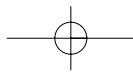
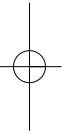


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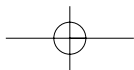
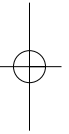
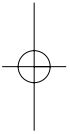
INTERPRETATIONS

European Research Project for Poetics & Hermeneutics

Volume No. 1
Violence & ART
Edited by Kata Kulavkova



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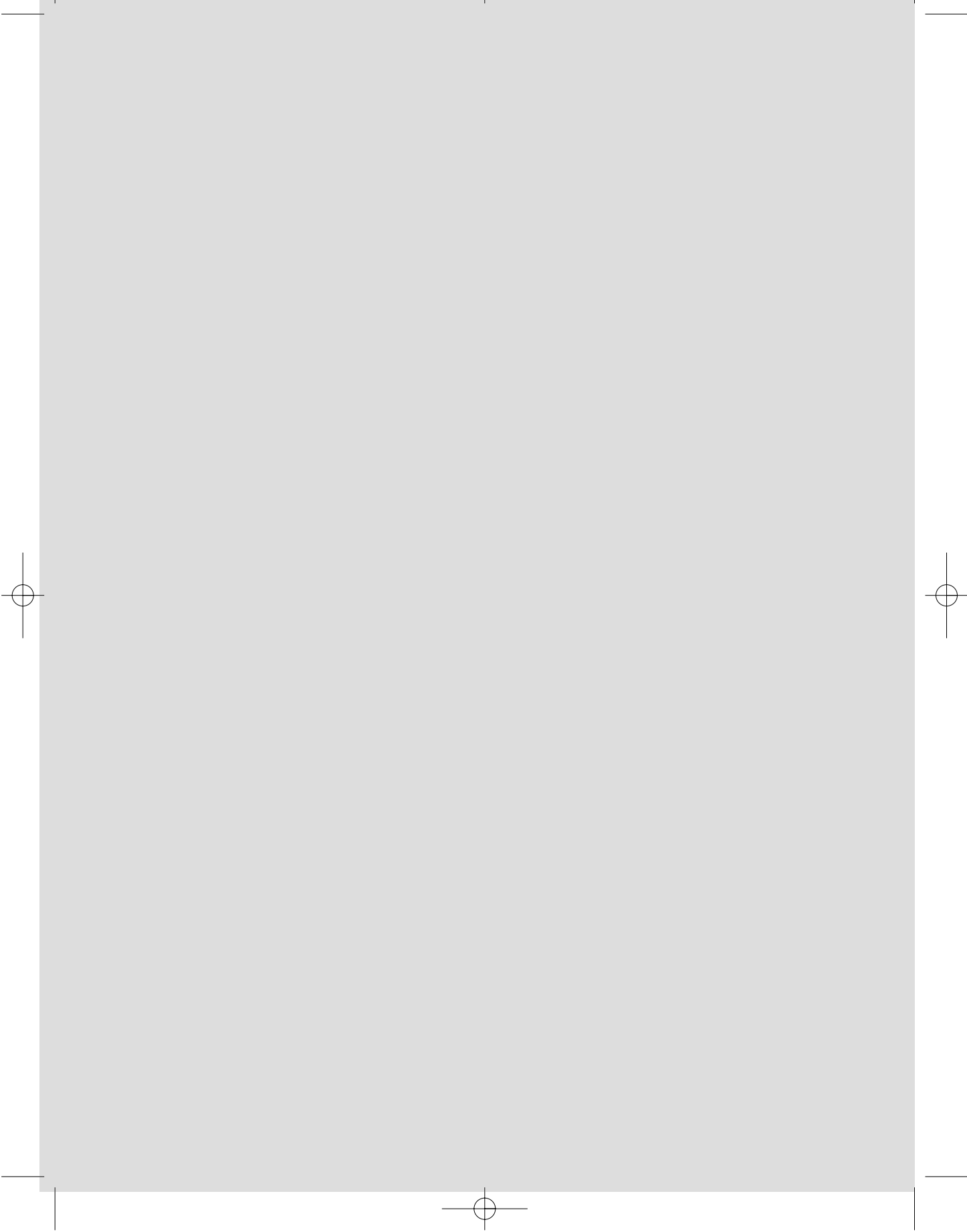
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SKOPJE 2007



CONTENTS

- Kata Kulavkova, *The Poetics and Hermeneutics of Violence*..... XI
- Acknowledgements XIX

Part I A New Theory of Violence

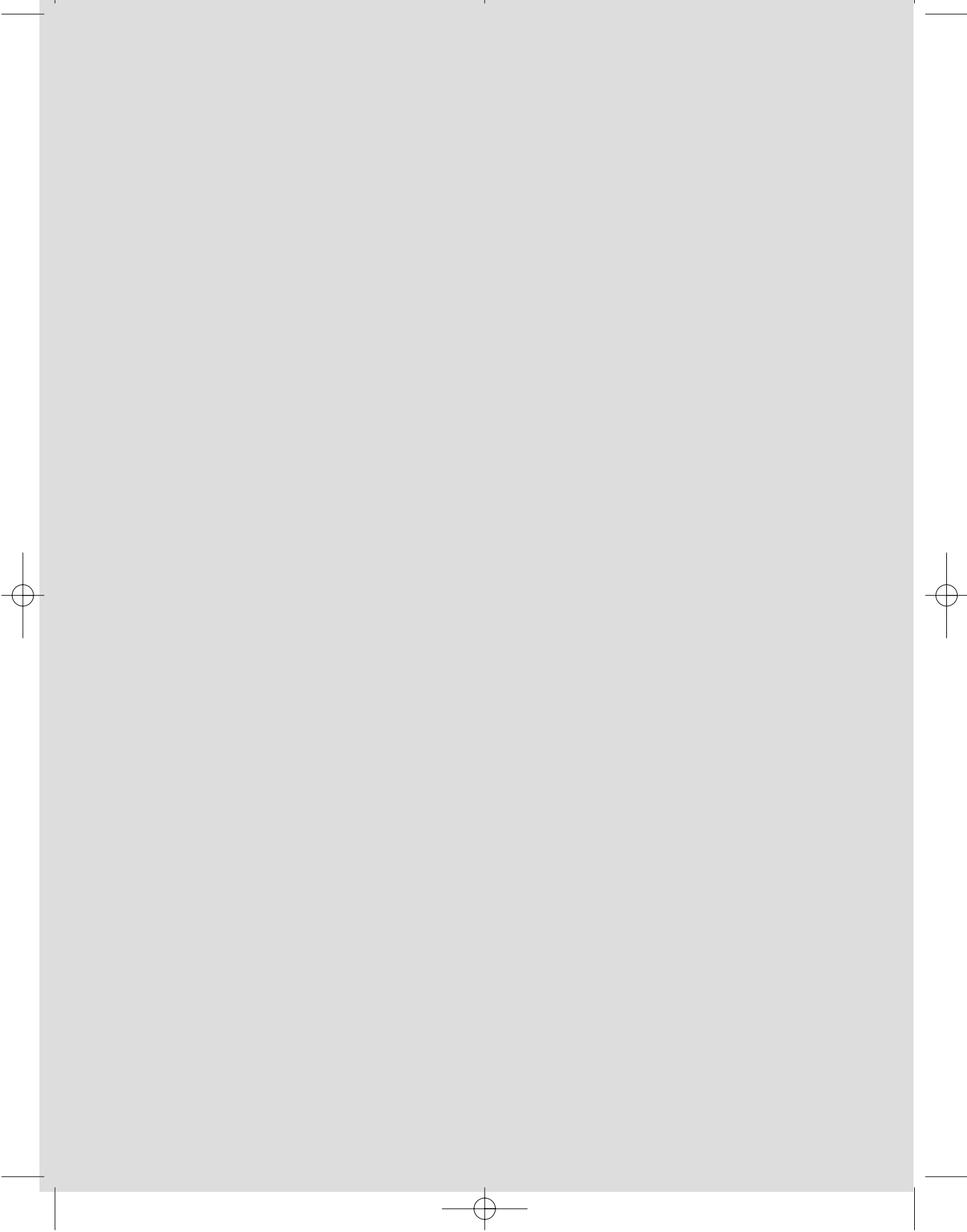
- Kata Kulavkova (Skopje), *Violence & Civilization* 23
- Mikhail Epstein (Emory), *Horrology as a Negative Science of Civilization* 47
- Mieke Bal (Amsterdam), *Lost in Space: the Violence of Language* 53
- Teresa Salema (Lisbon), *Lava, Wound, Scar: Violence – Ways of Using* 69

Part II Violence in Memory Practicies

- Ernst van Alphen (Amsterdam), *The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality* 81
- Danuta Ulicka (Warsow), *The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich* 99

