the streets, and brutality in the home. For women who survive the violence, what often awaits them is a life of unrelenting physical and emotional pain that destroys their capacity for mothering, homemaking, or working and can lead to substance abuse and even suicide.

Violence against girls and women goes beyond the beatings, rape, killings, and forced prostitution that arise from poverty, wars, and domestic conflicts. Every day, more than 5,000 young girls are forced to endure the brutal practice of genital mutilation. The procedure is painful and life-threatening. It is degrading. And it is a violation of the physical integrity of a woman's body, leaving a lifetime of physical and emotional scars” (Rodham Clinton 122-137).

A *strong opposition* between what has been done, what can be done, and what is not yet done, characterizes the *chaining* of the discourse. Repetition of such negative words as *human suffering and pain, inadequate, inaccessible, unaffordable, indignity, disease, and death*, underline her strategy of dramatic opposition to all easy or rhetorical solutions and give impulse to the central vitality of the text. All of her strategies are used to inspire belief and motivate action towards the “productive life.” Her speech becomes a sort of real *development plan* where the American identity merges into the different identities of women across the world, on the common ground of the *spirit of enterprise*. This allows the transformation of all fundamentally sensitive ideological/religious issues into the practical themes of *action and production*:

“At long last, people and their government everywhere are beginning to understand that investing in the health of women and girls is as important to the prosperity of nations as investing in the development of open markets and trade. The health of women and girls cannot be divorced from progress on other economic and social issues” (Rodham Clinton 40-45).

In opposition to *fantasy, illusion, and ritual*, Hillary’s speech becomes a benchmark for achievement, the *development plan* for a powerful enterprise. Though coherent with all the specifications and qualities UN addresses have as a *genre* – Donahue and Prosser, Swales, Prosser – Hillary’ speech becomes, most simply, the historical land where men and women fighting for human rights *unite and meet* a vision of the future.

Her diplomatic language is the clearest evidence that discourse plays an essential role in the construction of an enterprise, encompassing ethical concerns in global business culture, merging discourses, favoring “discourse hybridization,” implementing communicative strategies and intercultural communication. It is by means of discourse that the organization remembers its history, constructs its future and develops policies and ideas.

This last observation might lead to a kind of transformation of the diplomatic discourse into a sort of enterprise discourse and “marketization of public discourse” (Fairclough 130-166): this will be the subject of my next paper. The

language of negotiation needs critical communication and interpretation in order to identify the reasons and ideologies underlying discourse.

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## **Religious Values in Modern Mass Media: Russian Cases**

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The place and role of religion is being discussed by scholars of different countries and academic trends with big interest, from great authorities in social philosophy such as Jurgen Habermas to sociologists of religion like Oxford Professor Rodger Trigg. Yet many of them pay little attention to questions of mass media influence on the religious landscape of modernity. The main complaint of scholars presented to mass media is the lack of professionalism of journalists followed by the lack of their knowledge of religions.

In general, studies of religious and social issues are handled by experts of different areas of humanitarian concern, with a focus on the following important areas: the forms of existence of religion in post-secular society, the functioning of religion and the churches in the Internet space, the radical challenges of modern religion and the public reaction, and the political dimension of religious and social relations. A new question in this research field can be formulated as "tools and mechanisms of broadcasting religious values in the media sphere." This problem is closely connected with the search of appropriate methods of analyzing values "captured" by the media sphere.

The question of secularity is a European question as ex-pontiff Benedict XVI claimed. For instance, secular American society is strongly based on protestant culture, and interaction between numerous churches and the state is very close and natural. In Europe and Russia, as a part of European culture basis, experts and journalists observe a real collapse of Christian values under the pressure of new values based on consumption and social inequality (Ratzinger, Pera; 2006).

At the same time religious issues in the European Union and in Russia differ a lot. Catholic Italy, for example, is much more interested in the role of the Church in the information society; that means questions of evangelization via Internet, presence of the Church in mass media, working with people in terms of media education etc. For the Russian Federation, which is still multicultural but Orthodox, we underline the following problems: growing irritation caused by mutual support of the church and the state; inner controversy in the church among bishops; social discontent caused by church wealth or wealth of Patriarch himself; in other words, all these problems deal with the social dimension of the church like an institution but not with its spiritual dimension.

An analysis of the church-society relations over a long historical period in Russia leads to the idea that the relationship between the Western secular intellectual elite and the Church worsens during periods of increasing political activity, as it does now, when the position of the Church could have a material impact on the situation. Finally, a new phenomenon in the present situation is the active inclusion in the political process of the new younger generation who today is defined by its ideology and not burdened with historical knowledge of the life of the Church in the twentieth century. The Russian Orthodox Church does not have to have credibility; they see the real problems and need the answers.

So, even when taking religion as a part of private life, it still affects almost every crucial aspect of social life. As Professor Federico D'Agostino, Chair of Sociology (University of Rome III) states, the problem is not whether religion enters into the public sphere out of being a private experience. "The liberal and laical thought has been advocating for religion only as in the private sphere" (D'Agostino, 2013). This statement describes the dimension of conflict that happened with private religious values and feelings in public media sphere in terms of secular society. But if we speak about the post-secular society in the meaning of "return of religion into the public sphere" we can't expect any value conflict since religion is understood within cultural dimensions. However, social and media experience shows that even when taking religion as a cultural phenomenon it still provokes misunderstanding and social tension, especially in multicultural and multifaith countries as Russia.

For the study conducted in 2013 by a group of scholars from St. Petersburg State University and headed by Professor Viktor Sidorov we chose a Pussy Riot action as an object. The performance happened on February 21, 2012 in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. The choice was determined by several factors such as number of articles and long-life effect of the newsbreak, peculiarities of media coverage, and special interest in the case by other scholars in the humanitarian field. Among other possible cases of the year 2012 we could pick:

- baptized daughter of Russian pop-singer Philip Kirkorov, born through surrogacy;
- court "in the case of the Patriarch apartment;"

- retouching photo with expensive watches of Head of the Russian Church by its press service.

These newsbreaks, it should be mentioned, have a deep background of other prolonged conflicts: the interference of the Russian Orthodox Church in the educational sphere (teaching Basics of Religions in secondary schools), the close relations between religious leaders and political ones, the prohibition of some priests to speak with journalists, and equivocal comments from official Church press service, etc. The Russian Orthodox Church itself explains the negative attitude towards its activities by hostility to Patriarch Kirill as head of the Church. He was chosen in 2009 and is known as an active leader, even an “effective manager,” as some priests and journalists say, a reformer, and a renovator of the Church. Kirill started with establishing a new institution – the Synodal Information Department in charge of information policy. Since then the new division began to resist information provocations, including those in the media sphere.

It is an interesting fact that publishing results of sociological surveys on religious issues became a matter of information struggle and manipulation in the media sphere. It seems that no one can tell what the exact numbers of believers and belonging, of supporters and opponents, of satisfied and dissatisfied inside the Church are. In these terms, the analysis of the media sphere can give more precise conclusions than numbers.

Officially published numbers show diversity of religious views, and sometimes these pictures differ one from another depending on the research organization. As for the believers and the religious landscape in Russia, for instance, the Levada-Center public opinion poll conducted in November, 2012 confirmed that 74% of the respondents called themselves Orthodox believers, while 7% said they were Muslims. Less than 1% professed other religions (Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and others). The center polled 1,600 people in 130 towns and cities in 45 regions (Number of Orthodox Church Members Shrinking in Russia, Islam on the Rise – Poll, 2012). Another recent survey shows that many Russians (43%) support the behavior of the Russian Orthodox Church in scandalous situations. At the same time, a third of the respondents (35%) are of a different opinion, believing that the Russian Orthodox Church and the faithful “should show mercy, rather than enter into squabbles and lawsuits.” The support for the position of the Church in these situations usually comes from Orthodox Russians (48%). Atheists, by contrast, are more inclined to consider it as an unacceptable response (47%). (The poll, conducted in April 28-29, in 46 subjects of the Russian Federation by sociologists of Russian Research Center for Public Opinion).

One of the most tendentious polls was made by the Levada-center. The published results demonstrate that 46% of the respondents know nothing about the Pussy Riot, and 46% of those who know consider criminal penalties for the young ladies rather fair.

Another big research center loyal to the Russian Orthodox Church – “SREDA” – held another survey in 2012 that showed the most desirable characteristics of the image of the Church (1500 respondents across Russia). These are:

1. Helping people (38%)
2. Openness, clarity and friendliness (31%)
3. Active education of young people (26%)
4. Modesty, absence of greed (22%)
5. Adherence to tradition, maintenance of the past (18%).

So, the Pussy Riot’s prayer as a political performance in its nature exposed all kinds of religious tensions registered in the Russian society. It was based on a non-conformist action group of young women who, in spite of the accepted norms of behavior in the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church, held a shocking public prayer that sounded like “Mother of God, Put Putin Away!” This episode, later named “Pussy Riot action,” created deep social resonance and divergent estimates in mass media that were heated by the criminal case initiated against the participants and held over them by the court. Finally, they were sentenced to 2 years of colony despite their having young children.

The action happened when the four ladies burst into the church, set up their equipment immediately and sang that prayer for 40 seconds. They were well-known before this case by similar performances they made wearing leggings and colorful balaclavas on their heads. There were no debates among experts about the music, but their lyrics are of a political nature. They invited journalists in advance without announcing the details of what was going to happen. They were arrested in a week after the performance and the following details have been described in mass media and on Wikipedia as well.

Like any event that attracts worldwide attention, the Pussy Riot action acquired a political character. It exacerbated the existing ideological confrontation in the society and, therefore, their positioning in the media field. On one hand, this case split different social and ideological groups from three points of view – political, religious, and cultural; on the other hand, this phenomenon united all these people around an important cultural and ideological question: in which ways does the concept of sacred exist in post-secular society and mass media?

The sample consisted of 14 media (2 regional papers, 7 national papers, and 5 web-sites) of different political orientations: liberal, conservative, and marginal. Although the sample did not cover all types of classification system criteria we suggest that these media crucially influenced the public, especially in matters of ideology including religion. The text sample was solid; it implied that all publications included the keywords “Pussy Riot” while excluding context. Then we took key pieces of each text representing significant concepts (manually) for further analysis.

The content analysis required defining special criteria to analyze lexical fragments. The first group of value indicators allows ambiguous interpretation: human rights (freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, pluralism),

rationality/scientific character, faith/belief, spirituality religious/humanistic, social solidarity (solidarity/split), secularization, and authority (of Church, Patriarch, State/power).

For this group of indicators, we looked for three connotations (speaking in terms of political estimation, religious or cultural) and cited fragments highlighting key concepts. The task was to find out the semantic field of expressing the sacred.

The second group unequivocally treated value indicators: common cultural values, cultural heritage/memory, and sacrilege/blasphemy. Here we searched only for key concepts to find out the significance of every message.

