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In June of 2017, H.J. Manzari, Amparo Alpañés from Washington & Jefferson College, Angela Tumini from Chapman University, together with Mirko Menna from Centro Europeo di Studi Rossettiani, came together to organize the third Bridges Across Cultures: An International Conference on Arts and Humanities. The conference was held at the historical Palazzo D'Avalos from June 11-14th, 2017. I owe debt of gratitude to Angela Tumini, Patrick Quinn and especially Michele Pharand for their hard work and dedication to editing these papers. The "Bridges" conference originated as a vision and an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various arts and humanities-related fields from all over the world to come together and learn from each other. Over the years, the conference has served as a meeting place for scholars and experts with interdisciplinary interests related to arts and humanities to interact with members within and outside of their own particular disciplines. It is my hope that the reader will be able to discover new and creative perspectives from which to study some traditional academic topics from the crossdisciplinary 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 in on the conversation.

HJ Manzari

Managing Editor Bridges Across Cultures 2017

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When Poetry and Film Meet: Dante's and Kubrick's Cosmic Flights

Basile, Paola

Imagination is the queen of truth… She is positively akin to infinity. Without her, all the faculties, sound and acute though they may be, seem nonexistent… Often what they look for, finding it only after a series of attempts by several methods not adapted to the nature of things, she intuits, proudly and simply. Lastly, she plays a role even in morality; for, allow me to go so far as to say, what is virtue without imagination?

Baudelaire, Charles [1]

The human word is born as speech. It contains the primogenital sound, the sound of Creation. According to the poet Eugenio Montale, poetry is born from the necessity to join a vocal sound (the word) to the drumbeat of the first tribal music. [2] Notably, the term "poetry" is derived from the Greek verb ποιέω ("poieio") which means to create, to build, to invent. The creative Word united to music would therefore give life to poetry. With the passing of centuries poetry and music were able to be written and differentiated. Written poetry was born, and it still maintains a major relationship with music. "The true material of poetry is the sound," writes Montale, referring also to written poetry; however, he can do no less than note that poetry is, in some way, also visual because, as he affirms, "it paints pictures." [3]

Montale's observation is, to my way of seeing, correct. Thus, poetry would also be visual insofar as it is able to evoke images. Sound and image, music and painting, are therefore the fundamental components of poetry. The poetic word freely "sings" and "paints" vocal images, which are reverberations of the creative Word, thus succeeding in

making itself "heard" and "seen" at the same time by the reader. Montale is right in saying that it combines two arts in one.

Dante, before writing the Divine Comedy, pondered the existing relationship between poetry and music and emphasized the harmony inherent in that relationship. Poetry to him is the synergy between reason and music, a happy union of fine speech and good writing and the art of the Muse. From the synergy between these two forces arises human music, or poetry, only visible to those who look carefully, as the Poet affirms:

> "O uomini, che vedere non potete la sentenza di questa canzone, non la rifiutate però; ma ponete mente la sua bellezza, ch'è grande sì per construzione, la quale si pertiene a li gramatici, sì per l'ordine del sermone, che si pertiene a li rettorici, sì per lo numero de le sue parti, che si pertiene a li musici. Le quali cose in essa si possono belle vedere, per chi ben guarda." [4]

> "You men who cannot perceive the meaning of this canzone, do not therefore reject it; rather consider its beauty, which is great by virtue of its composition, which is the concern of the grammarians, by virtue of the order of its discourse, which is the concern of the rhetoricians, and by the virtue of the rhythm of its parts, which is the concern of the musicians. These things can be perceived within it as beautiful by anyone who looks closely." [5]

Dante invites men who are unable to understand the philosophy, "la sentenza", of the song ("canzone") to at least listen to its beauty, the music inside it, the rhythm. He invites the reader to set his mind ("porre mente"), to reflect and meditate on the beauty of the musicality in the verses. The "sentenza" the thought entrusted to the verses, can also be perceived through the sweet and harmonious sound of the words, woven together by continuous rhythm, which reflect the sound of the universe, or the creative Word.

The poet, Dante, hears the rhythm of the universe, its Sound, in a tremor his tongue "speaks almost as if of its own accord" ("la sua lingua parlò quasi come per se stessa mossa") [6], sending to humanity merely a crumb of that Sound heard, of the Verb received.

The poet therefore is privileged to hear the Word, the primogenital Sound, and has the great responsibility of transmitting it to those desirous of knowing it.

The music draws "the entire soul" of sensitive men inclined to receive its Sound, its Beauty and its Meaning. It consists of a series of beautiful relationships:

> "... de' quali tanto più dolce armonia resulta quanto più la relazione è bella: la quale in essa scienza massimamente è bella, perché massimamente in essa s'intende. Ancora, la Musica trae a sé li spiriti umani, che quasi sono principalmente vapori del cuore, sì che quasi cessano da ogni operazione: sì è l'anima intera, quando l'ode, e la virtù di tutti quasi corre a lo spirito sensibile che riceve lo suono." [7]

> "… whose harmony is so much the sweeter the more the relation is beautiful, which relation is the principal beauty in this science, because it is its principal aim. Moreover, Music attracts to itself the human spirits, which are, as it were, principally vapors of the heart, so that they almost completely cease their activity; this happens likewise to the entire soul when it hears music, and the virtue of all of them, as it were, runs to the spirit of sense which receives the sound." [8]

The Poet, notes Elias Canetti, is someone who writes, who instead of remaining silent writes. And whoever does not "see" the world we live in, can only with difficulty have something to say, something to write, emphasizes the author. The Poet is therefore someone who sees, someone who dares to see.

Canetti recounts, then, that one day by chance he came across a letter from an anonymous author dated August 23, 1939, written a week before the outbreak of the Second World War. He reads "It is all over. If I really were a poet, I would be able to stop the war." [9]

The anonymous author sees the war before it erupts, feels the responsibility that weighs on the poet's shoulders to act with his own "word of action." Thus the anonymous author of that letter attributes to the poet an enormous power: not only of foreseeing the future, but also being able to act on it, to transform it, to be able to stop a war that hasn't yet broken out. And it is revealing that this writer is from the twentieth century, which

makes us recall that, over the course of centuries, the poet has retained a visionary, prophetic eye, as well as the magic of beautiful words to act on the future.

The poet's word, therefore, is a word of action that surpasses time and space. It exceeds philosophy, says noted critic and intellectual Eric Auerbach in referring to Dante, a philosophy that:

> "....non può abbandonare e oltrepassare la ragione; essa sola [la poesia] è all'altezza della rivelazione [del Verbo] è può esprimerla; ed essa esce dall'ambito della bella apparenza, non è più imitazione e non sta al terzo posto nell'ordine dopo la verità, bensì la verità rivelata e la sua forma poetica sono una cosa sola." [10]
>
> "…cannot abandon and go beyond reason; it alone [poetry] is at the summit of revelation [of the Word] and can express it; and it leaves the sphere of beautiful appearances, is no longer an imitation and does not remain in third place in order after truth, rather the revealed truth and the poetic form are a single thing." [11]

Only poetry, therefore, can venture beyond reason and logic to express the Word because only in poetry does the Word resonate.

The creative Word of Dante launches itself into the beyond, into the infinite cosmos, surpassing reality and the imaginable. It flies to the threshold of Paradise on the border between the temporal and the eternal, the known and unknown, the possible and impossible. Appearing up high in a rising sun is Beatrice, who had awakened love in the adolescent poet. The name Beatrice means (not by chance) she who brings beatitude, joy, and salvation. In her eyes says Dante, she carries beauty and love, in her smile salvation and wisdom.

It is Beatrice who lights the paths of love that reach the way of wisdom. Love puts thought into action, it is an interior activity which results in wisdom. Love is not substance, states Dante, but an event in the substantial, which means it can belong (or not belong) to the essence of a being and can become, without changing, the same essence of the being in

whom it is revealed. It exists in the encounter, in the relationship with the other, the individual whom he experiences time after time.

Love is made manifest in Beatrice, in the smiling light of the sun that enamors the poet, moving him, spurring him to take an extraordinary voyage into the infinite cosmos. His vessel, a metaphorical space ship, is the poetic word that “cantando varca” [12] (by singing verses, crosses frontiers of space into the beyond) in a cosmic (“pelago”) sea, full of perils and marvels never before explored. From the moon’s orb, he flies to Mercury, Venus, and away to the Sun, and then Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and then he navigates a sea filled with Fixed Stars and reaches the Crystalline Heaven or Primum Mobile (“Prime Mover”), to the ultimate immovable and immaterial paradise: the Empyrean, beyond Space and Time.

In Dante’s poetry, the highest visible Beauty passes through Knowledge, meditated by Love. The true and the beautiful coincide. Every bit of knowledge he grasps and is able to communicate is impassioned experience, both mental and sensory.

Thanks to his vessel, the poetic word, the poet can experience unknown worlds, going deeper into the universal mystery. An adventure made of music, dance, colors, smiles, playfulness, and intense light. A transhuman adventure that dares to launch itself beyond the humanly possible, urged on by a will and by a love that are incredibly tenacious. The poetic word soars from the human to the divine, searching science, penetrating wisdom, questioning metaphysics, brushing against the mystery and the searing, blinding rays of Love, robed in Beauty.

The joy intensifies little by little as he climbs the heavens. In the heaven of “jovial” Jupiter the traveler is enlightened and cheered by Justice, which was for the ancients, the

source of happiness. Beatrice dazzles with supernatural light difficult to put into words. A light that is Love because derived from Love ("perche' da Amore deriva") and whose reflection strikes the astonished poet.

"Every heaven has its light" notes R. Giglio, "its own splendor, as if from a multiplicity of colors would be born the only light" [13] to which all are drawn. It is like a play of luminous geometric colors through which Dante travels to the Encounter with the Ineffable: "Io vidi in quella giovial facella / lo sfavillar de l'amor che lì era / segnare a li occhi miei nostra favela*."* [14] "And I saw in that smiling face / the spark of love that was there / signal to my eyes our speech." [15] These verses at the threshold of Jupiter go beyond every possible imagining, and attest "as if, notes Giglio, he had been able to see images, hear sounds, and be struck by an emergent light incomprehensible to the human mind because of the supernatural nature of the elements that comprise it." [16]

The supernatural makes a language of itself in an act of love so that the voyager is able to understand it: "Sì dentro ai lumi sante creature /volitando cantavano, e faciensi /or D, or I, or L in sue figure./ Prima, cantando, a sua nota moviensi;/ poi, diventando l'un di questi segni,/un poco s'arrestavano e taciensi." [17] "So, in their lights, the saintly beings sang / and, in their flight, the figures that they spelled / were now a D, now I, and now an L. /First, they moved to the rhythm of their song;/ then, after they had finished forming one / letter, they halted for a while, in silence." [18]

The souls of Jupiter, enfolded in glowing light, fly around singing, shaping themselves into the calligraphy of alphabetical letters. The light shapes itself into writing, into words. The inexpressible reveals itself in a silent mute alphabet, accompanied by the music and dancing of shining lights. The poet's quill trembles before such inexpressible

images, and he asks the help of the goddess Pegasea, the muse, that she may assist him in writing these verses. And as if painted among his verses, there appears a biblical quotation from the Book of Wisdom: "DILIGITE IUSTITIAM, QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM" [19] (Love Justice, you who rule the earth, you who have the duty to govern.) A statement that sounds like a divine commandment from far-away Jupiter to the men of the earth who must act justly.

An intense white light "strikes" the traveler, an eagle appears which suggests in its stylization the shape of the letter "M". The eagle is the bird which flies highest in the sky, and is endowed with keen sight and able to endure the sun's rays. In the pagan world, it symbolized justice, in the Christian world, it becomes the symbol of the evangelist John, called by Dante the "Eagle of Christ." Both these worlds attribute to it power, acute intelligence, and contemplation, which were entrusted to the god Jupiter. Therefore, it is not by chance that the eagle appears in the heavens over Jupiter, the planet and ancient god of justice, bearer of harmony and happiness.

The image of the eagle appears as the letter "M", the letter symbolic of universal monarchy; in his work, "De Monarchia", it is the political system dear to Dante, the only one according to him, able to guarantee justice and social welfare.

The poet-astronaut flies in Jupiter's skies, and crossing over it, "hears" and "sees", or rather experiences justice, the harmony of all the virtues of the stars, which means the main power that brings harmony and equilibrium into the Heavenly Paradise.

Some centuries later a film director, with the technology of his time, with his vessel, a movie camera, gave life on the screen to another cosmic voyage to Jupiter and even "beyond infinity."

During the years of our first ventures into space, Stanley Kubrick, fascinated by the cosmos and the infinite, decided to create a film of a flight beyond planet Earth: 2001: A Space Odyssey, "an epic drama of adventure and exploration." The film depicts an exploratory voyage into the infinity of the cosmos, presented as a vast cosmic ocean, which represents "that last ever-expanding frontier for mankind's exploratory voyages." [20]

Kubrick read much on the literature of space, astronomy, science fiction, and probably also read the Divine Comedy. The writings of Arthur C. Clarke particularly captured Kubrick's attention, to the point of his taking the initiative to personally write him a letter. In this letter, he confides to him that he wants to make "a really good science fiction movie" and that he would like to explore the reasons for which we tend to believe in the existence of intelligent extraterrestrials, and the impact that an eventual discovery of extraterrestrial life would have on us, and on the future of our planet.

The letter, sent in March 1964, was read with great curiosity by Clarke, who at that time was doing research on mankind and outer space for the Time-Life Science Library. Clarke replied to Kubrick proposing to meet to discuss and delve into his film project.

At their first meeting, the writer proposes as a starting point for the film one of his stories from 1948 entitled "The Sentinel" later revised and retitled "The Sentinel of Eternity" and reprinted in Ten Story Fantasy magazine. It is about an exploratory voyage into the universe set in motion by the discovery of evidence of extraterrestrial intelligence buried on the moon thousands of years ago. The idea somewhat appeals to Kubrick whose aim was to make a film about exploration in space, particularly as he was interested in the relationship of mankind with the Infinite, with the Unknown, which has never been realized before because it is at the limit of the possible.

The story "The Sentinel" is taken into consideration, but Kubrick firmly believes that it needs to be reworked and proposed that Clarke immediately begin rewriting it as a novel before moving on to the screenplay of the film. Clarke accepts the idea of writing the novel, "with an eye turned first to the screen", that will serve as a basis for the film's script. But in the end both the novel and script are completed at the same time, influencing each other. As Clarke puts it: "novel and screenplay were being written simultaneously, with feedback in both directions. Some parts of the novel had their final revisions after we had seen the rushes based on the screenplay based on earlier versions of the novel, and so on." [21]

Out of this intense collaboration between novel and film, writer and director, "2001: A Space Odyssey" is born, the voyage of a man into the infinite cosmos depicted as a vast ocean, into which flies the Ulysses of the future, the astronaut, seeking knowledge of new astral worlds. Instead of words, the director prefers music. His film is one of images accompanied by music. Spectators have the impression of finding themselves in front of a "living" painting of images that "move," "play," and "dance" like Dante's verses in the minds of readers. The director affirms his desire to visualize, for his viewers, an experience that goes beyond words: "I tried to work things out, so that nothing important was said in the dialogue and that anything important in the film be translated in terms of action." [22]

The film is immediately criticized, because the viewer does not understand these musical "silences"; it is lamented that the film lacks words and human involvement. In an interview with the New York Times, Stanley Kubrick answers the critics revealing that: "There are certain areas of feeling and reality that are notably inaccessible to words. Non-verbal forms of expression such as music and painting can get at these areas, but words are

a terrible straitjacket. It's interesting how many prisoners of that straitjacket resent its being loosened or taken off." [23]

The dialogue, would therefore imprison the spectators, keeping them from seeing beyond. For this reason, the entire first sequence of scenes (as well as the last one) entitled "The Dawn of Man" has no dialogue but only music, the powerful and evocative music of Richard Strauss's "Also Spracht Zarathustra". Music accompanies extraordinary views of Earth, of the rising and setting sun, of the heavens. Then "the first man" appears, the bestial man, in the form of an ape. This creature discovered that a bone can become an instrument of power in his hands, a means of destruction he can use to kill even his brother, and others like him, with the goal of dominating even more territory and gaining power. It is not by chance that this sequence is orchestrated with "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," music inspired by Nietzsche's essay of the same name, to the assertion of the statement that man is like a cable strung over an abyss, between animal and superman. Kubrick's bestial man longs to go beyond himself. Victorious over his rival he throws his bone-weapon into the sky, which in soaring high is transformed into a spaceship, floating in space, and the bestial man is transfigured into a superman (of space), an astronaut sailing towards Jupiter.

"The Blue Danube" of Johann Strauss goes along with this leap of mankind (over four million years) into infinite space in an astral waltz of pictorial, marvelous, and phantasmagorical beauty. There is nothing better than the Blue Danube Waltz, says the director, to depict grace and beauty in motion.

In the second part of the film, after the stellar waltz, we begin to hear some dialogue. Even the HAL 9000 model computer speaks through his artificial eye. Hal kills all the crew members with the exception of Bowman who is able to survive and prevail over

artificial intelligence. In the final sequence, Bowman completes the daring flight ("il folle volo"), catapulting himself into the blinding lights of Jupiter, a spectrum of sounds and colors, and even further into infinite mystery discovering himself to be part of it, in the womb of a star orbiting the universe.

Human imagination has flown so high and so far, away, spurred by the ancient desire to know the unknown (and the infinite) and by the insatiable longing to reach unreachable destinations, to cross the frontier of what is real, and dive even beyond that, into the future.

If we observe the night sky attentively we notice a brilliant point of light tending towards yellow. It is Jupiter, the largest planet in our solar system. No astronaut has been able to pass through its orbit and lights in flesh and blood to land on its surface. Two space probes, Voyager I and Voyager II, were launched towards Jupiter in 1979, more than 10 years after the debut of Kubrick's film. In 1995 another unmanned spaceship, "Galileo", was able to reach Jupiter and land a probe there before going into orbit. Thanks to the vehicle and probe, the instruments created by human beings for the purpose of adventuring further than their physical limitations, we can "see" and "know" the planet Jupiter. For example, we know that its magnetic field extends over eight million kilometers and that there exists a ring of tiny particles that display different colors. Kubrick and Clarke must have already intuited this back in the sixties. In the film, you can see a kind of ring encircling Jupiter, a spectacular play of light and color, seen from the perspective of the character of Bowman traveling inside it. After the Jupiter experience, Bowman finds a "new" life in a star in the Infinite. Dante in his poetic vessel ("cantando varca") by singing verses, crosses frontiers of space into the beyond and flies even higher; after having

experienced the planet of Justice (Jupiter), he goes through the heavens of Saturn, the star-filled sky, the new rings that whirl at maddening speeds in the Crystalline Heaven, to arrive, blind, in the Empyrean. Here, like Bowman, Dante finds a "new" life, acquires a new vision rekindled within him allowing him to glimpse the Ineffable.

However, the poet is not able to find words to describe it. He feels bewildered before such a vision which has transcended the human mind so as to be beyond any experience or recollection.

The Empyrean does not exist in any place, and is not itself a place, but is "Mind", the poet specifies. The astronaut Dante has therefore left space and time and penetrated into the mind of the universe, into the unimaginable. Thanks to his great talent as an artist, the poet succeeds in molding the unimaginable into a supreme canto. The physical and spiritual heavens merge.

The poet has arrived at the final canto of the *Commedia*, at the vision of the inexpressible, the inconceivable. He turns his eyes towards the eternal light and his sight becomes more acute (like that of John the Evangelist, "the Eagle of Christ"): "ché la mia vista, venendo sincera, /e più e più intrava per lo raggio / de l'alta luce che da sé è vera." [24] "because my sight. becoming pure, was able /to penetrate the ray of light more deeply / that Light, sublime, which in Itself is true." [25] And his vision penetrates deeper into the ray of eternal light that depends on no other light, because it is the source of all light. From that moment on, what he sees is well beyond human nature, and therefore inexpressible in words, even impossible to remember:

"Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
che 'l parlar nostro, ch'a tal vista cede,
e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio.
Qual è colui che somniando vede,
che dopo il sogno la passione impressa

> rimane, e l'altro a la mente non riede,
> cotal son io, ché quasi tutta cessa
> mia visione, ed ancor mi distilla
> nel core il dolce che nacque da essa." [26]

> "From that point on, what I could see was greater
> than speech can show: at such a sight, it fails
> and memory fails when faced with such excess.
> As one who sees within a dream, and, later,
> the passion that had been imprinted stays,
> but nothing of the rest returns to mind,
> such am I, for my vision almost fades
> completely, yet it still distills within
> my heart the sweetness that was born of it." [27]

Before this transcendent vision, the poet-traveler feels limited. But the impossibility in front of which he finds himself seems to bolster his will and his tenacity not to turn back, and to press further on, to give sensory form to what is beyond the senses, to distill the ray of his vision in his verses, to render the immaterial sensible and incarnate. The mind does not remember but a fragment of what he has seen remains in the heart. The poet sharpens his sight and seeks to enter into the mystery. Contrary to the mystical, which abandons all the operations of the intellect to elevate oneself to the supernatural, the scholar Chimenz justly notes that Dante: "Non si abbandona, non si oblia, [...] non si annega nell'immensità dello stupore e dell'amore, ma studia e misura il progressivo incremento delle sue facoltà umane [...] con miracolosa lucidità intellettuale, con tutta la tension della volontà, fino all'ultimo atto dell'ineffabile drama". [28] "Does not abandon himself or lose himself in oblivion, nor drown in the immensity of his astonishment of love, but studies and measures the progressive growth of his human faculties with miraculous intellectual clarity, with all the force of will, until the final act of the indescribable drama." [29]

The drama Chimenz speaks of is seen by human eyes in the overwhelming divine light that strikes human eyes in the suffering endured while experiencing this supernatural

power - “the living ray that I endured (suffered) was so acute... -. Despite such overpowering light, Dante does not retreat; on the contrary, he courageously opens his eyes to the unbearable light. His daring is so ardent that the Divine Mystery gives way to such desire, and allows him (the poet-astronaut) to see for just an instant: “E' mi ricorda ch'io fui più ardito /per questo a sostener, tanto ch'io giunsi /
l'aspetto mio col valore infinito.” [30] “I can recall that I, because of this / was bolder in sustaining it until / my vision reached the Infinite Goodness. [31]

Having permeated the vision of the mystery of the universe so assiduously sought, the poet goes profoundly into the depths, igniting a spark to leave for future generations. But our future generation, Chimenz tells us that there remains:

> “L'imprecisione in cui Dante ha lasciato la descrizione del meraviglioso mistero di luci iridate e fiammeggianti, in cui direi che si celi più che si riveli Dio... l mistero teologico rimane, così, poeticamente mistero; eppure la fantasia ne ha, direi, la commossa intuizione; ma non è il disegno che suscita la commozione della fantasia, bensì il senso di stupore di quell'incomprensibile rivelazione.” [32]

> “The imprecision with which Dante left the description of the marvelous mystery of the iridescent, flaming lights in which, I would say God is more hidden than revealed...the theological mystery remains like this, poetically mysterious. And yet the fantasy has, I would say, an enlightened intuition; but it is not the design which arouses the commotion of fantasy, as much as the sense of wonder at that incomprehensible revelation.” [33]

I believe that comment also applies to the film “2001: A Space Odyssey”. Also, here, at the end, the enigma remains “poetically mysterious,” and the onlooker intuits the “Incomprehensible” from the enchantment and marvel of the final scene.

The musical and poetic word-images of Dante and Kubrick comprise, therefore, the ship with which they can make the reader/spectator fly into the cosmic ocean, into the transhuman and mysterious mind of the universe to glimpse, with miraculous intellectual clarity, the Ineffable.

Notes

[1] Baudelaire, Charles. “Lettres à M. le Directeur de La revue française” in *Curiosités esthétiques*

Salon de 1859, M. Lévy, Europeanlibraries: 1868, p. 265-266. English translation in “Charles Baudelaire Quotes”, <http://notable-quotes.com/b/baudelaire_charles.html> .

[2] My translation in Montale, Eugenio. “Sulla Poesia”. Milano: Mondadori 1976, p.7. “Necessità di aggiungere un suono vocale [la parola] al martellamento delle prime musiche tribali.”

[3] Ibid. My translation.

[4] Dante. “Convivio”. Garzanti: Milano 1987, II, XI, 10.

[5] Dante. “Convivio”. translated by Richard Lansing, Digital Dante, Columbia University, 2017

[6] “Vita Nova” in *Princeton Dante Project*, xix, v.2.

[7] “Convivio”, II, XIII, 23.

[8] “Convivio”, II, XIII, 23, translated by Lansing.

[9] Canetti, Elias. “La conscience des mots”. Paris: Albin Michel 1984, p. 331. My translation.

[10] Auerbach, Erich. “Studi su Dante”. Roma: Feltrinelli, 1977, p. 91.

[11] Ibid. My translation.

[12] Dante. “Paradiso”, II, 3.

[13] “Ogni cielo ha la sua Luce il suo splendore, come se da una molteplicità di colori nascesse poi quell'unica Luce, a cui tutti tendono.” My translation in Giglio, Raffaele. “Il volo di Ulisse e di Dante”. Napoli: Loffredo 1997, p. 165.

[14] Dante. “Paradiso”, XVIII, 76-81.

[15] Ibid., translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

[16] “Come effettivamente egli abbia potuto vedere immagini, sentire suoni ed essere investito da una luce, che risulta incomprensibile alla mente umana proprio per il contenuto soprannaturale degli elementi che la compongono.” My translation in Giglio, Raffaele. “Il volo di Ulisse e di Dante”. Op. cit., p. 165.

[17] Dante. “Paradiso”, XVIII, 76-81.

[18] Ibid., translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

[19] Dante. “Paradiso”, XVIII, 91-93.

[20] Kubrick, Stanley in Clarke, Arthur. “The authorized Biography”. N. McAleer, Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1992, p. 185.

[21] Clarke, Arthur. “The authorized biography”. Op. cit., 185.