Part III Violence in Literature

- Philippe Daros (Paris), *Images, violences, histoire* 119
- Manuel Frias Martins (Lisbon), *Violence, Literature and the Canon* 137
- Umberto Rossi (Rome), *Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'*..... 157
- Laura Mintegi (Bilbao), *The Effect of Political Violence on Literature* 179
- Aco Peroski (Skopje), *PerFet Violence* 189

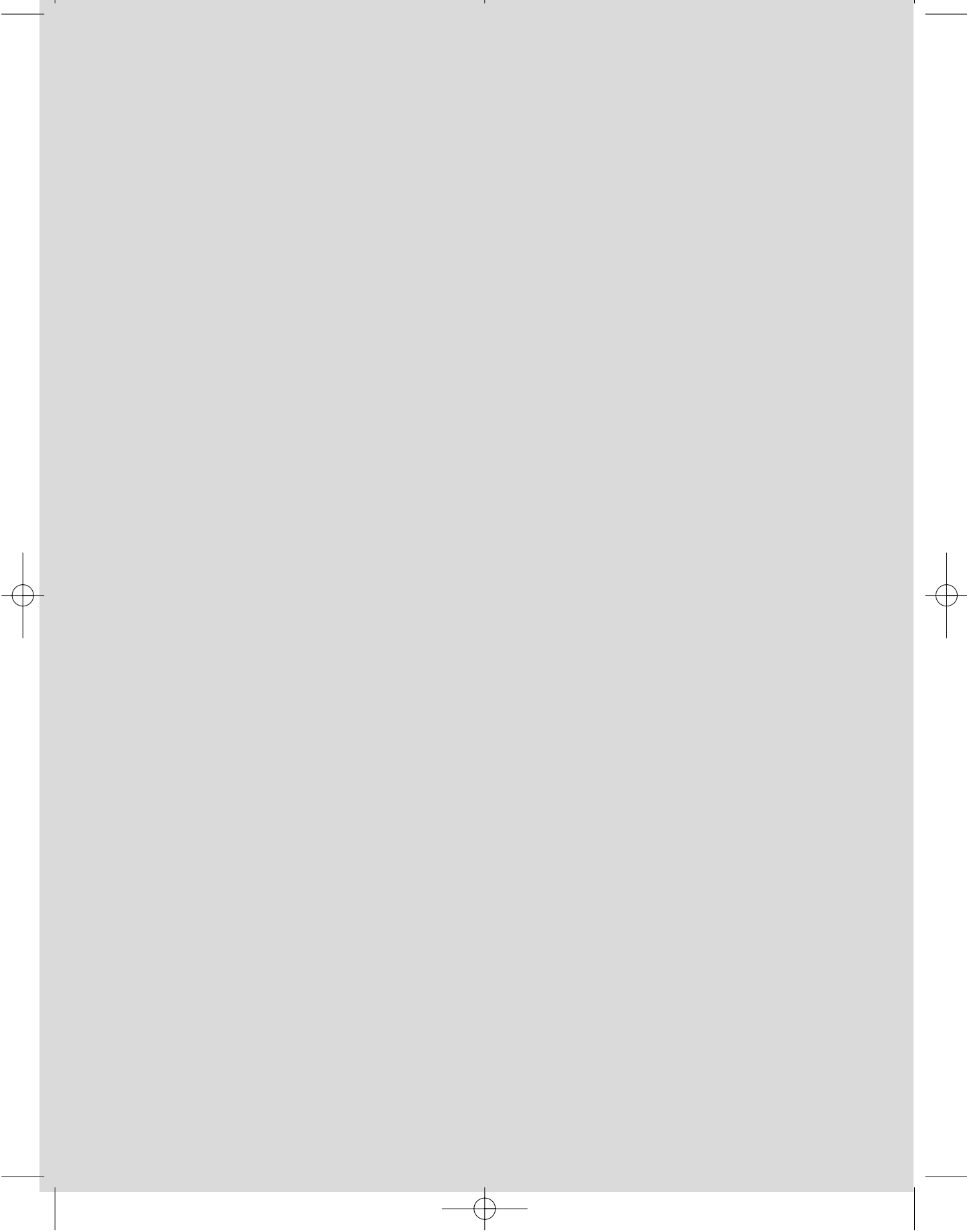


Part IV Interpreting Violence in Performance

- Milcho Manchevski (Skopje/New York), *Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes Tone and Function: Art and Ritual* 203
- Sibila Petlevski (Zagreb), *Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing* 215
- Jasminka Markovska (Skopje/Oslo), *Performing Violence Live* 231

Appendix

- Glossary 249
- References on Violence 259
- Index of Terms and Concepts 269
- Notes on Contributors 277
- Summaries into Macedonian 285
- List of Illustrations 297



PREFACE

Kata Kulavkova
The Poetics and Hermeneutics of Violence

Interpreting violence used to be an act of heresy, but this is no longer the case. According to certain statistical data, interest in violence increased continually throughout the second half of the 20th century. One could say that the *topos* of violence has been rendered banal through saturation to the point of arousing indifference. Between 1960 and 1990, for example, about 4,000 titles were published on the broader topic of evil, which includes violence as a kind of evil (L. Swensen, 2006, 12), while in December 2006, a Google search on the topic of violence generated results on more than 67,000 books and 1.5 million articles. To interpret violence, in the context of its representation in the arts (in artistic images of violence), however, i.e. to interpret art from a viewpoint of violence (violent acts in the arts), is hardly a usual undertaking.

Violence has familiarized itself with art in the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. What is going on? If it is true that violence is a sign of identification of the 20th/21st centuries (so typical is it of the reality/history of the 20th/21st centuries!), if it is true that violence is the dominant (verbal, visual and auditory) media information of the 20th/21st centuries, if it is true that violence increasingly obsesses 20th/21st century art, if it is true that the theoretical and research *praxis* of the 20th/21st centuries increasingly focus on the topical compound of violence (war, torture, terrorism, genocide, holocaust, evil, crime, the death penalty, homicide, cultural violence, domestic violence), then violence is unambiguously the dominant form of reality of our civilization. Violence is becoming a *common-place* for reality/history, art, the media and theory—a binding interest amongst what are otherwise known as different spheres and

Preface

discourses (existence, aesthetics, information technology, science). Reality and art increase their mutual interest; art's referentiality grows in the way that the scepticism of the representative subjects of reality increases regarding art. The *blind hope* of sufferers, of humanists and philanthropists also grows (individuals and peoples); the hope that it might just turn out to be art that can develop a new critical consciousness for the contemporary world catastrophically filled with *incidents arousing pity and fear* (Aristotle) and that precisely this consciousness might be the *spiritus* for a more humane world in the here-and-now. The hope of such awareness comprises the justification for interpreting and contextualizing violence through the arts (including the myth as a specific kind of fiction or art) with reality and the media which, as mediators of the collective and ritualistic violence of today, can also be understood as a contemporary version of the mythical herald of the gods, the demigod or the demi-man Hephaestus!

The acting hermeneutic mind of the European intellectual raising the issue of violence and art in fact raises the issue of anti-violence, anti-militarism and non-violence. Every violent action is latently tragic because it violates the established balance between the government and the sub(jugated)missive world; yet it is action typical of humanity nonetheless. The intellectual mind tends to be active, cannot remain amorphous, ataractic and autistic, and cannot ignore the awareness that humanity is not humane by itself but rather humanizes itself through history, nor can it ignore that such humanization is a work in progress. The European research interest which stands behind the *Violence and Art of Interpretations* (EPPH) reader sends the message that the indifferent monitoring of policies and practices of violence in the contemporary world constitutes a silent complicity. Nothing absolves the intellectual from moral culpability in their keeping silent. Moral and cognitive acts are two sides of the same phenomenon. *Interpretations*, in the act of its international initiation, seeks to expose the way in which the modern world refuses to confront itself by refusing to confront the practice of violence (René Girard, 1993, 27). *Interpretations* proceeds from the premise that the civilized world today has additional and current reasons to feel cultural discomfort in demystifying the phenomenon of violence. The scientific discernment of the delicate *topoi* of civilization by definition threatens politically correct rhetoric. However, the primary and chief intent of *Interpretations* is not to menace any recognizable subject. *Interpretations* intends—above all—to encourage the creative and ethically uncompromised European mind in the theoretical discernment of art

Preface

and the world via interpretation. The interaction of theory and interpretation is a precondition for their integration. By indicating the phenomenon, raising awareness of the need for a global and local policy of pacifism and anti-militarism, the level of systemically envisaged anti-war strategies is raised as well.