Additionally, we gathered key opinions of experts expressed in the articles, and we divided them into the following categories: a journalist, an opinion journalist/observer, specialist in any field, girls from Pussy Riot, state representative, church representative, culture representative, Christian, representative of non-Christian faith, atheist, and others. The content analysis also included study of the readers' comments on websites if found. Key reflected ideas were divided into four groups: neutral (estimate of journalist' work); negative (assessment of journalist' work and attitude towards scandal prayer); positive; and unstable (changing position of a reader, the uncertainty in relation to the prayer, and the work of journalists). Primary results of the study were published earlier (Nigmatullina, 233-241).

The table in the appendix demonstrates the quantity of publications in sample for the period and corresponds to the part of the study executed by the author (see table 1). First, results showed that the most significant numbers relate to criteria "social split," "cultural memory," "blasphemy," "humanistic spirituality," "authority (of Church, Patriarch, State/power)," and "freedom of speech." Here we see definite cultural estimation of the Pussy Riot action covered in mass media. Experts correlated the most severe evaluation of its consequences with social split inside different types of elites, including religious ones. That means that the core of the split lies in value uncertainty in society as a whole. Table 2 in the appendix demonstrates key pictures of this part of the study.

We can conclude that journalists of liberal print media ("Nezavisimaya") show diverse estimates of the political performance paying attention mostly to political and religious dimensions of the case. It is noteworthy that most arguments in the analyzed articles were given through opinions of Church representatives, law experts, and academicians. Some of the comments sound rather radical: "I do not rule out the possibility that in order to calm the agitated public they can apply a tough criminal article."

The liberal-conservative wing of the Russian mass media ("Russian reporter") detects a religious split on society and gives political evaluation of the Patriarch's authority and level of freedom of speech. The correlation between expressing different values in secular society and the abuse of religious feelings of individuals is very strong. Journalists of "Russian reporter" support their conclusions with their own arguments; the second and the third place go to culture representatives and academic experts respectively. The defense of the Pussy Riot prayer by journalists in this case is connected with cultural dimension. They also see positive meaning in the very fact of emerged conflict: "Pussy Riot's genius is that they pulled out all the most unpleasant things in our society."

Radical conservatives from "Zavtra," who are monarchists by nature, give negative estimates to political performances in churches; they regard it as a form of freedom of speech in defense of the authority of the Patriarch. Explaining the Pussy Riot action in terms of postmodern carnival, journalists deepen their conclusions in a sociological way. They write about the fragmentation of consciousness, the cult of the "Golden Bull," the hatred of one's neighbor, the cult of greed, violence, and murder: "All of these elements suddenly started troubling our power structure as well."

Moderate conservatives from "Literaturnaya" analyze social and political problems in a cultural context as well. It is the only mass media in this part of the sample that discussed interaction between academic rationality and humanistic secular spirituality. In their conclusions, journalists put the debate on a more global level of national ideas: they did not establish the main point, however, the ideological conditions for sustained development. In society, there is still no agreement as to the meaning and purpose of the existence of the new Russia."

Generally, we reached three main points of conclusion.

- 1) All mass media – liberal, loyal to state, radical conservative, and loyal to church – more or less oppose blasphemy as a cultural phenomenon.
- 2) The journalists and their audience are still very conservative in their value orientations.
- 3) The mass media did not meet the expectations of the audience. Church, state, and society speak different dialects. And all of them are disconnected by "media illiteracy."

Recorded in the study the attitude to the Pussy Riot case as a blasphemy carries a very important message. It allows us to understand the marked controversy regarding the different values because they translate the discourse from a political language or religious one to the language of culture. We observe that the post-secular society moves from the negative attitude towards religion and the church to the treatment of the church as a cultural value. Thus, people from secular society and their heirs transform their ideological potential in two directions.

The first is the perception of the church as a sacred institution designed to be between man and God. The second is the attitude to the church as to the value of the national culture, as to the phenomenon that has deep historical roots and forms part of the universal cultural memory. These directions are no longer antagonists nowadays. In other words, the hypothesis of the special importance of culture in the media discourse of the church and society to the post-secular world finds its definite confirmation.

However, the role of mass media in putting the right accents in any discussion is obviously crucial. With the help of mass media, the society can be either manipulated or socially mobilized with good intentions. The coverage of

the Pussy Riot action showed that the audience did not get answers to key questions but attracted numerous opinions from journalists, experts and different representatives. As Viktor Khrul suggests in his observation of the religious landscape in Russia, “the lack of knowledge and experience in religious life among journalists gives much more space for myths and stereotypes in the public opinion. There is an evident temptation for journalists to feed the audience not with what is happening in reality but with what fits into people’s expectations, based on myths and stereotypes” (202).

We suggest that an axiological approach and specific tools of the value analysis of media can become the theoretical basis for studies of religious and social discourses. There is a request in the Russian media sphere to conduct research related to the radical religious actions, relations of church and state in the media sphere, new manifestations of mythological thinking of the contemporary Russian audience and others. The initial intention of our study was to reveal hidden spiritual values from religious discourse in media and to compare them with those that are described by sociologists.

In general, the scheme of the valuable media research can be summarized as follows. The first phase involves the definition of value conflict in the media sphere that has led to the displacement of significances in the same category. This shift is recorded as compared to a norm and past performance. Next, we should find out who influences the transformation of the concept in the media and what the mechanisms of adding new values are. Relatively speaking, the result of this procedure should be the understanding of the language that journalists and opinion leaders speak with the audience in the public media sphere. The final stage of such a study, and maybe the most difficult, is linking the results with the data of closely related sciences (sociology, political science, psychology) to find the consequences: how the transformation of significances in the media affects real change in the public consciousness, opinion, and behavior. The theoretical understanding of the formation of a new research methodology will inevitably become a priority before the results of the case studies, as the “blind” analysis of complex categories can result in second-guessing and creating non-existent mechanisms.

## Appendix

Table 1. Text sample

Mass media	Number of texts	Number of analyzed pieces
“Nezavisimaya” - “Religion” appendix	22	57
“Literaturnaya”	9	59
“Zavtra”	46	51
“Russian reporter”	87	83

Table 2. Significant estimates of Pussy Riot case

<i>Value indicators (equivocal)</i>		<i>Political estimates</i>	<i>Religious estimates</i>	<i>Cultural estimates</i>
<b>Human rights</b>	Freedom of conscience	Nezavisimaya		
	Freedom of speech	Russian reporter, Zavtra		Zavtra
<b>Rationality / scientism</b>				Literaturnaya
<b>Spirituality</b>	humanistic			Literaturnaya
	religious			
<b>Social solidarity</b>	solidarity			
	split	Nezavisimaya	Russian reporter, Nezavisimaya	Literaturnaya
<b>Secularization</b>				
<b>Authority of</b>	The Church		Nezavisimaya	Nezavisimaya
	Patriarch	Russian reporter, Zavtra	Nezavisimaya	
	The State	Literaturnaya		





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## Media Sphere and Bridges of Culture

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Bridges of culture is an anthropomorphous communication that actualizes the spiritual heritage of the mankind and creates the personality within the frames of the society. These are the largest sets of socially significant information which is in continuous application and which is specifically ordered in media communication of the human.

Throughout the centuries and the millennia of humanity, history of the cultural memory has undergone difficult metamorphoses. As a philosopher writes, “cultural development in all variety of her forms occurs in such a way that everything which is important for development and storing of saved up experience gravitates to a certain internal system...” Culture has to bear sufficient potential opportunities within itself for its acceptance by a human. The hidden sense of such structure of culture, which can be incorporated by every human, can become a basis for the formation of streams of new meanings, new interpretations (Akhiyezer, 383). In its essence, experience precedes our idea of cultural memory and channels of our transfer from generation to generation, from human to human.

Cultural memory continues to shape humanity. This is the question for today, which means that cultural past is only conditionally past but in its essence it is always with us – alive and actively present. But is it possible to call our live memory cultural, or to know whether there is a substitute?

To keep the memory only is insufficient. "Severe experience confirms that everything rests against universal questions, kindness, and evil issues" (Lifshits, *The problem of Dostoevsky*, 49), including a question of cultural continuity and culture.

It is known that humanity today is less focused on that history, which in its invariable shape (and whether it can be like that?) comes to him from the past times. Rather, it explores the newly designed or carefully edited memory, looking for new meanings and interpretations. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon is not only one repetitive of similar situations of former times when the authentic past seemed of undoubted value, it was not so for everyone; some people always wanted to change it. For example, the history of losers traditionally was written by winners, thereby reformatting the past of the losers of a battle, a pin and a content of their cultural memory. Communication channels were filled up, traditional bridges through which the constants of the culture were broadcast from era to era collapsed; foreign and overseas items substituted all this, at the will of winners. So, unfortunately, the human history has had big and small cultures that went to obscurity. But today in the twenty first century, at the same time, something new is also observed — still novel. It exists today as well, but in the same time one may observe something new.

On the one hand, we witness and participate in the partial loss of authenticity of cultural memory, destruction of her core integrity representing "the certain steady form of consciousness relating to the sphere of social ontology" (Cantor, 11). On the other hand, we understand that we witness the formation of a new precondition for the integrity of a cultural kernel of human memory. We are sad, leaving aside the habitual, and at the same time we welcome this new situation because we know that historically developed kernel of culture preserves in itself both positive and negative value components which are slowing down our finding of modern cultural identity.

Elements of a kernel of cultural memory are coming to us from past ideas and values. From the depths of time, the most live values emerged, which hide the answers to the questions of life found by humanity. Those probably are truths for us even if during the whole history of humanity, they weren't fulfilled. Why? It is another question.

And in the modern context the most important thing is that the real needs of a social organism express themselves through ideas. The idea is a "made up," "seen" (i.e. found while only in consciousness) as a possible exit out of limits, out of the frames of the created inconsistent situation – behind the frames of an existing situation of affairs and concepts expressing it (Ilyenkov, 344). Thus, loss of former integrity of a kernel of cultural memory and the attempt of finding the new one is a natural contradiction of human history or a nation. The human will always re-evaluate bygone times, and it will be done with equal chances of victories and defeats, openings and delusions. Every era has its own sociocultural drawing and its opportunities to influence the cultural memory of society. It is truly noted by M. Lifshits that "a difference gives sense. The poetry has to step away from poetry to be poetry. Then the reflection grain appears" (Lifshits, *Ancient Mythology*, 51). To re-read and re-evaluate the pages of cultural memory means to find its new meanings. To find instead of inventing —the poet writing about love doesn't invent, but finds new understanding for it.

The definition of the difference mentioned by Lifshits brings us to the interpretation of bridges of culture as the communication that has been initially built in social life of humans. It is timely, global communication, connecting eras and ethnicities. One of the most important bridges of culture is the church: a church that is surrounded by a lot of contradictory judgments.

Communication is pre-information rather than an object; its meaning escapes constantly because communication is always what isn't present. It is the process that constantly creates meanings, depending on this process and at the same time influencing it (Klyukanov, 56). The participants of the communication have a direct impact and influence on it and depend on it in the same time.

Information exchange within society can be presented in the form of two-level communications – interpersonal and intergroup. Interpersonal communication is primary and still a decisive link of information exchange in society. The understanding of communication on an intergroup level is much more complicated. Therefore, we will note one more possible division of communications which partially coincides with the previous division, but isn't identical to it. Combination of the interpersonal and the intimate, the intergroup and the public communications, isn't absolute. In the concrete cases, interpersonal communication is capable of gaining public recognition and intergroup to be hidden from society.