[22] Kubrick, Stanley in Clarke, Arthur. “The authorized biography”. Op. cit., p. 203.

[23] Ibid., p. 204.

[24] Dante. “Paradiso”, XXXIII, 52-54.

[25] Ibid., translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

[26] Dante. “Paradiso”, XXXIII., 55-63.

[27] Ibid., translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

[28] Chimenz, Siro. “Il canto XXXIII del *Paradiso*”, in *Lettura critica della Divina Commedia*, a cura di T. di Salvo, Firenze: La Nuova Italia 1969, p. 292.

[29] Ibid., my translation.

[30] Dante. “Paradiso”, XXXIII, 78-81.

[31] Ibid., translated by Allen Mandelbaum.

[32] Chimenz, Siro. “Il canto XXXIII del *Paradiso*”. Op. cit., p. 295.

[33] Ibid., my translation.

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Expanding the Literary Imagination Through the Translation of García Lorca's Poetry

Marco Antolín

In the winter of 1953, Philip Levine, Pulitzer Prize Winner and Poet Laureate of the United States for 2011-12, recalls in his book *The Bread of Time: Toward and Autobiography* how "one Saturday afternoon," reading García Lorca's *Poet in New York*, "became a miracle as I stood in the stacks of the Wayne University library, my hands trembling, and read my life in his words" (144). A few years later, in 1958, another young poet, James Wright, who would become one of the finest poets of his generation, wrote to James Dickey that "Lorca's poem 'Ode to Walt Whitman' makes me want to tear my hair with terror and joy. I don't know what to do" (Wild Perfection 153). "Reading his poetry then, the words and what they seem to fuse in combination," says Jerome Rothenberg in his collection *The Lorca Variations*, "hit me like electric charges" (88).

"A miracle," "terror and joy," "electric charges," reflect the emotional impact of Lorca's *Poet in New York* on these distinguished authors, representative of a group of emerging poets in the early 1960s, who were trying to break away from the poetry that the New Critics and Modernists had supported in the universities in the 1940s and 1950s. Although Lorca wrote most of the poems in that book when a student at Columbia University during the first year of the Great Depression and they were first published in a bilingual collection in 1940, it was in the 1955 edition translated by Ben Belitt that they enjoyed a wider circulation. *Poet in New York* offered an alternative to the objective,

impersonal and intellectual view of the world that had dominated the poetic establishment ruled by T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams.

Lorca's passionate and powerful imagery was praised as the embodiment of an alternative consciousness that subverted logic and broke the rational mindset of the reader. His acclaimed essay on the sources of artistic inspiration, “Game and Theory of the Duende” (1933), in which he defined the concept of the *duende* as “a mysterious force that everyone feels and no philosopher has explained” (107), had an enormous impact on poets from different styles and from various literary movements. Lorca became “a major precursor for the revolutions in poetry and life erupting again in the 1950s” (Rothenberg, *Lorca Variations* 89), especially for the poets who were starting to move away from formalisms and to reject the technician’s approach to poetry dominated by academic specialists. Robert Bly referred to those poets as the ones who were “writing in what we have called the new style or the new imagination, who are not driven to rhetoric and overstatement” (Sixties 4, 29).

As a result, translating became an opportunity for many poets with some knowledge of a second language to immerse themselves in the craft of those whom they considered to be masters of the art of poetry. Lorca, but also Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Antonio Machado, Miguel Hernández, and Rafael Alberti, entered the American canon in translation and influenced those who, in their capacity as poet-translators not only absorbed imagery, symbols, and poetic patterns, but also discovered an English idiom for their own poetry. Their thought and use of the English language were altered, and quite often the resulting poem was the product of their particular style as much as it was an adaptation of or variation on the translation work. Translating meant “the recovery of an untapped

potential for English language poetry, rendering in a distinctively American idiom the enigmatic volatility of the subconscious and of the pre-rational, manifested in the work of Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, Georg Trakl, André Breton, and Vicente Aleixandre" (Rasula 30).

I will explore how four major poet translators, Philip Levine, Robert Bly, James Wright, and Jerome Rothenberg, began experimenting with imagery and free verse style in their own poetry when they undertook their own translations of Lorca's poetry. In addition, I will show how translating Lorca played a central role in their poetic development by encouraging the transition from the "old" poetry of formal metrics in which they had begun to feel trapped, to a poetry of common speech, a more subjective outlook, and personal involvement.

Philip Levine: Lorca: A Poetry Beyond Rational Limits

When Philip Levine, still an aspiring poet, came across *Poet in New York* "by one of those magical strokes of luck that came to the poet in need," as he put it, he found "a door to a way of speaking about his life" (*Bread of Time* 144). What first caught his attention was largely the language itself that Lorca used, even though "he could not understand all of what he was reading by any means and could not comprehend how he went from one image to another" (Antolín 176). The broken syntax, intense undertone, and the combination of astonishing images inspired him, while he was growing as a poet, to capture the anger and frustration of the difficult life he had been experiencing at that time due to working in different factories. This is how he recalls that experience:

> Never in poetry written in English had I found such a direct confrontation of one image with another or heard such violence held in abeyance and

> enclosed in so perfect a musical form. What in my work had been chaotic rant was in his a stately threnody circling around a center of riot .... Here was the first clue to what my poetry would have to become if I were to capture my experience." (*Bread of Time* 145-46)

Levine started writing formal verse like many of his contemporaries, such as Robert Bly, Robert Lowell, Adriane Rich, and John Berryman. After their second or third collection, all rebelled against the institutionalized predominance of the rational poetry the New Critics promoted in their journals and in the academic world. Let us examine the syllabic verse and consonant rhyme of the first stanza in Levine's "An Abandoned Factory, Detroit," from his first book *On the Edge* (1963), as an example of the formal style characteristic of his beginnings and esteemed by the poetic establishment. It deals with the hatred for the inhumane conditions he experienced while doing industrial work during his early youth:

> The gates are chained, the barbed-wire fencing stands,
> an iron authority against the snow,
> and this grey monument to common sense
> resists the weather. Fears of idle hands,
> of protest, men in league, and of the slow
> corrosion of their minds, still charge this fence. (3)

Inspired by how Lorca's poems "would move from one arena of imagery to another with a kind of mysterious transition" (Antolin 179), Levine committed to translate Lorca's work, which affected him in various ways. Having already learned from Lorca, when first reading him in translation, that one could feel the emotion the poet was trying to communicate before understanding everything that was going on in the poem, had helped him liberate his verse from rational constraints. After committing to translating him, his own poems became more charged with surreal elements and he moved toward looser

rhythms and plainer speech. "They Feed They Lion," written after he had been living in Spain for a year and had translated not only Lorca but other Spanish poets, shows the same theme as the previous poem, but now conveyed with visual images that act as a catalyst to express the frustration that came from unbearable working conditions. The syllabics and rhyme are gone, the syntax is broken, and the last line reproduces slang language, complete with incorrect grammar.

> Out of burlap sacks, out of bearing butter
> Out of black bean and wet slate bread,
> Out of the acids of rage, the candor of tar,
> Out of creosote, gasoline, drive shafts, wooden dollies.
> They Lion grow. (34)

Those familiar with Levine's work would not find the precedent of this poem in his first collection. In fact, Levine has acknowledged the direct influence that Lorca had on expressing his own feelings of rage and "what his poetry would have to become if I were to capture my experience" (*Bread of Time* 146). He alludes to these specific lines from "The King of Harlem," in which Lorca, with a succession of images, conveys his frustration and isolation in New York.

> A wooden wind from the south, slanting through the black mire
> spits on the broken boats and drives tacks into its shoulders.
> A south wind that carries
> tusks, sunflowers, alphabets,
> and a battery with drowned wasps. (*Poet in New York* 27)

Aware of the perils of allowing his writing to be overly influenced by Lorca, Levine reinvented him in his own way, taking only what he felt was necessary and avoiding imitations or misappropriations. He incorporated the idea of using non-rational connections and making leaps of images. "How Much Can It Hurt?" is another example of this technique based on the rhythm of images constantly making associations with various topics:

> The egg turning brown under the spoon
> The lemon laughing all night long
>
> My brother in his uniform over Dresden
> The single thrill of fire going for the bed
>
> The kindergarten blowing its windows out
> Chalk burning the little fingers
>
> The newspaper waiting all weekend
> Dozing in rain with the deaths smeared on its lips
>
> The oiling and loading and springing
> The bullets sucking quietly in their cradles. (42)

During the 1970s, Levine continued to liberate his work from what Edward Hirsch terms the "poetics of extreme rationalism" (49). As a reader and translator Levine used the inspiration he gained from Lorca to construct a poetic style of his own devising, a manner of speaking by taking techniques from and an interest in the unconscious. The idea of leaping from one image to the next and juxtaposing different scenarios, thoughts, and levels of reality would stay with him throughout his career.

A poem such as "On the Meeting of Garcia Lorca and Hart Crane," published in *The Simple Truth* (1995) several decades after having translated Lorca, reflects another way of incorporating this free-association style. Levine begins by setting up an encounter between the two poets introduced in the title of the poem: "Brooklyn, 1929. Of course Crane's / been drinking and has no idea who / this curious Andalusian is, unable / even to speak the language of poetry" (3). Then, the poetic voice addresses the reader directly and includes images such as the ants from an easily identifiable source in Lorca's acclaimed "Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter," in which he commemorates a friend, mortally wounded in a provincial bullring in 1934: "The bull doesn't know you, nor the fig tree, / nor the horses, nor the ants of your house" (Lorca, *Collected Poems* 825). Levine writes:

> Let's not be frivolous, let's
> not pretend the two poets gave
> each other wisdom or love or
> even a good time, let's not
> invent a dialogue of such eloquence
> that even the ants in your own
> house won't forget it. (3)

The leaping of images, scenarios and themes defines the structure of the poem, from the encounter between Lorca and Crane to the speaker of the poem addressing the reader (including reactions to that gathering and references to Lorca), then to the life of his brother Arthur, and he continues to make leap after leap. The poem ends with a personal anecdote about his brother and a final reference to the importance of the imagination:

> Arthur, he survived graduate school,
> later came home to Detroit and sold
> pianos right through the Depression.
> He loaned my brother a used one
> to compose his hideous songs on,
> which Arthur thought were genius.
> What an imagination Arthur had! (4)

"The real joy of poetry" in Robert Bly's words, "is to experience this leaping inside the poem. A poet who is leaping makes a jump from an object soaked in unconscious substance to an object or idea soaked in conscious psychic substance" (*Leaping Poetry* 4). Like Levine, Bly was inspired by Lorca to develop his distinctive style based on associations of images and themes. One of the main proponents of the resurgence of abundant leaping in modern poetry, Bly was a prolific translator who introduced Lorca and other European and South American poets to American readers.

Robert Bly and James Wright: Translating and Experimenting with Lorca's Imagery

Through Robert Bly's magazine *The Fifties*, which in the 1960s changed its name to *The Sixties* and in the next decade to *The Seventies*, the work of foreign poets and different traditions previously unknown were made available through translation. Bly was dissatisfied with current poetics: "Most of the poetry published in America today is too old-fashioned," we read on the cover of the first issue of *The Fifties*, and Bly constantly emphasized the importance of poets in translation as a conscious means of importing their energy into American poetry.

His translation work was also part of a literary agenda to attack the poetic establishment and to discredit the American tradition of formal poetry. He argued that the vast majority of American poets were cut off from the unconscious mind, were "unaware of leaping as a principle in art" (*Leaping Poetry* 52), lacked imagination, and evinced a fundamental absence of spiritual intensity, emotion, and inwardness, qualities that were the yardstick he has insisted upon as an essential poetic value. He was also one of the main advocates of Lorca's poetry based on the use of images from the unconscious because they contained the emotional charge that he considered was missing in American poetry. In his essay "A Wrong Turning in American Poetry," he affirms the following:

> Lorca, conveys his emotion not by any formula, but by means that do not occur to [T.S.] Eliot—by passion. The phrase 'objective correlative' is astonishingly passionless. For Lorca there is no time to think of a cunning set of circumstances that would carry the emotion in a dehydrated form to which the reader only need add water. (10)

Bly also believed that the reason why few American poems penetrated to any reality in political life was because the "political concerns and inward concerns have always been regarded in our tradition as opposites, even incompatibles" (*American Poetry* 246). He used Lorca in translation as an example of a poet with a surrealist impulse who draws on his inner life and responds to external realities. In his poetry anthology and critical treatise *Leaping Poetry: An Idea with Poems and Translations*, Bly includes several of Lorca's poems ("Landscape with Two Graves and an Assyrian Hound," "Little Infinite Poem," "Rundown Church," "New York: Office and Denunciation," "The Quarrel," and "City That Does Not Sleep") as examples of the leaping image and the expression of realities within the own culture. His belief was that poets like Lorca and Neruda had rediscovered the

radical psychic freedom of the imagistic leap, and that the poetic image was not a matter of mere equivalence with another object, nor an expression of the poet's own personality, but an agent of lies inside the soul and imagination of the poet.

Bly valued poets like Lorca because he was able to confront modern life, acknowledging its moral commitment to social and political issues, and able to write out of their social identity. Bly had found a model for a poet who used a language that took poetry closer to the intimacy of the spoken word and whose purpose was ultimately to achieve effective and essential communication and to express shared understanding. According to Bly, Lorca and others from the Spanish tradition who were all writing in the new imaginative style "assembled the three kingdoms within one poem: the dark figures of politics, the world of streetcars, and the ocean world" (*Fifties* I, 39). Translating Lorca but also Neruda and Vallejo conferred vitality to his writing, which absorbed the intensity of the Spanish imagery, Bly gaining a clearer perception of realities within his own culture.

After having immersed himself in translation work, his own verse reflected the transition from a style intent on registering qualities of the natural world and the intimacy of the self, to a more radical surrealist and politically involved style. The atmosphere of solitude in the poems of his first book, *The Silence in the Snowy Fields* (1962), with its images combining perceptions of nature with occasional touches of surrealism, differs from his next book, *The Light Around the Body* (1968), where he adopted a different voice and much more radical imagery.

At a time when Bly was organizing readings around the country and trying to spread an awareness of the social and psychological ills of American society, *The Light Around the Body* won the National Book Award, becoming a kind of anthem of the sixties. In

poems such as “The Executive’s Death,” “Watching Television” or “The Great Society,” Bly depicts the ugly side of American society. Take “The Great Society,” for example, where Bly uses “Dentists continue to water their lawns even in the rain,” “coffins of the poor are hibernating in piles of new tires,” and “The President dreams of invading Cuba” (17) to call out the excesses of wealthy people who do not care about turning off their sprinklers despite the fact that it is raining and value car tires more than people’s lives, and to express dissatisfaction with his country’s foreign policy.

Bly’s bewilderment with the ongoing political transgressions of his country and the escalation of the Vietnam conflict during this period intensified his political and social focus. In aesthetic terms, he made use of the kind of surreal images in Lorca’s writing to probe the unconscious of the reader in a confrontational manner. In poems such as “Hatred of Men with Black Hair,” he exposed the psychology of American racism against Native Americans. The final stanza of this poem contains a striking image, “Underneath all the cement of the Pentagon / there is a drop of Indian blood preserved in snow” (*The Light Around the Body* 36), that is reminiscent of the first two lines from Lorca’s “New York: Office and Denunciation:” “Under the multiplications, a drop of duck’s blood” (*Poet in New York* 129).

Bly attacked the American government and people in positions of power in poems such as “Those Being Eaten by America,” “Listening to President Kennedy Lie about the Cuban Invasion,” “At a March against the Vietnam War,” or “Driving through Minnesota during the Hanoi Bombings.” For example, the last stanza from “Hurrying Away from the Earth” mirrors the surrealist anger of Lorca’s New York poems:

> The time for exhortation is past. I have heard
> The iron chairs scraping in asylums,
> As the cold bird haunches into winter
> In the windy night of November.
> The coal miners rise from the pits
> Like a flash flood,
> Like a rice field disintegrating.
> Men cry when they hear stories of someone rising from the dead.
>
> (*The Light Around the Body* 54)

Images like "the iron chairs scraping in asylums" and "the coal miners rise from the pits like a flash flood" approximate the image-making style and echo the freedom used by Lorca. Interestingly, the looseness of form and personal expression, which had a liberating effect on Bly's verse, parallels the trajectory of James Wright, with whom he collaborated on translation work. Both poets shared a similar style at the outset, engaged as they were in the "Romantic rebellion against poetic formalism" (Barillas 149) characteristic of their generation, and protested government policies in lectures and in their verse. Wright was also struck by the potential power of translating Lorca's poetry and began experimenting with imagery and free verse style in his own poetry.

Translation played such a central role in his poetry that after having been recognized for writing the kind of verse esteemed by the Modernists and the New Critics—"the tradition of poetry which I had tried to master, and which I'd come to a dead end, was not the only one" (qtd. in Barillas 150)—he rebelled against it when he discovered the work of Lorca and of other European and South American poets. His 1963 collection, *The Branch Will Not Break*, signaled his change in poetic direction away from formal academic

poetry. After he felt he had achieved a dexterity with the craft at the expense of feeling he now had his own voice, he moved toward a poetry of subjective imagery and verse freed from metrical constraints.

"Spring Images" is an example of the kind of poem structured through images unconnected by logic and is typical of the kind of verse he wrote when he started to do translation work. Typically Lorquian imagery, such as "the wind," the color "green," "the moon," is used to create symbolic associations with the transformation and rebirth that this season of the year brings:

Two athletes
Are dancing in the cathedral
Of the Wind.

A butterfly lights on the branch
Of your green voice.

Small antelopes
Fall asleep in the ashes
Of the moon. (*Branch* 44)

Captivated by the strong evocative language, the exploration of the subconscious, and the ambiguity that makes comprehension hard in rational terms characteristic of Lorca's poems, Wright continued to develop a style that relies on images to mark the strength of expression. Two of his most anthologized poems, "A Blessing" and "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota," are in the free verse of "deep imagery" aimed at touching emotions beyond the rational mind that he developed

for his own poetry by absorbing the image-making techniques of Lorca's poetry through his own translations.

"A Blessing" begins with the close observation of the natural world and moves toward a startling moment of self-revelation. After announcing a geographical setting, "Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota," the speaker and his friend watch two Indian ponies emerge from a group of willows and walk toward them. Then they move suddenly and unexpectedly to a moment of spiritual revelation expressed with an image that evokes a sense of liberation from human alienation from nature. "Suddenly I realize / that if I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom" (*Branch* 57). Similarly, making the image the main element in the poem's structure in "Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy's Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota," Wright creates a strong contrast between the observation of the landscape and an image, concluding with the admission that he has "wasted his life." His intent here is to capture the life of the unconscious and convey emotional impact.

> Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,
> Asleep on the black trunk,
> Blowing like a leaf in green shadow.
> Down the ravine behind the empty house,
> The cowbells follow one another
> Into the distances of the afternoon.
> To my right,
> In a field of sunlight between two pines,
> The droppings of last year's horses
> Blaze up into golden stones.
> I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.

> A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home.
> I have wasted my life. (*Branch* 16)

The image and the rhythm of breath as the fundamental agent of poetry will be prevalent in Wright's poetry going forward, even in the poems of political expression that become more and more common in his work. In his celebrated "Eisenhower's Visit to Franco, 1959," he recreates the encounter between the two heads of state using images that create an emotional impact: "forces of darkness," "light of heaven," "slow dusk," "a shining circle of police." Leaping constantly to other topics and historic periods, such as Machado running away to France when the Spanish Civil War broke up in 1936, the speaker says: "Antonio Machado follows the moon / down a road of white dust, / to a cave of silent children / under the Pyrenees." Next, he takes us back to the political meeting: "Eisenhower has touched hands with Franco, embracing / in a glare of photographers." The poem concludes by telling us about the consequences of the event:

> Clean new bombers from America muffle their engines
> And glide down now.
> Their wings shine in the searchlights
> Of bare fields,
> In Spain. (*Branch* 29)

Wright's interest in translation resulted in a poetry that drew more and more upon images spontaneously arising from the unconscious and that expressed a more subjective outlook. It was kind of poetry whose origin and inspiration came from Lorca and from the other Spanish and South American poets he was translating at the time, from Juan Ramón

Jiménez to César Vallejo. This poetry became known as Deep Image poetry, and it is one of the most important literary currents that originated in the 1960s.

Although the label is not loved by everyone, the notion of the Deep Image aesthetic is now as much a part of the scholarly vocabulary as are the other schools that originated during that decade: the Beatniks, the Confessional poets and the Mountain Black poets. Jerome Rothenberg coined the expression Deep Image after being inspired by Lorca's composition method: "Lorca was the first, and it was from Lorca more than anyone else that I brought away the idea of a composition through images ... that I later named "deep image" (Lorca Variations 88).

Jerome Rothenberg: The Line Between Translating and "Writing Through" Lorca

After the frustration of not being able to publish, back in the 1970s, some of his own Lorca translations independently, which he had been commissioned to do, Jerome Rothenberg decided to pay a kind of homage to Lorca by composing a series of poems of his own that draw systematically on vocabulary, mostly from Lorca's *Suits* and *Poet in New York*. The lessons gained from boldly contending with Lorca's work is evident in the composition of variations and adaptations, or what Rothenberg called "writing through Lorca," which he published in *The Lorca Variations* (1990), decades after he did his translations.

The first poem in the collection, "Lorca's Spain: A Homage," serves as an example in which the words are drawn in part from Lorca but rearranged, with a wide margin of flexibility and freedom, in a kind of "collage." Occasional references to Lorca and the

Andalusian landscape contribute, as he intended, "to create a kind of mediumship in which voices spoke to and through the poet" (*Writing Through* 170).

> Beginning with olive trees.
> Shadows.
> Beginning with roosters.
> Crystal.
> Beginning with castanets and almonds.
> Fishes.
> This is a homage to Spain.
> …
> The Moon.
> Who is naked? The imagination
> (wrote Lorca) is seared.
> This is a homage to water.
> Beginning & end. (*Lorca Variations* 1)

In all the poems of this collection, Rothenberg straddles the thin line between translation and composition, and a still thinner line between translation and other forms of "writing thorough" Lorca's themes, images, and symbols. However, he has no qualms about considering these poems his own. There is "a sense of freedom in the recognition that I could make a poem from words and thoughts to which, initially, I had no claim. Once translated they were mine and simultaneously not mine" (*Writing Through* 153). Some of the poems show little modification from Lorca's originals, while the more complicated ones provide an opportunity for the arrangement or recirculation of source words or for the substitution of alternative words and phrases. "The result isn't translation or imitation in any narrow sense, but yet another way of making poetry, and for me at least, a way of

coming full circle into a discovery that began with Lorca and for which he has stood with certain others as a guide and constant fellow traveler" (*Writing Through* 170).

Rothenberg rearranged imagery and composed variations on Lorca's themes from poems such as "Jewish Cemetery," "Moon and Panorama of the Insects" and "Two Lovers Murdered by a Partridge," constantly testing the limits of translation. His poem "First New York Poem," follows the principle of textual transformation in making a free adaptation wherein he explores his own personal reaction to "the city that we thought we knew" (*Lorca Variations* 88), but to which Lorca added a different perspective, far from the official one.

> Science and the paradise of labor give hope to those who live
> with anguish, whose dawn are buried under mud
>
> The challenge arises in my blood. It brings me games to
> play with bones till morning ends it-spikenard afloat on
> water, columns swaying like a distant shipwreck.
>
> We control the children's noises with our laws, their mouths
> distorted into mindless angles.
>
> Above New York four pigeons-silhouetted, black-fly
> from your fire escapes, but no one sees them.
>
> Numbers we write down clank like drills or chains. (79)

Linguistically and aesthetically, the intermediary texts in English are the translations he made from Lorca, which never saw publication. His poem, however, is a

new creation, distinct from Lorca's poem and the poet's translation in English. He reinvented and constructed a poetic style of his own design by adopting a language influenced by his own "creation" of Lorca. References to social injustices, labor exploitation, and the polluted urban setting, as well as rearranged images from several of his translations, form the structure of the poem. Most of those images, such as "blood," "shipwreck," and "columns," come directly from Lorca's poem "Dawn," which describes the dawn of New York city annihilated by pollution: "Dawn in New York has / four columns of mire and a hurricane of black pigeons / splashing in the putrid waters."

> The light is buried under chains and noises
> in the impudent challenge of rootless science.
> And crowds stagger sleeplessly through the boroughs
> as if they had just escaped a shipwreck of blood. (*Poet in New York* 75)

The city in Rothenberg's poem has not changed much from those perceptions that Lorca observed and reflected, but he expands Lorca's vision to include the human aspects of the disoriented multitudes, the memory of the dark polluted dawns, the lack of authentic values, indifference in the face of suffering, and the destructive effects of men on nature:

> Impossible to know your boroughs any longer, to recall the
> dawns that struck New York with hurricanes, rattled coins,
> that let love die before it blossomed, spattered your rootless
> crowds with faded light. (*Lorca Variations* 79)

For Rothenberg, the idea of making variations on Lorca's faithful translations and of "writing through" Lorca using vocabulary from his own translations as building blocks for the creation of poems had a very positive effect. Levine, Bly and Wright did not test

the limits between translation and free poetic adaptations as much, but they all shared a passion for translating Lorca that became part of their creative process and helped them create tactics of their own devising.

In addition, translating Lorca saved them from the dullness of their predecessors' analytical and logical conception of poetry. It relieved them of the intellectual poetry by which they had been imbued by validating a composition process that could take political risks without forgetting the emotive aspects. It was also a source of techniques stemming from the treatment of the surrealistic image or images derived from Lorca's poems that allowed them to design their own poetry, avoid creative stagnation, and expand their literary imagination.

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Searching for identity through autobiography: E. Mphahlele from South Africa

Concetta Croce

According to one famous definition, an autobiography is a backward tale (usually written in prose) that real people write about their own individuality and, particularly, about their personality development (Lejeune 9).

Lejeune bases his definition on the French autobiographers of the XVII-XVIII centuries, and he underlines two main features: 1) a conventional representation of life by people who start retelling their past lifetime from an end-point, and 2) a self-inquisitive and self-known modern conscience describing itself. Thus, an autobiography shows no doubts or ambiguities: it displays an almost monolithic personality that is exposed through analytic accuracy.