* * *

Whether observed as an attractive topic for artistic works or as a specific discontinuity/shock regarding the established civilizational, poetic, hermeneutic and receptive conventions, violence and its paradigmatic dramatic *incidents arousing pity and fear* (Aristotle) is an artistic invariable: the rule rather than the exception. Neither can art turn a deaf ear to reality/history; nor can reality resist violence; nor can readers/spectators ignore the fact that violence is one with history. Art, however it may elude history, never remains completely indifferent and untouchable. That sometimes lower and other times higher degree of art's sensibility to violence involves readers as a crucial factor in the process of the familiarization of artistic and violent practices, policies and theories. The shock-effect among readers/viewers can be canonized and tendentiously caused by well thought-out procedures in presenting the world and man; therefore it is subject to manipulation by the deciding instances. The mass strategy of shock is typical not only of practices of broader discourses which tend to be artistic (trivial literature, thriller and action movies, science fiction, popular theatre), but also of the electronic media which keep daily touch with reality and with policies of representation of reality. The poetics of shock is grounded upon the principle of the textual and pictorial presentation of violence. In the 20th century, various poetics of literature, film, theatre and photography came to coincide more than ever before. This is not fortuitous; nor is the experience of art endemic. It is an experience transferred from the very reality that is oversaturated with violence and eager to find not only an outlet to the public but also its own symbolic projection. The surplus of violence in reality, which enters into the area of the unnecessary, hence into the area of the Luddite, initiates art's interest in violence. This interest is sometimes discrete, sometimes indiscrete. In cases of an overdose of indiscreteness, art saturates itself with violence and starts to abolish itself. One of the unambiguous indicators of the collapse of art is the over-saturation of the audience with violence. Then do the trivialization, thrillerization and vulgarization of art prevail. The genres and works in which action and horror dominate become stereotyped. And the audience, too, is selected and classified. The

Preface

topos of violence has its elitist audience when it becomes an integral part of the artistic image of a violent world; for violence is not an ordinary *image of life* but a symbolic *image of life*—an image of the world. The mass media create a mass audience thirsty for horror and action. Thus, a domino system of influence is created between reality, art, the audience and the media (politics). This system has its own rules of functioning which can be subject to observation and deconstruction.

Art, as anti-ataractic discourse par excellence, has been called upon to create its non-stereotyped image of violent reality and to take a stand toward the violent policies and practices of humanity. The artistic image of violence is an implicit stand toward violence communicated in a symbolic manner typical of art and of humans understood as *animal symbolicum* (Ernst Cassirer, 1944). The violence that man commits—whether individually, in hordes, in tribes and peoples as collectives, or as the state with its institutions—differs from violence in animal life. Violence is, in fact, an area of man's differentiation from animals. Violence has a specific anthropogenetic dimension; therefore it is not to be simplified, reducing itself to the stereotype of animalism in man. René Girard (2006, 153) argues unambiguously that 'the fundamental leap between animal culture and human culture occurs with the advent of the sphere of the symbolic,' and the symbolic is closely related to ritual.¹ Collective ritual sacrifice is an important factor in the genesis of cultures and cultural institutions (meurtre fondateur, victime émissaire). Human violence is marked by man's specific urges. Human violence is a radicalization and absolutization of violence, an act which turns man into *animal irrationale*, into a *perfect monster*. Thus monstrousness marks man as a unique species of violator. The monstrousness of humanity is its inalienable heritage, sometimes recognized as civilizational. Human urges, often being anything but humane, humanistic, humanitarian or philanthropic (irrespective of how hard they try to depict themselves as such), reproduce violence in various cultural and civilizational circumstances, so that violence—unfortunately—is a scandalous shadow of humanity and its history, whether we want to admit it or not!

The centuries of societal democratization, the 19th and 20th centuries, have been especially emblematic in their violence. The 20th century could also be described as a century of absolute violence (Philippe Daros). Modern reality, let's say from the 90s until today (2007), is an example of *live violence*.² It blurs the clear-cut borders between what is real and what is symbolic, what is presentation and representation, what is rational and what is irrational. Violence

¹ Elias Canetti, in *Crowds and Power* (1966) claims some similarities between animal hordes (elements of collectivization) and primitive human social communities before the advent of the culture of the symbolic and ritual.

² Exemplified by shows such as CNN's regular feature, *The War Within*.

Preface

simultaneously happens and is displayed. In this lack of *representative distance*, the process of symbolization is damaged. In such compulsory closeness/intimacy, stereotypes are inevitable, especially those imposed by a higher instance and those representing not so much reality as what reality should be. Hence the image of *banalized violence* (Hannah Arendt) lacks nuances, and black-and-white contrasts dominate. In the modern world, violence forms a global, massive and popular post-art poetics which unifies the shapes of the aestheticism of violence and the shapes of the realization of violence in politicized and washed-out daily life. Such banality becomes a double standard: on the one hand it shows that violence escalates and can be subject to daily manipulation and institutionalization at all possible social and existential levels; while on the other hand it presents an additional reason for art to finally realize that it does not exist to typecast but to chromatize and colourize, to individualize and symbolize. Contemporary art is saturated with scenes of stereotypic and virtual violence which deprives violence of its *mysterious code*. The inflation of violence in reality and in art devalues violence as the key link in the demystification of the human world. The word is a commonplace between art, reality and violence. Violence is stimulated by words (information, policies) and is sanctioned by words (laws, moral judgments). But violence is in close relationship with painting and its mythical 'pictorial dramatics' (Elena Koleva, 1992, 160). Photography, which does not exclude contact with the word (the legend is important in presenting violence), is an especially important medium in which documentary mixes with art. Therefore, special attention in interpreting violence is drawn to those arts that are founded upon the linguistic articulation of (humane/monstrous) violence or which are in close relation with it: literature, theatre, film. Violence in all its forms—murder, crime, war, torture, genocide, punishment—is inseparable from parabolic discourses such as that of the myth. Therefore the artistic presentation of violence is closely intertwined with narrated images which have high visual potential (the myth and the TV story). Art returns to myth and reality and brings them into one symptomatic relation: reality is mythicized, while myth is realized.

So, why make violence and art the subject of the first part of the European scientific-research project *Interpretations*? Without being arrogant in identifying motifs of scientific interest, I would underscore the following aspects: firstly, the inflation of violence in reality and related mass media imposes the need for reflection and meta-reflection on violence; secondly, violence is not an archaic or symbolic practice of sacrifice, punishment or replication of primary evil

Preface

³ We would be guilty of theoretical naiveté if we postulated violence only as an ontological differentia specifica of man. Not that violence is not an anthropological feature of human beings, but there are irreconcilable indications in that power centres rely precisely on this fact: (1) on the ontological attachment of man to violence and on history's metaphysical dependence on violence and on (2) the systemic position and function of violence in human history.

⁴ Members of the editorial board of Interpretations comprise: Mieke Bal, Jean Bessière, Armando Gnisci, Manuel Frias Martins and Danuta Ullicka as members, and Kata Kulavkova as project manager.

inherited from the distant and indifferent past but an integral part of the hyper-sensible reality here and now; thirdly, violence is committed not only by barbarians and dilapidated people but also by seemingly normal persons, developed democracies and civilized states;³ fourthly, the hermeneutic *episteme* of violence is in need of a terminological distinction within the corpus of violence-related concepts; and finally, although more often than not it is personal experience that becomes intellectual preoccupation, the reverse also occurs: collective experience is adopted as personal experience to become an integral part of the individual identity and to grow into a legitimate intellectual preoccupation.