Social information interaction, as well as intergroup media contact, is no more than conditional, generalizing constructions. These are abstractions that do not naturally exist. Informational interaction in the society is always structured and personally expressed; it always proceeds through the channels of communication installed in the society and also is organized by topic and meaning. It means that the society creates and supports certain discourses as well as fills them with the updated content (this is done by the stakeholders entering into the discourses).

Clarity in understanding the media's interaction in society starts coming to light only through disclosure / deconstruction of abstractions that are already have developed in our consciousness. In reality, the information interaction is performed through institutions that, at every moment of the study, are specified in their own way.

For example, if we speak about information interaction of the authority and society in our thoughts, we simplify the reality: we imagine the certain personified authority plus something uncertain, with some faces, voices, and movements – in general, almost artistic images. In reality, the authorities and the society carry out the information interaction through the institutes that are getting concrete in specific moments of the research. But it appears that these concepts are only abstractions. Actually, there is an interpersonal media contact between the representatives of the institutes of the power and society. In reality, it is not cultures that interact, but individuals that carry the cultural traditions. But in this case attempts of theoretical reflections made by representatives of one nationality about the other, as well as official policy of intercultural exchange, do not necessarily coincide with daily practices of cross-cultural contacts. Taking into account everything that has been said, let us note that information interaction in the society in principle is institutionally structured and has expressed character. All this is based on the fact of the impossibility of legitimizing the authority without communication – in text and in speech. The authority assumes knowledge, beliefs, and ideologies that would support and reproduce its power. The discourse structurally expresses and broadcasts these key preconditions of reproduction at all societal levels, in all aspects and contexts.

One more abstraction can be named. It is delusion about always topical and therefore new content of media interaction of social institutions. The delusion is based on confidence that there is no relevance without innovation. Secondly, though it is paradoxical, this delusion is not an absolute one because, let us agree, that without a difference in information potentials of the actors standing on the different ends of "the wire," communication will not take place, the social discourse will not get activated, media interaction, yet without having started, already loses its value. Then what occurs in media interaction in reality?

In reality, social discourses reproduce mainly once set samples and algorithms of a topic are discussed, but very avariciously include the latest perspectives. A certain discourse where the important place is occupied by former

meanings that are slowly evolving is supported. For the political power, these are intra economic, geopolitical, sociocultural problems of the state. Such meanings, or factors, throughout eras are without variants and objectively set up certain political approaches to their solution. Therefore, as T. van Deyk writes, between societies, "discourses and ways of reproduction of the power (though the glasses of society) differ depending on culture, social structures, and the social knowledge involved in processes of reproduction" (T. van Deyk, 35). But within a specific sociocultural reality, the discourse is not variable.

Inclusiveness of accessibility to an inter-social informational exchange is illusion and abstraction at the same time, but in any case it is necessary to say goodbye to it resolutely.

First, as we determined, media interaction between social groups has personal expression. The text brought in the media sphere is created by the individual who carries the knowledge. He possesses the necessary abilities, knowledge, and understanding of socially significant problem, and in other words, is predisposed to express the idea about it verbally or visually.

Second, any channel of media interaction functions in concrete socio-political system in which there are dominating social groups, who have the real power. It is known that the nature of the power is in its ability to manage the citizens and society as a whole. A management cannot take place without control, which is the main function of the authority. As a matter of fact, control is management itself. This determines potential desire of authorities to control the channel of its interaction with the society where it dominates, as well as access to it. We agree with T. van Deyk when he says that we have to research in detail how powerful groups regulate access to the discourse, because the discourse determines the public awareness. The researcher suggests that power groups have active access to the discourse, while consumers, in other words, society gets only passive access. All this is typical for the most influential forms of a media discourse (T. van Deyk, 28). This is the reality of the institutional interaction in the media sphere. Researching its results brings us to the understanding of the media sphere, which is being formed within the dynamics of such institutional interaction.

Let's determine the typical features of the media sphere of society. First, we will emphasize its discursive base, which bears a certain orderliness in the entering in a media discourse of the representatives of the institutes of society. The regularity of permanent excitement of social meanings supported by the discourse is another aspect of it. Let's try to imagine the media sphere as a set of socially significant discourses and a framework. It turns out that the content acts both ways, equally accepted by us, – as the integrated sum of the meanings creating the media sphere and as a system of the interconnected meanings understood as the structural elements.

Making the following step, we can come to understand the media sphere as a result of the communication structures in society. The result means the information contains an understanding of socially significant facts, which are being formed, as well as events, the phenomena, and human relations. The results of this information is the development of reality, bearing in itself a certain novelty, nevertheless repeating – literally or modifying – the reached before results and, in its turn, forming one more standard, one more algorithm of the development of the spiritual world of a human.

From this perspective the media sphere is like a house strongly and carefully constructed by the generations of one family: at the will of everyone the walls are getting stronger, the interiors change, and the communications are updated. However, the environment and the architecture of the house and the arrangement of its rooms predetermine the depth of admissible innovations – the future is dialectically reliably coordinated with the past. In this case, the family represents a kernel of an unchangeable type of the culture, defining the content of the media sphere. In this connection, we will remember that the type of culture remains if its kernel remains, even during the changes of socioeconomic structures, radical changes of social structure, sharp reorganization of the political power, or ideology change. All public changes have a footprint of influence on this steady kernel of culture (Cantor, 10-11). The kernel ("paradigm") of culture doesn't belong to a society above-structure; it represents the certain steady form of consciousness related to the sphere of social ontology.

The media sphere has no scientific explanation and yet is perceived metaphorically. But already there were ideas of its components. These are mass communications, journalism, art, church, and political institutes – everything that attracts the audience, addresses it, and interferes with the public consciousness and functions itself. It is media reality that is formed during communication, and communicative reality is a special measurement of the reality of society (Nazarchuk, Reflections about of communication, 157). In social and philosophical understanding, the media sphere theory, probably, will be a synthesis of theories of culture, politics, journalism, and mass communications. A lot of things were made by the French philosophers of the XX century to create those theories, having commensurate with them order and a society. It is not communication in its pure form. Most likely, the researcher says, we can talk about the social order structured within communication frames (Nazarchuk, Idea of communication, 149). Journalism incorporates the interconnected layers of a general reflection of public consciousness concerning social being. Looking at the process dynamically, it is notable that the current public consciousness reflects itself and how it was created.

The first visible discourse layer is the discussion of the current social problems which is potentially capable for a transfer to the second, deeper, substantial layer of a discourse supported by journalism – historical and cultural. This is explained by the recurring appearance of new social problems as a continuation once submitted for discussion. At last, the third, and the deepest layer of a discourse reflected by journalism is gnoseological – about knowledge of the personality, society, the state, and meaning of the life, good, and beauty. Any of these discourses is essentially opened by the media sphere and is made not only more extensive, but also more ancient than journalism. Media sphere roots are in those immemorial times when people only started discussing a world arrangement, when the first patterns of an explanation of life arose in the consciousness of the humans.

We understand the media sphere as the ideal space that is objectively inherent in the spiritual life of the society in which socially significant meanings (beliefs, myths, and ideas) occur. It is a result of the public interaction of the institutes of the society. New meanings are created and join once discourse arises. It is impossible to decide even symbolical dates of their beginning; further back than the work of Guttenberg, the publicity of a discourse is more conditional. Most important is the fact that where publicity ends there is no discourse and media-sphere. The media-sphere only forms a field of informational interaction of the social systems, their institutes and individuals and by that provides publicity of such interaction. At all times publicity was a factor stimulating achievement of the equality of participants of a discourse, but – what is especially important – never reaching a desirable solution. The illusion of freedom and diversity can be one of ways of production of ideological hegemony (T. van Deyk, 30). Good intentions [of participants of communication] and absence of demonstrative violence are good supportive tools, but it isn't enough. If there was no structure in the communicative situation, if it was not free from distortions and the latent presence of power, the results of the communicative processes would always cause suspicion. Since communication always bears in itself a duality, it is an expression of the hidden abuse (Habermas, *The Split West*, 23).

Examples from the regular press confirm the specificity of the situation of the modern media environment, but they do not have an answer to the general questions of this theory. Therefore, while analyzing the media sphere it is desirable to draw from journalism and mass media because the actual content of the publications can potentially become an obstacle to the objective analysis. Discharge from media realities of the present (where, whether you want it or not, mass media prevails) will allow research of the media sphere mechanism on a general level, without reducing examples of its functioning to cases which, because of its proximity to the researcher, can close the general picture. So, we see the media sphere as a certain field of informational interaction of the social systems, their institutes, and the individuals. To make the construction less heavy, we will take away the issues of inter-system interaction (for example, between the states), and also private information interrelations of the individuals.

Taking into account the opinions of parties willing to enter the discourse should become the precondition of the effectiveness of the analyses of cooperation in a media-field:

- to communicate (ideological beliefs, value assessments, ideas of ways of social development, and so forth);
- to win in informational opposition (to disarm the opponent ideologically);
- to find a compromise;
- to achieve the majority on an information field through the ideological polemic.

Goals of the parties (institutes) interacting in the media sphere include the choice of the corresponding tactics of promoting these beliefs on the informational field, choice of the means, forms, and methods of achieving what is planned. But this is the flat level of the characteristic of the functioning of the media sphere. Deeper reflection about the issue begins as soon as we consider all subjects of the media sphere, or at least the main ones. Informational interaction of the institutes of the society normally does not aim to affect ideological, political, and moral positions of each other (though it also exists), but is targeted to make an ideological impact on the other social institutes which at this moment, seems, are not yet in a discourse. The final goal is to influence the society in general.

The choice of concrete channels of communication, the methods and the forms of bringing into the media sphere ideological, political, and moral values is defined by the communicator's beliefs. In turn, they are determined by the culture of the society in general, and also by the accepted cultural codes of transferring value, emotions, rational meanings of communication and keeping results in the media sphere as fixed algorithm of historically lasting discourse. It is fairly notable that the rationality of the modern "the right of mind" is realized not through the universal "values," but in practices of certain cultural life forms (Habermas, *The Split West*, 38).

It is difficult to understand the media sphere of the 21st century without understanding the sources and dynamics of its formation throughout known history. The media sphere isn't created today, as the French researcher fairly notes (Debray, 79). Besides this history, it is possible to consider a history of communications, as I. Klyukanov writes. Respectively, the history of judgment of communication is represented as an extremely important sphere of

scientific analysis. How is it possible to comprehend a subject of research without knowing its history, “without remembering relationship?” (Klyukanov, 26). We understand that the media sphere arose much earlier than journalism and mass media. In fact, the qualitative transformation of the media sphere happened in antiquity. Some changes happened since, but those changes affected other features, like the conscious energetic promotion in the media environment of the state institutions and the government. We are talking about a conscious promotion because there is a natural opposition occurring independently of the will of individuals entering these institutions in the sphere of the information exchange, long before Caesar's orders. Historians who discovered rudiments of periodical press in Ancient Rome and agreed that the history of journalism started from the publications of the notes of Senate gatherings done due to the order of Julius Caesar, so-called "acta senatus" (Salamon, 70), are not fully accurate. They noticed one of the qualitative transformations that took place in ancient times within the media sphere. Changes were earlier too, but this one is special because it recorded for us vigorous, conscious advancement into the media sphere of institutes of the state and the power. We speak about conscious advances because we oppose it occurring; independent of individuals will, entry of these institutes into the sphere of information exchange, long before Caesar's order. Moreover, state and power institutes also were ancestors of the media sphere. And even more, the church actively and smoothly entered this sphere with the emerge of the Christianity.