Autobiography is one of the primary European literary genres. During the Colonisation and Imperialism eras, European writers spread autobiographies across the colonised world. Nowadays, it is widespread, despite seeming incompatible with post-colonial intellectuals' psychology.

In fact, identity is one of the most problematic issues of post-colonial theory [1]. Colonial power was based on the idea of 'purity', both from a racial and cultural point of view. Domination depended on preserving the 'difference' between colonisers and the people colonised.

Exploited for centuries by the colonisers' political system, as well as suffering oppression by their educational, cultural, social and even religious practices, colonised

people suffer from a loss of both personal and communal identity. All post-colonial intellectuals share Ngugi wa Thiong'o's famous commitment of 'decolonising the mind'. This represents a sort of categorical imperative, implying a large-scale re-evaluation of history in terms of policy, society, culture, and even psychology. In other words, in order to regain their freedom, colonised people must destroy the mental organization that allowed the rise and development of exploitation throughout the centuries.

In post-colonial literature, the old concept of 'contamination' (linked to the Eurocentric representation of moral or physical corruption) is replaced with 'hybridism', a new assessment derived from identity criticism from Derrida's deconstructionism combined with Bakhtin's ideas. Specifically, Bakhtin believed that an understanding of others' discourse incorporates the others' perspective into one's own frame. The result is a predicate that can be articulated in two ways, which can be similar and different simultaneously. Thus, a hybrid element changes difference into similarity. In the same way, post-colonial intellectuals are aware of their privileged point of view, which enables them to deconstruct Eurocentric concepts, such as 'culture', 'race' and 'identity'.

Post-colonial identity is a contradictory issue. On the one hand, it seems to bring together all the multiple experiences from the decolonised world. On the other, the loss of identity can also be assessed. According to Paul Gilroy (*Between Camps: Race Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Colour Line*), the modern African diaspora is a powerful metaphor that helps us re-think 'identity' and 'identification', reorienting these notions towards uncertainty, ambiguity and conflict. The aim is not to describe a monolithic identity, but to explore new links that redefine the idea of culture. The 'commemoration' is not linked to plain recollection, but to the possibility of elaborating and modifying

memory itself in the present.

Post-colonial writers contrast the western solid personality with this hybrid: they open and split their own. In this way, autobiography changes in order to fit the writers during the process of self-discovery.

In Africa, many artists have written their autobiographies, especially in South Africa where ‘the current proliferation of autobiographies may be seen as a part of the autobiographical impulse of an entire country engaged in a process of bringing the past into proper perspective in a “drama of self-definition” […], a nation’s textual creation of itself in the course of identifying itself’ (Jacobs i).

The distinguished line of autobiographies by African authors from South Africa includes *Tell Freedom* by Peter Abrahams (1954), *Road to Ghana* by Alfred Hutchinson (1960), *Chocolates for My Wife* by Todd Matshikiza (1961), *Blame Me on History* by Bloke Modisane (1963), *Autobiography of an Unknown South African* by Naboth Mokgatle (1971), *In Transit - Autobiography of A South African Freedom Fighter*" by Fanele Mbali (2012), *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995) and *Conversations With Myself* (2010) both by Nelson Mandela.

One of the most famous, however, is E. Mphahlele, born in Marabastad, Pretoria on 17 December 1919.

A self-made man, Mphahlele received a BA degree in 1949, followed in 1968 by a doctorate from the University of Denver.

Responding to an appeal for teachers from Nigeria, Mphahlele left South Africa in 1957 together with a number of other African teachers whom the apartheid regime considered unemployable. The ANC requested him to represent it at the first Pan-African

conference to be held on African soil and hosted by Ghana in 1959. It was in West Africa that he began to blossom as a literary figure, having broken out of the constraints of apartheid racism.

Almost twenty years later, among much controversy, he returned to South Africa: his return coincided with the last decade of the apartheid system. He devoted himself to literature and cultural work, avoiding politics, and died on 27 October 2008, in Lebowakgomo, Limpopo.

Mphahlele was the author of more than thirty short stories (*Man Must Live, and Other Stories*, 1946; *The Living and the Dead, and Other Stories*, 1961); many essays (*The African Image*, 1962; *Voices in the Whirlwind and Other Essays*, 1972; *Poetry and Humanism: Oral Beginnings*, 1986; *Echoes of African Art*, 1987); some novels (*Down Second Avenue*, 1959; *In Corner B*, 1967; *The Wanderers. A Novel*, 1971; *Chirundu*, 1979; *Afrika My Music: An Autobiography*, 1984; *Father Come Home*, 1984) and a collection of letters (*Bury Me at the Marketplace: Selected Letters of Es'kia Mphahlele, 1943-1980*, 1984).

In career spanning sixty years, Mphahlele received many international awards and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature in 1968.

His life is inextricably connected to his country's history, and his autobiography is the main topic of his works. In fact, he wrote two autobiographies: *Down Second Avenue* in 1959 and *Afrika My Music: An Autobiography* in 1984.

In *Down Second Avenue*, he described the hardships he experienced even as a young boy living with his grandmothers during the apartheid era, showing what it was like for a black man to live under the regime. He recounts his experiences in Marabastad (near

Pretoria) when he was a young boy until he became an adult, at which time he fled the country and went into exile in 1957.

The story begins with the young Eseki (his nickname). He and his brother and sister were taken to live with their grandmother in the village of Maupaneng, near Pietersburg, while their parents remained in Pretoria because of work. The father was a shop messenger and the mother was a domestic servant.

One of the issues most emphasized in the first part of this book is linked to the self-construction of the artist as a child, for whom the village community functioned as a caring group and safe place to live. Eseki learned the traditions and lifestyle of his own people by listening to stories told by Old Segone (the village storyteller) at the fireplace.

However, he also learned the social problems under apartheid. In fact, one day, Eseki is surprised by a story he heard about the black man and the white man:

> The Black man must enter the white man's house through the back door. The Black man does most of the dirty work… Black man cleans the streets but mustn't walk freely on the pavement; Black man must build houses for the white man but cannot live in them; Black man cooks the white man's food but eats what is left over.
>
> (*Down Second Avenue* 6).

When Eseki was twelve years old, his mother came to fetch him, but because of an abusive father, the mother eventually moved the family away to live with her mother at Second Avenue, as the title of the book suggests.

There, Eseki proved himself a brilliant student. Although his mother earned very little, she was enthusiastic about sending Eseki to school. Education was valuable because it was viewed as a benefit that would improve their life circumstances: "You'll come back

and be able to look after yourself and the two you're leaving behind." (*Down Second Avenue* 113).The language is the most interesting aspect of the book. Syntactically segmented and polysemous, it shows 'the constant tension and restless[ness] of life in a South African ghetto' (Afejuko 269).

The book effectively describes the harsh establishment of racial segregation and the very different lifestyles of blacks versus whites. Instead of narration, debate was predominant: each memory was a personal condemnation as well as a societal one because a single person's life was indistinguishably linked to the others:

> Saturday night. Darkness. Sounds of snoring from my uncle al the corner. Like the muted lowing of a cow […] My younger brother doesn't stir beside me. Nor the younger uncle the other side of him under the same blanket as we […] I know the cold air coming through the hole in the flooring boards will whip us out of sleep as it plays upon bare flesh, else one's legs will rest on my neck and then I shall jump up with a scream. My sister also on the floor is kicking the legs of the table she's sleeping under. Grandmother and three of Aunt Dora's children ore lying quiet on the old double bed. The only door and the only window are shut. Hot. With two frayed blankets on us it's good to feel hot. I can't sleep I can't get up to walk about in the yard because my bones are aching because I was cleaning the house and turning every thing up and choking in the dust I was making.
>
> (*Down Second Avenue* 44-45).

The ending of the work is suspended, and a second book, *Afrika My Music: An Autobiography 1957–1983*, completes the story. In this second book, the structure is more evident, starting with the subtitle, which fulfils Lejeune's 'autobiographical pact' (i.e., the

identification between character, narrator and author) that the autobiography is based on [2].

The chronology (1957–1983) links this book to the previous novel and begins where the other ends, during his exile in Nigeria, and includes his return to South Africa, which is the second end-point from which the new backward tale comes.

Mphahlele mentions the continent he returns to after more than 30 years in exile. This showed that the links between the author's life and his country were very strong, and there is a connection between Mphahlele's (the artist's) surname and the name of a district in Mopaneng (a city not far from Pietersburg in the Northern Province). The first novel was also named for the road where Mphahlele lived with his maternal grandmother. Jacobs stresses that the great urgency in black South African autobiographies relates to the place of experience because 'autobiographers have defined themselves explicitly in relation to the country in the titles and sub-titles of their works' (Jacobs ii). In fact, the novel begins with a long, very suggestive description of the native landscape at the moment he returns from exile.

Moreover, the graphic style of the continent's name ('Afrika') focuses on the native language (Afrikaans) rather than English, and the change is remarkable. This is because language was a very important element during colonisation, both for political control and cultural submission. Nowadays, the use of a specific language, especially a native one, has strong cultural and political meanings in connection with the debate surrounding post-colonial identity, as was pointed out by famed Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. Also, according to Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, language is a 'bank of memory' and preserves the communal experience of people. When speech creates and re-

creates experience, it gives it truthfulness and direction. As tools of control and exploitation, European languages must be abandoned in favor of indigenous ones. In doing so, the post-colonial world will break colonial dominance [3].

Bilingual or multilingual situations (including native languages, pidgins, creoles and even translations) are very common in post-colonial literature, and this enables readers to understand and break colonisers' cultural structures. Obviously, for Mphahlele this choice was ideological because he decided to change his given name (Ezekiel) to 'Es'kia', the Afrikaans version.

Finally, the book's title contains another important point of discussion with regard to post-colonial theory: music. Because they were prohibited during colonialism (especially if referring to the traditional civilizations), music and songs, as well as carnivals and festivals, are now central topics in promoting indigenous cultures because 'indigenous music/song recalls a pre-contact method of communication and affirms the continuous validity of oral traditions' (Gilbert and Tompkins 194). This helps unmask the autoreferential and hierarchical structures of western cultures, as already pointed out by Baumann. This cultural policy is emphasised by the title of the first chapter of the books, *The Sounds Begin Again*. Here is a brief passage from the text:

> I am sitting out on the step of our house at Lebowakgomo, fifty kilometres south-east of Pietersburg. A city in the making. In front of our row is bush. Pitch dark. Not more than six kilometres to the north, beyond the bush through which the Tudumo river cuts, is the hill. A narrow valley away from the hill is the Mogodumo mountain range. […]
>
> Twelve kilometres to the east is Maupaneng, the village in the Mphahlele

> district where I spent seven years of my childhood, looking after cattle and goats. The mountain dark and its boulder-heaving rivers has since those days held some enchantment for me.
>
> (*Afrika My Music* 1)

The text begins with a long, objective description that emphasizes the place of experience. This choice has is very meaningful: first, there is a strict correspondence between the names of the author and the country, and second, the details of the landscape show the urgency of self-belonging and, of course, self-definition.

At this point, the narration flashes back to the final moments of exile, when the government withdraws its previously offered university contract. A second flashback is connected to the first and brings the reader further back to 1957, the year of exile. Moreover, many flashbacks are embedded in the novel. They are set at the very beginning of various paragraphs and introduced by the concise, but effective, phrase 'Back to …'. This technique suddenly throws the reader back into the past.

The literary device of embedded narrative not only produces suspense, but also displaces the narration back and forth. This movement creates a timeless narrative flow where memory can be relived and re-written in the present, as we can see in this passage:

> *Every* so often I jog in the Mphahlele district and trace the goat-and-cattle trails we maintained in my herdboy days. I still remember them vividly. On these excursions I try to recapture the smells of the place. So often I am jolted out of my reverie by the birdsong of my youth. I pick up *morula* fruit and berries, and the taste travels back forty-seven years. I left these haunts in 1930 and did not return until July, 1976. (*Afrika My Music* 2)

The recovery of the past is closely linked to the recovery of the loss of identity. In this autobiography, the process is based on two main aspects: the places of existence and the community and relationships.

Regarding the first point, the author seems to suggest he did not feel comfortable about places for exile (especially the western locations), while he professes his belonging to Africa – both generally, to the whole continent, and specifically to South Africa. This ambivalence is one of the central issues in the novel and is especially linked to his 'political' and 'social' improvement, as well as his psychological and personal upgrading:

> Exile. From innocence to experience to the acceptance and resentment of placelessness, of the memory of the cries and sirens. The voice of cautions against the urge to throw yourself into other people's cultural battles and causes, in search of a commitment, merely on the strength of one's colour… The ironies and paradoxes of the black world.
>
> (*Afrika My Music* 133)

As we can see, the self-construction is a choral event: it pivots on the second main topic of the novel, the relationships with other African personalities he encountered. This results in a rich cast of characters, both common people and important persons.

In the first case, the tale dramatizes their lives as witnesses to events and happenings; in the second, it shows crucial meetings with African politicians (Kenneth David Kaunda, President of Zambia) or artists (Nigerian Cyprian Ekwensi, Ulli Beier, even Nobel prize-winner Wole Soyinka). These meetings evince the need for post-colonial intellectuals not only to speak about themselves through others, but also to build a community of shared experiences that creates a common background in order to compare

themselves and define their own identity, even in a problematic way. The narrative correlates with this searching for identity, and the technical devices support an inward examination by their hybrid texture, combining canonical autobiography and other self-telling forms such as the diary.

The dates are strictly linked to the narrative context and are usually inserted in the text to emphasize particularly crucial events. For example, at beginning of the fifth chapter, with its symbolic title (*Reconaissance… and back to base*):

> May 1976. The unbelievable had happened. The Black Studies Institute in Johannesburg invited me to read a paper at its inaugural conference and actually succeeded in its request for a visa to be granted to me. Nineteen years, and now I was able to re-enter South Africa! I had even decided I was not going to try to apply, but Rebecca urged me to do so. The visa came.
>
> For days and nights after this I kept asking myself, what awaits me out there? How will they receive me - my people? […]
>
> Finally, there I was at Jan Smuts Airport. July 3, 1976. My passage through the Immigration gate was smooth. But at the sight of a young policeman in uniform my heart missed a few beats. Old memories… old encounters… old fears… I was back, *that* was clear.
>
> (*Afrika My Music* 171-72)

We note that the chapter began with an abrupt date that becomes more detailed a few lines below. Thus, the diary structure becomes increasingly more tense in order to emphasise the author's returning little by little. At this moment, the flashback about the exile ends after about four chapters [4], disposing the elements in the form of so-called

"ring-composition", which reminds the reader of *The Odyssey* by Homer, both with respect to the fictional technique and the topic. In fact, one of the most emphasized issues in the first part of the novel as the 'νόστος', or the 'return': according to Gilroy (*Between Camps: Race Identity and Nationalism at the End of the Colour Line*), this is the strongest metaphor for existence.

Mphahlele also used another form of self-account: the epistle. In fact, he inserted parts of private letters into the autobiography's plot in order to multiply the points of view about an event or episode or to affirm a given one. In particular, one letter was fully copied: the missive that an unknown Lekau had written to his mother (*Afrika My Music* 57-59). It seems strange that a letter from another exiled man has been so used as the author's own, but Mphahlele, despite the evident pain of his long exile, is aware of his public role as an artist. In order to speak about his feelings, emotional states and reactions as a human being towards that exile, he uses another's words, which allow the novelist to be a part of a community of shared experiences and to express himself through the others:

> […] Funny thing, Ma, every time I think of you I seem to hears bells. Not church bells, just a mixture of bells, you know. We you ever forgive me? But that is not the important thing – not really. Only if I can forgive myself will things come right and I cannot. My heart is heavy with guilt and shame, it's like I'm dragging a heavy chain to which my heart is tied […]. (*Afrika My Music* 58-59).

This is the central point in the letter: Lekau was an exiled man, forced to live far from his country and family because he had joined a political movement. He expresses all his regret for his present lifestyle, a regret many men share, including possibly the author himself.

The narrative choices by Mphahlele in this autobiography reflected the author's

real personality, an ongoing identity defining itself according to the community and territory he shared with the same complexity. The author used writing more as a means of knowing himself than to spread his fame. In this way, the novel is not the result of inquiry, but a process towards a search for identity.

Endnotes

[1] Fundamentals of post-colonial theory can be found in the writings of Anderson, Gellner, Bhabha, Olaniyan, Ching and Low, Baucom, Singh and Schmidt and Prasad.

[2] We are aware of the methodological problems we encounter when studying a literary genre from a different time or place. Therefore, we borrow and blend the main procedures by Claude Guillen, applying western patterns to the 'other's' civilization, but modifying and correcting them according to the peculiar distinctiveness of non-European cultures.

[3] See also Korang and Slemon.

[4] The title of the first chapters are 1. *The sounds begin again*; 2. *Nigeria, France, Kenia – and the Pan-African hop 1957-1966*; 3. *Denver, Colorado 1966-1974*; 4. *Philadelphia 1974-1977.*

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Music and Soul: Gabriele D'Annunzio and his Abruzzo Homeland

Laura D'Angelo

In *Il Fuoco* (The Flame), D'Annunzio writes, "Have you ever considered that the essence of music might not be in sounds at all? It is in the silence that precedes sound and the silence that follows. Rhythm appears and comes to life in those periods of silence. Every sound and every chord awakens a voice in the silence that can only be heard by our minds. Rhythm is the heart of music, but its beat cannot be heard except during the pauses between sounds."[1] The silence as the essence of music, music that originates from the inner spiritual human life, through the experience of senses and affections, becoming a voice of mind and soul.

To understand the importance of music in D'Annunzio's work, we can mention a passage from *Libro segreto*: - "Quando nella notte io mi curvo su la mia pagina, in questa officina, operaio artiere artista, come il ciglio della mia palpebra china. *Ascolto.* E mi sembra veramente di ascoltare per la prima volta, con una attenzione diversa da quella che io m'ho nel ricevere le belle musiche: da quella attenzione di così alta spiritualità che per tutti i sonatori diviene un elemento del suono e un mistero della risonanza. Il vento e l'acqua nel mio giardino alternano o contrappongono due melodie. Ogni nota delle foglie e delle gocciole mi tocca in tal parte di me dove non giunge la musica degli strumenti, ma 'con una *volontà* di musica'. Mi tocca dove vuol toccarmi: mi commove come vuole commovermi: con una esattezza e con una sapienza che m'è quasi insegnamento di composizione." [2] And in an other passage, "-[…] ascoltando il *Peccavimus cotidie* di Pierluigi da Palestrina -[…]- rientrai nella Chiesa e il tuono dell'organo rintronò sul mio capo era come se il Palestrina prendesse in me la mia angoscia più profonda e ne facesse la sua sostanza musicale -[…]- in quel punto io nacqui alla

musica, ebbi nella musica la mia natività e le mie soste -[…]-non per diletto, non per blandizia e non per oblio, ma per elezione di dolore e per vocazione di martirio-”.

The centrality of music in Gabriele D’Annunzio’s poetry needs to be understood within the framework of the emerging cultural constructions of Decadentism, a literary and artistic movement that emphasizes sensuousness, the delectation of form and sound, the worship of beauty, Aestheticism, and musical symbolism. Music is an inner constituent of the soul. It’s the voice of sadness, a cry, a shout, an experience that can be heard in rain, or evoked through the invisible voice of water, or of wind. The crisis of modernity leaves mankind alone, without positive values and landmarks. It responds to the trends of the time, which disregard the true value of human personality. The idea of progress and the sense of decadence appear to be intimately linked. And music is a symbol, a language of immense evocative power, with which to experience the full power of life, one in which the poet is wholly immersed.

Music for the poet born in Pescara, in Abruzzo, is an important theme in every period of his artistic and prolific life. A representative of the Italian Decadent movement, D’Annunzio was a writer, a poet, a journalist, a dramatist, a playwright, a war hero, and a dandy whose life was adventurous, always in the spotlight, glamourous and scandalous, a life targeted at *vivere inimitabile*, the inimitable life.

But there is one aspect of his multi-faceted activities that has been ignored by essayists and critics alike: music. Music is an essential constituent of D’Annunzio’s creative process, a voice of silence and soul, a mysterious voice that originates from silence reproducing through the senses of affections and imaginations a rare and unusual melody.

“De la musique avant toute chose,” says Verlaine, and D’Annunzio considers music an important constituent of human life, individually (in Vittoriale, the museum- home of the

poet, there is an entire room dedicated to music) and above all socially (as can we see from The Charter of Carnaro, the political, military and cultural constitution proclaimed by D'Annunzio on 8 September 1920 in Fiume, establishing the centrality of music as the fundamental principle of the State).

Although the poet was not a musician by trade, we can consider him as "the lover of music": when he was young, he took piano and violin lessons and was an accomplished guitarist.[3] His love of music can be surmised in his villa's violin-shaped garden, aptly named "garden of the dances." The poet cultivated friendships with many notables in the music world (Arturo Toscanini, Francesco Paolo Tosti, Giacomo Puccini, Claude Debussy, and Niccolò van Westerhout, among others) and was a connoisseur of concert hall performances; (he was also a successful lyricist and librettist). D'Annunzio wrote one of the masterpieces of Neapolitan music, *A' Vucchella*, which Enrico Caruso brought to international acclaim. The song was set to music by Francesco Paolo Tosti, who also used many other lyrics by D'Annunzio. The poet likewise wrote many popular songs with composers Ottorino Respighi and Leone Sinigaglia. A few operas were also composed based on his writings, among them Riccardo Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini* and Pietro Mascagni's *Parisina*. D'Annunzio's predilection for music can be summarized in his love for Richard Wagner. His fictional characters are all linked with art, so that their "Titanism" is due to their particular sensibility, to the feelings of an attitude, "the perception of music", that is the immediate revelation of distress, the true essence of interior life. D'Annunzio published three articles in *La Tribuna* devoted to Wagner. In them he defended Wagner against Friedrich Nietzsche, who had recognized and combated in Wagner the exemplary type of the decadent artist. His defense of Wagner is still considered one of the best commentaries on Wagner's music.

Of the “season of Wagnerism” are the novel *Il Fuoco* [*The Flame*] and *Il Trionfo della morte* [*The Triumph of death*], that is set in Abruzzo, in San Vito Chietino.[4] Here, on the Trabocchi coast and pointing towards the sea is the *Dannunziano Hermitage*, also known as the Portelle Hermitage due to its location in the locality of Portelle; it owes its name to a visit by the poet Gabriele D’Annunzio, together with Barbara Leoni, in the summer of 1889. During this stay D’Annunzio wrote the *Trionfo della Morte* (1894), the celebrated autobiography of his love for the woman.[5] The Italian region is a picturesque landscape, stretches from the heart of the Apennines to the Adriatic sea, full of a charming atmosphere and history, traditions and folkloric habits and attitudes.

The novel is a music-work. Such as a mixture of a poetry and art, it contains in fact the most thrilling evocation of the Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* music in all literature, the voluptuousness of intensity, the fervour of sounds as a background of emotions. Giorgio Aurispa and his lover Ippolita Sanzio, live for months in an highly charged eroticism, enhanced by superstition, memories, and above all by the score of *Tristan und Isolde*, that never leaves Giorgio: “Giorgio had not forgotten any episode of his first religious pilgrimage to the Ideal Theatre; he could relive every instant of his extraordinary emotions when he had discovered on the gentle hill, at the extremity of the great shady avenue, the edifice consecrated to the supreme feast of art; he could reconstitute the solemnity of the vast amphitheatre girt with columns and arcades, the mystery of the Mystic Gulf. In the religious shadow and silence of the place, in the shadow and ecstatic silence of every soul, a sigh went up from the invisible orchestra, a moan was uttered, a murmuring voice made the first mournful call of solitary desire, the first and confused anguish in presentiment of the future torture. And that sigh and that moan and that voice mounted from the vague suffering to the

acuteness of an impetuous cry…"[6] Giorgio, increasingly enable to attend the trivia of day-to-day living, chooses to live with Ippolita entirely for love. But death, in many guises, is always present, and Giorgio tragically understands that only in obliteration can highest ecstasy be found. As Tristan did when he heard the shepherd's song, so Giorgio too found in music a *revelation*, the comprehension of pain, the knowledge of his tragic destiny and sad life.

The novel in many ways symbolizes the pessimism and sense of crisis that lie at very heart of *fin de siècle* culture. The idea of death, the perception of *decadence,* the popularity of macabre in addition to being a symptom and consequence of the cultural crisis of the time, is a prolific literary theme for the emerging *mass* audience; [7] according to a kind of Wagnerian *leitmotif*, death is constantly present in the novel in different ways.[8] Giorgio Aurispa is an emblematic figure. At first he considers death to be the ideal transfiguration of vulgarity into beauty. Than, he discovers the impossibility of loving, the secret illness that corrodes his will, since in his eyes the woman has been transformed into a "sexual being exclusively, the inferior being deprived of all spiritual value, a simple instrument of pleasure and luxury, the instrument of ruin and death".[9] As a theatre drama, music is revelation, a sort of voice of soul, an intense voice originated from a "mystical abyss". As a final act, for Giorgio suicide is a logical solution, representing a protest against life, and not a celebration of death.[10]

But musicality in the novel is also the Italian background that amplify the local "abruzzese" characterization. It's a poetry, a folkloric painting, an integration to descriptions. For example, the novel is full of connections with Abruzzo traditions and places:

"La fede consacrava tutte le forme vegetali intorno. La leggenda cristiana si avvolgeva ai tronchi, fioriva tra i rami. – Nel grembiule della Madonna fuggiasca, inseguita

dai Farisei, il Bambino Gesù si mutava in frumento traboccante. Nascosto nella madia, faceva lievitare la massa del pane rendendola inesauribile."[11]

And in other passage: "Era l'antica melodia che da tempo immemorabile in terra d'Abruzzi le donne cantavano su le spoglie dei consanguinei […]. Ella cantava, cantava: - Apri gli occhi, alzati, alzati, cammina figlio mio! Come sei bello! Cantava: per un tozzo di pane t'ho annegato, figlio mio! Per un tozzo di pane t'ho portato al macello, figlio mio! Per questo t'ho allevato!- Ma la femmina irosa dal naso adunco, la interruppe: - Non l'hai annegato tu. È stato il Destino. Tu non l'hai portato al macello. L'avevi messo in mezzo al pane."[12]

Picturesque is also the description and the representation of Favetta, "cantatrice di San Vito", with the traditional song in Abruzzese dialect, *Tutte le fontanelle se sò sseccate:*[13] "Favetta diceva:«Tutte le fontane sono secche. Povero amore mio! muore di sete. –O Amore ho sete, ho sete. Dov'è l'acqua che mi hai portata? – Ti ho portato una giara di creta, incatenata con una catena d'oro». Le compagne dicevano: Viva l'amore!