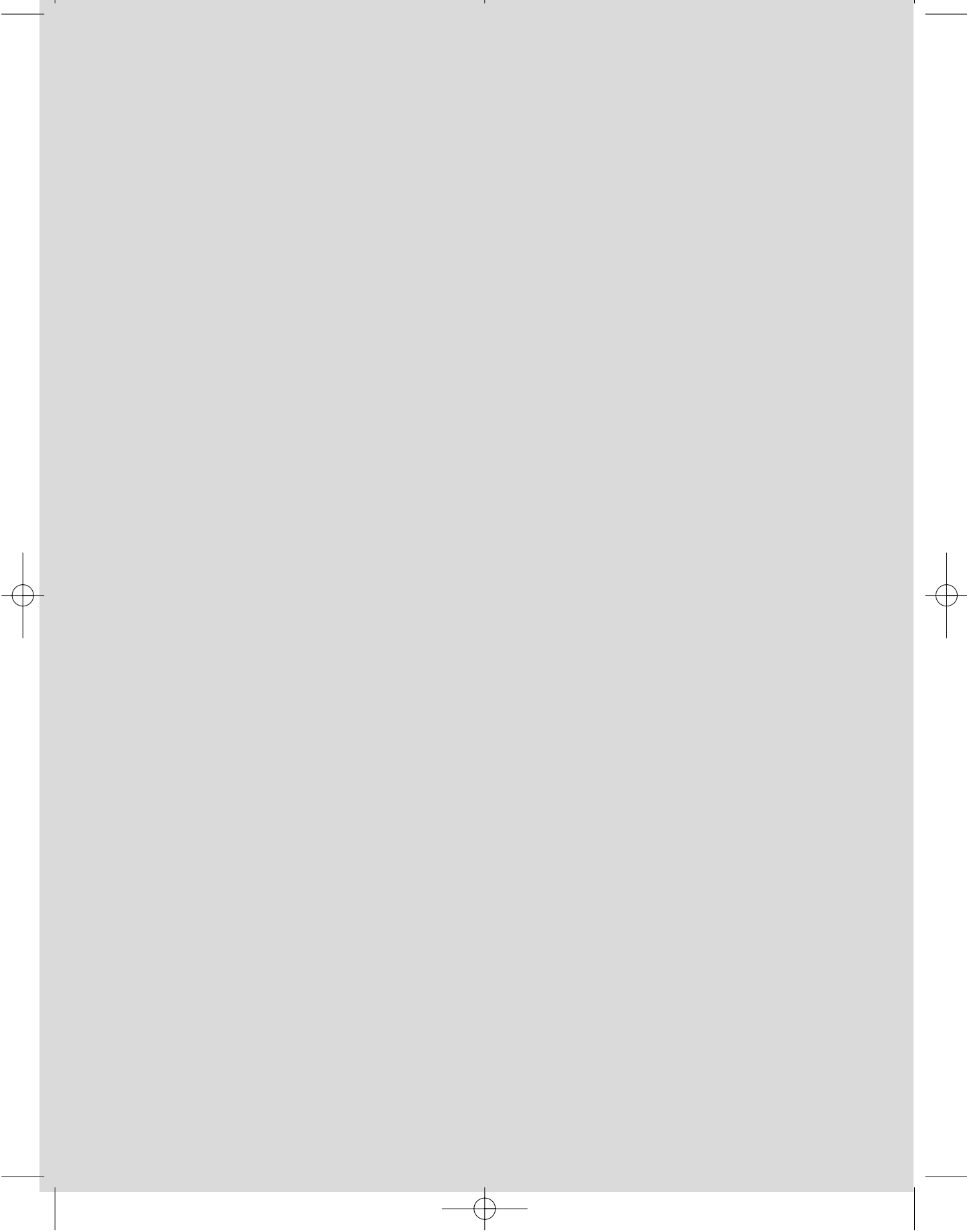
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The editorial board of the European research Project for Poetics and Hermeneutics (EPPH) *Interpretations*, with its office in the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, has set out the principles of the functioning, the methodology, the objectives, the target groups, and the effects of annual research in the first three years of the project's implementation.⁴ The manner of presentation of the research results has also been agreed upon. Once a year, it will publish the results of its research. It has been agreed that the first volume of the *Interpretations* series should be focused on the *topos of violence and art*. This shall be the title of the first publication. The individual poetic-hermeneutic perspectives of the authors of *Interpretations* articulate the collective European research interest and join the European scientific space. The first volume of *Interpretations* announces a new, perhaps referential, epistemological model for the interpretation of the world (of violence) through the prism of art, and of art through the prism of the world (violence). The texts included in this special reader on violence not only popularize certain theories of art and violence but also create a fund of new terms implying genuine, even innovative, perceptions of violence. Part of the said terms have been included in the *vade-mecum* specially drafted for the first volume of the European initiative for poetics and hermeneutics *Interpretations* (chronology, migration aesthetics, torture, absolute violence, coercion, political violence, Violent Act, etc.), while the rest, which are an inseparable part of each theoretic vocabulary on violence, can be traced in the essays themselves (massacre, barbarianism, war, conflict, fascism, Nazism, terrorism, anti-terrorism, state terrorism, humanitarian disaster, military intervention, weapons of mass destruction, secret prisons, death camps, balkanization, fragmentation, discrimination,

Preface

pillages, rapes, sadism, death penalty, murder). From the present moment onwards, this perception of violence can become an indicative European state of mind and theory. I personally believe that this image of the world could change the world itself, that it could transform the world of humans into a humane/humanized world, into a world without violence. For these reasons, Interpretations is not an ordinary research project but also a project of integration of contemporary art, theory and interpretation of art and the universal ethical value of non-violence.

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Academician Kata Kulavkova



INTERPRETATIONS

European Research Project for Poetics & Hermeneutics

Volume No. 1

Violence & ART

Part I

A New Theory of Violence



TITAN ATLANT AND PROMETHEUS
VI century BC, Vatikan Museum

Kata Kulavkova

Violence and Civilization

'People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty,
but that's a great injustice and insult to the beasts;
a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel.'
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1976)

'There is not a document of culture
that is not a document of barbarism at the same time.'
Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1974)

1. Theoretical context Violence and violentness

The apority of human civilization is primarily a consequence of the fact that the so-called evolution of civilization does not abolish violence and even, quite to the contrary, instigates violence to the level of its entropic presence on the historical scene. Violence is built into human civilization from its very beginnings, so the notion of civilization cannot be interpreted as an unquestionable institutionalization of the humanized values of humanity and its culture, but as a permanent revaluing of humanism in the history of humanity whereby the basic principles of humanity, justice and peace, may deform in certain periods of time. In this context, the following two strategies of interpreting/reading violence provoke our interest by their paradoxicality. The first is when violence and all its individual, collective, state and global forms (murder, war, and crimes against humanity) are installed as dynamic factors of civilization; and the second is when governing structures in power and centres of power identify their *political otherness*—including avatar, humanistic, reformatory, scientific and artistic forms of otherness—as violent, on the basis of which they penalise them with cruel and radical punishments.

Key Words:

- violentness
- mythic image
- political violence
- aestheticization
- institutionalization of violence
- limits of violence
- peine dure et forte
- torture
- trivialization
- monstrousness
- political
- otherness
- ethics
- Prometheus
- terrorism
- anthropogenic feature

Kata Kulavkova

¹ According to Friedrich Nietzsche's writings in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the world is based on 'the smell of blood and torture' (Nietzsche 2000, 2nd treatise, paragraph 6). Hence the theory of the fundamental cruelty of humanity.

² Let us recall the opening verses of the first rhapsody/poem in Homer's *Iliad*: 'Sing, Goddess, sing of the rage of Achilles, son of Peleus/that murderous anger which condemned Achaeans / to countless agonies and threw many warrior souls / deep into Hades...' (2002 / Homer, 1976). Euripides also emphasizes that anger, or 'the huge rage in your heart...' [590], '...will not end' [90] and that it 'incites the greatest evils human beings do.' [1080] (2002 / Euripides 1990). Rage and hatred transformed in the instinct for revenge are the main motive for the Trojan War and the death toll of Achaeans and Trojans as well as the cause of many other wars and misfortunes of humanity. Contemporary society faces the institutionalization of the curse in the form of the fatwa (and laws on defamation).

³ In *Les Anormaux* (1999), Michel Foucault analyses the different forms of perverseness and vice, i.e. types of human anomaly of the human being as a sexual moral and political monster.

Before taking a closer look at some concrete aspects of the phenomenon of violence, however, let us make a distinction between the notion of violence and the notion of violentness, i.e. the state of being predisposed to violence, since this distinction is important for the hermeneutic vision of violence in this essay. *Violence is a recognizable praxis of humanity, while violentness is a latent anthropological and social predisposition* which is characteristic of all civilizational matrixes of humanity. If being violent is the other face of humanity, if it is the symptom of humankind's aggressive potential (violence as a matter of the choice and personal will of an individual or collective) and humankind's potential for survival/self-defence (violence as a forcible act and as an act against human will), then it certainly deserves to be freed from taboo and deconstructed.¹ Violentness is an enigmatic mixture of several basic structures of humans and humanity: (1) the human will to power, to govern, to be superior, to possess and to know; (2) the human need to satisfy needs/instincts, including, among others: the instinct for life, survival, pleasure, the so-called *lower needs* for molestation and sadism, for punishment and revenge (anger, rage, wrath, hatred, cursing),² the instinct for death (suicidal and murderous inclinations); as well as (3), the human need to articulate physical, racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, ethical and spiritual identity (having in mind here also human flaws, vices, degeneracy and perversions).³ Violentness exists in correlation with human passions and obsessions which are an energetic metamorphosis of the *instinct for power*. Whenever convenient social conditions occur, violentness is articulated in forms of concrete violent acts, beginning with the most naive and ending with the most monstrous.⁴ Several examples may be mentioned here from ritual practice, myth, biblical texts, literature and film. The most interesting examples deal with the anti-hero/negative hero model: the young Medea who commits filicide not only in revenge for the infidelity of her husband Jason, but also in order not to leave her children to her enemies, i.e. as a kind of a maternal prevention from violence/abuse (Euripides 2002);⁵ Sethe, who kills her two-year-old daughter to protect her from the destiny of being a slave, is convinced that slavery is not *humane* and is not meant for people (Morrison 1987);⁶ Raskolnikov, who kills the old lady-pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna in revolt against social injustice (Dostoevsky 2000); Sophie, who was forced by a Nazi doctor in the Auschwitz concentration camp to choose which one of her two children would be liquidated (Styron 1979); Prince Marko (a Macedonian historical figure who inspired folk songs and legends in oral literature, but also inspired many contemporary authors), who sacrificed the hardships of many people in the name of erecting the perfect building in the poem *Marko's Monastery* by the Macedonian poet Blaže Koneski (Koneski 1988), etc.⁷