Christianity had to create universal symbols and mythology to create the universal religious language that has become the major bridge of culture for civilizations and ethnic groups. Such tasks demanded assimilation of a set of archetypical elements, structures, and symbols inherent to the people, which appeared in the field of the Christian sermon. All these things facilitated such sermons, made Christianity recognizable, and forced souls of new turned pagans to resound (Yakovenko, 141).

It is necessary to make some clarifications. Long before Christianity, the individuals in Ancient Egypt and other countries of the Middle East, along with ancient Greece and Rome, were willing to appeal to the citizens within the interaction with authorities, thereby creating a certain informational environment where myths, talks, appeals, and ideas were circulated together with the decrees and orders of the highest power picture. They adjoined to decrees and orders of the highest hierarch of the power. Thereby, parameters and models of public interaction of institutes of the state and priesthood were put in place. In those early times, reaction to this interaction from lower social classes usually had emotional character, allowing the most active actor of media to successfully manipulate the people. That was the natural origin of a public discourse and media sphere emergence. It is not easy to make out features of this stage in media reality of our days, but at the modern media sphere there are discourse practices that were developed in the history. Let's address some results of the research conducted by group of analysts from St. Petersburg University (Russia).

Cultural bridges – formed throughout centuries of discourses of the media sphere of society – influence those that had arisen recently. The public media discourse is still influenced by state and church discourses in which cultural codes arose and were approved. Violation of codes causes social fluctuations, including fluctuations in the media sphere. For example, this happened on February 21, 2012, when the punk public prayer of Pussy Riot group's shocking public opinion occurred in the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Savior, in defiance of all canons of behavior in church. In a form it is a punk public prayer with political text – "The virgin, banish Putin!" A criminal case was brought, the consequence was held, and already on August 17 the same year, the court sentenced participants of the group to two years of imprisonment. The court of high instance, which has taken place on October 10, replaced some participant's appointed punishment.

Representatives of the major institutes of society – churches and mass media – took part in the media analysis of the action and its consequences. Politicians, scientists, and cultures also didn't stand aside; and through mass media they joined in on the discussion. For the church, the incident was so significant that its echoes are still audible. During a visit to the Baltic, Patriarch Kirill thanked his Estonian colleague from Evangelic – Lutheran church of Estonia "for [his] very clear position concerning hooliganism in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior." As a whole in the media sphere, there was a situation of ambiguity of interpretation of the fact – there was not and there is no uniform key to understanding of the events reflected in the media.

On the one hand, the Pussy Riot event looked like an episode characterizing the modern level of political culture of society and its culture in general, nothing more than a detail in difficult political life of the country. Episode, case, spontaneous surge of emotions ...

On the other hand, following the incident in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, comments of representatives of the state, church, and institutes of culture were prompted. While nothing new happened, reactions to Pussy Riot keep within the already known matrices of public life. Discourses of power, church, system parties, and irregular opposition have been constructed in the past; long ago they have found the expression in the media sphere. Simply, new content was poured into these discourses as into ready forms the action in the Moscow temple.

To look at the functioning of any parts of a human body doctors use contrast substances. The Pussy Riot action can be considered as a type of contrast substance that shows practice of media discourse of church, ideological institutes

of society, and society as a whole. Discourses aren't separate and connected; they have the general scope of performances in the press and the general environment of functioning. The world absorbs the new contents and at the same time influences it. This reflects the nature of the media sphere – the discursive base.

Features of the genesis of the media sphere assume appeals to axiology. Values of belief, religion, family, law and order, statehood, and freedom became for a long time the basis of discourses forming the media sphere. Creeds and symbols of belief are values that got almost material force and were capable of generating conflicts. Ambivalence of the values brought in the media sphere a need for studying. So a journalism axiology, the methodology of the valuable analysis of media, was arisen.

The idea of valuable analysis isn't yet indisputable. Ex-pontiff Benedict sees in the appeal to values a way neither to speak about truth nor to enter conflict with idea of tolerance and a democratic relativism. How does one prove the main values that haven't been subordinated to game of the majority and minority? (Ratzinger, 54). The question is natural, and the answer to it in an all-philosophical field is especially difficult. But, in the sphere of functioning of the media we can't leave relativism – truth relativism. In media only values –not absolute, but conventional – possess a high degree of reliability – values of life, freedom of communication, and a freedom of worship.

Another question deals with the fact that every era nominates the priorities to a history proscenium through media. It was once possible to be content with a democratic ideal into which values of freedom of press, freedoms of worship, etc. were "packed." And today it isn't enough, and philosophers consider values of "public reason" and "free from coercion public discourse," including participation in a public discourse of believing persons, representatives of churches or other religious communities, reflect on crossings of "nonpublic reasons" with "public reason." The main research interest is how to prevent the conflicts that can arise on this crossing (Nagl-Dochekal, 13).

J. Rawls proves the possibility of overcoming conflict situations at the expense of following to idea of "the public reason," allowing tolerant relationships between citizens of different religious faiths and also between confessional groups in society (Rawls, *The Idea of Public*). However, Habermas claims our societies are split on the questions concerning values. Any serious discussion – whether it is a dispute on legalization of abortions or voluntary euthanasia – shows that distinctions in initial attitudes of opponents are so indistinct that crucial importance gains not fidelity to ideological dogmas but ability to appeal more or less convincing to moral intuition of audience (Habermas, "Against "militant" atheism"). And it is impossible to disagree with it.

The analysis of the facts of the media sphere, which directly concerned an episode in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, showed that the Pussy Riot action mentioned the most sensitive topic – a value system of the person. So, in publications the question of definition of an action as "blasphemous" became the most disputable point of intersection of opinions. The maximum number of publications in which the punk public prayer is considered as "blasphemous," – 39% – is in the coverage of conservative and orthodox media "Narodny Sobor," minimum – 2.3% – in the secular «Nezavisimaja gazeta». In the mass press and liberally adjusted printed media, along with infrequent statement of "blasphemous" character of an act of Pussy Riot group (19.0% in the "Moskovsky Komsomolets" newspaper; 12.6% – in the network mass media OpenSpace), statements of cultural pictures make a strong impression. They have a slight relation to this event, or actually justify it. So, the first line of values split is formed between the popular editions and "niche," in this case focused on liberally adjusted audience.

"Differentiation, – I quote the report of the colleague on research project N. Ivanov, – passes through the line the federal/regional press. Federal editions represent the politicized picture of the events, and the social consequences of trial over group. Following the results of the analysis, in the first place is the discussion of social split, and also the authority of the church. And further, authority of the power. National mass media transferred discussion from the Pussy Riot action to the narrow-minded outlook. For regional newspapers, a more important process is understanding things in a global sense, aspiring to analyze an irrational, spiritual component. Authors of the Petersburg newspapers consider a situation in a philosophical and cultural context, generally interceding for church, and Moscow – the opposite, rigidly criticizes, the Moscow press is more secular and practical." So, we noted the second line of a break – between the national and regional press. The media picture of the interaction of the institutions of society (communicated by the media in written, audiovisual, documentary, art, rational, irrational... form) is the reflection of what is occurring in the society, of both the big and small changes, and the new and old ideas that collide. To enter into the media sphere means "to destroy, disturb thought ... only with writing, that is during thought typification into the word, into an external image, there can be a communication" (Menegetty, 61), which today accompanies all transformations of global cultural space. With globalization, a fight for interpretation of values entered, fiercer than before. Such is a consequence of the need for a person of the changing world to remain adequate to himself. Here is one of explanations of the renaissance of religious consciousness and activation of social function of church. The church, throughout centuries, carried out duties of communicator between eras, speaking metaphorically, directed bridges between them and relayed cultural values.



It is necessary to accept that the church never could do without the support of the religious consciousness of masses. It was centuries ago and today we will partially explain the same way a phenomenon of sociocultural transformation of church. At the same time, results of the All-Russian poll that has been carried out on March 22 through 25, 2013 by sociologists of Levada Center, showed that 43% of respondents counted "not too important a religion role in society life" (Religion and a church in public sphere). Brian Turner provides even more impressive data. Speaking about Russia, he notes that present influences of the church generally are based on cultural nationalism, instead of on spiritual authority: if "orthodox" call itself 80% of Russians, "believers" – only about 40% (Turner, 29). It is possible to assume that religious consciousness and institutional authority of the church are dispersing more and more. Mass media are carriers of social meanings. Individuals and whole communities exchange them (convince, impose, perceive, reject). Mass media themselves produce new social meanings, and also, being the active subject of society, structure cultural space in concepts of media reality with what other institutes of culture cannot reckon. In unison, places of traditional formation of public opinion changed. Now it arises from below and it is suspicious in relation to spread from above by means of traditional media. As result – confrontation of the public opinions, one – created by traditional media, and another – arising in network communities. It is hard to predict future perspectives (Ricceri, Religious messages).

From its origin, mass media considerably influenced the church by its dynamics. Media at first promoted society secularization, and then introduced into public circulation the idea of the church as a cultural institution, thereby having lowered degree of former public awe in front of its sacral grandeur. And then something unforeseen happened: the critical perception of the church by the society was compensated with the acquisition of the new media projection that turned to be organic part of general discourse of the church.

Let us discuss the meaning of these media manifestations of opposition in society. Whether it is possible to regard them as manifestation of activity of post-secular society or to see in it reflection of regressive movement of society – to a pre-secular era? Today in information space, two types of outlook dominate – secular and pre-secular.

In research results, two types of outlooks are presented; on the one hand, by a historical and cultural assessment which includes also idea of church as a culture phenomenon, and on the other hand, church and religious. In liberal editions it will look as a ratio "95% against 5%." In editions of orthodox orientation – "71% against 29%." Thus, the majority of the author's statements are connected with reflections about cultural value of church whereas the religious maintenance of a question remained in the shadow.

Turner believes that distribution of new spirituality is nowadays observed; these are the urbanized, commercialized forms of religiousness which usually exist outside traditional churches, a consequence of that is the increasing difference between "religion" and "spirituality" (Turner, 42). However, it is not important how we treat religion – in its "old" or "new" appearance, it all the same remains the area of spiritual life of society and the person, the cultural bridge in society. And this situation confirms that fact that now almost all projections of spirituality, outlook of the person and self-identification of societies, have media character and they are placed in the media sphere. Not casually, Turner declared that "nowadays it is possible to express the sacred" [Turner, 25], and "during an era of a postmodern which is synchronous with approach of post-secular society, the religion represents one of many discourses in its pluralistic space" (Shapoval, Post-secular society). And today it is a high time to wonder, whether the designated types of thinking separate media discourses or in the conditions of post-secular society they form parallel practices of generalizing media discourse?