Tutte le funtanelle se sò sseccate. //

Pover'amore mi'! More de sete. //

Tromma larì lirà llarì llallera, //

tromma larì lirà, vvivà ll'amore! //

Amore mi tè set'e mmi tè sete. //

Dovèlle l'acque che mme si purtate? //

Tromma larì lirà llarì llallera, //

tromma larì lirà, vvivà ll'amore!" [14]

This traditional song emphasizes the folkloric atmosphere: music becomes an instrument to amplify the voice of feelings and mind: through the use of repetitions of sounds, onomatopoeia and rhythm it seems to live in San Vito Chietino, “the place of brooms” *il paese delle ginestre,* where is “Trabocco del Turchino”, “una strana macchina da pesca, tutta composta di tavole e travi, simile a un ragno colossale”, and the Adriatic sea reproduces the sounds of silence and emotions.

D’Annunzio converts images into words. His ear is as discriminating as his eye. In all of his literary production, we can find Abruzzo background: the Italian region becomes a source of inspiration, a beautiful ancestral landscape that highlights the realism of the text. The poem *Rain in the Pinewood*, [*La pioggia nel pineto*], for instance, with its modulated word-music at once describes and imitates the sound made by rain falling on leaves:[15]

“Taci. Su le soglie //

del bosco non odo //

parole che dici //

umane; ma odo //

parole più nuove //

che parlano gocciole e foglie //

lontane.” [16]

The silence in the verb “*Taci”* [Hush v.1] at the beginning of the poem underlies the music of nature, that reproduces the sounds of human soul, the essence of music, like “*gocciole e foglie lontane”* [droplets and leaves v.6]. The musicality of the poem underlies the metamorphosis in nature of the two lovers. The magical tone is evocated by the rain, falling rhythmically, tapping on the foliage, in a celebration of nature that becomes all senses. The

use of repetitions, onomatopoeic words and a lexical choice based on phonic criteria underlie the simultaneity of sensations, in an identification of the poet with nature, with a highly musical essence.

In Ortona was born Francesco Paolo Tosti, composer and friend of Francesco Paolo Michetti, another important artist born in Abruzzo, famous for the constitution of the *Cenacolo brotherhood.* Tosti was as a member of Michetti's *Cenacolo* in Francavilla, like D'Annunzio, that in this period began to see his native region as a fit object for his literary production. As a constituent part of the creative process, music become an important element of narration. The members of Michetti's Temple all shared an interest in the traditional culture of Abruzzi, and through them D'Annunzio discovered a world at once archaic and exotic, rural in his characterization and full of magic. The subject of all Michetti's art, wrote D'Annunzio later, was "the ancient vital race of Abruzzi, so vigorous, so thoughtful, so full of song". In particular, the friendship with Tosti was prolific and important.

Their collaboration, which extended far beyond the Francavilla years, resulted in numerous works, such as *A'Vucchella*, or *Ninna Nanna*, *Quattro Canzoni di Amaranta*. There are a lot of anecdotes about Tosti and D'Annunzio' s friendship, but what is important is how the Abruzzo homeland becomes a landscape evocated by modulations of sounds. D'Annunzio as a lyricist, transcends the fixity of the text, with a clear and remarkable musicality, compared by critics to a "musical score in words".

NOTES

[1] Bassnett Susan, translator. *The Flame*. By Gabriele D'Annunzio, Quartet, 1991, p.159.

[2] D’Annunzio, Gabriele. *Cento e cento e cento e cento pagine del libro segreto di Gabriele D’Annunzio tentato di morire,* edited by Angelo Cocles, Istituto nazionale per la edizione di tutte le opere di Gabriele D'Annunzio, Mondadori, 1935, p. 80.

[3] To understand the importance of music in D’Annunzio’s life, see also: Cellucci Marcone, Silvana. *D’Annunzio e la musica,* L.U. Japadre, 1972, pp. 9-19.

[4] For more about the novel, see in particular the proceedings of a conference dedicated to it: Tiboni Eduardo, and Abrugiati. “Trionfo della morte.” *Atti del III Convegno Internazionale di studi dannunziani,* Centro nazionale di studi dannunziani, 1981, Pescara; see also: Balducci, Maria Giulia, editor. “Introduction. ” *Trionfo della morte,* by G. D'Annunzio, edited by M. G. Balducci, Mondadori, 1995, pp. v-xxxvi.

[5] Baldi, Guido. *Le ambiguità della "decadenza: D'Annunzio romanziere*, Liguori, 2008, pp. 81-86. For the autobiographical elements in the *Trionfo*, see also: Alatri, Paolo. *Gabriele D’Annunzio*, Utet, 1983, pp. 133-36.

[6] Hornblow, Arthur, translator. *The Triumph of Death,* by Gabriele D’Annunzio, George H. Richmond, 1896, p.364.

[7] In a period when the publishing industry began to produce and produce, books were considered more than ever to be products like any other, conditioned by demands of commerce.

[8] According to Wagner, peace could only be found in a “burning and profound desire for death. Complete unconsciousness, dissolution of all dreams, [and] absolute annihilation. Here lay liberation!”. D’Annunzio, Gabriele. “Caso Wagner.” *Scritti giornalistici*, edited by Annamaria Andreoli, vol. 2, Mondadori, 2003, p. 242.

[9] Hornblow, Arthur, translator. *The Triumph of Death,* by Gabriele D'Annunzio, George H. Richmond, 1896, p. 198.

[10] As Guido Baldi indicates: "Giorgio Aurispa stands as a literary metaphor, a literary prototype of the period, both for the crisis surrounding the role of the intellectual on the eve of the triumph of industrial and capitalist civilization, and of the impotence of the individual in emerging mass society"(Baldi, p. 77).

[11] "Around him, faith consecrated every vegetables form. The Christian legend twined itself around the trunks of the trees, blossomed amid the branches. On the knees of the Madonna, a fugitive, and Pursued by the Pharisees, the infant Jesus was changed into wheat that overflowed. Hidden in the bin, he made the dough rise and rendered it inexsthaustible […]" (Hornblow, p. 237). See also: D'Annunzio, Gabriele. *Il Trionfo della Morte*, Oscar Mondadori, 1985, p. 217.

[12] "It was the melodious eloquence of the sacred sorrow that spontaneously wells up from the depths of the being, that hereditary rhythm in which the mothers of other times had modulated their laments. She chanted, chanted: <<open your eyes, arise, walk my son! How beautiful you are! How beautiful you are!>> She chanted: <<for a morsel of bread, I have drowned you, my son! For a morsel of bread, I sent you to death! It was for this, than, that I raised you!>> But the woman with the hooked nose interrupted her, snappishly: «No, you have not drowned him. It was Destiny. *No, you didn't send him to his death. You put it in the midst of the bread*»" (Hornblow, p. 351). See also: D'Annunzio, Gabriele. *Il trionfo della morte,* Oscar Mondadori, pp. 326-327.

[13] "Favetta commenced, at first timidly; then, note by note, her voice became more assured. She had a limpid voice, fluid, crystalline as a spring of water. She sang a distich, and her

companions took up the refrain in chorus. They prolonged the final notes in unison, their mouths close together so as to make but one vocal wave; and this wave undulated in the light with the slowness of liturgic cadences" (Hornblow, p. 174).

[14] "*Favetta sang: All the fountains are dry, // My love is dying of thirst, // Tromme larì, lira… // Love, forever! // Love, I'm thirsty, oh I so thirsty, // Where is the water you bring me? // Tromme larì, lira…// Love, forever! // I bring you a bowl of potter's clay, // Sospended from a chain of gold, // Tromme larì, lira…// Love, forever! // And her companions repeated: Love, forever!*" (Hornblow, p. 174).

[15] The poem is included in *Alcyone* [Halcyon] and is one of the most emblematic of his "panism", the ability to experience the vibrant life of nature in one's own body and soul. Comprising four long stanzas of 32 verses, it describes a walk on the pinewood of Viareggio, in Tuscany. During this walk the poet and his companion Ermione, are surprised by rain.

[16] "Hush. On the edge // Of the woods I do not hear // Words which you call // Human; but I hear // Words which are newer // Spoken by droplets and leaves // Far away..."

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Rossellini's Artistic and Literary Allusions in *Rome: Open City*

Steven Grossvogel

Roberto Rossellini's *Roma: città aperta*, or *Rome: Open City*, was released in Italy in 1945, shortly after the end of World War II, when the Italian movie industry was destroyed, as were many other Italian institutions. The destruction brought about by the war made post-war reconstruction a moral and social imperative for all Italians. As Millicent Marcus has shown, in *Rome: Open City* the notion of rebuilding a better Italy rested on the hope that the collaboration of all the political forces involved in the Italian Resistance movement, from the Church on the Right to the Communists and Socialists on the Left, would continue after the war (52-53). The rebuilding of Italian cinema, on the other hand, would come about largely through the birth of Neorealism, a straightforward representation of all aspects of war-torn and post-war Italian society. *Rome: Open City* is an exemplar of neorealist cinema: it draws our attention to the day-to-day struggles of the characters as they try to cope with the war, while at the same time showing the ways in which the war affects and transforms them. The realistic portrayal of the events and characters in the movie gives such a sense of immediacy to everything we see on the screen that we can easily miss the subtle intertextual and intercultural allusions which Rossellini uses to reinforce the main themes and messages of *Rome: Open City*. By reconnecting with Italy's great cultural heritage through these allusions, Rossellini not only adds an artistic dimension to his movie, but also uses that cultural heritage to rebuild Italian cinema.

The movie narrates three days in the lives of several Romans who know each other well, and, except for one of them, all live in the same working-class condominium. When the boys in that condominium destroy an enemy fuel-truck, the Nazi-Fascists raid the condominium looking for the perpetrators, but instead arrest the few men of military age that are still living there. Among the arrested is Francesco, a member of the Resistance who was about to marry Pina, a Resistance sympathizer from the same condominium. When Pina sees her groom-to-be brought away, she frantically runs after him and is shot in the back by a Nazi soldier. The following day, Francesco, who was freed earlier by Manfredi and his Resistance forces, joins Manfredi at the upscale apartment of his ex-girlfriend, Marina. When Marina overhears their plan to seek refuge in the church of Don Pietro, the local parish priest who is also a member of the Resistance, she betrays them by informing Ingrid, a Nazi SS agent, about their plan. The following day, the Nazis arrest Manfredi and Don Pietro, and bring them to SS headquarters where Colonel Bergmann, the head of the SS in Rome, has Manfredi tortured to death in the presence of Don Pietro. The following morning, Don Pietro is executed by an SS officer in the presence of the boys who blew up the fuel truck.

As film scholars have shown, Rossellini makes several visual allusions to traditional religious iconography when he depicts the deaths of his protagonists in *Rome: Open City*. For example, after Pina, the female protagonist, is killed, her dead body is cradled in the arms of her parish priest, Don Pietro, in a fixed pose that evokes the *Pietà* of Michelangelo in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome (Gottlieb 14). Similarly, when Giorgio Manfredi, the anti-Fascist Resistance leader, is tortured and killed at the end of the movie, his suffering clearly evokes traditional iconography of the Ecce Homo, the Crucifixion,

and the Deposition from the Cross (Bondanella 71). There are, however, several other iconographic and onomastic allusions which have not received critical attention, but which also function as a subtext in the movie.

The movie begins with a scene in which Giorgio Manfredi is fleeing from Nazi SS soldiers who are looking for him in the boarding house where he lives. The establishing shot of Manfredi, cool, composed, and silent during this, the dramatic opening scene of the movie, anticipates his similar composure and complete silence at the end of the movie, when he is tortured to death without divulging the information that his SS captors are brutally trying to extract from him.

As the SS are searching Manfredi's room, Marina, Manfredi's lover, phones the boarding house and asks to speak to him. One of the SS soldier answers the phone, and when he asks who is calling, Marina hangs up. This establishing shot of Marina is significant: she is sitting in her bed, where she supplements her income as a cabaret performer by going to bed with various men. Her back is resting against a headboard in the shape of a large, dark cockleshell, the symbol of Venus, the goddess of love born from the sea. This character's association with Venus is further suggested by her name, Marina Mari, literally "marine seas," and the fact that Marina, like Venus, is a beautiful sex goddess with multiple lovers.[1] The fact, however, that Marina's cockleshell headboard is dark grey, as opposed to Venus's bright white cockleshell, as depicted in Botticelli's famous painting *The Birth of Venus*, suggests that Marina is living in a grey zone in which her understanding of love and sex is flawed, as Manfredi tries to show her during their final conversation. The chiaroscuro lighting of her bedroom further heightens her ambiguity.

Marina's questionable conduct throughout the movie is also suggested by the black phone next to her bed. An Italian audience in 1945, when the movie was released, would have expected to see a white phone in Marina's apartment, in the elegant Pariole neighborhood of Rome. White phones are ubiquitous in Fascist cinema and were a symbol of the upper-middle class. As we find out later, Marina originally came from the lower working class, and fears its poverty so much that she will do anything to maintain her recently attained upper-middle class status. By replacing the white phone with a black one, Rossellini is symbolically breaking with "cinema dei telefoni bianchi" (white telephone cinema), the term used to describe the escapist, romantic cinema of prewar Italy, and is replacing its positive portrayal of Fascist Italy's upper-middle class with a darker portrayal of that class and of the people who aspire to belong to it. Like Marina's dark cockleshell headboard, her dark phone anticipates the important turning point in the movie when she betrays Manfredi to the SS while sitting on the same bed and using the same phone. Marina's act of selling out to the SS is probably meant to be just one instance of the upper-middle class's complicity and collusion with Nazism-Fascism.

If Marina was initially attracted and attached to Manfredi for the right reasons, it soon becomes apparent that his love and nobility of heart are not enough to inspire her to become a better person. In postclassical mythology there were two Venuses: a terrestrial Venus, associated with erotic love and lust, and a celestial Venus, associated with the ennobling power of love to bring about positive change in the lover's character. Marina is a terrestrial Venus whose potential to become celestial is never fulfilled. When speaking to Manfredi about Marina, Pina, the woman who is the exact opposite of Marina, says "a woman can always change, especially when she is in love." As Millicent Marcus has

suggested, "For Pina, the woman in love is an active determinant of her fate and is morally accountable for the course of her passion, while Marina sees herself as the victim of an uncontrollable power to which she abdicates all personal responsibility" (Marcus 40). Rather than see Marina as a Dantean Francesca da Rimini, I prefer to see her as someone whose actions are dictated by her fear of poverty, and by her inability to love herself and others. When Marina tells Manfredi, "If you had really loved me, you would have changed me," what she probably means is that if Manfredi loved her enough to take her out of poverty, she would not be a prostitute. Marina ignores the corollary of her accusation, that if *she* had really loved Manfredi, *she* would have changed. Marina sees a change of character as the product of external social forces, not internal psychological ones.

If Manfredi is a positive, though ineffective, influence on Marina's life, Ingrid is a very effective negative influence on her life. As the most insidious of Colonel Bergmann's SS agents, Ingrid is the person Bergmann turns to for the challenging mission of capturing Manfredi. Peter Bondanella has characterized Ingrid as "viperish lesbian" (67). In fact, several shots of Ingrid are lit in such a way as to flatten her face and make it look like that of a cobra. Furthermore, when Manfredi is being tortured at Gestapo headquarters in Via Tasso, Ingrid is in a room adjacent to the torture chamber, leaning on Bergmann's desk holding a letter opener with the tip positioned against her two eye-teeth, like an enormous fang. Ingrid is, in fact, as much a snake in the grass as the SS soldiers who surreptitiously and deceptively travel through the streets of Rome in a truck with a big Red Cross on top to conceal their identity and their deadly mission. The double esses on their helmets remind us that the serpentine shape of this letter, like the sibilant sound it represents, were derived

from the snake when ancient Rome invented this and the other letters of the Roman alphabet.

Ingrid's seduction of Marina is facilitated by the latter's addiction to cocaine hydrochloride, which Ingrid provides her with. The relationship between these two women evokes Michelangelo's depiction of the Fall and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. In that famous fresco, the temptress who gives Eve the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is depicted as a woman from the waist up, and a serpent from the waist down. In fact, whenever Ingrid enters or leaves the officers' lounge at the Gestapo headquarters, we see a serpentine candle-stick holder by the door. Ironically, however, the forbidden fruit of cocaine hydrochloride does not open Marina's eyes to who is truly good (i.e., Manfredi) and who is truly evil (i.e., Ingrid).

When Manfredi later discovers the bottle of cocaine in Marina's purse and asks her about it, Marina says that her dentist gave it to her to numb her toothache. Cocaine hydrochloride was and still is used as a topical numbing agent. In Marina's case, however, the cocaine is not only numbing parts of her body, but also her soul: she becomes indifferent to her own actions, even though she knows they are detrimental. As Marina tells Lauretta in their dressing room at the cabaret where they perform, "There are a lot of things that are bad for us, but we do them anyway." Marina says this while she and Lauretta are looking at themselves in the boudoir mirror as they get ready to go on stage. In fact, we see both of the women as if we were looking at them through the mirror. Like other mirror scenes in Italian cinema, this one is a moment of self-reflection in which Marina makes a truthful statement about herself. Her remark, in turn, begs the question, why does

Marina continue to engage in this self-destructive behavior? The answer slowly reveals itself in the ensuing events.

If the cocaine helps numb the negative feelings Marina has about herself and about the things she does, it also numbs any positive feelings she has for Manfredi. As Lauretta and Marina are looking at themselves in the mirror, the former asks the latter if she loves Manfredi. Marina avoids answering the question by asking Lauretta to mind her own business and turns away from the mirror, as if she feels uncomfortable about looking at that aspect of herself. Later in the movie, after Marina has turned in Manfredi to the SS, Ingrid asks her the exact same question in front of a different mirror, the one at the SS headquarters in Via Tasso. Here, however, Marina answers by saying that she does not love anyone. Before asking the question, Ingrid has Marina try on a new coat, her reward for turning in Manfredi, and tells her, "Guardati" ("Look at yourself"). After staring at her image in the mirror for several seconds, Marina suddenly turns her back to the mirror as if she does not like what she sees. While Marina is facing us with the back of her head reflected in the mirror, Ingrid is facing Marina so that the right side of her head appears to us in profile, while the left side appears reflected in the mirror. As spectators we can simultaneously see both sides of Ingrid's head and face: her "two-sided" nature and duplicitous appearance are visually represented in this mirror. This double image shows Ingrid holding Marina from the back with her left hand and forearm, and from the front with her right hand and forearm: a clear sign of her control over her weak victim.

Like the earlier mirror scene in the dressing room at the cabaret, this mirror scene is an *anagnorisis*: a recognition scene in which the character moves from a state of ignorance into a state of knowledge, in this case self-knowledge. Marina's agnition, or

moment of recognition, produces a rare emotional response: she breaks down and sobs, “What have I done? What have I done?” For the first time in the movie, Marina questions her actions, and tries to physically break loose from Ingrid’s clutches, without, however, succeeding.

As spectators we already know much about Ingrid that Marina does not know. Marina wants to believe Ingrid when she tells her that the SS will not do anything to Manfredi, merely ask him some questions, and then let him go. Marina cannot imagine the horrible things Ingrid’s colleagues are about to do to try to get Manfredi to answer their questions. Rossellini exposes Ingrid’s lies by showing us what is actually happening to Manfredi in the stark torture chamber, and then by returning to the well-furnished officers’ quarters where Marina and Ingrid are now sitting intimately together on a sofa. Marina appears to be in a drug- or alcohol-induced stupor, looking obliviously into space while resting her left hand on Ingrid’s knee.

Marina’s state of mental and spiritual numbness comes to a dramatic end when she inadvertently walks into the torture chamber and sees the dead and disfigured body of Manfredi. It is only then that Marina attains full and unequivocal knowledge of the good and the evil with which she has been in contact. Marina screams in horror, faints, and falls to the ground in front of Manfredi’s dead body. Marina’s literal fall coincides with her metaphoric fall from grace. Like Eve and Adam after the Fall, Marina too is introduced to the post-lapsarian world of death. Now that the SS no longer needs her, she is out of their good graces and will be detained and presumably killed. If Marina’s corporeal death is imminent, as suggested by Ingrid’s last remarks in the movie, the eye-opening revelation

of Manfredi's Calvary and Christological death may bring about her *contritio cordis*, the "contrition of the heart" needed to save her soul from "the second death" of damnation.

Giorgio Manfredi, the person who might still save Marina after his death, has a trinity of names which are significant. According to the Italian police commissioner, his real name is Luigi Ferraris, born in Turin on October 3, 1906. Rossellini probably borrowed this name from the Italian soccer player, Luigi Ferraris, who, like Giorgio Manfredi, was also an engineer and a soldier. Giorgio Manfredi is from Piemonte, like the Ferraris family, and like Ferraris he makes the ultimate sacrifice for their *patria*, fatherland: whereas Ferraris died fighting the Austrians in World War I, Manfredi dies fighting the Germans in World War II.

At the time *Rome: Open City* was made, the real Luigi Ferraris was best known for having played for the Italian soccer team Genova, and in 1933 the team's soccer stadium was named after him. Giorgio Manfredi is not a soccer player (or at least there is no indication of him having been one); however, soccer is present in the film. The establishing shot of Don Pietro, when he first appears in the movie, shows him refereeing a soccer game played by the children of his parish, in the courtyard of his church. On the surface, both the children and the priest seem to be innocently involved in Italy's national pastime; but we soon realize that things are not what they appear to be. In addition to being a parish priest, Don Pietro is also a key figure in the local Resistance movement; moreover, several of the soccer-playing children will later blow up a Nazi-Fascist fuel truck in their neighborhood. The war has poisoned childhood innocence with harsh adult realities. Italy's national pastime gives way to a larger agonistic struggle: the young soccer players become youth resistance fighters, not unlike the historic Luigi Ferraris, who, at age fifteen,

began his soccer career in Genova's youth league and eventually became a starting player for Genova before becoming the first player of that team to die in World War I. Through these historical allusions and analogies, Rossellini suggests a recurring pattern of struggle and sacrifice involving successive generations of young Italian men.

Giorgio Manfredi's third and last name in the movie, Giovanni Episcopo, is the title of a short novel by Gabriele D'Annunzio. Don Pietro gives Manfredi this name when he provides him with a false identification card, just minutes before the two men are arrested by SS soldiers. D'Annunzio's novel is a detailed confession, in the first person, by the protagonist, Giovanni Episcopo, who explains to the police interrogating him what induced him to kill Giulio Wanzer, a violent and oppressive man who had subjugated Episcopo to a humiliating existence. In his confession, Episcopo also speaks about his wife, Ginevra, who, as her name (Guinevere) suggests, is continuously unfaithful to her husband, and allows Wanzer to become a lodger in their apartment against Episcopo's wishes. One day, when Wanzer is about to strike Ciro, Episcopo's son, the protagonist takes a knife and kills his oppressor.

Similarities between Bergmann, the head of the Gestapo in Rome, and Wanzer are obvious: both are very violent individuals who strike fear among the people they subjugate and oppress. There are also similarities between Marina and Ginevra: both betray the men who love them, and, because of their betrayal, bring about the tragic events in their men's lives. Like Giorgio Manfredi, Giovanni Episcopo is interrogated in prison about his past activities. Despite these similarities, however, Manfredi and Episcopo have different characters: Manfredi never says a word during his interrogation, whereas Episcopo confesses everything that happened up to the moment he killed Wanzer. Unlike Manfredi,

who courageously fights against his Nazi oppressors, Episcopo is afraid to act against Wanzer, and seems to suffer from Stockholm Syndrome. Episcopo's lack of courage and his constant humiliation at the hands of Wanzer, Ginevra, and many of his other acquaintances, eventually reaches a breaking point when the person he loves the most, his ten-year old son, is threatened by Wanzer.

It is not clear what Rossellini intended when he had Don Pietro give the false name "Giovanni Episcopo" to the Resistance leader. It could be a literary foil used to show that Giorgio Manfredi faces adversity in a manner significantly different from the way Giovanni Episcopo faced it. On the other hand, it could allude to the complex psychological trauma which results from oppression and subjugation. In D'Annuzio's novel, Giovanni Episcopo often compares his years of suffering to the suffering of Christ, and Don Pietro, a priest, gives this false identification to a man who is also about to suffer like Christ on the Cross. Whatever Rossellini may have intended by this literary allusion, it is one more example of how the director combines the religious and the secular, the sacred and the profane, to create what Peter Bondanella called Rossellini's Christian humanism (68).

The name "Giorgio Manfredi" is also a false identification with religious and literary connotations. His first name evokes Saint George, the Christian knight who saves the Princess of Silene by slaying the demonic dragon that was terrorizing her father's kingdom. After the dragon is killed, the kingdom of Silene converts to Christianity. Even though Giorgio Manfredi dies at the hands of the demonic Bergmann and is unable to save Marina from the SS, his exemplary death and his resistance to the Nazi occupation presumably inspire others to follow in his footsteps, liberating Rome from the dragon of

Nazism and replacing the reactionary ideology of Fascism with one that combines both Christian and anti-Fascist values, as articulated in the words and deeds of Manfredi, Don Pietro, Pina, Francesco, and the other participants in the Roman Resistance.