Violence and Civilization

Also, since the history of humanity is a history of domination, violence is a fundamental part of it and can never be entirely abolished. Abolishing violence would mean abolishing civilization. Barbarism, which is seen as synonymous with a hypothetical anthropological structure of violence, is not alien to any culture or civilization (Barker 1993).⁸ Cain's fratricidal murder of Abel, for example, constitutes the structure of human civilization and can be interpreted as a prototype of *civilizational violence* which is aimed at social regulation by the radical use of force (including murder, i.e. war) and which, unfortunately, renders humanity and justice useless in the race for survival and the development of civilization.⁹ The history of civilization is the wasteland of barbarisms. In spite of all historical retouching, the image of historical reality still shows violentness as a universal feature of civilization and not only as a relatively recent factor in constituting statehood or as an exclusive characteristic of primitive and archaic social communities. The thesis that violence is characteristic only of primitive (savage) communities aims at diverting the attention of the public eye from the fact that violence in its most extreme, monstrous variant is much more characteristic of developed civilizations. Many preserved *primitive communities* nurture a culture, politics and ethics of non-violence, while some developed civilizations that declare themselves for peace *de facto* pursue policies of violence (policies of internal and external, local and regional conflicts). The rhetoric of non-violence can serve as a well-conceived camouflage for severe violations of peace and crimes against humanity.¹⁰ The more civilized the society, the greater the probability of perfecting the strategies of violence.

Perhaps in historical reality there were long periods of peace and prosperity, but in reflected history it is the narratives of violence that prevail. It may be said that reflected history is an anamnesis of crime and violence of all kinds.¹¹ Yet the theory of this world as a world of violence is not defeatist, but rather an endeavour to promote the praxis of non-violence (*ahimsa*).¹² The transcended and archived memory of violence is a precondition for promoting a global policy and practice of non-violence, which is then to be established by adopting conventions for institutional and media amnesty. Namely, it is widely known that inter-ethnic and inter-religious violence (civil wars and conflicts) is initiated by the media's systematic instigation of memory to recall a certain previous painful experience and by obsessive reflection on the floscula of that memory. The manipulation of historical memory in political and media campaigns is the forerunner of a future response to a certain type of violence.

Regardless of whether violence (which is instigated by obstructions) is justified or not, controlled or not, reasonable or not, it has an inner

⁴ Latent structures of human identity may include predispositions of an aggressive being, of a despot, a tyrant, a sadist, a murderer, a mass murderer, a sex maniac, etc.

⁵ Medea is the incarnation and allegory of Otherness. She comes from Colchis, she is a foreigner, a barbarian, but on the other hand, mythology points to a domestic (Hellenic) *infanticidal tradition* in Corinth, not in Colchis. This indication of a tradition, a system, a memory of filicide is certainly one of the most surprising mythological indications about human civilization and deserves particular hermeneutical attention.

⁶ Medea's and Sethe's motives for filicide are very similar, though they belong to different social strata and positions. The myth and Euripides' tragedy of Medea deal with different interpretations of her crimes. Medea's sin is not only filicide; there are many other evil deeds committed—from the betrayal of her father and homeland to the murder of Creont's daughter.

⁷ A construct of a quasi-anti-hero has recently appeared in the book/film *Perfume: The Story of a Murder*, written by the German writer Patrick Süskind (1987 / 2006), directed in 2006 by Tom Tykwer.

Kata Kulavkova

⁸ The example of Shakespeare's time is well known. In contradiction with the dominant renaissance currents in arts and culture, the judiciary introduced a new legal measure for torturing prisoners, known as *long and severe punishment* – *peine forte et dure* (John Cordy Jeaffreson, Middlesex County Records I, 1972 & Middlesex County Records II, 1974, in Barker 1993, 173). Other legal measures which instigate certain types of violence were also introduced in this period (for instance, men were allowed to punish their wives physically—a law that was only abolished in the mid-20th century).

⁹ Rene Girard, in *The Girard Reader* (1996), stirs up the unorthodox, anti-sacrificial interpretation of the key biblical stories on violence (Cain's murder of Abel, the suffering of Jesus Christ), which had been postulated two centuries before in the poetic work *Ghost of Abel* by William Blake (1757-1827) published in 1822 (1988). In contemporary Macedonian poetry, the poetry collection *Kainavelia* (1968) by Slavko Janevski (1920-2000) stands out with its reinterpretation of the archetype of biblical fratricide as a parable of Macedonian identity.

¹⁰ The hierarchy of international crimes seems to be revised in accordance with events. After the Second World War, 'violation of peace in the

logic of its own and builds its own specific grammar. Therefore, however mysterious or enigmatic, violence is capable of being subjected to theoretical perception and demystification. The hermeneutics of violence does not plead for the utopian project of a world without violence; it only suggests an optimal control of violence and the elimination of mechanisms for stimulating new mass murders, exterminations and crimes.

Thus the hermeneutics of violence proposes the unconditional ratification of an International Criminal Court of Justice by all states, the non-selective and just liability of all states to punishment in the form of international sanctions for committing *crimes against peace and humanity* and for the *crime of administrative massacre*.¹³ The concept is based upon the presupposition that violence can be reduced over the course of a longer period of time by developing a greater sensibility to the co-existence of racial, religious, ethnic, ideological, social, linguistic and cultural differences and by creating a culture of global abstinence from violence (self-regulation), a general climate of depoliticized and demilitarized reality.¹⁴ It may sound paradoxical, yet there is not only an absence of violence-prevention today, but violence is even additionally instigated by a special rhetoric of camouflage used in specific pretexts (racial, religious, ethnic, political, gender, social, existential, civilizational, humanistic). Unfortunately, violence is still the dominant project of civilization, additionally encouraged by its biased treatment as a legitimate instrument in projects of global domination.¹⁵

Identification of violence

Unfulfilled will to power is the moving spirit behind violence. Violence is the reaction to realistic or fictional obstructions to someone's will to have power (over certain interests, influential positions, other people's objects of desire, other people's property, personal or collective identity, territory, fatherland, etc.). Whenever a subject with a surplus of uncontrolled will faces obstructions to its fulfilment, there exist real conditions that this subject will employ punitive measures which will create an aggressive situation. The subject whose will is hurt produces the synopsis for a violent situation, creates a politically correct rhetoric and ethic of violence, names the guilty ones—the aggressors (witches, Antichrists, heretics, anarchists, terrorists, enemies of the state, communists, barbarians, imperialists, etc.)—and undertakes radical or moderate punitive measures against it. In this way the archetype of punitive violence is always being renewed, since in response to some primary violence it always has some primary ethical legitimacy from the start. This situation creates a specific kind of violent illusion that the primary violence is the real violence, while the secondary one is a

Violence and Civilization

justified and necessary means of conquering violence (a necessary evil). The history of violence conjures a magical series of progression wherein violence is eliminated by violence, thereby creating an eternal vicious circle in which primary violence is no longer identifiable and is forgotten (primary and secondary violence coincide either by motive or structure). Yet violence also occurs in reply to the endangerment of someone's survival (will and right to survive/exist) and is thus defined as self-defence, defensive war, or the defence of human rights. As a basic human instinct, the instinct for survival raises a whole series of such atavistic actions, especially when manifested independently from any moral contexts or when ignoring the aspects of the meaning of existence or of the humanization of humankind (people are not humanized merely by virtue of being human; humanized is what they should become).¹⁶ Violence of the truest and greatest order, literally speaking, is committed when violence becomes *an art and a science*, a violent 'l'art pour l'art'-ism, an obsessive self-articulation known in history as *peine dure et forte*. Such violence puts forward the manifestation of human unconscious instincts, vices, deformities and complexes and shows that the social conditions in which violence-for-the-sake-of-violence is committed are not necessarily a crucial factor. Although violence-for-the-sake-of-violence originates in the sphere of *lower human passions* (greed, desire for other people's possessions, jealousy, pleasure in other people's pain, molestation), it is also structured within the frameworks of the phenomenon of *identity*. In conditions when certain *otherness* is positioned as a potential or a realistic threat to the attributes of someone's identity, the *Other* becomes an object of aggression.