The analysis of the Russian media sphere showed: 1) prevalence in media of political and culturological estimates of the Pussy Riot action overestimates of religious character; therefore, the press generally remains secular, and media as a whole doesn't promote society's movement to its pre-secular shape; 2) divergence of church and religious discourses; 3) noticeable, but not leading, Orthodoxy's place in the media sphere, confirming its right to be considered as the most important bridge of culture.

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**CHAPTER FIVE**

**LIFE-CHANGING BRIDGES**

**“Finally to suppress this bore”**  
**Cultural and Generic Bridges in Stevenson’s Aborted Essay on Irish Politics**  
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Rather than an orthodox paper presenting an analysis of a problem or interpretation of a text, or an attempt to open our understanding of some larger contemporary themes, this paper presents a narrative, a tale about Robert Louis Stevenson, who, when settled in Samoa, was given the name *Tusitala*, which means teller-of-tales. This paper presents a tale about a teller of tales, and, in keeping with the theme of Bridges across Cultures, this story about Stevenson will be a story of cultural bridges he had to cross, or chose to cross, or asked his readers to cross, or failed to cross himself.

The story focuses on one essay Stevenson wrote, while isolated in a cabin in Saranac Lake, New York, in 1888, addressing the deficiencies of the American press’s coverage of the Irish Problem. It was an essay crossing many bridges: a Scottish writer, addressing an American audience, speaking about Irish politics, drawing lessons from the French Revolution, with ramifications to the politics of European and American colonization of the South Pacific. Many bridges, and yet Stevenson, famous for crossing bridges all his life – and for insisting on the importance of crossing bridges – in fact never really crossed this Irish bridge he had constructed. This essay, “Confessions of a Unionist,” was suppressed at the last minute and never published until many years after Stevenson’s death.

### ***The Dynamiter***

Stevenson never visited Ireland, but he set up bridges to Ireland three times. The first was in his book *The Dynamiter*, published in 1885, a collection of interconnected stories involving absurd misunderstandings and reversals of social expectations and focusing in part on a secret society (implicitly Irish) committed to planting bombs in London. The Dedication defends the comic treatment of dynamiters. (Today we’d say *terrorists*.) “It were a waste of ink,” Stevenson says, to speak of these dynamiters “in a serious spirit” (*Dynamiter* xiii), since no one seriously thinks that setting off bombs in public places is a good action in itself. Writing stories that condemn dynamiters is, in the end, just sentimentalism: inflating an emotional response just for its own sake. It gets us nowhere.

Serious condemnation (in the form of a horror story perhaps) should instead be addressed towards politicians (like Parnell), and to us members of the public supporting immediate Home Rule – people who, “with a generous, unfounded heat of sentiment,” are tempted to excuse these crimes for the sake of the political cause they are trying to promote. Such people, Stevenson says, are “not acutely following [the political action] from cause to consequence.” That is, they are focused on the grievances they are trying to correct but forget to consider that their actions will result in injury and death to innocent people.

Stevenson knew that his position went against the views of many of his friends, and a few years after publication of *The Dynamiter*, one friend, Grant Allen, while publicly praising the book itself, strongly objected to the dedication. Stevenson was wrong, he said, to condemn “a body of misguided Irish patriots, goaded by English injustice and landlord misrule into a mode of retaliation in some respects unworthy of their laudable object.” Instead of condemning the people fighting against injustice, indignant condemnation should instead be directed towards “the wicked and cruel system which drives brave and resolute men to such desperate means of righting their ill-used country” (*Letters* 5: 439n). Stevenson held firm. “As soon as my brains are fit to work,” he promised, “I shall have to fall foul of the whole crew of you” (*Letters* 5: 439).

### **The Curtin Boycott**

Stevenson’s reply to Allen was partly written out of frustration. His brains were not “fit to work” because he was shutting his house in preparation of sailing to America in search of better health. In leaving Britain, however, he was leaving behind his own projected political action about Irish affairs, and this brings us to Stevenson’s second bridge to Ireland, one he constructed plans for but never built, much less crossed.

To put it briefly, in November 1885, a group of nationalist “moonlighters” murdered a Catholic farmer named Curtin, and when his family identified the murderers in court, their farm was boycotted, making life for the family (mostly women) almost impossible. By the spring of 1887, seeing that nothing had been done to relieve this innocent family, and probably influenced by Tolstoy’s moral challenge never to countenance evil (another bridge to a foreign culture), Stevenson hatched a scheme to move with his family to the Curtins’ farm in County Kerry and publicize the injustice being done there. Should he be killed there, he argued, his celebrity, especially in America where the

Nationalists were receiving most of their funding, would draw attention to the cause. But even if he was not murdered, his health was so feeble that there was every chance that he would die from natural causes, and this too would publicize the situation. He was desperate to leave the life of almost continuous confinement to the sick room over the previous five years and risk everything for some worthy action.

I see quite clearly [he wrote] how [everything] points to nothing coming, to a quite inglorious death by disease and from the lack of attendance; or even if I should be knocked on the head, as these poor Irish promise, how little any one will care. It will be a smile at a thousand breakfast-tables. I am nearly forty now [he was actually 36]; I have not many illusions. And if I had? I do not love this health-tending, housekeeping life of mine. I have a taste for danger, which is human, like the fear of it. Here is a fair cause; a just cause [...] (*Letters* 5:389).

His friends opposed this scheme, but his wife, who thought it was a crazy idea, supported him and was willing to go for his sake. ("It is nonsense, but if you go, I will go" [*Letters* 5:391].) But at this point Stevenson's father died, and he felt his first duty was to look after his mother and to look after his own health so he could continue to provide for the others. Tolstoyan ideals were set aside, and, coming into immediate possession of several thousand pounds, he decided to seek a cure in America. It was at this moment that he promised Grant Allen that "as soon as my brains are fit to work, I shall have to fall foul of the whole crew of you." He obviously was determined now to take political action through writing, not through throwing his life away on a remote Irish farmstead.

### "Confessions of a Unionist"

When Stevenson landed in America, he was astounded (and amused, and considerably offended) by the celebrity treatment showered on him as the author of *Treasure Island*, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, *Kidnapped*, and most of all, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a second dramatic adaptation of which was just about to open on Broadway (though Stevenson was too ill to attend). He quickly turned down an offer of \$10,000 to write a series of weekly newspaper articles, but accepted a \$3600 commission to write twelve monthly essays (on any subject, any length) for the prestigious *Scribner's Magazine*. Though always averse to writing for a deadline, he threw himself into this project, writing essays that combined sharp insights into the creative process with disarming details of personal anecdote (including an account of the dream that had inspired him to write *Jekyll and Hyde* – just the thing his fans wanted to hear, though he actually gave very little away), and he began work on a new novel, *The Master of Ballantrae*.

And Irish politics? In early January Stevenson dropped all his other writing projects finally to "fall foul" of his Home Rule friends and take a stand against the American view of Ireland. He wrote "Confessions of a Unionist" and sent it to *Scribner's*, asking for it to be published as soon as possible.

The essay begins with an attack on the American press's coverage of Ireland. Of course the coverage was biased. Stevenson was enough of a modern thinker to know that all news reports, indeed all use of language, is limited and thus partial. But it is one thing to present a point of view; it is another willfully to manipulate the facts so as to prevent anyone from trying to understand the situation objectively, and nowhere did Stevenson find any attempt to take the Unionist view seriously. We might continue our metaphor and say that there were no bridges to any opposing views, just the one, limited position of the Irish Nationalists. As in the case of the Curtin boycott, this outraged not just Stevenson's political principles; his sense of fair play was angered. The press, Stevenson felt, had an obligation to present many different viewpoints: in a world as uncertain as ours, we need every chance we can get to expand our subjectivity so we can have if not the truth, at least a wider view of what may be going on in the world.

Stevenson takes it on himself to inform his American readers about the Unionist position. There can be no talk of Home Rule while nationalists are breaking the law and injuring innocent citizens, no bargaining with the nationalists as long as they resort to criminal activities. Stevenson does not simply state his party's views; he crosses the political bridge to show that he fully understands the arguments of the other side in favor of Home Rule. In fact, he admits, he had been a Home Rule supporter himself before the violence began. After all, the first thing one had to admit was that

the state of Ireland is a perpetual and crying blot upon the fame of England. England went there, as every nation in the world has gone where you now find it, because it consisted with her interest. She conquered it, as the Normans had conquered herself not so long before; and she has ever since majestically proved her incapacity to rule it (*Lantern-Bearers*, 238).

He blames the British government also for being inconsistent: one moment harsh towards the Irish Nationalists, the next moment lenient. And in fact, though the government is accused of being harsh towards the Irish, "[t]he harshness is upon the other side." The Coercion Acts, which stirred such hostility among the Nationalists, were, Stevenson argues, "directed simply against crime: the crime over which your journals love to pass so lightly: unmanly murders, the harshest extreme of boycotting, and that applied to the poorest and most pitiable persons: murders like [...] the Curtin murder: boycottings like that of the Curtin family: crimes which, if any government permit and do not sternly suppress, it has ceased to be a government at all" (239). (Contrast this statement, full of qualifying subordination, to someone like Margaret Thatcher's simplistic version of the same argument: "Crime is crime is crime; it is not political" – she as usual demolishes bridges.)

Stevenson then crosses another cultural bridge to draw parallels from French history. He had been reading Taine's *Origine de la France Contemporaine* (see *Letters* 6: 66 & n), and saw the parallels between the Nationalists' actions and those of the Jacobins during the French Revolution, who used force to stifle a minority, and then threatened the majority, and ended in the Reign of Terror. As he had said in the Dedication to *The Dynamiter*, people who advocate political action that breaks the law are "not acutely following it from cause to consequence." Or, in other terms, murder and boycotts and bombs, in however just a cause, are assuming that the ends justify the means. Stevenson's moral code would not tolerate that. We have been brought to an important bridge that Stevenson always stood firm to defend, a bridge linking politics to common morality, which holds that we must always defend the innocent and vulnerable.

Stevenson admits that the law is not always moral; in fact, it can never fully represent the community's moral sense because, by its very nature, everything becomes oversimplified once it is put into words, and the law can never change quick enough to meet the refinements of public feeling. But, just as Stevenson had argued in earlier essays that words never fully explain our ideas and meanings, they do express *some* of what we think and feel, and so he insists that the law, for all its inadequacies, is the public articulation of our common moral code. It is all we have to ensure the protection of the weak and innocent. (In abandoned drafts to another essay written at this time, Stevenson tried to explain more clearly this bridge between law and morality.)