Giorgio's surname recalls Manfred, the natural son of the German Holy Roman Emperor Frederik II who eventually became emperor of southern Italy [2]. As Manfred tried to consolidate the Hohenstaufen claims on the Italian peninsula, he met resistance from the Church which brought about his excommunication. Manfred was betrayed by his barons from Apulia and subsequently died at the battle of Benevento. In the third canto of Dante's *Purgatorio*, Manfredi tells Dante how he was saved despite the Church's ban of excommunication. As he tells Dante, the ban only lengthens the time that an excommunicated soul must wait in Ante-Purgatory before being admitted to Purgatory proper. It does not bar the path to salvation, contrary to what the Church hoped would happen to Manfredi:

> After I had my body broken by two mortal
> thrusts, I gave myself up, weeping, to him who
> gladly pardons.
> Horrible were my sins; but the infinite
> Goodness has such open arms that it takes
> whatever turns to it.
> … By their curse no one loses the eternal love
> that it cannot be regained, as long as hope has any
> touch of green. (Dante 55)

Manfredi's message to Dante, made famous by the verse "mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde" (*Purgatorio* 135), is one of hope even in the most desperate moments. It debunks the idea that the path to God is barred as a result of politically motivated misuses

of Christian rites, such as excommunication. What Manfredi tells Dante echoes similar statements Don Pietro makes to Bergmann during the interrogation. Bergmann tries to represent Don Pietro's actions as a violation of international law and of a priest's religious vocation. The SS commander accuses the priest of helping "a subversive, a man without God, and your enemy" to plot attacks on an occupying army which is exercising its legal rights. Don Pietro responds by saying that he simply came to the aid of someone in need of help, and in so doing he performed an act of Christian charity. Don Pietro also states that anyone who fights for liberty and justice is on a path to God; and the paths to God are infinite. If Dante's Manfredi can be saved despite his sins and in spite of the attempts by the Church to have him damned, Rossellini is suggesting that Marina can be saved, as can Giorgio Manfredi even though he is an atheist, a Communist, and someone engaged in violence against the Nazis. This is yet another example of Rossellini's hopeful symbiosis of two political ideologies, Catholicism and Marxism, both of which were at odds with each other before the war, but came together during the war. As Millicent Marcus has suggested, Rossellini's hope is that this political union will continue after the war (52-53).

In conclusion, the religious, literary, and artistic allusions in this film suggest that the fundamental message Rossellini is communicating through his characters to his audience in 1945 is never to lose hope in a better future, no matter how great the adversity. The tragedies represented in *Rome: Open City* occurred during the months which preceded the liberation of Rome: they mark the painful gestation which eventually gave birth to the first Italian Republic for which so many of the characters had struggled and sacrificed.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Emily Elizabeth Davis who, as a student, saw the significance of this character's first name.
2. I am indebted to my colleague, Professor Thomas E. Peterson, for asking about the significance of Manfredi's surname, and for suggesting a Dantean connection.

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From East to West: Female Mobility in Petzold's *Yella*

Eilis Kierans

In Christian Petzold's film *Yella* (2007), the female protagonist Yella Fichte gradually assumes a male gendered identity that shatters the impression of a stable gendered self, illustrating Judith Butler's theory that gender roles are socially constructed. Yella convincingly performs a male gender role for an audience of businessmen from former West Germany who collectively and implicitly accept the authenticity of her performance. Indeed, her performance appears so real that it cannot legitimately be denied recognition. She is adept at playing the traditional male gender role, and thus her counterparts come to value her as much as any other man. Yella is a progressive female, and she interacts with society according to her own interests; yet she views the world from the perspective of the men who seek to oppress her, which perhaps contributes to her downfall. In this essay I concentrate on the character development of the protagonist Yella. My purpose is to shed light on her transition from an impoverished, taciturn woman living in former East Germany to a cunning and manipulative entrepreneur who seeks a better life in former West Germany. In the second part, I trace her transition back to the oppressed class of women and her subsequent demise.

In her landmark study *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985), Luce Irigaray discusses society's commodification of women, relying on the work of Marx to make her point. She maintains that women are rare commodities that are integral to society's survival. They are considered scarce because men are inclined towards polygamy, which reduces the quantity of available women. Irigaray poses a crucial question: "why are men not objects

of exchange among women?" (171). She explains that "all systems of exchange that organize patriarchal societies and all the modalities of productive work that are recognized, valued and rewarded in these societies are men's business" (171). The economy depends upon the exchange of women. Men, however, are immune to becoming commodities of exchange. She notes that "all the social regimes of 'History' are based upon the exploitation of one 'class' of producer, namely, women" (173). Men establish the value of women who will subsequently be exchanged. Indubitably, society is structured upon male desire. Women are rendered "commodity objects" by male "producer-subjects" who do not value them for their inherent traits, such as intelligence.

In the former West German state, Yella is eventually valued and acknowledged for her astuteness, work production, and performance. In her book *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions of American Feminism* (1985), Josephine Donovan points out that social feminists have encouraged women to develop awareness of their oppressed condition and ideologies that benefit male interests. She discusses the relationship between feminism and Marxism, women and the proletariat. She cites the work of Marx in order to support her argument: "In revolutionary activity, the changing of oneself coincides with the changing of circumstances" (qtd. in Donovan 65). At a work meeting in Hannover, Yella actively transcends her traditional role as a complacent female in twenty-first-century capitalist society. This leads her to assume a conventionally male attitude in order to survive. In adopting a male attitude, she begins to behave like a man. This is perhaps most evident in a scene in which Philipp has hired Yella for a freelance accounting job. Philipp instructs her how to act during their corporate meeting. However, Yella abandons the

script, preferring to perform as she deems appropriate to the scene. Ultimately she becomes the star of the show.

According to Judith Butler, individuals typically fulfill the gender template that society imprints upon them. The social construction of gender is exemplified when the performative essence of gender is altered. In an interview with Liz Kotz titled "The Body You Want" (1992), Butler states "that gender is an impersonation, that becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits" (Kotz 85). For example, a woman may behave in a way that reinforces and signifies what it is to be a woman by her attitude, gait, and style of dress. The gendered subject's female behavior is reproducing an effect that precedes her existence. It is an effect that is shaped by the culture and economy in which she is embedded, and it is created and sustained through repetition. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler explains that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33). In Butler's terms, as opposed to *being* a gender, one is always *doing* a gender.

Although gender appears natural, it is constructed through discourse and manufactured through the repetition of the gendered gestures of the body. The internal essence of gender is not natural but contrived. The performative outcome of repeated acts is the naturalization of heterosexuality and gender binary. Frequently, those who do not properly embody their gender are chastised and ridiculed. Gender cannot simply be chosen, as one is chained to a prescribed gender within a "highly rigid regulatory frame" (33). In "The Body You Want," Butler is asked on what rational basis she believes younger readers understand her book *Gender Trouble*. She claims that the most common interpretation of

the book is flawed. Most readers perceive gender as a form of consumerism that they can exploit. This is how she explains the wrong reading of gender: "I can get up in the morning, look in my closet, and decide which gender I want to be today. I can take out a piece of clothing and change my gender, stylize it, and then that evening I can change it again and be something radically other…." (Kotz 83). Performativity is not style, but rather "has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to resignify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in" (Kotz 84). Gender identity is largely confined to gender norms that have been repeated throughout time and contingent upon the society in which one is immersed. In her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988), Butler states that "bodily gesture, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (519). Gender parody exposes the fluid nature of identities through an individual's willingness to resignify and recontextualize, thus exposing the fictitiousness of an original. Butler explains:

> Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis: the tacit collective agreement to perform, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction "compels" our belief in its necessity and naturalness. (*Gender Trouble* 140)

Gender parody evidences that gender is created through various acts. If gender were devoid of these repeated acts, then it would cease to exist. Indeed, as Yella gradually transitions

into the male sphere of West Germany, she intuits that gender is an impersonation and she begins to enact the male gender as a means of survival.

In an early scene, Philipp meticulously coaches Yella in how to act like a woman accountant in a business meeting; however, Yella instinctively understands that if she wants to get ahead, she must assume the active role of a businessman. As Philipp drives to an important meeting with Yella, whom he has enlisted to serve as his accountant and accomplice, he explicitly sets the rules of negotiation, instructing her how to play a particular role in a specific scene (27:31). Philipp teaches Yella where to direct her gaze. She has three options. She can make eye contact with the opposing party. She is not allowed to look at the lawyer, but instead at the business manager, Dr. Fritz. She must look at him calmly. As he sits back, she must hold her gaze for two or three seconds, subsequently returning her attention to the computer screen. Secondly, she is permitted to look at her screen, because it contains account sheets that expose why Dr. Fritz is unable to obtain a loan. Thirdly, when Philipp performs "broker posing," Yella must lean over and whisper in his ear, as this will cause others to lose their concentration (28:30). Philipp seeks to reenact court scenes in Grisham films. As in a film, he would like Yella to look the part he would like her to play. He insists that she try on glasses, but he decides that they are not the right costume accessory. Yella is not instructed to negotiate or speak with the other men at the meeting, but rather is primed to play a passive female role in a highly orchestrated performance.

In Yella's relocation from the former East Germany to West Germany, gesture, gait, and costume become integral components of her transition. At the outset of the film, her former husband Ben remarks that her style of walking has changed following her return

from Hannover, where she has supposedly secured a job. As Ben follows Yella down a street in her hometown, he says, "You got a job! Must be a good one, a real good one. I can tell. By the way you walk" (2:49). Before she even reaches Hannover, Yella begins to assume a new identity, which Ben points out is evident in her stride. In her repeated movement back and forth between the two Germanies, Yella modifies her attire to suit her environment. In Hannover, Yella is clad in a modest black skirt, a red blouse, a plain pair of black heels, and a beige trench coat. Her long dark hair is tied back, which accentuates her large blue eyes that seem to say much more than her words. In the opening scene, Yella removes her business attire during a train trip back to her hometown of Wittenberge; she changes into casual jeans and a black cotton shirt. Her informal, worn attire is more in line with her unpolished home environment peppered with construction sites. However, there is no clear separation of personas, with one surreptitiously seeming to inhabit the other in a nebulous, ephemeral guise. In her more rural hometown, she wears casual attire; however, she cannot conceal her walk of ambition, which is perhaps perceived as a masculine walk. In Hannover she dresses in business attire, but she wears the mark of her modest origins on her unembellished, cosmetic-free face. In her article "Ghostly Business: Place, Space, and Gender in Christian Petzold's *Yella*" (2011), Anke Biendarra maintains that Yella's business attire is mostly masculine:

> That Yella does reasonably well in the male-coded space of high finance is in part the result of an act of successful mimicry that facilitates her being taken seriously by the surrounding men. She wears hardly any make-up, and her clothes do not highlight but hide her feminine features. Her skirt is modest and falls below the knees, her flat pumps are comfortable and decidedly not sexy, and her beige trench

> coat is a rather masculine piece of clothing. The red blouse she wears throughout the film is the only concession to her gender. (474)

While it is evident that Yella sharply perceives that she must mimic men in order to escape a position of inferiority, her attire appears to be the last remaining sign of her femininity. As opposed to desiring to appear physically in a more masculine manner, as Biendarra believes is the case, it seems more plausible that Yella wears a longer skirt and baggy blouse in order to evade objectification in a male-dominated domain. In so doing, she runs the risk of a reflex interpretation as being rather masculine in her style.

During her initial business meeting as Philipp's accountant, it gradually becomes clear that Yella is her own director: she has a very different act in mind. As the men negotiate, she knocks a glass to the ground. She is suddenly overwhelmed by an auditory insult perceived by her ears alone: the diegetic sound of water bubbling, the rustling of wind, and the caw of a crow. Time is seemingly suspended. The businessmen continue their discussion as the glass shatters to pieces. As Yella's senses return to her, there is a turning point in the plot; Yella is caught between the act her male boss would like her to perform and the act she is compelled to perform. Although she is hesitant, she gradually dominates the meeting in a performance of her own making. Philipp strikes the "the broker pose" expecting Yella to react accordingly (31:08). In a medium close-up shot, Yella is in focus while Philipp is out of focus at the periphery. It is at this point in the scene that Yella transitions from a passive, supporting role to an active role of central importance. Reverse shots ensue as Yella explains to Dr. Fritz why his calculations are not credible. The sequence is interspersed with over-the-shoulder shots that depict Yella from behind as she questions the three men, as if they were on trial (32:36). The men suddenly appear nervous

and insecure in Yella's presence. Although Philipp instructed Yella to communicate with only her eyes, she asserts her presence and value by interrogating Dr. Fritz, whom she eventually renders speechless. At this point, Philipp sits back and plays the supporting role. By the end of the scene, Dr. Fritz is unable to communicate with his voice or eyes. His bewildered gaze falls to the ground. On the drive back to the hotel, Philipp apologizes to Yella for underestimating her worth; Yella has successfully moved from the inferior female sphere into the capitalist male sphere (34:25). Yella and Philipp subsequently form a partnership.

In the economy and culture of former West Germany, Yella is initially instructed to follow the cues and commands of her male superiors. This is the message that she repeatedly receives. However, Yella implicitly understands Irigaray's view that the only productive work that is valued in patriarchal society is men's business. In assisting Philipp in his business ventures, Yella transcends her role as a submissive female, in which she is not acknowledged for her work. She goes against the status quo by subtly and astutely putting on a compelling performance, thus demanding the value society generally accords to male work. Biendarra explains that Yella "promptly internalizes the rules of venture capitalism because she understands instinctually that it relies less on substance and hard facts than on gestures, attitudes, poses, surface, and games propelled by power structures" (470). During Yella's first business meeting as Philipp's accountant, she assumes a masculine attitude and cunningly interrogates and shames her male counterparts. Biendarra notes that "if a businesswoman wants to be perceived as credible and capable, she needs to convey 'masculine' qualities" (474). Capitalist society undoubtedly drives Yella to play a male role in order to thrive.

Petzold portrays Germany as a man's world. Only two women are repeatedly portrayed in the film. Yella is a clever businesswoman who quickly learns how to compete in the male game in the public, competitive sphere. The second female character, Dr. Gunthen's wife, is confined to the private, domestic sphere. Her sense of self-worth depends on her supporting role as wife and mother. The housewife, who stands in stark contrast to Yella, is a trivial character of tangential importance to the plot. Donovan notes that Engels's solution to domestic oppression "is to urge that women fully enter the public workforce, thus eliminating their confinement to 'private, domestic labor,' which would be changed 'into a public industry'" (75). By including a weak female character in the film, Petzold suggests that only females who walk and talk like a man are granted entrance into a capitalist, public labor force.

Once Yella arrives in Hannover, she gradually becomes more ruthless and cutthroat. She is willing to cheat in order to assert herself in the male sphere. The idea of being a man in former West Germany entails deceit and corruption. This is an act that is repeated from the outset of Yella's arrival. Early on in her relationship with Philipp, Yella establishes that she can mimic this male act. When she attempts to steal money from him, he reprimands her, but he also implicitly respects her for her audacity; he subsequently invites her along to another business meeting.

Yella begins to assume a more dominant role as she and Philipp begin their journey to a job in Dessau. In this scene Yella drives the car, while in previous scenes either Ben or Philipp are in control of the car, the vehicle through which they seek to control Yella. As Philipp sleeps, she deviously alters their destination, desiring to see her father in her economically depressed hometown of Wittenberge. She nervously glances at Philipp as

she turns off the road that leads to Dessau. This act suggests her hesitancy to transition from her comforting *heimat* (homeland) in Wittenberge to a sterile, hostile environment in former West Germany. Or rather, it conveys her desire to combine both home and business. At this point in the film, the calculating side of Yella begins to emerge more clearly. When Philipp awakens, he asks her how long he had been sleeping. Yella is able to precisely inform him "24 minutes" (1:04:55). Once Philipp discovers that Yella has strayed from the prescribed path to Dessau, he explodes into a fit of rage reminiscent of Ben's behavior. Philipp seeks to quickly reassert dominance and control. He demands that Yella pull over the car, physically dragging her out of it as he reprimands her for not following his orders. At this moment, traditional gender roles are temporarily restored. As Yella walks briskly away from the car, she finds herself trudging through wild grass that leads to the River Elbe. Both physically and emotionally, she is at a fork in the road.

As Yella stands before the River Elbe staring at it wistfully, she is torn between two different domains. In one of them, she is constrained by her gender identity as woman; in the other, she is forced to emulate the performative acts of a man in order to survive. It is in this moment of confusion that her world comes to a standstill and time is seemingly suspended. An ominous breeze blows as she is struck by noise interference—the sound of one immersed in water. Simultaneously crows caw, a harbinger of her impending downfall (1:06:29). Yella, in a state of dishevelment, looks around suspiciously. As Philipp arrives at the river, she is cast back to the present. By the end of the scene, she has agreed to help Philipp make corrupt business deals. Ultimately, Yella does not return to Wittenberge to see her father, desiring instead to cut ties with the past in order to break free from the listless life imposed upon her there. As Biendarra points out, "The question running through all

[Petzold's] films is how to live meaningfully in Germany's late-capitalist society shaped by globalizing factors. His films show familial and social networks as well as notions of Heimat dissolving and life measured in terms of efficiency, progress, speed, and mobility" (466). Former East Germany represents a place of emotional and financial stagnation, while former West Germany represents a competitive capitalist territory that offers Yella the potential for personal and financial growth, the wherewithal to enter the male sphere of business where she gradually demands to be treated equally by her male counterparts. In order to establish herself as male's equal, she is forced to shed her meek, unassuming female mask and enter the efficient, fast-paced, "super-modern non-place" of former West Germany (Biendarra 476). In his article "Facts of Migration, Demands on Identity: Christian Petzold's *Yella* and *Jerichow* in Comparison" (2012), Matthew Miller notes that the name Yella may have derived from the Arabic word *yalla*, "hurry up" or "come on" (61). Indeed, this name is fitting for Yella, as she ambitiously strives to keep step with a fast-paced business environment. She seeks to establish her voice within the male ruling class, escaping male desire to possess her and render her dependent. Biendarra explains:

> With Philipp mentoring her, Yella adapts perfectly to the unemotional rhetoric and the gestures and postures that men assume in their negotiations. She shows a natural talent for business and experiences a sense of success and self-worth that is heightened by Philipp's favorable feedback and his obvious interest in her. On the other hand, she quickly becomes infected by the erotic of power and the promise of wealth. (474)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Yella is willing to dupe others in order to materialize her personal goals.

It is interesting to note that during critical moments of transition Yella is overcome with sensations that echo her initial plunge into the River Elbe: gurgling water, rustling trees, cawing crows. These sensations serve as a sinister forewarning that meddling in male business affairs will lead back to her initial doom: submerged in the river. Thus, Yella is stuck in a double bind: she is unable to build an independent life for herself either in former East Germany or in West Germany. Ultimately, because she is torn between two different domains, it is only fitting that by the film's end she returns to the River Elbe—a point of division between two different realms that offer her no possibility for genuine growth. Yella chooses death as a preferable fate.

Yella's final business deal comes to a close when she blackmails her client Dr. Gunthen, who resorts to drowning himself in a river—an echo of Yella's demise. She is overtly disheartened by the tragic scene and quickly scurries away, leaving Philipp behind to drag Dr. Gunthen from the water. In the following scene, she sits in the back of a cab alone, presumably on her way home to Wittenberge defeated. Her positioning within the vehicle suggests that she has returned to the inferior class of the female. Throughout the film, Yella is composed and usually emotionally stolid, but for the first time in the film she is overwhelmed with effusive emotion. In a medium close-up shot, she breaks into tears that she unsuccessfully seeks to suppress (1:24:16). Suddenly the sequence cuts to a shot of Yella sitting in the front seat of Ben's car (1:24:40). The transition from one scene to the next is abrupt, and it is not immediately clear to the viewer who Yella is with or where she is going. A medium close-up shot frames Yella in her beige trench coat sitting in the passenger seat. Subsequently a point-of-view-shot frames the car rapidly accelerating as it crosses a bridge. Suspense is allayed as the words "I love you" are uttered and a medium

close-up shot frames Ben in the driver's seat (1:24:54). Ben decisively drives the car over the bridge and into the River Elbe; however, this time Yella does not attempt to stop his murder-suicide. She is calm and passive, resigned to her fate (1:25:01).

The final scene of the film mirrors an earlier one, in which Ben drives off a bridge and into the River Elbe in attempt to drown both himself and Yella. At the outset of the film, Yella appears to have survived the car crash. However, by the close of the film it seems more likely that it is her ghost that rises from the river and comes to understand what life would have been like had she reached Hannover alive. In Yella's transient reawakening, former West Germany presents her with the opportunity to reinvent herself, which she does by adopting a male mindset and mimicking the gestures of greedy businessmen. Yet, she becomes disenchanted by the role she plays when, in her desire to attain more wealth, she miscalculates and her actions lead to Dr. Gunther's suicide. Former East Germany, on the other hand, is a place of comfort, home to her beloved father. Yet it is also a place of dead ends. Yella is unable to obtain employment in Wittenberge, and thus she is constrained to rely on her father for financial support. Furthermore, she is still fettered to an abusive ex-husband who stalks her every move in his relentless pursuit to repossess her. By the film's end, Yella chooses to retreat back to her role as inferior female, which at best can lead to death. Unable to sustain a gratifying identity in former East or West Germany, she chooses to return to the River Elbe. The river physically marks the division between two different societies that are more disjointed than unified. The fragmentation of the New Germany is embodied in Yella herself. Ultimately, she reclaims her life through death, an echo of Hamlet's mad Ophelia, who views drowning as a preferable alternative to a forlorn existence in which she is repeatedly manipulated by men.

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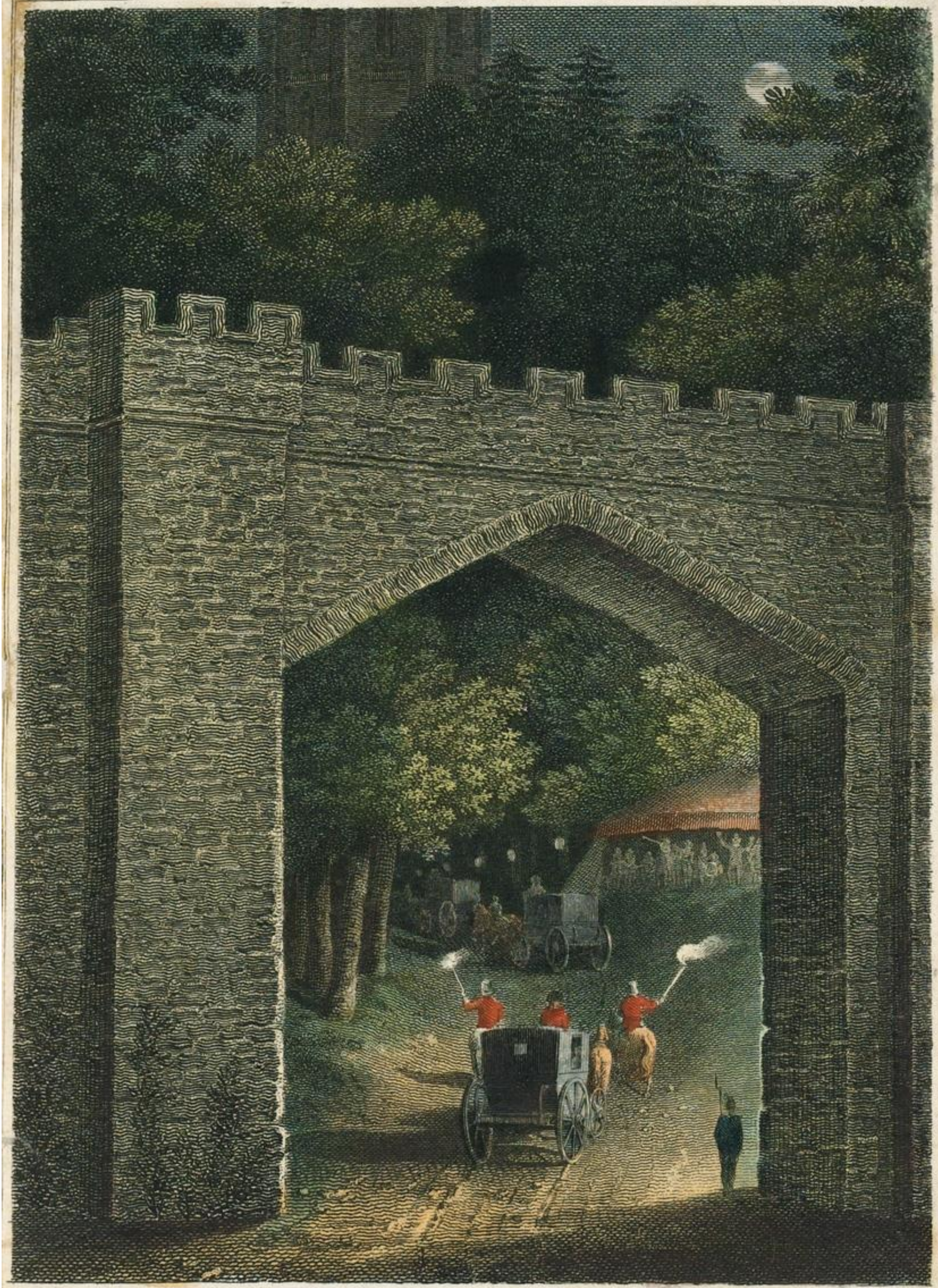
William Beckford meets Benjamin Disraeli: A Literary *liaison dangereuse*

Daniele Niedda

No one can dispute the fact that William Beckford had an eye for the magnificent and a desire to make an impression on the few whom he cared about – witness the breath-taking choreography that he contrived when the famous trio, formed by Sir William and Lady Hamilton and her lover Lord Nelson, was invited to spend the week of Christmas 1800 at Fonthill, his Wiltshire estate. [1] Beckford wanted to show them the vast Gothic complex that eventually would replace Splendens, the Palladian mansion of the Alderman, his father, the famous radical MP for the City of London and twice Lord Mayor. At dusk the carriage bearing the guests proceeded to the Abbey, as Beckford called the new buildings under construction, escorted by his personal regiment led by himself astride a beautiful white horse. Out of sight in the thick woods musicians played the works he had chosen and even composed for the occasion, while hooded figures held torches to light up the way and the precincts of the Abbey.