Otherness may irritate by the mere fact of its existence or by its being eligible to be subjected to torture. Everyday state torture inflicted upon the racially, ethnically, religiously, ideologically and socially *Other* can also be perfected and pass unpunished. By the mere fact of not being talked about and being placed at the margins of history, this type of violence also receives the legitimacy of the ritualistic *necessary evil*.

Amnesia is an unwritten curative and cathartic tradition. Running away from truth as a form of intentional amnesia is a means of retouching and revising the truth, an indicator of the biased and unjust evaluation of the violent scenarios in the world today, and in the end amounts to a kind of complicity and silent instigation for such projects as the *long and painful* extermination of entire peoples.¹⁷ The development of human civilization is deeply marked by controversial experiences with violence which are not always manifested in the foreground of the socio-historical scene but which are always present.

Undoubtedly, violence is the demonic face of dominance/power. When it serves as a *means* of acquiring and maintaining (governing)

world' (i.e. war) was considered the greatest crime, later on it was 'crimes against humanity', and now at the start of the 21st century it is 'terrorism'. The new obvious violation of peace in the world (starting a war) is no longer considered as violence of the first degree but as an instrument in accomplishing other goals (i.e. the prevention of potential genocide, the prevention of potential humanitarian catastrophe, the prevention of the potential acquisition of nuclear weapons, etc.).

¹¹ The notion of 'structural violence' was introduced by the Norwegian sociologist, Johan Galtung (1969). The term indicates that violence is present in its institutional forms even when it is not visibly manifested. Structural violence is equal to social injustice (Honderich 1995, 855). The same author also promotes the notion of 'cultural violence', which is explained as any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form (1990, 291-305).

¹² Non-violence manifests itself in different forms: in Ghandism, peace, dialogue, Christian submissiveness ('turning the other cheek'), etc.

¹³ At the Nuremberg trials after the Second World War, crime against peace was proclaimed as the worst possible crime, but those who participated in the so-called crime of

Kata Kulavkova

administrative murder (slaughters and massacres organized by the state apparatus of the fascist regimes) were de facto sentenced with capital punishment. (Арендт 2003, 396 / Arendt 1994).

¹⁴ The long-lasting conditions of public non-violence (order and peace) in society can even be a grotesque consequence of *extensive fear*, a historically acquired conditional reflex of certain peoples/ persons to be oppressed and to have a high tolerance limit for bearing despotism. The capacity for bearing the burden of crisis and stress is heightened and emphasized in societies in transition and in colonized and non-developed states. Thus, the efficient state or collective despotism creates an illusive condition of peace and nonviolence. There are indications that more natural and long-lasting conditions of non-violence exist in more primitive societies; and, vice versa, that the development of civilization is a potential generator of violence due to the multiplication of prohibitions and limitations to freedom.

¹⁵ In the speech which Harold Pinter delivered upon receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2005, he underlined the difference between the politics of *low intensity conflicts* (slow occupation of a certain territory or state) and the current politics of *full spectrum domination* (full control over all auxiliary resources on land, sea, air and space). (Pinter 2005 / Пинтер 2006, 19).

power, there is always a realistic chance that it will receive official legitimacy. Yet when violence is transformed into a *purpose* of projects for domination and possession, when it becomes a self-contained purpose and meaning unto itself, then it becomes a paradigm of monstrosity. Such violence-for-the-sake-of-violence transforms people into *monsters*. A monster differs from an ordinary animal. The monstrosity (or the radicalization of violence by the perfecting of violence) is characteristic of mythical demonized creatures who are

¹⁶ Examples from different areas may be introduced here (from experimental and medical to artistic and media examples). We will point to the example given by Ernesto Sabato in *The Angel of Darkness* of the man and woman who are stuck in an elevator for several days and exterminate each other in the end (1974 /1991).

¹⁷ The massacres and tortures inflicted upon the Macedonian population/Macedonians have been—and should be—the subject of other essays. We will offer here only a bricolage of quotes from the memoir of Henry Noel Brailsford (1906 / 2002, 114): 'But fear in Macedonia is more than an emotion. It is a physical disease, the malady of the country, the ailment that comes of tyranny. One enters some hovel which a peasant family calls its home. In the oppressive darkness one becomes gradually aware of a living something which stirs or groans in the gloomiest corner on the floor beneath a filthy blanket. Is it fever, one asks, or smallpox? And the answer comes in the accents of custom and commonplace, 'He is ill with fear.' The word becomes the key to half the circumstances of existence. Fear is the dominant, the ever-present motive. It builds villages. It dictates migrations. It explains deceptions. It has created the morals of a country... Looking back upon my wanderings among them, a procession of ruined minds comes before the memory: an old priest lying beside a burning house speechless with terror and dying slowly; a woman who had barked like a dog since the day her village was burned; a maiden who became an imbecile because her mother had buried her in a hole under the floor to save her from the soldiers; a lad who turned ill with 'fear' from the moment when a soldier put a knife to his throat; children who flee in terror at the sight of a stranger... In that world of nightmare a massacre is always possible. One can hardly spend a week in such a town as Monastir without noting on some peaceful afternoon that the streets are strangely silent and the shutters of the shops are closed. Is it the Jewish Sabbath, one asks, or an Orthodox feast day? But a glance at the names over the closed doors shows that it is some rite which affects all creeds alike. It is simply that most ordinary of all social phenomena in Turkey: a panic. Some rumour has run round the bazaar of impending trouble, and every house has closed its doors. The calendar is marked with its appointed days of fear. It may be the months of Ramadan and Eid ul-Adha when Moslems are supposed to be excitable and dangerous. It may be Easter when the Orthodox processions are thought to excite their fanaticism. Perhaps it is the festival of Saints Cyril and Methodius when the Bulgarians remember that they are a nation. Or else it is St. George's Day, when spring begins... The occasion matters little - there is always a good reason for fear. Hunger and extinction. Chronic chaos. Terror and primitivism of government. Pains of everyday sadism. Kidnapping Christians turned into fun for the tribes from Debar. Unpaid work. A racket on all that is created. Terrors for which there are no words in the English language.'

On the massacres perpetrated upon the Macedonians, see Petar Popovski (Поповски 2006), Lazar Mojsov (Мосов 1989) and Dimitar Galev (Галев 1991). Also see the book *Aegeans/ Егејци*, by Kitza Kolbe (Колбе 1999).

Violence and Civilization

neither human, animal, nor divine, but something *in between*. These monstrous creatures in the form of humans are only half-human (centaur, bird-man, fish-man, sphinx) or *inter-(hu)man*. The world is filled with everyday, invisible, forgotten or ignored monsters.¹⁸ The black chronicles of humanity—the everyday, anonymous, family, ethnic and state tortures for which no adequate words exist in the language—all transform the *banal act of crime* (Арепт 2003, 340 / Arendt 1994) into the perfect (unpunished) crime. Violence is not a feature that humankind inherited from animals but an *endemic, anthropogenic* feature of humanity.¹⁹ Violentness is of course characteristic of the entire animal world, but in animals it is subjugated to the instinct for survival, self-defence and the protection of close ones. Only in some species (such as whales) is some type of revenge observed, but this behaviour is merely in response to violent human actions toward animals.²⁰ For humankind, however, violentness is typified and perfected by surpassing its function as a mere means for survival and, surpassing its character of a primitive, instinctive and unconscious reaction, enters the sphere of conscious behaviour and the sphere of the scientifically-argued, ideologically conceptualized functioning of collective, political and state institutions. Scientists have registered the phenomenon of sadism and the phenomenon of ceremonial 'ritual demonstration of an indefinite power of punishment' (when the ritual of torture continues in the public scene, before the public eye, even after the death of the tortured person) solely and exceptionally in human behaviour (Foucault 1999). Only the human is an insatiable, greedy creature. Monstrosity is the other face of humanity. Therefore, the attribution of *animalism* to humans must be accepted only with great reservation and only with reference to the stereotypical opposition between animality and humanity.²¹ Animalism is an inherent feature of humans. Therefore we must be especially cautious with the attitude that in the era of *post-history* 'the complete humanization of animals coincides with the complete animalization of humans' (Agamben 2002, 125),²² and that 'the human-animal and the animal-human are two faces of the same phenomenon...' (61). Given that sadism as a paradigmatic form of violence-for-the-sake-of violence has no parallel in the animal world, the usual view that *language* is the distinguishing feature differentiating humans from animals should be revised.²³ As a matter of fact, it could be said that the aestheticization of violence and the aestheticization of language are the true distinguishing characteristics of human civilization. The art of violence and the art of language are the hallmarks of human civilization. Hence, the hermeneutics of violence can transform into the hermeneutics of *language* in all its mythical, literary and other artistic forms (visual, electronic, etc.).