His final argument can seem the most outrageous. He turns to his American readers and says that they, of all people, should understand the Unionist viewpoint because they have never allowed criminals to run free. He cites the riots he had witnessed in San Francisco in 1880, when vigilante parties arose to put down the violence committed by the Workingmen's Party, even though that Party was clearly opposing gross injustices by the landowners, as the Land League in Ireland opposed similar injustices. It is not an ideal solution, Stevenson admits; it is "not the mark of a country where the law is strong (and [in America] it seems to be especially weak against the rich), but it is the mark of a people with some lively and enviable virtues" (242-43). Where the law is poorly enforced, private citizens must step up to enforce the law and protect the weak. How far Stevenson really approved of vigilante parties can be debated; the significant thing is that he uses this argument to construct yet another bridge, one that will take his readers across, from hostility to the Unionist position, over to shared values with the Unionists. And in doing so, Stevenson as a writer has crossed a rhetorical bridge, from personal essayist to lawyer swaying a jury, which is to say he had crossed back to the profession he had been trained in but had rejected many years earlier.

What this brief summary cannot convey is Stevenson's adroit use of tone, ranging from playful intimacy to alarmist urgency to frank (or apparently frank) admiration of the Old World visitor for the lively American culture. The effect of the essay depends as much on the voice of the essayist as on the arguments presented.

### Suppression of the essay

"Confessions of a Unionist" aimed to build several bridges, but proved just as abortive as Stevenson's scheme to "rescue" the Curtins. The essay was suppressed almost at the last minute. The article was set in type; several sets of proofs were read and corrected, one set by Stevenson himself. And then it was pulled. What happened?

One's initial guess is that *Scribner's* grew afraid of publishing this piece that was bound to anger and perhaps lose their Irish American readers. But it may not have been so simple. There was apparently a heated exchange of telegrams and letters – now lost – between Saranac Lake and New York, spurred perhaps by Stevenson's wife's over-reaction to *Scribner's* reservations, based on her fear that the essay would lose Stevenson that lucrative popularity he had in America, and then Stevenson's misunderstanding of *Scribner's* position and an over-reaction on his part. In the end, Stevenson was happy to forget the whole business. He wrote to the editor of *Scribner's*: "I have telegraphed to you this morning finally to suppress this bore. [...] I never stood out against my wife on any point but one (and that a detail) so that when she has spoken, the thing is settled" (*Letters* 6: 114-15).

Stevenson burnt his own bridge before he even got to cross it.

### Conclusion

What was the outcome? Stevenson still had eight monthly essays to write for *Scribner's* and while he did not return to political subjects, he continued to develop the theme of morality, insisting that our chief duty lies in looking out for others and doing our best to make others happy, not ourselves. ("To be honest, to be kind [...] here is a task for all that a man has of fortitude and delicacy" ["Christmas Sermon"].)

He did not *abandon* politics, however, and the themes he worked out in his Unionist stance reappeared in a more successful way. Six months after "Confessions of a Unionist" was written, Stevenson was sailing around the South Pacific islands, as a rare European who actually tried to meet the islanders on their own terms. He was sending a series of letters back to American newspapers, which later formed the basis of his book *In the South Seas*, an attempt to build a bridge of cultural understanding between the South Seas islanders, the Americans, and Europeans.

In 1892, he wrote *A Footnote to History*, with the same kind of urgency he wrote "Confessions of a Unionist" and for a similar reason: to redress the injustices committed by people who did not understand their opponents. The aim was to shape Western morals so that they would see the islanders as fellow human beings and thus act towards them with the decency that their moral code instructed them to act to any other human being. And, also like 'Confessions of a Unionist,' *A Footnote to History* insisted on maintaining bridges with the past. How could people who understood the French Revolution fail to recognize that the anti-Unionist terrorists were repeating what had led to the Reign of Terror?

Or, put it the other way around, how could the Western colonial powers formulate any kind of just or even efficient policy if they did not understand the history and culture of the islands they had taken possession of?

And what might we ourselves take away from this story? Stevenson's bridge to Ireland came to nothing (even *The Dynamiter* now lies as one of his least memorable books) but the two bridges that form the heart of his argument still need our attention. The first bridge is our connection to history since without that bridge; we can have no way of "acutely following [our political action] from cause to consequence."

The second bridge, connecting political action and morality, may be harder to work out. It is easy to get so concerned about righting the wrongs of this world that again we forget about "acutely following [our political action] from cause to consequence." We forget the bridge between political action and the actual experience of the people affected by that action, especially the innocent and weak; puffed up by our idealistic ends, we can destroy the bridge to the means by which we hope to achieve the ends. Stevenson will not let us forget about that bridge, which allows us to balance between abstract ideals and concrete experience.

But then, isn't balance what bridges are all about?

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## **Transnationalism among Italian Americans: A Comparison with Mexican Americans**

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Transnationalism has been defined in different ways since the beginning of the twentieth century because its significance mainly depends on the context. This paper aims at highlighting this concept thanks to the study of transnationalism among the Italian migrants in the United States at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as among new generations of Italian Americans nowadays. Comparing the situation of Italian migrants at the turn of the twentieth century with that of Mexican migrants to the United States today should help us better understand the phenomenon and even reveal the high degree of integration of Italian Americans in American society.

### **1 – Toward a Definition of Transnationalism**

Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanson – three anthropologists who work on international migration today and who intend to normalize the concept of transnationalism – define transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement [...] through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders” (Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 5).

For Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, transnationalism is a recent phenomenon. They consider that in the late nineteenth century, migrants broke off their ties with their homeland. But according to Peter Kivisto (549-577), and as this paper aims at upholding, European migrants maintained close ties with their families, villages, or country. Thus, transnationalism is not a new phenomenon even if it is possible to see differences between transnationalism during the period of massive migration from Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and migration today, mainly because of new technology and modern means of communication.

Individuals remained connected with their country of origin regardless of the place where they lived and in spite of the distance that may have separated them from their place of birth; thus transnationalism seemed to shrink both distances and time. Communities then became transnational communities as they underwent the impact of the links with both the host society and the country of origin, which led to a process of deterritorialization of identity and the formation of transnational identification. As a consequence, migration should no longer be seen in terms of alienation, rupture, or isolation, but in terms of exchange and continuity, which contradicts Oscar Handlin’s theory of uprootedness related to migration.

What the three anthropologists introduced in the historiography of migration is the normalization of the concept. Randolph Bourne had mentioned a “transnational America” at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Bourne, the Melting Pot was a failure because all individuals had kept some parts of their original identities; the interaction among the groups who constituted the population living in the United States and the interference of cultures had stimulated a new American culture, a new American identity, which gave way to a “transnational America.” He likened the United States to a tapestry, woven from several materials and threads, with a multiplicity of colors and sizes. On a metaphorical level, the United States had become a sociological and cultural fabric due to the presence of a multitude of migrant groups. Even if Bourne perceived the impact of the persistence of the migrants’ links with their countries of birth, he did not really theorize the phenomenon of transnational ties between the migrants and their homelands.

Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, on their part, manage to define transnationalism on a theoretical and nearly a universal scope. They succeed in proving that transnationalism is based on cultural, social, and political ties that are so intimate and deep that individuals can feel that they are living in both the homeland and the host society simultaneously. They feel that they belong to both societies. But if transnational ties are maintained on a deep level



among first generation migrants – as they feel involved in the evolution of the country where they were born – younger generations, who are born in the United States, are less concerned by their fathers' place of birth. Yet, even if the ties are loosened, they still exist as having specific origins in a multicultural society gives individuals pride and the feeling of being special. This is what Mary Waters notes: "Having an ethnic identity is something that makes you both special and simultaneously part of a community" (Waters 150).

Transnationalism can even be praised by the American authorities since it can accelerate assimilation. It is not an alternative to assimilation but a factor of integration in the host society. In 2006 Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbault show that it is particularly true on the political level (138). Political activism and skills can "travel" from one country to another as what is acquired in one country can be transported into another. Therefore, the experience gained in the hometown can be transferred in the American environment and vice-versa. As migrants, and political exiles in particular, may be active in both their societies of origin and settlement, they feel that they live simultaneously in both national spaces. This sentiment of participation may be reinforced when migration is perceived as a temporary experience, as was the case for Italians at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or for many Mexicans today: even if settlement eventually became permanent in many cases, emigration was first supposed to be only for a short episode of time in the working life of migrants.

## 2 – Italian Transnationalism and the International Migration Movement

Rudolph Vecoli, Frank Thistlethwaite, and Bruno Ramirez considered that migration to North America at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries must be considered as part of international labor migration; the impact of migration on out-going countries as well as on in-coming countries needs to be studied altogether. Italian migration to the United States must not be seen as an isolated phenomenon, but situated in the context of broad industrialization, the internationalization of labor, and massive migration movements. First generation migrants had a limited integration in their host society and remained suspended between the Old and the New Worlds. Thus, they wished that they could preserve their ties with their motherland, and transnationalism was a commonplace element of their experience even at the end of the nineteenth century. Migration was "a mental universe that included two worlds. In their psychic map and in their emancipatory timetable, their relations with the hometowns and with their kin pictured more prominently than the relations they might establish while working in North America"(Ramirez 96).

Emigration was part of a project in Italy. It aimed at improving the material conditions of life in the hometown by earning money; it could also constitute a way of avoiding conscription, or of finding a place of exile for political activists. As a consequence, the maintenance of transnational ties through correspondence or through repeated return trips was crucial. Migration was huge (between 1870 and 1920, some 4.5 million Italians went to the United States), and returns were numerous. They were part of the collective experience of Italians, both in the New World and in the Old World.

Between 1870 and 1910 nearly 80% of Italian migrants were males (Foner 171). They had left behind wives, children, and parents who expected their return. Thus, migration that was seen as a source of additional wages for families was supposed to be temporary (Wyman 38). But the proportion of males declined. Men constituted 40% of Italian immigration in 1930 (Bureau of the census) and more entire families tended to arrive in the United States, very often with the purpose of settling there. However, ties with the extended families that had stayed in the village remained strong. Generally speaking, the type of transnationalism depended on gender; men tended to feel more concerned by the political situation of their homeland, the public sphere, when women were more likely to be involved in private fields, and family issues. Their behaviors were then complementary, which leads to the thought that transnationalism can have an impact on all fields of daily life. As the socialization system is traditionally based on familial ties, individuals were likely to see in their transnational relationships a means to cope with the hardships, even prejudice and discrimination, that they may have to face in their country of settlement. It amounts to a source of comfort (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 895-920).

Many Italians were "birds of passage," and to be able to find again what they had left behind before their departure, they were eager to remain involved in the socialization system of Italy. Yet, they felt it necessary to negotiate their position in America, to be able to work, earn money, and reduce discrimination. This situation is a source of comments such as "they were physically in the United States but psychologically in Italy" (Wyman 204).

The multiple, circular movements across the ocean gave rise to the establishment of networks and transnational communities. Chain migration, through which most of the Italians emigrated to America, participated in creating networks between Italians abroad and Italians at home since migration was based on the system of dependence on – and links with – emigrants who organized the trip to the New World for their parents or friends.

It is difficult to have a precise idea of the number of returns, as the rate of repeaters is unknown, but re-emigration was a common practice based on seasonal work; in agricultural work, building construction, or railroading, jobs were scarce during winter. It is estimated that between 50% and 70% of Italians returned home according to the year (between 1870 and World War I) and on their region of origin (there were more returns to Southern Italy than to Northern Italy) (Rosoli 28 and 66). Return was related either to the idea of failure and disillusion from life in the United States or to the idea of success. In the first case, return meant refuge; in the second case, thanks to the money saved from working abroad, return meant a better life in Italy. As a whole, the fact of contemplating returning home pushed migrants to maintain ties.