Lord NELSON's Reception at FONTHILL.

More than thirty years later, this typically Beckfordian taste for grand scenarios remained intact. Indeed, a more appropriate setting was hardly conceivable for the meeting which, finally, the by-now seventy-four-year-old scandalous bisexual had consented to and arranged at the King's Theatre in London for the evening of 12 June 1834. The younger admirer who had paid him homage by sending all his new publications could no longer be delayed, even more so after receiving *Alroy* (1833), the late Oriental phantasy which showed the powerful influence of *Vathek* (1786), which had made Beckford's renown. With its phantasmagoria of Babylonian, Egyptian, and Indian monarchs, princes, dignitaries, magicians, priests, warriors, pagan temples, palaces, hanging gardens and even a ghost rising from his tomb, Gioacchino Rossini's *Semiramide* (1823) offered Beckford the ideal chance for this first encounter with Benjamin Disraeli, the future Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party. That music, however, celebrated divergence rather than "the alignment of two planets in the literary orient" (Ford 32), since it turned out to be the soundtrack for the critical distinction made by Edward Said between two broad types of modern Orientalism. [2]

Beckford well represents the eighteenth-century Western mind, which was capable of "sympathetic identification" with the East and managed to breach "the doctrinal walls erected between the West and Islam and see hidden elements of kinship between himself [the Occident] and the Orient." For Beckford, among others (e.g., Goethe, Mozart, and Byron), the Orient was "sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy:" a chameleon-like figure in the pre-Romantic and pre-technical imagination, summed up by Said in the phrase "free-floating Orient" (118-19). Forty-four years Beckford's junior, Disraeli exemplifies the alternative, hegemonic and more recognizable

face of the Orientalist discourse, that is, the Western cultural representations of the East as the Other, the "manifestly different world" (Said 12) on which the Occident ("we" as opposed to "they") exercises power in various forms: political, intellectual, cultural, and moral. Not surprisingly, a quotation from Disraeli's novel *Tancred* – "The East is a career" – figures as one of the two opening epigraphs of Said's book. [3]

Particularly with regard to *The Episodes of Vathek*, the series of companion stories which in Beckford's original plan were to be published with the main one in the manner of the *Arabian Nights*, the Beckford-Disraeli relation – or factor, connection, legacy, and even destiny, as it has variously been called – demands closer scrutiny. [4] *The Episodes* saw the light only between 1909 and 1912 in an English modern translation from the French original manuscript. Of the main story itself Jorge Luis Borges believed that the original was unfaithful to its translation, thus endorsing its avant-garde quality and post-modern condition.

Indeed the "real" text of *Vathek* is difficult to locate. Written in second-rate French by Beckford just recently twenty-one, *Vathek* was first published fraudulently in 1786 by the Reverend Samuel Henley, formerly a professor at William and Mary College in Virginia, whom Beckford had hired for his scholarly interest in Oriental literature to prepare the English version of the tale, but prohibited him from publishing until the *Episodes* were ready. Taking advantage of Beckford's absence from England due to a scandal over an adolescent boy (William 'Kitty' Courtenay, 9th Earl of Devon, nephew of the powerful Lord Chancellor Loughborough, who publicised the scandal) and Beckford's subsequent fall into depression when his wife died a few days after giving birth to their second daughter, Henley cheerfully ignored Beckford's directions and pretended to publish

a translation from a manuscript in Arabic. Beckford responded immediately from Lausanne by establishing his authorship in the preface to the French edition, which he published later that year. Afterwards he revised extensively both the French and the English versions, rendering the latter more palatable by lightening the load of notes provided by Henley.

Despite this controversy, *Vathek* was an instant success. Byron considered it his gospel and entreated Beckford many times, with the very book in his pocket, to show or even read the *Episodes* to him, but to no avail. Back to England after some years travelling on the Continent (he never made it to Jamaica because, feeling terribly seasick, he preferred to stop over in Portugal and Spain, where he remained for two years), Beckford, virtually ostracized by respectable society, lived as a recluse in Fonthill Abbey on the huge income derived from the West Indian plantations (slaves included) he had inherited at age nine, following the untimely death of his father. Only a few privileged individuals were admitted into his sanctuary, and even rarer were those with whom Beckford shared his treasures. Apart from the exclusive trio mentioned above, the poet Samuel Rogers, for instance, was the lucky recipient of an exceptional reading from the *Episodes*.

Beckford had taken to collecting compulsively everything that appealed to him, from rare books and paintings by the old masters, to Japanese lacquer, *pietre dure* tabletops, exotic furniture, and thousands of other items whose provenance today, when documented, adds to their market value. Not only did he collect the beautiful and the sublime, but with the help of Gregorio Franchi, the beloved friend and factotum who had left a wife and a daughter in Portugal to serve him, Beckford commissioned art works to meet his ideas and projects. Thus did Beckford squander his immense wealth, to the extent that in 1822 he was forced to sell Fonthill Abbey with most of its furnishings – just three years before the

house's three-hundred-foot tower, built on shaky foundations and with inadequate materials, collapsed.

It was Benjamin Disraeli who made the first move, since, as he wrote to his sister

Sarah, he liked "to do astonishing things" (DL I, 210). In April 1832, Beckford received an unsolicited copy of Disraeli's latest novel, *Contarini Fleming*, to which he responded enthusiastically, with a "short but very courteous note" opened by four exclamations: "How wildly original! How full of intense thought! How awakening! How delightful!" (DL I, 210) It must have been a re-awakening indeed, particularly of Beckford's literary enthusiasm. Disraeli seems to have revived Beckford's interest in writing, editing, and publishing after almost ten years of inactivity. The 1823 fourth edition of *Vathek*, very probably issued to meet public interest in the sale of Fonthill the previous year, was followed by the 1832 fifth edition under George Clarke's imprint and two editions published two years later by Richard Bentley, in French and English respectively, the latter in combination with Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* and Matthew G. Lewis's *The Bravo of Venice.* The fourth edition of Beckford's debut work, the satire *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* (1780), was published by Bentley in 1834 with the same lithograph of St Denis bearing his own head in his hand, which had served as frontispiece to the 1824 third edition, a likely source of inspiration to Disraeli for the ending of *Alroy*. Finally, in the same year 1834 the same publisher, Richard Bentley, issued the first volume of *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, a version drastically revised by Beckford of the first suppressed edition of his travelogue, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (1783).

Less than a year had passed since the first contact had been established and the game of projection, identification, and mirroring between these two remarkably narcissistic personalities had entered its decisive stage, when Disraeli sent Beckford his Oriental tale *Alroy*. Beckford told his bookseller and literary agent George Clarke that he had "slowly and reluctantly finished the truly wondrous tale of Alroy" and wished it "had been extended to 20 volumes." What gave him the most intense pleasure was to perceive that Disraeli was "so strongly imbued with Vathek," that its images "haunt him continually. […] The halls of Eblis, the thrones of the Solimans are for ever present to his mind's eye, tinted with somewhat different hues from those of the original, but partaking of the same awful and dire solemnity" (Gemmett 186).

In fact, it was not only *Alroy* but the whole personal trilogy, as Disraeli called his three early novels *Vivian Grey* (1826-27), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), and *Alroy* (1833), that

was "imbued with" Beckford. In *Vivian Grey*, in which Disraeli portrayed his "active and real" self (DL I, 447), Beckford is adumbrated in the character of Beckendorff, as the name evidently suggests, although the compiler of the *Second Key to Vivian Grey* claimed the identification was with Prince Metternich (VG 688). Michael Flavin (12) has justly noted that Beckendorff establishes a character type that features regularly in all Disraeli's novels, most notably in the figure of Sidonia, the Jewish *Übermensch* of the Young England trilogy: that is, the young hero's guru who happily blends aphoristic teaching with more practical guidance.

A glance at the analogies and differences between Beckford and Beckendorff shows that twenty-one-year-old Disraeli, who was the same age as Beckford when he began *Vathek*, interestingly coalesces his and Beckford's personae in a major character of his first novel. Like Beckford, Beckendorff lives in retirement, has "many feminine characteristics" coupled with "firmness and energy" (VG 355), can play and sing, and, like the Caliph Vathek, is fond of astronomy. Politics is the relevant distinguishing factor, as Beckendorff is a champion of expediency and a model politician for Disraeli, who extols his character's skill in using other people to his own advantage, while Beckford was famous for detesting politics and politicians. This trait is so divisive that the fictional alter egos of Beckford and Disraeli enter into a struggle at the end of the book, when Beckendorff discovers in his house that Vivian is about to have sex with the Archduchess of Austria, incognita until that moment and pledged to the Prince of whom Beckendorff is Prime Minister.

As for his most autobiographical novel, *Contarini Fleming*, in Disraeli's own words "a development of my poetic character" (DL I, 447), Beckford's latest biographer, Timothy Mowl (1998: 295), believes that the early chapters of the book were enough to seduce Beckford. Like him, Disraeli's hero spends a lonely childhood wandering in "a beautiful garden full of terraces and arched walks of bowery trees," an "enchanted region [which] seemed illimitable" (CF 9), with cool grots, a mossy hermitage, a distant bridge, and everything that could appeal to a fervid imagination and make the place ideal for isolation and fantasy. Beckford was accompanied by Richard Lettice on his first Grand Tour (1780), and in a similar fashion Contarini travels abroad with his tutor, who disappoints him with his "museum of verbiage" (CF 15). Contarini is an avid reader and craves knowledge, but wants to have it his own way. When he is sent to school, he becomes infatuated with a boy (a modern-day Kitty) with the Hellenic name of Musaeus. The passion is so openly described that it was easy for Beckford to identify with the first-person narrator and admire

the author for his uninhibited way of expressing an emotion that he had never had the courage to display. Like Beckford, Contarini falls into a depression when his wife dies in pregnancy and, as a form of therapy, travels and lives abroad. The finale strikes the common chords of a reclusive life ("passed in the study and creation of the beautiful") and tower-building ("which shall rise at least one hundred and fifty feet [to rival] the most celebrated works of antiquity" CF 294). According to Mowl (1998: 296), Disraeli "seems to have looked around for the model of a controversial older man and picked from Beckford's life the incidents he needed to enrich his own."

If Beckford admired himself in the mirror of *Contarini Fleming*, it was from *Alroy* that he derived sheer pleasure. The description of Beckford's experience of reading the last volume of Disraeli's personal trilogy bears all the signs of Barthesian erotics: "I did not hurry on, fearful of expending the treasure too fast, for a treasure I consider it to be, and of the richest kind" (Gemmett 186). The second part of the work, which deals with the fall of the Jewish hero, was singled out for comment and affected Beckford deeply: "What can be truer to nature or more admirable than the delineation and development of the character of Honian [*sic!* – Honain is the personal doctor of the Caliph in Baghdad and a Jew in disguise]. His speaking of the agony of impalement and the deadly effects of that horrid spectacle upon the bystanders (sufficient to turn their blood) with all the cant of a medical professor, is a masterstroke. The scenes in the dungeon are heart-rending. The hyena-like fierceness and treachery of Schirene [the Caliph's daughter married to Alroy] most ably drawn, the death of Miriam [Alroy's sister] beautiful, the heroism of the youthful and lovely Alroy – sublime" (186). So intense were the feeling of recognition and the energy of projection that Beckford got carried away by his own enthusiasm. A thought insinuated

itself: "I wonder whether D[israeli] is partial or the contrary to French. Unless very intimate with that language, the episodes to V[athek] would be thrown away even upon him" (183).

Beckford's correspondence with his bookseller attests that prolonged negotiations with publisher Richard Bentley were conducted in the years 1833-34 over the *Episodes.* Indulging in his customary practice of commissioning, inspiring, and contributing to works of art, including literature – as in the case of Catherine Gore, the successful writer of 'silver fork' or fashionable novels (Chatel 192-93) – similarly Beckford might have thought of Disraeli as the best candidate for finishing and/or translating in English what he considered to be the gem of his collection. What Beckford writes to Clarke in July and August 1834, when he had already concluded the deal with Bentley for *Vathek*, *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* and *Italy*, will suffice to give an idea of the value he ascribed to these stories: "Now is your moment for increasing the Vathek mania by all that analysis, commentary etc. can do for it. Now the propitious hour for sharpening the public appetite for more powerful episodes – which if ever emerge from Hades into day light will reduce Byron's Corsair and Victor Hugo's monsters and scoundrels to insignificance. I speak from the fulness of heart and conviction not any hungry or thirsty desire to treat" (Gemmett 290); "unless Bentley can persuade himself and feels inspired to give a sum, as round as the great globe itself, nay rounder, for the globe we know is flatter at the poles than my Episodes I hope will be found in any part of them, we are not likely to deal" (304).

Sent to make a preliminary reconnaissance, Clarke, being prejudiced against Disraeli, forwarded a discouraging report. Aside from the smoking habit that Clarke well knew Beckford detested, Disraeli was found weak in French and exceedingly self-conceited. Beckford admonished Clarke not to mistake "*hauteur* and extreme conceit" for

what was Disraeli's "uncontrollable consciousness of superior powers" (Gemmett 186), but did believe in his scarce familiarity with French and was very sorry for it. This was a major obstacle if one was to fully appreciate and understand a substantial part of Beckford's orientalism in terms both of sources and style. Disraeli would miss, for instance, the main echoes of the Oriental satires written by Beckford's ancestor Anthony Hamilton to mock imitators of *Arabian Nights* at the French court, not to mention the many formal elements endowing the text with a truly comic tone (Folsom, Lonsdale xxvi-xxvii).

The other serious setback was that Disraeli was playing his cards on the two tables of literature and politics, while Beckford held the latter in utter disdain, as can be seen in these excerpts from letters to Clarke: "No doubt D[israeli] is pleased with the autographed Vatheks. I have some doubt whether his V[ivian] Grey would delight me overmuch, as I abhor politics" (Gemmett 189); "I should think Alroy has no chance in Mary la bonne [Marylebone] notwithstanding the terseness and energy of his address to the Electors. What can posess [sic] so bright a genius to dabble again and again in such a muddy horsepond!" (201).

All things considered, Disraeli's weakness in French and immersion in politics seem hardly insurmountable obstacles on Beckford's way to completing his life's work of publishing *Vathek with the Episodes of Vathek*. If Beckford had dismissed any ideas of making a new Samuel Henley of Benjamin Disraeli, he would not have responded so rapidly to the slightly peremptory tone of this clever letter with an invitation to the opera (DL I, 410): "Dear and honored Sir, I send you some tribute in the shape of a piece of marble which I myself brought from the Parthenon. It may be sculptured into a classical press for the episodes of Vathek, which otherwise may fly away with[ou]t the world reading

them. I think it very unfair that I sho[u]ld hear of t[*he great*] Beckford only [*from*] my friends, and that I am not permitted personally to express to him how much he has obliged Disraeli." As Douglas Hurd and Edward Young have justly observed (83), Disraeli was more versed in the epistolary art than in the art of novel-writing. The "born letter writer," as they call him, plays on the sense of disappointment for Beckford's indefinite deferral of their meeting face-to-face astutely. By fusing the themes of beauty, writing, and collecting, Disraeli's appeal to Beckford's sensibility is masterly. His gift of a piece of antiquity to the one he elsewhere defines as "the man of the greatest taste" (DL I, 412) is explicitly linked to the printing process of the *Episodes* and the part he is willing to play in their public accessibility. Given these premises, the question of the unpublished companions of *Vathek* could hardly be evaded during Disraeli and Beckford's three- or four-hour conversation, with Rossini's Orientalist music in the background.

More significantly, there was a narratological difficulty that proved insurmountable; in fact a series of difficulties. Broadly speaking, Beckford's project entailed disclosing and exhibiting in the *Episodes* what was veiled or hinted at in *Vathek* (pederasty and pedophilia, among other things). A shift in the narrative voice marks this development: from the heterodiegetic narrator of the main story to the autodiegetic narrators of the episodes. The stories were supposed to be embedded in the main frame just before divine punishment is administered. Having descended into the Palace of Subterranean Fire, the Muslim Hell, Vathek and Nouronihar are awaiting their final doom, when they see four men and a woman in the same situation. So they begin sharing their stories, except that the stories are now told in the first person and reveal a crescendo of perversion: pedophilia, necrophilia, uxoricide, parricide, and incest are among the criminal

feats of Vathek's companions. The bottom of this stairway leads to an abyss from which Beckford himself decided to withdraw. He told his first biographer, Cyrus Redding, another suitable candidate for the translation of the stories when the Disraeli option disappeared, that he had destroyed the final episode because it was "too wild" (Redding I, 246).

I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere that Beckford was conducting an experiment in fiction. He was trying to incorporate the psychological narrative of modern fiction into the non-psychological narrative structure of the Oriental tale with a satirical intent. He aimed at mocking the belief of modern novelists in a form of prose fiction capable of constructing culturally bounded, i.e., Western, forms of subjectivity. The novelists' confidence led straight into chaos instead, but on its brink Beckford's readers were left forever hovering with the twins Prince Kalilah and Princess Zulkais. Of their story, which is told in the third and last episode, only a fragment remains, and the testimony of Samuel Rogers that brother and sister finally conjoined carnally inside the pyramid of Cheops.

Could Disraeli ever replace or supplement such an anglicized version of the Marquis de Sade? Robert O'Kell, author of a masterful study on Disraeli's fiction, is likely to answer in the affirmative. Although he does not deal with the Beckford-Disraeli connection, he does detect "an incestuous component" (333) in the English noble hero's love for the Jewish beauty Eva Besso in *Tancred* (1847), the final volume of the Young England trilogy. The pretended incest occurs in a dream and is limited to an embrace between Tancred and his mother, who assumes the form of a Syrian goddess with Eva's face. Tancred's dream is the penultimate chapter, which in O'Kell's political reading eases the second half of the book back to reality and realism after the Middle Eastern fanciful escapades of the protagonist, a privileged child dissatisfied with the world. However, the

uncanny potential of the dream scene is far from considerable. Granted that Disraeli presents Tancred and Eva's stepbrother Fakredeen as alter egos, the so-called incestuous component seems more symbolic of harmony and reconciliation of opposites (Orient vs Occident; female vs male; sister vs brother; expediency vs principles) than evocative of illicit instincts. Only insofar as the taboo is defused, incidentally, can the ambiguity of the ending be resolved in the happy hybridisation of the Jewish and Christian couple, as some critics suggest (Ragussis, Kauffman, O'Kell).

To understand how incompatible the two forms of Orientalism practised by Beckford and Disraeli are, I propose to overlook the unfortunate plot of *Tancred*, with its ambivalent ending and the farrago of genres, discourses, and themes which make *Alroy* hard to digest, and see what happens to the theme of sibling attraction at the hands of the mature novelist who had recently secured Cyprus and the Suez Canal for the British Empire. By the time he published *Endymion* (1880), which earned him the largest advance ever paid for a work of fiction, the former Prime Minister, Lord Beaconsfield since 1876, "was no longer the outsider looking in, but the insider looking out" (Schwarz 138). The most coherent of Disraeli's plots features twins Myra and Endymion Ferrars. The sister and brother belong to a disgraced Tory household, upset by the Great Reform Bill and an extravagant way of living. When thirteen-year-old Endymion returns from Eaton, Myra kisses him again and again, "and when he tried to speak, she stopped his mouth with kisses" (E 39) to inform him that things were so bad that they were to have no more ponies! Tragedy strikes when mother's health fails and after her death father commits suicide. Eventually, Myra marries a much older man, Lord Roehampton (a fictionalized Lord Palmerston), only to give Endymion the chance of a career. A few years later, when he

refuses to marry the wealthy girl his sister wants him to marry, because he loves Lady Montfort, an older woman married to an odd character, Myra lectures him thus: “You are not a man to marry for romantic sentiment, and pass your life in writing sonnets to your wife till you find her charms and your inspiration alike exhausted; you are already wedded to the State” (E 386). By and by Myra becomes a widow, remarries with Florestan, a foreign king (based on Louis Napoleon) and turns queen; Endymion marries Lady Montfort, when her husband dies, and his prospects of becoming Prime Minister of a Whig cabinet are very promising. The happy ending is celebrated in the Ferrars’ old house, where the twins are reunited. In a tête-à-tête queen Myra is given the final word: “it was not to see these rooms I came, though I was glad to do so, and the corridor on the second story whence I called out to you when you returned, and for ever, from Eton, and told you there were bad news. What I came for was to see our old nursery, where we lived so long together, and so fondly! Here it is; here we are. All I have desired, all I have dreamed, have come to pass. Darling, beloved of my soul, by all our sorrows, by all our joys, in this scene of our childhood and bygone days, let me give you my last embrace” (E 467-68).

Remove the Oriental costumes and Disraeli’s twins are domesticated and melodramatic versions of Zulkais and Kalilah. Beckford’s desecrating irony has been diluted in a Victorian solution for the achievement of more down-to-earth aspirations, such as money and career, both for the novel characters and for their forger.

Benjamin Disraeli ending the *Episodes of Vathek*? Just another dream of William Beckford’s.

Endnotes

[1] Fictional recreations of the visit are found in Sontag (332-44) and Brickles (1-6; 267-82). A major exhibition on Beckford and his collections (Ostergard) was held in New York (Bard Graduate Center, 18 October 2001 – 6 January 2002) and London (Dulwich Picture Gallery, 6 February 2002 – 14 April 2002).

[2] I am aware of the arguments advanced against the thesis of Said (Irwin is an excellent representative). However, they do not seem to me to invalidate its basic tenet that "never has there been such a thing as a pure, or unconditional, Orient" (Said 23).

[3] The other epigraph is from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* by Karl Marx, who shared Jewish origins with Disraeli, but no sense of belonging. It is worth noting that *Tancredi* (1813) was also, like *Semiramide*, an opera by the duo Gioacchino Rossini (composer) and Gaetano Rossi (librettist).

[4] Over the last few years, the Beckford-Disraeli relationship has drawn the attention of Mowl, Gemmett, Dellamora, Nolan, Kuhn, and Ford.

Illustrations

[1] Lord Nelson's Reception at Fonthill, *Gentleman's Magazine*, April 1801.

[2] John Hoppner, *William Beckford* (oil on canvas, ca. 1800).

[3] Decapitated St. Denis Extending His Head, in William Beckford, *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* (1834).

[4] Author of *Vivian Grey*, a drawing of the young Disraeli by Daniel Maclise, *Fraser's Magazine*, May 1833.

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Baking Bread: A Documentary Memoir about Food, Family, and Fitting in

Rose Spinelli

Film Summary

America: land of the melting pot, where disparate cultures historically have aspired to assimilate into the fabric of American society. We think of it as a proud achievement for immigrants who frequently leave dire circumstances of poverty, repression, or intractable social stratification.

But a smooth transition from one deeply rooted culture into a new and foreign one, no matter how much the family stands to gain in upward mobility or safety, is sometimes more idealist notion than reality. Parents fret their children will lose touch with their heritage. They fear that as their children Americanize, they will cease to hold sway over them, that they will be corrupted. Perhaps most damaging, they're terrified they will no longer have their children's respect.

Such was the case in the family of Rose Spinelli, producer, director, and writer of the documentary memoir, "Baking Bread." At least, Spinelli sensed it was. It's a common theme played out again and again: As the children of immigrant parents go out into the world, a rift forms and is replaced by unspoken feelings, often leaving families strangers to one another. A mutual resentment may take hold, with both generations feeling that the other isn't making an effort to understand the other.

After many years of alienation, a sense of "otherness," while growing up a first-generation Italian, she sets out to get some answers in hopes of bridging the divide.

Spinelli frames the film around the most prominent symbol of her estrangement from her roots: her fear or inability to make the family bread. Set in both her hometown of Chicago, Illinois and her mother's birth home of Sant' Ambrogio, Sicily, sets out to find some answers.

In a series of interviews, plenty of family meals, and culminating in her own attempt at finally making bread using her mother's recipe, the viewer has an opportunity to and reflect and relate to a common, uniquely American theme.

Introduction

The seed for "Baking Bread" came after reading an article in the *New York Times Magazine* about an intellectually challenged couple that married and went on to raise children, all of whom were also intellectually impaired except for one. The black sheep writ large. The story's central theme was what it means to be "other" within your family. I latched on to the part that focused on the girl, who by nine years old had already surpassed her parents intellectually. The girl suffered from anxiety.

I completely related to the girl's sense of otherness. It manifested for me in many ways. But one symbol, at least back then, was making the family bread. Though I'd watched my mother make bread every Saturday for my entire childhood and beyond, I never ventured to make the bread myself.

As time passed, it became a source of consternation. The more I fixated on it, the larger it loomed in my imagination. Why was this so difficult for me? I was an excellent cook, thanks to my mother. But bread was different. It required measuring. My mother didn't measure. I didn't trust that I could make the bread without clearer instructions.

Looking back, I now believe I the lack of trust went much deeper, a sense that I was in this life alone.

I wanted to get to the bottom of this and learn more about my place within my cultural heritage.

Fortunately, a wonderful and mystifying series of synchronicities began showing up in my life to confirm that I should make this documentary. First, I discovered, and was awarded, a grant to bankroll the project. Secondly, a highly regarded professional editor, an acquaintance whom I'd run into at a summer party and briefly told about my plans, told me on the spot that he would edit it. Additionally, he told two of his friends, who happened to be successful filmmakers in their own right. They were interested enough in the idea to be my crew and join me in Italy on their own dime. Thinking I would shoot the footage myself, the project was becoming larger and more exciting.

As all documentaries go, the final product was a little different than what I'd first envisioned. Once we started shooting the story I'd intended took a lot of twists and turns—mostly because we had to either work around all the family meals or incorporate them. As the film shows, I chose the path of least resistance. I apologize in advance for making you hungry as you watch.

Upon completion, the film did quite well, screening at several film festivals both stateside and abroad, between 2002 and 2005.