¹⁸ In the short story 'Press Clippings' ('Recortes de Prensa'), through the character of Noemi, a Latino-American journalist, Julio Cortazar gives fascinating descriptions of a horrifying situation of sadistic family violence between a husband and a wife (the child being the constant witness). This description evokes the unconscious mechanisms of revenge, when the victim of torture takes the role of a torturer ('kills without killing') and repeats the previously experienced violence (inter-violence). Cortazar shows that each chain of revenge seen as a response to a previous—let us say even primary violence—only ever perpetuates violence and adds new motives and subjects to the chain. Here is an excerpt from the short story in question: 'Now when I am supposed to remember it all and write it down (...) I only know that the girl was not with us after I came in the room, and that mom was doing some things to dad, but who would know if that was really mom or it was the night winds again, the pieces of images which return from a single press clipping... How could one know how long it lasted, how could I understand that I was there at all, there – on the other side of the cut-off arms and the mutual graves, me on the opposite side from the girls tortured and shot that night, at Christmas...' (Cortazar 1998, 68-9; quotation translated from Macedonian by the translator / Cortazar 1983). Also see Kulavkova's essay 'The Hermeneutics of Narrative Identities' / 'Херменевтика на раскажувачките идентитети' in Bessière, J. et al. (np. 2004).

Kata Kulavkova

¹⁹ The representatives of contemporary *interpretative anthropology*, such as Clifford Geertz (1973) apply Max Weber's thesis that 'Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance'.

The unconditional limits of violence: the death penalty and torture

If the crucial aspect of violence is not its instrumentally utile character in constituting statehood but its leading and dominant role in the survival of human civilization, then the issue of the moral justification of *the use of force* can be raised today more than ever before.²⁴ The ethical aspect of violence is always actualized when there is a need to identify the illegitimate application of violent acts and when *moral perversion* is instigated (Foucault). There is a theory which claims that punitive state violence could be humanized under the condition that one unconditional limit be respected, i.e. the abolition of the death penalty as an illegitimate penal measure. 'Only the punishment which does not inflict murder itself, which does not inflict a death penalty, does not fully contradict love.' (Ricoeur 2001). However, another painful civilizational question arises from this: does the illusion of abolishing the death penalty humanize state violence or is it only an implicit legitimization of entropic state terror and limitless torture? Claims that state terror is legitimate unless it ends with death/murder are therefore somewhat ambivalent. At first glance liberal and humane, the philosophical interpretation of the limits of punitive violence is based upon a shocking civilizational paradox. By declaring allegiance to the ethical codex of non-murder, the state indirectly proclaims the codex of torture: *all except murder*. This *all except murder* is neither the sole nor the primary precondition for the humanization of the state penal and correctional investigation and security system. The *all except murder* rule implicitly permits all other kinds of institutional violence except murder, including unforeseen murder during some investigative and penal measures, such as *torture till death*.²⁵ In certain situations, the death penalty might be more bearable and murder might be more *innocent* (humane?) than the endless torture of the investigative or penal *peine dure et forte*.²⁶ Therefore, the *unconditional limit* of penal state violence and state terrorism should not be defined merely by the abolition of the death penalty/murder, but rather by the abolition of the mechanisms of brutal torture and repression.

If violence is a constant phenomenon in the history of humanity and has been manifested in all epochs of the development of civilization, in different spatial and socio-cultural constellations, then it must be a socio-culturally encoded phenomenon. The system of violence integrates the three historically verified models of violence: (1) *violence as articulation of the will to power* and the *battle to govern*; (2) *violence in response to other violence* (revenge, punishment, defence, self-defence); and (3) *violence-for-the-sake-of-violence*.²⁷ But it is precisely because the system of violence is closely linked to the system of culture

²⁰ Herman Melville depicts this brilliantly in his novel *Moby Dick* (Мелвилл 1982).

²¹ In his lecture of January 29, 1975, Michel Foucault (1999) talks in detail about several notorious torture scenes (massola) from the history of humanity. There is one especially 'fascinating' scene of the torture inflicted upon Balthasar Gérard, the assassin of William of Orange (the Silent), a torture perpetrated with 'ritualistic extremeness by the government' over the course of 18 days in 1584.

²² 'The political conflict which rules with all other forms of conflict is in our culture a conflict between the animality and humanity of humans. Western politics is, in other words, co-originally biopolitical.' (Agamben 2002, 127; quotation translated from French to Macedonian by the author, and from Macedonian to English by the translator.).

²³ As regards the differentiating characteristics of humankind, our opinion is that we should focus on the linguistic

Violence and Civilization

that there are so many problems in its identification. Definitions of violence change from one epoch to another, from one regime to another, always in accordance with the changing conventions for differentiating legitimate from illegitimate violence. There is an impression that, generally speaking, the notion of violence is unambiguous but that at the concrete level of the identification of certain violent practices it is plausible. At the sight of the same photographed scene of massacred people, some subjects rejoice and others are appalled (Sontag 2003). Depending on the enactors of the aggression (conflict, war) and the sponsors of the war, the aggressor may be shown as peacemaker and victim, while the guilt may be shared between both aggressor and victim (in accordance with the theory that no one is innocent in a conflict), or the aggressor may be minimized through the perspective of primordial and unconscious stereotypes. Some perverse interpretative strategies could even persuade us that terrorism prevails in the contemporary world due to the human disposition to masochism, since after all there is no sadism without masochism, right?! In the appropriate social conditions, legitimate and illegitimate violence migrate and transform into one other. The boundary between them is susceptible to relativization, just as media *live stories* are susceptible to quasi-argumentation as to the identity of aggressors and victims of aggressions (falsification of photographs, videos, etc.). Differentiating justified and unjustified violence is a delicate matter since the differentiation of justified and unjustified motives for the instrumentalization of violence is very delicate.²⁸ The ambiguous, aporical and even mystical character of violence is a consequence of the possibility of justifying violent deeds by quasi-*humane* goals. These goals are a projection of the 'incredible confusion about basic moral issues' (Арендт 2003, 397-398 / Arendt 1994) which dominates this world with its pretensions to being civilized. Contemporary civilization deploys mechanisms to one-sidedly evaluate even the most outrageous crimes against peace and humanity to free their protagonists (and particularly their inspirers) of guilt.²⁹

The codex of collective violence is especially ambivalent. Violent deeds such as revolutions and uprisings have a variable identity through history. They can be recodified from violent into heroic deeds.

The entire epic tradition bears testimony to the fact that certain violent deeds in national and even world history are reinterpreted, retouched and then integrated as glorious. Key factors in determining the identity of a violent act are those of the point of view and of the subject constructing the narrative about the act. Therefore, in the course of the realization of global projects for domination with the energy, material, cultural, intellectual and human resources of the world, violence is open to manipulation and even to falsification. Aporical

phenomenon; not on colloquial language and the ability to speak, but on the *art of language*, since this is the feature of humans that distinguishes us from the rest of the animal world.

²⁴ Humanity continues to live in a world filled with all kinds of violence: the violence of post-war totalitarian communism; the violence of these rites of war hunts, regimes and dictatorships in South America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile); the violence of the series of state revolutions and civil wars across the world; the violence of the series of military interventions in Vietnam, Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda; the violence of Apartheid in South-Africa; the violence of Tiananmen Square; the violence of terrorism and also of anti-terrorist and anti-genocide policies. The new history is a history of neo-colonialism, of new forms of domination of the powerful over the powerless, of the new global dualism of good and evil regimes. It is, thus, a history of everyday violence.

²⁵ Tashko Georgievski's novel, *The Black Seed* (Георгиевски 1980), describes torture as carried out within a special kind of prison during the period of the civil war in Greece to which people from Northern Greece—mainly Macedonians—were incarcerated. They were tortured for their political beliefs and were forced to sign statements renouncing

Kata Kulavkova

the Communist Party of Greece. 'They didn't put Christos's body before the wall and they didn't shoot at it with bullets, but they chased away the soul from his body, and then what could be left of him?' (106; quote translated from Macedonian by the translator). Fear of death turns into hope for death, the torture is that unbearable: 'That fear was actually his hope' (107; idem).