Emigrants kept sending remittances, which maintained the paternal societal role of men as the breadwinners of their family. Remittances were so important that they had an impact on Italy's economy. For example, in 1907 some 465 million *lire* were sent from the United States to Italy, 70% of which reached Southern regions (Cinel 131-145).<sup>1</sup> They also had an impact in the United States as banks were established to facilitate the movements of capital overseas: from 1901 the Bank of Napoli channeled 25% of the remittances sent to Italy. It was then no longer necessary for men to go back home regularly in order to give money to their parents. They could send money orders through the banking system. These sums of money helped families survive and improve their standard of living; they could help pay debts, subsidize dowries, or purchase land or farms. They also stimulated emigration, as they stood for the promises offered by America: on the one hand, they were used to pay the travel fees; on the other hand, they were the symbol of the economic success linked to emigration. So, networks and transnational ties were maintained through remittances and returns.

In all these examples, Italians felt a transnational "way of being" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 1010). The mobility of Italians created such a huge network between emigrants and their hometown and between the host societies and Italy that the individuals' daily lives contained social and cultural fields that were naturally and unpremeditated transnational, as if the migrants could live in two countries simultaneously. The activities of the consulates, of mutual aid societies – such as the St Raphael Society – of the ethnic press that circulated news from Italy and the United States alike, of the priests (the Scalabrinians, for example) who were in charge of Italian-American parishes, encouraged migrants to keep relationships with Italy and triggered off nationalism. It aimed at creating solidarity among the migrants whose system was still based on *campanilismo* and at gaining more power and more respectability in discriminatory early 20<sup>th</sup>-century American society by becoming a lobbying group. By intensifying nationalism among migrants, these institutions stimulated transnationalism.

Emigrants represented such a considerable asset to Italy that the Italian government began establishing agencies for their protection. As the *prefetto* of Palermo acknowledged in a 1907 report, migration, returns, and remittances were seen as agents to modernize the South of Italy, since emigrants could take back to their hometown the modern views that they had found in America as well as money, which may help the South of Italy develop (Cinel 94). Thus, Italian authorities were eager to maintain transnational ties.

In 1901, the General Commission on Emigration was created to secure the protection of Italians abroad and favor dual citizenship when it was possible (it was refused in the United States). In 1906, the creation of the Istituto Coloniale strengthened transnational ties in organizing societies among Italian communities abroad. Thus, the Italians in the United States felt they were still involved in the social and political fields of their country of birth. In 1913, emigrants were given back the right to claim Italian citizenship after two years of residence in Italy if they had been naturalized in another country. Between 1902 and 1927, *Il Bollettino dell'emigrazione* published information concerning the activities of emigrants and events in Italy.

The emergence of fascism also gave an impulse to transnationalism by stimulating a new collective consciousness. Mussolini thought that Italian expatriates should be nationalist agents and promote fascism abroad. Thus, they were regarded as part of the nation, and transnational ties were strengthened. Consulates had to make sure that links between emigrants and Italy were reinforced (Smith 2003). Many Italian Americans supported the imperialistic policies of Il Duce by sending money to Italy. Their donations went through the Italian Red Cross during the Ethiopian War in 1935-1936 and through the Ente Opere Assistenziali, a welfare agency that was run by the government, when Italy entered the Second World War. The anti-fascists denounced the purpose of these donations, which were supposed to be humanitarian, but aimed eventually at supporting the fascist machinery.

The example of political exiles illustrates the maintenance of transnational ties. They had fled Italy to escape political persecution but they continued to develop their political activities on both sides of the ocean. Michael Miller Topp (39-63) gives several examples of socialists and labor organizers who worked among Italian workers in the United States during the 1910s. Political activist Edmondo Rossoni, for instance, was expelled from Italy and, when he arrived in the United States in 1911, he established the Italian Chamber of Labor in New York City and organized the strikers in Lawrence in 1912 for the Italian Socialist Federation, which had locations across the country. During the strikes in 1912, he sent articles to Italian papers – *L'Internazionale* among others – for workers in Italy to know the conditions of

labor in America and international political consciousness to rise. His activities in the United States were a continuation of his political involvement in Italy. Rossoni kept traveling back and forth between Italy and the United States before the First World War until he embraced fascism, and then he decided to stay in Italy.

Carlo Tresca's militancy both in Italy and in the United States is another significant example. Even after he had settled in the United States, he acknowledged: "I was still living in Italy, both with my heart and mind. Though living in America, my thoughts, my talks, my habits of life, my friends and my enemies were all Italian" (Tresca 75). His efforts to oppose fascism, when he published articles from an Italian friend, Paolo Valera, in his paper *Il Martello* as early as 1921, testified to his involvement in the Italian political situation even from the New World. So, fascism led the Italians abroad to take position, for or against it, and to feel concerned by the political situation in Italy, which triggered transnationalism. It also helped Italian-American communities get organized on a political and social level and then played a part in the integration of the ethnic colonies. It led Italian migrants to organize as a lobbying group in order to exert pressure on the American government's foreign policies: after the First World War when they supported the Italian sovereignty over the city of Fiume, and the adoption of the Mellon-Volpi pact (1926); when they claimed the neutrality of the United States when Italy entered World War II; when they wrote to their families in Italy to convince them to vote against the establishment of a Communist government during the 1948-parliamentary elections, or more recently, in 1997, when they demanded that the Clinton administration should support Italy for gaining a permanent status at the United Nations Security Council. Each time they acted to have their voices heard for Italy's sake.

Thus, in spite of the time it took to cross the ocean at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (one week) and the time migrants' letters needed to reach their destination in Italy (several weeks most of the time), the multiplicity of the involvements that migrants sustained in both Italy and the United States revealed that a phenomenon of transnationalism existed as early as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even if this transnationalism is different from what Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton describe when they study the experience of migrants today. For the first generation of Italians in the United States, it was a transnational "way of being." Now, for the generations of Italian Americans, it is rather a transnational "way of belonging."

### 3 - The Persistence of Transnationalism Today?

Today, new generations of Italian-Americans somehow experience a transnational "way of belonging," which is encouraged by Italy. The migrants, as well as their descendants, are seen as long-distance members of the nation, and they tend to have some of the rights that Italian citizens have. In 1992, inspired by the principle of *jus sanguinis*, a new law was adopted to facilitate the acquisition of Italian citizenship for any person with an Italian ancestry. Since 2006, Italian expatriates have had the right to vote without returning to Italy. However, less than 20% actually voted in the 2006 and 2008 elections (Luconi 46-63), which shows that transnationalism is fading away as generations pass. Indeed, if they are still attached to their country of origin, it is mostly on special occasions related to their cultural heritage or family background.

The interconnectedness of individuals and societies on both sides of the Atlantic is intended to be maintained, but Italian Americans, belonging today to the third or fourth generations, react as transnationals willingly, punctually, and symbolically and not naturally and nearly unconsciously as the first-generation migrants used to. Their lives are based on an American lifestyle, but their hearts may still feel Italian during an ethnic festival, when they hear opera, or stroll about Little Italy neighborhoods. Their "ways of belonging refer to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. [...] They combine action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies" (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 1010).

When they decide to visit Italy, although their choices may have been guided by blood, interest in their ancestry and family history, their travels are often motivated by tourist attractions. Rudolph Vecoli called this eagerness to know about their genealogy and national history "rootsmania" (89), which means that ties persist in spite of the process of integration. They still consider that they are the members of a specific group, that of the Italian Americans, that they have specific characteristics – cultural essentially – and as a consequence they are different from the rest of Americans. Thus, even if ties with their country of origin seem to have faded away – except among the elite and scholars who put forward their Italian ancestry and can usually speak Italian – and if their Italian origins are expressed from time to time only, the majority of the Italian Americans feel Italian somehow in addition to being American. Their transnationalism is a "way of belonging." The fact that many do not speak Italian, do not necessarily know Italy, and do not have any links with family members in Italy reveals that their transnationalism differs from the transnationalism that the first generation maintained. But what is noteworthy is that ties re-emerge on specific times, which proves that the relationships are deeply rooted in their identity. Their transnational "way of belonging" is an expression of their adaptation to American modern society and a recollection of their past as migrant people. They no longer live in two

countries simultaneously or have daily – even regular exchanges with Italy – as Glick-Schiller and her colleagues advanced to define transnationalism, but they still feel that they belong to a specific group.

To illustrate this assumption, two examples can be studied: the attachment Italian Americans have for celebrating ethnic festivals and their reaction when Italy goes through natural crises. Indeed, when Italy suffers natural catastrophes, Italian Americans show that they do not forget their ancestry, and they rapidly, voluntarily, and extensively help their brothers in Italy.

On April 6, 2009, L’Aquila, a town in the Abruzzo, was devastated by an earthquake, resulting in the death of 309 persons and leaving 66,000 people homeless.<sup>2</sup> Italian American institutions and individuals, mobilized in order to send help to the stricken region. The Connecticut Italian Earthquake Relief Fund, an association of twenty societies was created to organize help: it collected some \$33,000; the Columbus Citizens Foundation gathered \$75,000. The National Italian American Foundation devoted more than \$800,000 to students to go and study in the United States as long as the L’Aquila university facilities were not reopened. The church, which provided spiritual comfort, and the Italian-American press – *America Oggi* in particular, the largest Italian-American paper in the Tri-state region – participated in helping the victims of the disaster by organizing fundraising. Concerts and dinners were given to raise money. The Italian-American Museum of New York collected \$110,000, which was aimed at the restoration of the statue of the Madonna di Pietranico, the symbol of L’Aquila. When the restoration was completed in 2011, the statue was lent to the New-York-based museum, as a testimony of gratitude and as a proof of the strong ties that existed between the Italian-American community and the motherland.<sup>3</sup> Individual initiatives multiplied, which was quite easy thanks to the modern means of communication. The use of credit cards, payments through the Internet, or postal orders facilitated fundraising. The mobilization of Italian Americans was symptomatic of the maintenance of transnationalism in Italian-American identity. This is what *America Oggi* confirmed while mentioning the mobilization of the Italian-American community at facing the disaster of L’Aquila: “una coalizione univoca [...] un modello di amor di prossimo da ricordare; frutto insieme di Amor di Dio e Amor di Patria” (May 30, 2009), and the term “patria” takes a symbolic significance of transnational links in this quotation. It shows the feeling of belonging somehow to the Italian people.