Please enjoy "Baking Bread" at https://vimeo.com/43055315

Post-Screening Talk

You may have responded to this film in one of several ways:

You may take it as face value, as a story of one daughter preserving the family history. You may see an entitled and self-absorbed adult child who won't just grow up and move on, for which I will forgive you, because I often feel that way, too. Given the current climate in the US relating to new immigrants, you may see some echoes of the stress that the newest wave of Muslim refugees and undocumented Mexican young adults are experiencing. Finally, you may simply see similarities in your own upbringing or that of someone you know.

As a writer, I believe strongly in the power of sharing our stories in order to heal. Yet I myself was living an unstoried life. My family seldom talked about who they were before they uprooted themselves and moved to America, partly because they struggled to adjust and to keep five girls safe in a new country. Their fears may have been unfounded but they were rooted in their own experiences.

Especially during the turn of the last century southern Italians, after all, were poorly treated both at home and in their adopted country in the US. This was something my parents were aware of and internalized. So they protected themselves. They were secretive. They didn't assimilate well. Family loyalty was everything. In breaking from tradition, which in many ways they viewed as a kind of betrayal, I probably tapped into some of their worst fears. I'm not sure how much I tapped into that in "Baking Bread."

Though I was proud of the film—and my family certainly appreciated that I'd created a kind of digital legacy for the Spinelli family—I always felt that I hadn't quite dug as deep as I wanted to. A lot of the issues about managing dual identities still niggled at me.

So, when I was first invited to screen my film here in Vasto, of course I was honored. But when I started reflecting upon it, I was also a little nervous. What did I have to say that was new after all these years? I also realized that this was an opportunity to revisit what I'd started and see if I could dig deeper. Again, synchronicity saved me.

My parents lived largely unexpressed lives in America. Our relationship suffered as a result. It may not have been that they didn't want to, but they couldn't verbalize their sense of loss. They didn't have the emotional language, the luxury, to address our shared grief. And in some unresolved way, I lived with the fallout from that, some of which is evident in the film.

In agreeing to screen and talk about the film, I think another door opened for me. I found some interesting insights on the other side.

One day I read something about epigenetics, the study of biological mechanisms that will switch genes on or off. In other words, certain circumstances in life can cause genes to be silenced or expressed over time.

I read studies about mice inheriting specific memories. For example, a group of mice was exposed to an odor. The scientists paired the odor with a mild shock, which caused the mice to fear that odor. Ten days later they were allowed to mate. Amazingly, what they discovered is that their offspring showed signs of fear when presented with the same odor, even though they had never been exposed to it or any shock before.

Now, I'm not a neuroscientist, but according to these studies there's a multigenerational component to our inheritance of environmental influences—whether we were actually present for the trauma or not. Our brains still process and replicate those responses.

I believe in science but I've also always been a spiritual seeker. One day, not long afterwards, a friend who comes from a traditional Peruvian family began talking to me about how in Native traditions the shamans have long understood the nature of generational trauma. The method of healing involves guiding the wounded to connect to the source of the pain in order to regain sacred power.

Suddenly, I seemed to be finding articles and books that in some way or another supported both the epigenetics and shamanistic theses. The stories were different but the theme was the same.

I read a very moving piece called "The Seventh Generation" about a group of Lakota teenagers from the Standing Rock Reservation who became activists against the Keystone pipeline. But they were unlikely environmentalists. What really prompted their activism was that their friends were committing suicide at a heartbreaking rate. Somehow these young people knew they had to free themselves from the painful history they saw their parents living, how they watched them give up, become alcoholics, didn't provide a safe place for the kids. Their activism was about giving their lives purpose, to stop the cycle of suicide. It seems to be working.

One of the leaders of the group talked about the "historical trauma" that defined their lives. She says, "No one realizes what the repercussions of colonization have been, the repercussions of forced removal." She said it was hard to explain to people that these were things that lived within them, even though they had happened to past generations.

She said, "I don't blame my parents. The abuse lives in our blood."

Soon after I found an article about writer Elizabeth Strout, who had just published another book.

Even though she doesn't like to be referred to as a Maine writer, she did grow up in a small town in Maine and all of her stories center around that geography, that life, and those people, because it's what she knows and, like many of us, she felt like she didn't quite belong in Maine or in New York, where she lives part time, and through her writing she was figuring it out.

One more example. I saw an excellent play by a Chinese-American playwright Lauren Yee. The script, though very different from the story in "Baking Bread," reminded me of my own experiences and the great responsibilities that were placed on us to do good by helping the family. I rebelled because I wanted to live my own life, so I underachieved as their savior to be the child they needed me to be.

One of the striking sequences was between Lauren Yee (the playwright in the script, though not played by Yee, was named Lauren Yee) and her father who is critical of her because even though she graduated from Yale and found success, she never mastered the Chinese language. In a vulnerable moment she admits it was because she felt that if she couldn't speak it perfectly, she was going to reject it completely. Whatever it is, there's a burden that children of first generations feel.

I think it's no accident that there is this surge of interest in discovering our heritage through sites such as ancestry.com and 23andMe, and TV shows like Henry Louis Gates's "Finding Your Roots." There's a yearning to learn about the people who came before us so we can find our place, so we can feel like we belong.

Whether you want to see it through the sharp eye of a scientist or the gauzy eye of metaphysics, or whether you want to work through art or protestation, taking the risk of

looking back and then sharing our stories generates its own momentum that is healing and transformative.

Brush Strokes of Melancholy: Lars von Trier and *Melancholia*

Angela Tumini

In the film *Melancholia* (2011), Danish film-maker Lars von Trier appeals to our psychological and emotional ability to share the experience of the paralyzing melancholy that overwhelms us at the moment when an imminent action of apocalypse is about to fall upon us. At the same time, he challenges our intellectual critical ability as spectators by inviting us to examine the existential preoccupation that underlines the behavior of the characters. In this film, it is not the action of destruction in itself that is so important, but rather the way in which it is conveyed and how we could react when facing a situation in which we hold no control. I propose that, while there are important mythological elements that compose the film, it is art, nevertheless, which is the major component of its narrative. In *Melancholia* the function of art is to unravel the threads of melancholy that tie together the protagonist with the settings and the events. With the use of carefully selected paintings, von Trier offers a non-conventional interpretation of the film itself, while he looks for an intricate context beyond the simple text in which melancholy, and the unpredictable emotional side of human nature, can be more accurately examined.

Melancholia is divided into three parts: first of all by the prelude, initiated by the soundtrack of the opera, “Tristan and Isolde” completed by Wagner in 1859. As stated by Manohla Dargis, “Wagner described the opera as ‘one of endless yearning, longing, the bliss and wretchedness of love; world, power, fame, honor, chivalry, loyalty and friendship all blown away like an insubstantial dream,’ for which there is ‘one sole redemption — death, finality, a sleep without awakening.’ ” (Dargis, n.p.) A feeling of inevitable and impending doom, therefore, dominates the narrative from the very beginning. The first part of the film is related through the eyes of Justine, a woman whose perception of the void of existence constantly prompts her to look forward into the unfulfilled side of herself, while she remains inevitably detached from the events of her life. As the farce of her wedding unfolds, we get to familiarize with a woman who faces up to two catastrophes. On one

hand, her struggle to feign the acceptance of conventional rituals – such as marriage- as a protective façade, while remaining indifferent to them; on the other, the awareness of the imminent annihilation of earth and humankind. The second part focuses more on Claire, her sister, and her perspective as she battles between self-denial and the acceptance of the nearing apocalypse.

The web of the narrative is all weaved together in an entirely non-conventional plot driven situation; by that I mean a plot which is not based on the dramatic function of the characters. On the contrary, the characters are at the mercy of the circumstances in which they are placed, and that is what is central to the film. The story development is scattered by the juxtaposition of famous art works that serve no decorative purpose. The specific paintings we see in the film function in two ways: firstly, they disturb the narrative of a potential fairy tale-like wedding by interfering with disquieting visions of death and bleak landscapes. In so doing they darken further that melancholic cloud that hovers over the scenes and that clashes against the beauty of the settings where the events take place. Secondly, the paintings are invested with a prophetic value as they become the key to interpret the apocalyptic events that will later strike the characters. The build up of the dramatic tension in this film is exceptional because it is of a personal nature; it results partly from the spectators's reading of these art works within the cinematic text, and by the psycho-emotional reaction that they may have when they appear in the film. Art in *Melancholia,* must be taken as an integral part of the narrative itself; it is a form of discourse in its own right. It serves to validate the notion that, at the core of von Trier's concern as a film-maker, lies an ongoing preoccupation with unresolved existential anxieties, and with the sense of loss that strikes us at heart when reflecting upon the vulnerability and the loneliness of the human condition. Furthermore, if we read between the lines, we discover that von Trier considers the mythological roots of melancholy as being at the basis of the realistic, artistic and social constructs that pervade human existence.

Melancholia acquires a strong mythological quality when Justine's role is conveyed as that of a modern time Cassandra who knows in advance about the inevitability of disaster, and that everything that her sister stands for is futile. Justine advocates a vision of

life on earth that has no redeeming attributes: “The earth is evil. We don't need to grieve for it.” Like Cassandra when vainly foretelling the fall of Troy, Justine’s words echo with the heartache of a melancholic. Noticeably, here von Trier points to the enhanced sensitivity which is culturally associated with the melancholy “disease”; something that stems from a complete detachment from the “present”, and that results in the individual’s mourning generated by a visceral sense of loss. This mourning without an object reflects an absence whose scale and consequences are unfathomable, and yet it remains central to one’s sense of self. While Justine never defines precisely what this loss consists of, it is evident how, at the core of her profound sadness, there is an archetypal drama. Her heart weeps for a loss of unity with Nature and a desperate existential longing for wholeness that is initially disappointed. Nature has, instead, been vanquished and its cultural meaning has been severely depleted. That is emphasized by a number of features in the film such as the hypocritical and artificial atmosphere of the bourgeois celebration of Justine and Michael’s wedding in which everything goes wrong. Here von Trier skillfully illustrates the painful in-congruencies between what Justine feels and perceives and what she is told by all of those around her. Unlike Wagner’s Tristan and Isolde who die in each other’s arms, and to which the prelude alludes. Justine and Michael’s symbolic bonding is broken with no ecstatic final moment to redeem it. On the contrary, the archetypal male/female wholeness is shattered by contemporary cynicism regarding the perfect love and union found within Nature. This cynicism finds ample parallel in the brutal realism voiced by Justine’s mother Gaby who defines the illusions of marriage and romantic love in a most unsubtle way: “why are you allowing yourself to assume the stupid role of with these deluded people? I know you see as I do. So, why don’t you admit it and leave?” Gaby’s speech is intended not only to challenge marriage as an institution, but also to question Justine’s honesty in her assumed role of a romantic blushing bride. At first glance, Gaby may seem detached and un-nurturing in her motherly relationship with Justine; yet, given the critique-based structure of the von Trier text regarding conventional values, Gaby’s speech calls for an automatic re-assessment. Gaby represents the ultimate realist and, in the von Trier universe where society is consumed by materialism and greed and the role of parenting is sabotaged, she has, instead, the reverse role of nurturing mother. While seemingly antagonistic, Gaby’s anger is an energy that has an appropriate focus: helping her daughter Justine to

discern her purpose within a conventional type marriage to which she secretly remains indifferent.

Although Michael, her newly wed husband, seems to have no demands of his own, he forces on behalf of society, the role of wife on Justine that she finds intolerable. Justine's "purpose" seems, in fact, at loss and exacerbated by the sense of emptiness, which is mirrored in the vast moonlit setting surrounding the locus of the celebration. The grounds around the mansion, where the story takes place, with a sundial and rows of trees, invites us to reflect upon the fragility and linearity of time that leads irrevocably to death[1]. Justine's growing nihilistic attitude favors an interpretation of reality that sees humankind standing as the damaged creation; by contrast, the destruction of life itself asserts that the self-destructive process of humanity has drawn to a definitive close. Nature in the film is an irate external force that essentially antagonizes industrial modernization and alienation. The photographic strategy used in the film produces an unusual portrayal of natural settings which is forgetful of the verdant, exuberant views of nature; bright colors are, on the contrary, substituted by "diseased" shades alternating between tones of brown and green, "decayed" yellow and a ghostly shade of gray. Von Trier's idea was evidently to create a deeply felt emotional presence, able to convey the purpose of the film; that is the endless nostalgia that pervades the narrative. Manuel Alberto Claro, von Trier's cinematographer, explained that his aim was essentially to " make images that are in love with the story and not with them." (White, n.p.) Moreover, as remarked by David Denby in the New Yorker: "the movie was shot way up north, on the coast of Sweden, and the whitish illumination can be uncanny, an intimation of the ghost world to come" (Denby, n.p.) The lighting strategy was thought out to better accentuate the hopeless sense of grieving for something invariably lost; a loss, which is at once too intimate and too totalized to be named by the protagonist. The breath of doom that pervades the air is rendered, therefore, in a mélange of colors that devitalize the natural setting. The "slow greens" and "impending greys", as described by Catherine Lord, are there to forge the "catastrophic" atmosphere that marks the narrative from the very beginning. As Lord points out:

> the green and vital life of Earth, its cultural traditions and weddings, will be obliterated for eternity by an incoming rogue planet called Melancholia. This

> narrative premise allows the spectator to witness cinema at its most painterly, as *tableaux vivant* with compositions that illuminate Justine's wedding in many shades of green. Grey and blue insert shots set in space foreshadow the film's denouement: the grey and ashy blue absorption of Earth by Melancholia. (n.p.)

On the path to the ultimate destruction, von Trier takes a reflective filmic approach framed by a mythological aura. The Justine/Cassandra figure, like in a classical Greek tragedy, is the one to have the biggest impact on the atmosphere of anxiety and doom pervading the scenes. The story progresses while Justine will appear more and more as a character conceived within the boundaries of ancient Greek medical paradigms; those in which mind and body were considered inseparable. The state of her inner soul is inexorably linked with the outward appearance of her body. As if in symbiosis with the planet coming to destroy Earth, she seems spellbound, her limbs are "narcotized" and move at a glacial pace, while she desperately attempts to put a faint smile on her face. The drowning of Justine in a slow-motion everyday despair intersected by music, paintings and the emptiness of the golf course, allows von Trier to develop a subjective dramatic situation that represents a form of therapeutic exercise. This is is meant to keep his own inner anxieties at bay; something that also seemed to be the case for his previous film *Antichrist* (2009) and that most suits his style.

The contemplative mood of the film is born out of von Trier's way to address his own battling with depression and anxiety. "If God created life- which I sincerely doubt" he stated " he didn't think it through" (Brody, n.p.) The cynicism of the film-director is voiced throughout the context of *Melancholia* where Justine moves within a prism of time, boredom, emptiness and mortality, while a sullen feeling of the unrelenting linear time inevitably climaxing in death dominates the air. Von Tier's text speaks of 'finity' and precludes any affinity with the universe that Justine inhabits. The spectator is not expected to judge Justine by her actions, but by her reactions. In other words, von Trier demands that his characters are looked at from the inside and not from the outside, and that is the case for most of his other films too. It is not so much what Justine is doing that matters, but her silent anguish for something unexplainably lost that she conceals within herself. This

brings me to the question of the function of art works being so important within the context of this film: they give voice to the unspeakable, to the most silent emotions and make the invisible visible. Paintings become the allegory of Justine's subjective experience; an allegory that charges melancholy with a certain degree of *jouissance* by co-existing with it and by giving meaning to something which would otherwise be mute.

The "unspoken", or the feeling of *angst* and ineffable loss is, after all, the only reality for the melancholic subject, being Justine in this case. As Julia Kristeva affirms "Melancholia then ends up in asymbolia, in loss of meaning: if I am no longer capable of translating of metaphorizing, I become silent and die." (Lechte, 78). For melancholic and depressive individuals, as Kristeva suggests, often words have no meaning, or they feel like they are looking at events from the outside (Lechte, 78). Justine's personality fits in well within those described in Kristeva's theory, given that language for her becomes impossible at some point. As Justine's celebration begins to appear more as a masquerade than a wedding, her melancholic mood worsens to the point of a vehement repudiation of action that culminates into inertia. Just as described by John Lechte :

> The loss of words, of taste, of motivation, go to form an intense despair […] This is the other face of narcissism where despair is meaning. By contrast, love is a union with an external object in the symbolic; thus, it has no place in the melancholic's universe. (Lechte, 82).

In the film Justine finds "no union with an external object"; neither a relationship nor a successful career can relieve her "asymbolic" condition. Justine is the embodiment of the mourning of the "being"; that is a constant brooding over the meaning of life in the face of all perishable things. Having little faith in rationalism, Lars von Trier in this film is, thus, ultimately preoccupied with exploring the unbearable helplessness of this melancholic mourning, and the spectator is consequently placed in the uneasy position of having to contemplate this discomforting idea.

Considering that melancholy is an emotional state that words simply cannot fully express, von Trier makes use of specific paintings whose images intensify the substance of the text. Besides, these paintings give a premonitory value to the text, while rendering the meaning more decipherable for the audience. As a point of departure for the function of

art, we need to firstly consider the scene in which Justine substitutes some illustrated books of modern paintings with those containing images of old ones, in the library. The exegetical value of this scene is found in the denial of the more modern utilitarian design that rejects the idea of "art for art's sake", and that can be more of a form of rigid constructivism. Such function in art was meant to counterbalance the prevalence of producing useless “beauty” and, to use art for industry, communication and social causes. Justine disrupts what is orderly set around her in the library and frantically gets rid of the catalog containing works by Russian Suprematist painter Kazimir Malevich whose aesthetic concern was purely with form. As Malevich stated himself “For the new artistic culture, things have vanished like smoke and art goes toward an end in itself, creation, it goes towards the domination of the forms of nature.” (Compton, 557) That is a concept evidently based on the idea the twentieth century man could accomplish domination and control over the earth. Justine’s disregard for a type of art that speaks of domination is the result of a recognition that the “major stakes of […] art is henceforth located in the invisibility of the crisis affecting the identity of persons, morals, religion or politics.” (Kristeva, 222) Justine’s gesture is indicative of a critical analysis of the modern society mollified by a consumeristic ideology whose perpetuation brings nothing but ever increasing emptiness, misery and alienation. That is evidenced by her stubborn contempt for the conventional and financial concerns of both her sister and brother in law who strive to preserve their notion of normality, and the feeling of having their lives at hand.

By discarding Malevich’s paintings, Justine denies the spectators the possibility of reading any positive subtext that might otherwise have an effect on the un-redeeming quality of the film itself. She proceeds, therefore, to replace the images of Malevich’s paintings with others of grim scenarios pervaded by omens of death; more specifically with some by Bruegel, Caravaggio and Millais. Since Justine’s knowledge is fundamentally tragic, her sympathy is directed at those paintings that can voice the tragedy of the ‘finity’ of all things. These art works in *Melancholia* are there to represent “the rhetoric of apocalypse”, an expression coined by Kristeva, that forces us to experience the invisible through its visions and it is “carried out in two seemingly opposite, extreme fashions that complement each other: a wealth of images and a holding back of words.” (Kristeva, 224). It naturally follows that Justine relates to an emotional art form that can better represent

her frustrations and despair. For this reason, *Melancholia* can be considered a film which is more concerned with the "inner" side of the characters than with their "outer" side. But what needs attention at this point are the specific reasons that may have determined von Trier's careful selection of artists.

Bearing in mind the director's personal experience of anxiety, which he then mirrors in his protagonist, Caravaggio appears as an almost predictable choice. Von Trier must have naturally associated Justine's behavior to those split moments of extreme agonizing rapture that Caravaggio so vividly communicates through his paintings. Caravaggio's art is racked with ambiguity, augmented by his superb mastering of *chiaro/scuro* technique[2] that makes his work immediately recognizable. Traumatized, yet eroticized at the same time, his figures seem trapped between dereliction, destruction and burning desire. Caravaggio's figures are always challenging and coldly appraising, looking almost stupefied by fear at times, as if always awaiting a tragic unfolding of actions. The introduction of *David with the Head of Goliath*[3] (1609-1610) within the text, gives weight to the cataclystic premonitory scope of *Melancholia* and becomes part of the dramatic strategy of narration by heightening its emotional tension. Caravaggio's figures are disturbingly isolated by the game of light and shadow. Since von Trier is certainly very concerned with the effect of light, especially in *Antichrist* and *Melancholia,* Caravaggio's work can have a strong evocative effect in the film. Claro recalls how special attention was paid to: "The colors [that] looked more natural; there were more subtle distinctions between colors. It was better able to achieve natural looking skin tones. There was more detail in the highlights and in the shadows" (n.p) Another relevant point to consider is that Caravaggio's figures, while being always worryingly beautiful, are, nevertheless, a baffling presence on the canvas. We get the sense that we are never going to be allowed to enter into their inner dimension and discover what is going on. This closeness of character is, after all, what distinguishes the protagonists of *Melancholia* as well, as mentioned above. Besides, Caravaggio's message has a well defined defeatist quality to it: any attempt to extract ourselves from the messiness of this world and to find a purpose within the universe, exclusively by our own power is meaningless and done in vain. This is a view that is undoubtedly shared by Justine in *Melancholia,* as her attitude demonstrates.

A further argument on this subject needs to be made also: the question of the auto-biographical element of Caravaggio that must truly fascinate von Trier. Indeed, Caravaggio invented himself in terms of "authorship", by constructing his own image of an artist above all laws. This "rule-breaker" certainly shifted his life from anarchy to tragedy with the force of a windstorm; yet , it was precisely that negative energy that made him into an artist of astonishing creative power. Von Trier, therefore, seems to recognize an affinity with this artist as far as authorship is concerned, especially when one takes into account Peter Schepelern's comment in such case:

> "the whole of Trier's work and career could be seen as a prototype auteurist initiative. Not only there is originality and coherence in his work made entirely according to his own whims, his work is also…designed by himself, to be the oeuvre of an auteur." (Schepelern, 111)

Von Trier's choice of using the image of *David with the Head of Goliath* specifically, can reinforce this argument. With this particular painting Caravaggio seductively invites the spectator to read him with an investigative approach. The face of Goliath, which is Caravaggio's self-portrait, looks directly outside the painting as if to prompt us to come face to face with the dark side of mankind, while, at the same time, it seems to prompt us prompting to look at ourselves. In a sense, this is a painting about the melancholic act of meditative reflection on life; it has an unusual intimacy of self-disgust and despair. Von Trier self-constructed image is mainly built around the exploration of contrasting areas such as evil and virtue, punishment and perversion; moreover, there is an element of self-disgust in his artistic identity too, which is tied in with the burden of having to exist, but not really wanting to. Further to this point, when commenting on *Melancholia,* A. O. Scott aptly points out:

> Total obliteration happens on an intimate scale, and the all-encompassing, metaphysical nature of the drama leaves room for gentleness as well as operatic cruelty. […] difficult emotions are registered in close-ups of individual human faces, and a perverse, persuasive idea rises to the surface.

The close-up of this painting in the film can verbalize the paradoxical idea that life on earth is a nonexistence in the pending moment of destruction. Moreover, quite reminiscent of

Caravaggio's well known tormented personality[4], Justine is steered by an uncontainable melancholy: her distressed personality veers from emotional calmness to complete hysteria. In other words, her behavior is related to "an experience of death where [she] becomes nothing" as theorized by Kristeva (Lechte 78). Even sexual transgression, sought by Justine as a form of solace, becomes devoid of pleasure, as a sense of cosmic loneliness takes control of her feeling: "When I say we're alone, we're alone. Life is only on Earth, and not for long."

The death experience is, furthermore, a polarizing experience whose intensity can generate 'frantic" reactions. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, for example, Shakespeare writes: that "melancholy is the nurse of frenzy[5]." (37) Frenzy, in Justine's case is manifested through her act of having sex with a stranger while still enshrouded in her wedding gown. Justine's desecration of her body and bridal garment is like a ritual of mourning of the body and the "deceptive" role forced upon it throughout its existence, from its very moment of being until it becomes a disintegrating alien element. Justine's "deceptive' bride role undermines further her sense of a stable identity while contributing to shatter her sense of a fixed reality in which her identity might have been at rest. Caravaggio's painting, therefore, contributes to the subversion of a traditional mainstream happy ending wedding tale, and reinforces a narrative structure dominated by themes of emotional distress, trauma and melancholic disorder. It is not Eros that controls the events in this "would –be" happy wedding story, but Thanatos that shapes, masters and dominates its course. Justine is fundamentally a tragic figure in the traditional sense of the word; since her knowledge is fundamentally tragic, she can do no more than to deny the presumption of a positive ending. The long bridal veil and the shining satin gown that initially frames her image into a fairy princess look-alike, gradually turns into a mere burial shroud. While her sister Claire insists on making things better, Justine has the feeling of being thrown in a " deranged" world, and suffers the pain of the chronic anxiety of those whose melancholy is about the awareness of the nothingness around them. The silvery water on which the estate lies merges with an ocean of nothingness.

Justine is evidently presented by von Trier as a modern times "Ophelia who loses control of her body and her feelings, drowning in an "ocean" of melancholic despair; hence

the choice of using John Everett Millais's painting in the film. In Millais's work, we see Ophelia lying lifelessly amongst a plethora of floating bright violets, pansies and roses, as if to purposely come into contrast with the greyness of her life that succumbed to madness and death. Von Trier picked up the idea to use Millais's representation of Ophelia for the official poster of *Melancholia,* in order to elevate Justine from the outset to the position of oracle of the death which is part of the theme of the film. Indeed, in *Hamlet*, one of Ophelia's less obvious roles is that of a tool used by Shakespeare to foreshadow future events, just as Justine does in the film. What is more, drowning, as it is the case for Ophelia, was associated with the feminine, with female fluidity as opposed to masculine aridity. As observed by Elaine Showalter in the discussion of the "Ophelia Complex" the phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard traces the symbolic connections between women, water, and death. He suggests that:

> Drowning becomes the truly feminine death in the dramas of literature and life, one which is a beautiful immersion and submersion in the female element. Water is the profound and organic symbol of the liquid woman whose eyes are so easily drowned in tears, as her body is the repository of blood, amniotic fluid, and milk. (Showalter, n.p.)