The example of the involvement of Italian Americans in the celebration of ethnic festivals is another piece of evidence of the maintenance of ties with the motherland in spite of time and the assimilation of new generations. The multiplicity of *feste* all over the United States testifies to the durability of transnational ties, especially in the cultural field. Regarding Patron Saint feasts, that is to say, the celebrations of the Patron Saint of the village of origin, they display the attachment of generations of migrants to their place of birth – usually in Southern Italy. Throughout the United States and usually during summertime, celebrations such as the feast of San Gennaro (in September), of San Rocco (in August), of Saint Anthony of Padua (in June), of Lady of Mount Carmel (in July), of San Guiseppe (in March), of La Madonna del Lume (in September), of San Donato (in August), to name some of the most famous, remind the Italian Americans of their ancestry. More than Italian-American festivals (*feste italiane*, as they are called), which are organized to celebrate the Italian heritage of these Americans as a whole in multicultural America, the Patron Saint ceremonies emphasize the links that individuals have inherited from their place of birth with its traditions, beliefs, and customs. Each feast is then particular, and displays a part of the cultural identity of the Italian-American community through a religious ceremony, food, entertainment, and music.

Even more relevant is Columbus Day. All Italian Americans are expected to participate in the ceremonies of the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus, as the adventurer was Italian. Nowadays, the federal commemoration can be considered an ethnic celebration as it is organized by Italian-American societies throughout the United States. Italians from Italy, official representatives of the Italian government, artists, public pictures, as well as Italian associations are invited to come and participate in the parades, dinners, exhibitions, and concerts. The celebration is an Italian-American celebration *par excellence*, and testifies to the attachment of the Italian American community to both America and Italy (Michaud). Even if new generations do not really live simultaneously in both countries as already mentioned, on Columbus Day they all feel that they belong to the Italian group. While the form of transnationalism that they experience every day is a way of belonging, Columbus Day makes them Italian on this very day, or during Patron Saint feasts. This situation reveals that their transnationalism must be qualified, and that Italian-American identity is complex. The fact that it persists among the fourth generation of Italians in the United States today, as well as its symbolic dimension echo the definition that Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanson give when they refer to the *multiplicity* of relations that link together the societies of origin and the county of settlement of migrants.

#### 4 – A Comparison with Mexican Americans

To give a more complete view of Italian American transnationalism, a parallel with the experience of transnationalism among Mexican Americans today can be useful, since it can provide a new insight.<sup>4</sup> Though the groups and the historical and social contexts of their massive migration to the United States are not identical, they can be

compared, as Italians and Mexicans share common points (Perlman). Gerald Suttles (139-140) and Massey (1995: 631-652) even note that in some circumstances, when their degree of integration is rather high for example, Mexicans can be taken for Italians.

First, the geographical situations are different. Since Mexico is on the other side of the American border, exchanges and transnational links are easy. The proximity of Mexico with the United States makes Mexican migration reversible, which was not the case for Italian migration, as travels used to take several weeks. Mexicans in the United States concentrate in the Southwestern states, while Italians were more scattered on the national territory, which may have consequences on the spread of prejudices in some regions and their assimilation to American society.

Access to modern means of communication, such as planes, telephone, and internet connections to keep in touch with the family in the country of origin, represents an essential difference between the experience of Italians during the period of their massive immigration to the United States and that of the Mexicans who emigrate today.

Even if Mexican migration to the United States dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century (especially since the time of the adoption of the Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty in 1848 when the north of Mexico became American), the massive arrival of Mexicans is rather recent, while Italian immigration was much more concentrated over a rather short period of time: four decades. But in both cases, chain migration gave rise to the growth of a circular movement of population. Newer migrants can benefit from the experience of former migrants and from the establishment of transnational networks.

The two groups share some common points despite the fact that one century has elapsed between their periods of massive immigration to the United States. They are mainly Catholic, they can be defined as Latin groups, and their socialization system is based on familism; in the United States they are at the bottom of the social and economic ladder; the demographic features of the two waves are comparable: mainly young adult males, unskilled workers from rural areas emigrated, and their social mobility was slow, which was in part due to their poor schooling. In both cases, migration represents an element of the internationalization of a cheap labor force. Their purpose in settling in the United States is to reach a working-class status, or better a middle-class status, and it is more difficult for the Mexicans today than it was for the Italians at the beginning of the twentieth century because of the general current crisis (Waldinger, Lim and Cort, 32). The general loss of jobs has increased the unemployment rate and unskilled workers have more difficulties in finding a job as American society has turned to post-industrialization. On the numerical point of view, the Mexicans and the Italians represent the largest groups of newcomers during their massive migration period to the United States, that is to say, 25% in both cases.

As the Italians did before the Second World War, the Mexicans suffer discrimination. Because they do not belong to the Anglo-American group, they are seen as a threat to national institutions. They are said to be less intelligent, unclean, and in brief a danger. So were the Italians. Likewise, the Mexicans are considered as illegal workers and drug traffickers while the Italians were said to belong to the mafia and radical groups. The nativist atmosphere in the early twentieth century, as well as the conservative campaigns of the 1990s, triggered the migrants' need to find comfort among their family back in their countries of origin.<sup>5</sup> Keeping transnational ties is, therefore, a form of response to prejudice or bad treatment in the foster society.

Their relations with the governments are also noteworthy. This is what Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanson insisted on when they referred to the role of the states. The migration policies, the dual citizenship possibilities, and the help provided to expatriates or to returnees indicate the government's preoccupation with the migrants. The Italian government, when emigration was revealed to have a real impact on the national economy and during the fascist period, encouraged the maintenance of the loyalty of emigrants and paid attention to the living conditions of expatriates through the activities of mutual aid societies or *prominenti*, such as Generoso Pope, who acted as intermediaries between the motherland and ethnic communities; as far as the Mexicans are concerned, the adoption of IRCA in 1986, along with the establishment of NAFTA in 1994, and the possibility for Mexicans to acquire dual citizenship (effective in 1998), facilitated the movements of population between Mexico and the United States. Then the right for Mexican migrants to be able to vote in Mexican elections without returning home (2005) shows that the role of the nation-states in the regulation of migration and capital flows may condition transnationalism. The role of the consulates, too, is to keep the ties between Mexicans abroad and Mexico. For example, before dual citizenship was accepted in the United States, if expatriates became American citizens, they could no longer be helped by Mexican consulates: hence consuls discouraged Mexicans from applying for American citizenship (Grebler, Joan Moore, and Ralph Guzman 560). They put forward practical motivations to sustain transnational ties and to try and keep solidarity and community power. In Mexico, President Carlos Salinas de Gortaris launched a program to help Mexican communities abroad, the *dos por uno* program: each dollar raised by a Mexican association abroad to subsidize transnational activities was doubled by a Mexican government's grant (Portes and Rumbault 135).

The Mexicans first think that their stay in the United States will be temporary. Many come as agricultural workers, as Italians did. So, emigration is seen as a strategy to earn additional wages, and returns are expected. As a consequence, they intend to remain active in the social or political life of their village. Ewa Morawska calls it a “long-distance management” (8), which is similar to the political or paternal activities of the Italians at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But many stay in the United States, as job opportunities offer better conditions of living, and as families in the hometown depend on remittances. In addition, the emergence of the second generation American-born also pushes families to stay in the United States. But, migrants, thanks to the modern means of communication and also thanks to the proximity of Mexico, can maintain close ties with their village of origin. If emigrants own a house or some land in Mexico, their involvement in Mexican life is even greater. Massey and Espinosa note that those individuals are less likely to emigrate than those who have no possessions, but, because they see migration as temporary, and because returns are easy and frequent, they make the decision of crossing the border while maintaining close relationships with their family and hometown (970-972).

Returns are instrumental in the maintenance of transnational ties: currently, and though it varies according to age, gender, and education, more than 50% of the Mexicans return home (Massey and Espinosa 977).<sup>6</sup> During the period of 2005 to 2010, it is estimated that some 1.4 million Mexicans crossed the border southward.<sup>7</sup> But because of the multiple trips back and forth, it is difficult to precisely count the number of returns. Douglas Massey defines repeat migration as a self-perpetuating phenomenon as a first trip to the United States tends to lead to additional ones, as well as family migration (1997: 1385). This process of movement back and forth shows that networks play an important role in the circulation of people, as well as of goods, just as *padroni* and chain migration were at the basis of the network that emerged among Italians at the end of the nineteenth century.

The exchange of goods, of views that they transplant back and forth, and remittances are also instrumental in the maintenance of transnational ties. In 2010, remittance inflows in Mexico reached \$22.6 million among which 95% came from the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Even more, a real transnational space has developed along the Mexican-American border with a transnational organization; people cross the border to go shopping or to work; economic and occupational ties developed thanks to *maquiladoras*; a bilingual bicultural system has emerged, which corresponds to the feeling of living simultaneously in two countries. Douglas Massey gives the example of the use of the term “Cerveza Bud” (for Budweiser) to designate beer, which shows bi-culturality and the impact of transnationalism (1987: 1-2). In a comparable way, a new language emerged among the Italians at the beginning of the twentieth century: for example, the migrants used the term *bosso* for boss, *baccauso* for backhouse, *storo* for store in English (Carnevale). The Mexican experience of transnationalism is a form of being. Along the border, in Mexican communities, migrants try to transplant their traditional lifestyle, to perpetuate a cultural and social process of identification with their place of origin, as first generation Italians tried to do.

No matter the kind of transnationalism, a transnational “way of being” or a transnational “way of belonging,” migrants try to find, through the persistence of their ties with their mother country, a source of comfort and identification.

The phenomenon of transnationalism among Mexicans, which can be defined today as a transnational “way of being,” resembles the situation of Italians at the beginning of the twentieth century. Now, due to the process of assimilation and the emergence of American-born generations, it is rather a transnational “way of belonging” which is felt among Italian Americans. The question is to know whether, as the supporters of assimilationist policies expect, Mexican American transnationalism will follow the path of Italian American transnationalism in spite of all the differences in the general context.

## Notes

1. At that time, 80% of Italian migrants came from the Southern regions of Italy.
2. The earthquake in L’Aquila is taken as an example in this paper but other recent catastrophes could have been referred to. For example, in November 2002, the NIAF collected \$25,000 to help the victims of the disaster in San Giuliano di Puglia. In 2012 the NIAF gathered some \$250,000 for the victims of the earthquake in Emilia-Romagna. See [www.niaf.org/news/pr\\_earthquake\\_fund.asp](http://www.niaf.org/news/pr_earthquake_fund.asp) (accessed on November 12, 2002) and [www.i-Italy.org/node/33938](http://www.i-Italy.org/node/33938) (accessed on December 20, 2012).
3. See the Italian-American Museum website: [italianamericanmuseum.org](http://italianamericanmuseum.org) (accessed on April 12, 2011).
4. Since there was hardly any illegal immigration among Italians, this paper only considers legal Mexican migration in the comparison and not illegal migration, which would change the data.

5. See the Americanization Movement and eugenicists such as Madison Grant (*The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916) and the campaigns led by Peter Brimelow (*Alien Nation*, 1995) or Republican Pat Buchanan against immigration in the 1990s. In the 1920s the quota laws to reduce Southern European immigration were adopted; in 1994, Proposition 187 was voted in California to ban undocumented migrants from public services.
6. During the fiscal year 2005/2006, according to sources, the number of Mexican returnees stood between 300,000 and 360,000 (National Survey of Demographics and the National Survey of Occupation and Employment).
7. Pew Hispanic Center, 2012.
8. <http://www.thedialogue.org/programs/policy/trade/remittances/default.asp> (accessed May 5, 2013)

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