Water, in *Melancholia*, is all around Justine: in an Ophelia-like vision, she slowly sinks into an irretrievable sea of melancholy that will prematurely claim her psychological life before even claiming her physical death. Just as depicted by Kristeva in *Black Sun*, melancholia is a living death. Eros has become detached from words, from language-from life. Melancholia is cold, on the side of death drive and tending towards complete passivity, mourning and sadness. (Lechte, 82) Justine is given a wedding reception in her sister Claire's aging isolated estate sitting above an ocean. We do not see a church wedding, but one whose crises unfolds in a milieu where any God is absent and that Justine despises. As Bryan Nixon points out "[Justine] urges Melancholia [the planet] to destroy everything around her through her [own] melancholia" (n.p.); in so doing, she ecstatically embraces the falling ash seemingly sure of the imminent annihilation of life.

Water is present also in another painting, whose metaphoric components are woven into the fabric of the film: "*Hunters in the Snow*" (1565) by Pieter Bruegel, the great

Flemish painter of the 16th century. Aside from a vast, snow-covered landscape, this work presents a valley full of ponds, and a winding river. Yet, Bruegel's painting is powerful because it provokes a sense of uneasy ambivalence. Its muted colors: black, white and grey create a feeling of precariousness. Everything feels a little provisional and unresolved when we observe the huntsmen returning to the village with no reward. The sky is flat and unforgiving, while ice fills the ground representing an archetypal winter that chills our spine. Within the film, the details of this painting codify the narrative; that is to say that the painting runs as a refraction of one image through another and becomes a "text" outside of the film text itself, which helps to better interpret the message of the film. Von Tier uses Bruegel's work as a metaphor for a world that has not felt the warmth of sunlight for a while, which is the psychological world that belongs to Justine. The vaguely pleasurable image of the children skating in the distance that we see in this painting is far too distant and out of reach. *Hunters in the Snow* has the feel of a cold quest for survival which is more constrained by time than place, which succeeds to fit "realistically" into von Trier's narrative. As Russian filmmaker Andrey Tarkovsky said: "art is born out of an ill-designed world" (n.p.) and, of course it was Tarkovsky who first made use of this particular painting in his film *Solaris*. Since von Trier has stated his profound admiration for Tarkovsky in several occasions the choice of *Hunters in the Snow* can indeed be viewed as a von Trier 's personal homage as he feels artistically indebted to the great Russian director. However, there are other considerations to be made regarding the metaphorical value of the painting that can support the film text, as mentioned earlier. Julia Shpiniskaya explains that Tarkovsky's cinematic technique "represents his ability to reflect the meaning with the help of metaphorisation and to set up a multidimensional vision of a subject. By this accumulation of metaphors" she says,

> there comes the multidimensional vision of a subject and the narrative reality doubles and trebles. The quotations build up the fundamental cognitive textual channel of the film, which unfolds independently in parallel and through the main film narration. (Shpiniskaya, n.p.)

Brueghel's painting, like that of Millais's *Ophelia* and Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath,* creates an additional text that can explain those narration moments that are otherwise too difficult to translate into words, or that they need to remain silent and have to be only visually experienced.

Julia Shpiniskaya's critique of *Solaris*, can be comfortably adapted to the text of *Melancholia.* In von Trier's film, the multidimensional vision of the subject and the narrative reality doubles and trebles too; the paintings channel the feeling of terror that everything ends, of the chaos of existence and not being able of making sense of what happens to us. At the same time, it also arises as a point of contrast in the film to counteract a culturally accepted tendency of society to obliterate the essence of "real". This is achieved through the subversion of conventional wedding narrative by denying the usual fairytale ending. A conventional fairytale ending would otherwise recuperate the film in a "satisfactory" way: the spectator would be comforted by the cinematic pleasure gained through the "right" that has been restored, and that was clearly not Lars von Trier's intention. Ultimately, his aim was to craft a visual "treatise" on his own philosophy of human existence; a philosophy based on a vision of life as an empty vessel constructed on the false ideology of happiness. Knowing that, for Justine, happiness cannot happen because she simply cannot accept it. As Julia Kristeva affirms: "Melancholy is amorous passion's sombre lining. A sorrowful pleasure, this lugubrious intoxication constitutes the banal background from which our ideals or euphoria break away as much as that fleeting lucidity which breaks the trance entwining two people together." (Kristeva,5)

Justine's melancholic breakdown, and alienation argue that society's tendency to exorcize or medicate away melancholy, in favor of an obstinate and unrewarding pursuit of happiness is, in many ways, just as dysfunctional as depression itself.

Notes

[1] Here von Trier deliberately alludes to Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) as well as Antonioni's *La Notte* (1962) by faithfully recreating the stiffly regulated grounds of a mansion as well as its golf course. The fabricated spaces of these two films usher our minds through the unpredictable psychological corridors of human meaning, ultimately challenging the way in which reality is shaped and understood

[2] it is believed that he may have used a lantern in his studio hung to one side while painting., to see effect of a rush striking light across the composition while part of remained in deep shadow.

[3] Caravaggio's *David with the Head of Goliath* is housed in the Galleria Borghese in Rome.

[4] Caravaggio's complex personality in one of the most intriguing one of the whole Art History. On May 1606 the painter was even accused of murder and fled from Rome to distant places such as Naples, Sicily, and Malta. David with the Head of Goliath's was later sent to the papal court in 1610 as a kind of painted petition for pardon. While papal pardon was granted to him, Caravaggio died before he could reach Rome.

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Historical re-enactments: cultural bridges or expressive tools of cultural closure?

Lia Giancristofaro

1. Research Objectives: connection to the past and traditional ceremonies

Since the Roman Empire, governmental institutions have performed famous representations of naval battles (naumachie) to develop cultural memory and collective identity as well as to strengthen the governmental institutions themselves (Assmann 1992). When a local community relates s past events, it increases value and creates a sort of propaganda. To this end, specific popular expressive activities have been developed: historical re-enactments, a form of popular theatre which recreates the atmosphere of an event or an ancient period in history for educational purposes or just as an entertainment. Today in the West, historical re-enactments have become an important partof cultural consumption using significant economic resources and a strong sense of imagination, requiring researchers to consider different approaches and ideas. On the one hand, historians tend to lean towards the most realistic representation in accordance with the past. On the other hand, anthropologists and lecturers in semiotics explore, from their critical standpoint, both the general needs to recall and ritualize the past and the specific motivations of the individual communities.

According to literature, the current success of historical re-enactments and their institutional "cultural activity" depends on the European idea of authenticity. In fact, the Western standard of historical materials based on the idea of reconstruction and the protection of historical heritage: since after the Second World War, the reconstruction of monuments called for the stylistic restoration of past life based on the "authenticity of fiction" (Petzet 1994). The idea of

authenticity as reconstruction prevails over the idea of authenticity as cultural variety and flexibility. Therefore, nowadays, respect for historical heritage is shown through the reconstruction of the elements from which it came about, according to restoration standards contained in the fundamentals of the 1964 Venice Charter (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites).

The standard of authenticity is very important in Western countries, where people believe that authenticity is that which most closely represents the original event.. This “material approach to history” is perfectly demonstrated by historical re-enactments, which reproduce a specific event through a script inspired by documents from the past. The re-enactments take place at sites where important events occurred in the past or in old districts of the cities. Actors and spectators dive into the fiction of the past and “materialize in their bodies the message expressed by the material traces and the aura of the monuments” (Petzet 1994). Therefore, in our modern era of the technical reproduction of art, documentaries and historical films seem not to satisfy the popular desire to experiment and experience real emotions right near monuments and historical sites. The historical re-enactments tend to visually capture spectators, fascinated by the simulation of details. The use of techniques and technology to represent the past enhances the relationship between realism and affective values, creating the idea of a sort of an anti-aesthetic community, i.a. a popolare culture related to the "kitsch" (Walker 2010).

This idea of a "kitsch" and anti-aesthetic community springs out from a difference of opinion between intellectuals and local people. The intellecuals (expecially the anthropologists) think that authenticity is not a requirement for the evaluation of a cultural element, which can instead include positive characteristics such as social inclusiveness, environmental sustainability and ethical values. Today, UNESCO policies move towards accepting academic positions and,

with the development of the new standards of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, formal authenticity is not a requirement to consider an item as “cultural heritage”. Instead, local groups follow the standard of formal authenticity, moving toward an embalming and mummification of expressive activities. The two different perspectives clearly reveal the gap between culture as seen by theorists as an analytical concept, and culture used by social actors as a political, expressive and identifying instrument (Bortolotto 2011).

This essay explores the topic of historical re-enactments through the view of cultural anthropology. I carried out a multi-located ethnography in a precise context (Abruzzo, in the Centre of Italy) through the method of direct observation. I carried out this ethnography both through participation in real life and ethnography, which is participation in the life of communities and social networks. In fact, audiovisual and electronic communication is an impressive way to understand how symbolic affiliations are created (Kozinets 2015). Amateur and professional filmography, web pages, blogs and social networks (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp), make visible and accessible the opinions and emotions that previously were kept hidden, showing that, through innovative and attractive means, contemporary society still tends to reproduce cultural conformism and inequality.

The first characteristic of historical re-enactments in Abruzzo is that they are annual, strict, formal and spectacular events. The re-enactments are held in summer and are repeated every year using the same format. The historical re-enactments also tend to evoke a society of wealthy feudal lords and merchants wearing luxurious clothes. They do not represent poverty but wealth, thus only the best side of the past. These new secular events have often replaced or married up with previous official ceremonies, which are religious feasts. The historical re-enactment, therefore, is a purposeful communication and its aim, which is symbolic and functional at the same time, can

be useful to understand its raison d'etre, which is, above all, that of marking time and space. Every ritual exists to express a meaning, to explicitly say what is right in a society and that is the reason why it is performed and reproduced (Turner 1982). Historical re-enactments are always accompanied by *Living History*, a freer performance where actors/players represent the past in an interactive way. There is an open border between historical re-enactment and Living History; in each historical re-enactment, the formal and ritual moment is accompanied by an interactive moment of Living History and vice versa.

The analysis of the expressions of a society, which is an embedded activity in a local community, allows us to unearth the hidden aspects of a society. Rituals are the expression of local communities, and should not be considered as "superstitions" or as "problems of knowledge in the Western world": this is what Ernesto De Martino asserts, the Italian anthropologist who has uniquely filled the gap between folk studies and cultural anthropology. De Martino, through his work published in 1961 about certain rituals in the South of Italy, was a pioneer in recognizing the skills of ordinary people who develop certain habits to satisfy the unfulfilled needs of society. De Martino says that popular beliefs, which have always existed, must be analyzed in their historical and political contexts (Crapanzano 2005). The development of popular beliefs can also be very recent. The idea that modern customs have always existed is the very basis of the concept of tradition and the obligation to communicate them in the future (Hobsbawn-Ranger 1983). Therefore, although memory is founded on cultural heritage, it is a suspicious source of identity because it is the instrument that those in power use to construct their version of the truth. Theoretically, tradition should be the old that shapes the new but, instead, it is present society that generates and shapes its past (Althabe-Fabre-Lenclud 1995, Dei 2016).

2. The research context: Abruzzo

Abruzzo is a mountainous (65%) and hilly (34%) region: the plain (1%) is only a narrow coastal strip. Starting from the Palaeolithic to the nineteenth century, hundreds of mountain villages thrived through agriculture, sheep breeding, hunting and gathering. At the end of the nineteenth century, an industrial, economic and cultural revolution began, resulting, after the Second World War, in a comfortable lifestyle, seen as a liberation from the material deprivation, as an increase in technical and scientific knowledge as well as an increase in confidence. This trend is related with the sudden urbanization of coastal areas. For example, the new coastal area of Chieti-Pescara reached a population of 400,000 inhabitants in just a few years and several coastal cities saw increases of up to 40,000 inhabitants (Lanciano, Vasto). Conversely, many historical villages are now abandonned. The peak of this growth was in 2500, after that an industrial decline began and has been getting worse due to the 2008 crisis.

Thus the improvement of people's horizons occurred through only one generation, i.e. the generation that in 1980 has build the historical re-enactements. In tthis fast cultural change, the verbal communication of craft activities was interrupted, and the rituals inspired by the Christian religion (i.e. the Patron Saints' Festivals), have been replaced by or combined with new secular ceremonies that evoke the Middle Ages or the Renaissance through spectacular and expensive fictions.

The luxurious clothes that turn a traditional actor into a medieval noble are, therefore, the outcome of a collective imagination and a cultural specialization that derive from other rituals and other regions: the Palio di Siena, the Giostra di Arezzo, or films in medieval settings, as well as local people working as tailors for film and drama productions in Cinecittà, Rome. This development was possible also thanks to the substantial public funding granted to these new

activities, considered useful for their ability to promote cultural awareness and tourism. The opportunity for public funding attracted locals, who set up permanent organizations specifically focused on historical re-enactments, which each year, claiming continuity rights, require ongoing public support.

So, in the towns of Abruzzo, as elsewhere, the historical parades become a "new tradition" (Segalen 2002, Dei 2016). Popular culture shies away from any reference to the poverty and agricultural culture, from which it has recently become liberated. The representation of a distant prestigious past, in stark comparison to the arduous past of war and poverty, is the goal of a dynamic partnership between the different social classes. Through historical re-enactments the leading class establishes a relationship with the masses who no longer feel on the fringes of society or prisoners of an unchangeable future (Bausinger 1990). The fiction makes available those “aristocratic symbols” that for previous generations were unattainable such as coats of arms, decorated carriages, necklaces of pearls, ermine fur coats, dresses with long trains. The collective theatricalization of wealth and power has become part of the local aesthetic, and is emphasized by new local media needing images to broadcast.

The first historical ceremony is the Mastrogiurato festival in the city of Lanciano, a re-enactment of a knighting ceremony (called *investitura*). It was established in 1981, because of the discovery of the city’s socioeconomic importance during the Middle Ages, as I demonstrated in my books about this urban ritual (Giancristofaro 2017). The ritual was invented to portray the city’s importance during a medieval golden age. During this historical re-enactment, the roles of powerful people who march through the city to the rhythm of drums are given to influential senior male citizens, and women just parade along as luxurious ‘dames’. Year after year, the Mastrogiurato festival tends to reproduce and perpetuate gender, age and class inequality. In

addition, the acting role in the parade tends to be restricted to the residents.

A very similar situation occurred with the historical re-enactment invented in Vasto that was established recently, in 1986, soon after an historical research lead to the discovery of an event that took place in 1723, when the Marquis Cesare D'Avalos in Vasto appointed Fabrizio Colonna, Prince of Rome, Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece (Giancristofaro 2017). This historical discover in 1986 has inspired citizens to re-enact the knighting parade every August in which about one-hundred actors wear the clothes of various high-ranking guests who featured in the original event. The city of Vasto is not short of memorable historical events, as there was a revolution leading to the establishment of Vasto's Republic in 1799. However, the story in which imperial Nobility takes a leading role has proved more successful than more subversive scenarios.

Other historical re-enactments are invented to take place during pre-existing religious festivals, and were intended to promote and revive them. In Abruzzo, the first example is the Perdonanza Celestiniana which is a local Jubilee established by Celestino V, the Pope of humble origins who abdicated in 1294. In 1984, in the celebration of the L' Aquila Jubilee, was introduced a large medieval parade composed of thousands of people impersonating nobles and noblewomen. The parade in the one hand increased the organizational and financial costs of the event but, on the other hand, attracted tourists and reduced the penitential and devotional aspect of the Jubilee. In short, the principles of poverty derived from Celestino V now challenge the paradoxes of his event now glorified througt luxury and costumes. After the tragic earthquake that destroyed L'Aquila in 2009, a large local interest in valorizing the urban ritual resulted in the candidature in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage: a political event that, for the population of L'Aquila, is considered crucial for the political rebirth of the city.

Since 1981, along with these historical re-enactments, in Abruzzo another two hundred and

fifty parades were born, which take place every year and last for days or weeks such as the Giostra Cavalleresca (Sulmona), the Certame della Balestra (Popoli), the Palio del Barone (Tortoreto) , the Palio delle Contrale (Pianella), the Bizantini (Crecchio), Lucrezia Borgia (Colledara), Signa Leones (Guardiagrele), the Corteo di Leone Acciaiuoli (Ortona). All these fictions resulted in a semantic redefinition of popular festivals based on three points.

At first, the simplicity of the event has been compromised because the new ceremonies are not organized by the local community, but entrusted to professional intermediary committees. The organizers themselves wear the historical costumes, parade in the centre of the village and perform different kinds of shows. The popular festival, therefore, has become the domain of the celebrating subjects.

Secondly, the associations responsible for managing the new ceremonies are great centres of socialization, but they do not focus on the modern issues, such as being environmentally friendly, socially inclusive and non-discriminatory because, they focus on the spectacular entertainment. Such organizations channel public excitement into an expression of public identity, reproducing conservative values. For a kind of political tautology, roles representing people in power are performed by individuals who are currently powerful, that is local, rich and elderly men. The female roles require sexist qualities as beauty and young age, and so the popular actresses are chosen in the towns through beauty competitions.

These new ceremonies inspired by the past have a repetitive requirement deriving from their own customs which weigh heavily on the local public purse. This has occurred as a result of the same set of religious rituals from which these laical events originated. Each ritual, by definition, is a reference to its own version of the past, to be repeated and passed down to obtain the effect of the transformation of reality (Turner 1982). The reference to the past is achieved not only through

the use of scenic design, but also by repetitiveness. The formal continuity of ritual forms helps reassure communities in the face of changes (Turner 1982). Perhaps it is precisely the collective need for reassurance that has caused, in Abruzzo, the popular increase of historical re-enactments. These activities are inspired by the past but shaped around the values of the present and their analysis allows us to understand the contradictions of a society that, free from the constraints of a lack of resources, tries to place itself in a "augmented reality" through new rituals that convey confused versions of history and community. In fact, often in historical re-enactments there is an embarrassing proximity of fake and real priests, or fake and real bishops, or fake and real regent of the town. The historical re-enactments are intertwined with musical performances and eating food, implying that to keep these new expressive forms alive we require precisely the same customs as in the past, such as the food consuming, the use of public spaces, the pace and the use of loud sounds. The happiness of the festival perpetuates positive emotions and the feeling of comfort regardless of the contents of the event itself, which may be insignificant and contradictory (Segalen 2002; Heinich 2012).

This network of cultural powers engages the new generations in a rather passive and unconscious way. These new generations, born after the institutionalization of these ceremonies, see them as pre-existent, eternal and even elements of historical continuity consistent with the Middle Ages. Even the elderly, who have seen the birth of these secular events, are now convinced that such ceremonies have taken place since the Middle Ages (the interviews are included in Giancristofaro 2017). This forgetfulness relies on the fact that the participants notice only the cultural side of the event, not taking into account the idea that tradition may have been invented recently but believing in it as a true story, a legend (Bausinger 1990, Miller 2008). After all, tradition resides mainly in practical experience rather than in ideas, and it is precisely this

subjective vision of history that needs an anthropological understanding.

Conclusion. Are those contemporary urban rituals consolidating the new social hierarchies?

Since their inception in 1981, the historical re-enactments in Abruzzo were expected to help people achieve a more democratic representation of their own history. Within forty years, they become a sort of summertime entertainment benefiting the emerging industrialised class. Despite an abundant use of costumes, the historical re-enactments does not contain a revolutionary spirit and does not allow the inversion of social roles as the Mardi Gras satirical costume parades did in the past societies. That means that the popular participation could not be projected forward into a large dimension of social and cultural avantgarde.

My ethnography is a way to reflect upon the overproduction of the urban and laical celebrations, but also to explore the difficult transition through the institutional capitalization of this new kind of heritage. I analyzed this passage through the lens of the UNESCO Conventions on heritage and cultural rights, which certainly has a universalist perspective, aimed at peace and environmental sustainability.

The historical re-enactments have the great merit of having demonstrated the organizational capacity of civil society. However, the associations involved in urban rituals focus on strengthening their own position in the community rather than on social development. Possible partnerships could instead follow a mixed system to renew and broaden support through an interchange between different genres, backgrounds and ages. It would be better if an association of medieval games cooperated with a non-Catholic foreigners' association to facilitate their inclusion. Basically, it is necessary to realize an anthropological study of activities in each events, but this is very difficult to be accepted by the associations, which do not want to compromise their

authority in the territory. Therefore, at the moment, they accept external consultancies of a theatrical, scenographic or sartorial type, but it is rather difficult to compare the contents of the rituals.

So, these new urban rituals are now weighed down by an hard financial planning and are linked to the crisis of public culture which fails to acknowledge the gulf between the past and present perspectives (Geertz 1995). The overproduction of significant events inspired by local identity is a global phenomenon, which international guidelines try to regulate. In particular, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, approved by Italy in 2007, has identified new regulatory challenges for anthropology. Safeguarding local diversity according to a universalistic conception of cultural heritage requires the realization of participatory and reflective processes, which help communities to relate to their past with awareness, ethics and sustainability when dealing with institutions and scientific communities (Khaznadar 2014). In Abruzzo, the associations of historical re-enactment should be encouraged to move away from a conservative perspective. To this end, an ethical regulation for the acquisition of public funding would be a step in the right direction: albeit only a partial solution, because it takes into consideration the subsidy and not the responsibility or the good behaviours based on the idea of a common interest. The most effective solution would be a "public education" on the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003, which would encourage communities towards greater responsibility. This "public education" could be realised by an agreement between the idealistic power of scholars and civil society, for a possible overcoming of the bureaucracy, in line with what is emphasized by some analysis of the institutional power (Herzfeld, 1992: 164-166). Central government is currently aware of the imbalance between Italy and other convention member countries and perceives the start of a transformation of the use of the heritage. In other

words, the current cultural problems require new generations of operators who, through an integrated use of history, urbanistics, semiotics, cultural anthropology and aesthetics, will be able to plan and stimulate change in the communities.

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Marco Antonio Antolín is an Associate Professor of Spanish at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. His area of specialization is the influence of Twentieth-Century Spanish poetry on contemporary American verse. He holds a Ph. D in Comparative Literature from the University of Valladolid, Spain and has published numerous articles articulating a framework for understanding transatlantic literary exchange between Spanish and American literature. He is currently working on a book on the influence of Spanish poetry on American contemporary poetry and also on translations from American laureate poet Philip Levine's poems into Spanish.

Paola Basile is an Associate Professor of Italian and French at Lake Erie College. She earned a Laurea di dottore (with honors) from La Sapienza- University of Rome, in Modern Languages & Literatures; a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Université de Montréal; an M.A. in French Studies from McGill University (Montréal, Canada). She is currently the director of the Italian Studies program at Lake Erie College. Dr. Basile was the vice-president of the Canadian Society for Italian Studies (2008-11) and the book review editor for "Quaderni d'Italianistica" (the official peer-reviewed journal of this society - from 2011 to 2015).

Concetta Croce holds a doctorate in Comparative Studies at L'Aquila University, with a dissertation about postcolonial reception of the ancient Greek tragedies in postcolonial English-speaking Africa. She is a former member of CASA (Classical Association of South Africa) and Italian Association of Comparative Studies. Nowadays, she is a member of Italian Association of Classic Culture and an Italian and History teacher in Fine Arts High School in Vasto.

Laura D'Angelo has a PhD in Humanities from the University "G. D'Annunzio", Chieti, with a thesis on Gabriele D'Annunzio and his poem *Isottèo* . Graduated in classical philology, she is a teacher, a poetess and a literature researcher. She is a jury member of a literary Italian Prize, blogger and writer for local newspapers. Her recent publication includes "L'Isottèo di Gabriele D'Annunzio e la poetica della modernità".

Lia Giancristofaro is a Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University "G. D'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara,Italy. Editor in chief of the academic review "Rivista Abruzzese Quaterly". Her main areas of work are the heritage studies, the migration issues, the human and cultural rights, the ritual processes, the folkloric and popular cultures, the social transformations, the intangible cultural heritage, the NGOs as new policy makers.

Steven Grossvogel is Associate Professor of Italian at The University of Georgia. He is the author of *Ambiguity and Allusion in Boccaccio's* Filocolo (Olschki, 1992). His articles have been published in *Studi sul Boccaccio*, *MLN*, *Il Veltro*, *Italiana*, *This Rough Magic, and in several proceedings.* He has also contributed to the Modern Language Association series volume *Approaches to Teaching Boccaccio's* Decameron (MLA, 2000); *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2004 and 2019); *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works* (Chicago Univ. Press, 2013); and *The Decameron Third Day in Perspective* (Toronto Univ. Press, 2014).

Eilis Kierans received her B.A. in Communication from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2009. During her summers as an undergraduate student, she taught English in various cities around Italy. In 2012, Eilis returned to Umass to teach and study in the Italian Department. During this period, she facilitated World Learning's Cooking and Slow Food Movement Program in Italy.

In the fall of 2015, she commenced the Italian Studies PhD Program at Rutgers University, where her research focuses on the study of 20th century literature, gastronomy, women writers, and cinema.

Daniele Niedda teaches English at UNINT (University of International Studies) in Rome. His main fields of research are the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To Edmund Burke he has dedicated two books and several articles. He has also written on travel literature, aesthetics, philosophy of language, collecting and narrative

Rose Spinelli has been a journalist for almost three decades and is currently an adjunct professor at Loyola University in Chicago. After being awarded a grant in 2002 Rose wrote, produced and directed a documentary film called "Baking Bread." It was screened at film festivals in Chicago, New York, and Florence, Italy.

Angela Tumini is a Director of International Programs at Midway University in Kentucky. She is the author of *Il Mito nell'Anima/The Myth in the Soul*, a book on Italian author Gabriele D'Annunzio, and *An Unintentional Liaison: Lars von Trier and Italian Cinema and Culture*. She is also the co-editor of *Making Sense of Pain*, an interdisciplinary volume, as well as several book chapters and articles on European Cinema, and one chapter on American Independent Film maker Michael Almereyda and on French film-director Anne Fontaine.