²⁶ It is suffice to recall the tortures committed in the prisons and concentration camps of communist, fascist and all other dictatorships, as well as the brutal tortures characteristic of contemporary prisons like that in Guantanamo Bay. The death penalty could be compared to quick and direct intervention in combat, while torture could be compared to low intensity occupation and domination.

²⁷ Benjamin differentiates the following types of violence: violence which establishes law; violence which protects law; pure violence; mythical violence; the violence of the Gods (sovereign violence), and governmental violence (1974, 54-90).

²⁸ Benjamin shows that the philosophy of natural law by which force is a product of nature was the ideological basis of terrorism during the French Revolution. (1974, 55).

concepts of humanity (globalism, multi-culturalism, multi-ethnic society) are practiced and crimes against peace and humanity are committed in the name of fictitious goals and perfectly packaged protocols.³⁰ And since all phases in the development of human civilization have their own mechanisms for managing violence, they all have their own experiences and their own versions—their own narratives about violence. If history is written by the victors, then they always have the legitimate right to re-define violence and re-evaluate crimes against humanity.³¹ Therefore, as much as the contextualization of violence (facts, witnesses, motives) is necessary in determining its identity, it is also necessary to establish the *minimum of universal ethical identifiers* of violence which would disenable the general relativization and unjust identification of violence. This minimum would enable the identification of violence even in conditions where there is an absence of live witnesses and also from the standpoint of historical distance. It would serve to protect civilization's archives on violence from non-critical amnesia and would free memory from being an endless resource for new evil responses to evil and would enable it to introduce the humanization of human civilization instead.³²

The theory of violence cannot ignore the constitutive role of violence in establishing and maintaining statehood, since violence is a legitimate instrument for punishing crime within the state (Ricœur 2001).³³ The discourse of violence introduces the categories of primary and secondary violence (reaction to illegitimate violence, repressive penal measures), radical and moderate state penal violence (Foucault talks about the open possibility for punishment to acquire the *character of terror*), external violence or aggression (military violence), internal-conflict violence (civil wars, religious wars, inter-ethnic wars). Violence is a factor in the establishment of states, in the survival of already established states and their regimes—democratic and liberal as well as monarchist and totalitarian ones—and it serves to achieve radical changes of state regimes.³⁴ Behind every legal institution, behind every peace treaty or other type of treaty, there lies some kind of violence, so it can be said that violence is latently present in all state institutions (Benjamin 1974). Radical violence (murder) is characteristic of civil wars and wars of conquest, but also of the external penal systems of one state against another.³⁵

War radicalizes violence because within its system it predicts anarchy and disproportion between crime and punishment, i.e. it gives legitimacy to external violence—the aggression of one state against another.

As a model of political violence, contemporary terrorism presupposes the previous existence of so-called state terrorism by which the positions of primary violence (crime) and secondary state violence (punishment) are conceptually revised.³⁶

*Violence and Civilization***2. Interpretative context:****The mythical image of violence**

Mythical, epic, legendary, biblical and historiographical narratives are symbolic but impressive archives of spectacular acts of violence/crimes. Human experience encoded in narrative mythical images paradigmatically affirms that violence is deeply embedded in the collective memory precisely because it is a historical and civilizational constant.

As a praxis, violence is the antecedent of myth, while myth is an aestheticised image of violence. Myth could not remain indifferent to the world of violence. Violence is so inseparably connected to the primary human condition that it necessarily imprinted itself upon archaic visions of humanity, especially in myth as one of the most impressive and most enigmatic image-narratives. The way in which violence is projected in myth is simultaneously a way of interpreting it. So the mere articulation of memorized violence is already an introduction to its interpretation. In articulating memory, i.e. the history of violence, the discourse of myth uses the following methods: narrative articulation of the mythical image of the world (the mythical story is an integral part of drama, epos, lyrical poetry and, as a specific form of ecphrasis, is even projected in the articulation of myth in the fine arts), metaphorical and metonymical rhetoric and oneiric and prophetic visions (due to the porousness of the borders between memory and precognition, past and future, and their intersecting with the *eternal present* of the world of myth—the present as a symbolical coitus of past and future). Therefore, myth is accepted as a hybrid discourse which contains trails of the syncretism of memory, logos, poesis, vision and creation, not only as a secondary modelative linguistic system which is affiliated to the language of literature, but also as a form of interpretation, meta-interpretation and auto-interpretation of the language/praxis of violence.

The mythical image of violence is almost indispensable in interpreting violence and in constituting the contemporarily articulated and specialized *hermeneutics of violence*. Having in mind the paradigmatic character of mythical hermeneia, the referential hermeneutical parabola of this essay will be the *Promethean prototype (pre-model) of violence*. As this varies in several literary, historical and cultural texts, in this essay we will use its textualization in the play *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus (525-456 BC) and its mythological presentations in *The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves (Грeкc 2002 / Graves 1955).

²⁹ The feeling of *collective guilt* for crimes committed by the state and administration, regardless of the will of the citizenry, is actualized in the contemporary world which discovers so many crimes and so much violence with great delay.

³⁰ If any legitimate subject (ethnic community, international institution, state, union of states, etc.) finds an adequate way to represent its goals as legitimate, then this subject also has the means of legitimizing its violent instruments to achieve those goals (dictatorship, military conflict, military intervention, terrorism, crime). Goals cover for the means, sometimes justifiably, sometimes not. Especially dangerous are those cases where violence turns from a means of maintaining a regime into an end in itself.

³¹ We will not speak about violence committed upon objects of cultural value in this text, since this topic deserves separate research. We will only point here to the spectacular phenomenon of destroying libraries and books, such as the destruction of the library of the Mexican writer and nun, Sor Juana de la Cruz, in the 17th century, or the burning of the books from the rich library of the Slivnica Monastery of the Holy Virgin Mary in Prespa (Macedonia), which was performed with three fires and lasted for a week (the Greek archbishop ordered the burning near the end of the 19th century simply because the books were written in a Slavic language, i.e. Macedonian).

Kata Kulavkova

³² In 1992, UNESCO created a special programme for the protection of world memory from collective amnesia. This is stated on the UNESCO website: 'UNESCO has launched the Memory of the World Programme to guard against collective amnesia, calling upon the preservation of valuable archive holdings and library collections all over the world, ensuring their wide dissemination.'

³³ According to some authors, violence is ambivalent because it has a pathological function and it contaminates society on the one hand, while on the other it has a therapeutic and cathartic function. Violence is also ambivalent because it can instigate the development of society but can also take it backwards. 74, 55).

³⁴ Civilized states make a rule of violence rather than making it the exception. Each act of violence is justified by the legitimacy granted to violence by the state. There is even a kind of ratio here: the more sophisticated the discourse of violence is in its political rhetoric, the more monstrous the practice of violence.

³⁵ 'States have endured thanks to wars.' (Ricœur 2001, 240).

³⁶ The notion of *state terrorism* implies the use of forcible measures by government state organs (army, police, etc.) against citizens. In the 70s and 80s, the term 'missing

Memento

According to the myth, in the rebellion against Cronus, Prometheus took the side of the victor Zeus (the son of Cronus, who established the prototype of Jupiterian progressive, mobile violence) and was later rewarded and privileged. But when he started to defy Zeus' commands and to show that he loved people more than his ruler and that, on top of it all, he did not fear 'God's wrath', Prometheus became an object of violence. Zeus understood that humankind was becoming wiser and more powerful (knowledge is power!) and that his supreme and absolute position was in danger. He decided to restore his power and punished humanity by depriving them of fire (light, enlightenment, sources of energy!). People must be held powerless, obedient and ignorant. But Prometheus returned fire to humankind.³⁷ Zeus then punished Prometheus. He banished him from his homeland and ordered Hephaestus to chain him up on the most fearsome ridge of the wild Caucasus Mountains.³⁸ He ordered that bloodthirsty eagles peck at his liver in the daytime but that the liver should grow back by night so that the torture would never stop (an intermittent, rhythmical cycle of destruction and reconstruction). He ordered that Prometheus be left there exposed to cold and icy weather without food or water and without human company. All Prometheus was allowed to see was the abyss below him and the sky above him. Zeus had ordered a continuous and prolonged torture to the verge of death but never reaching death.³⁹

The description of the chaining of Prometheus in the play is paradigmatic of the psycho-structure of violence of one human being against another and of the latent possibility of all people to turn into perpetrators of violence and torturers. In this sense the figure of Hephaestus is especially interesting. When Zeus commands him to chain Prometheus, who is his very close friend, Hephaestus is overtaken by grief, guilty conscience, hesitation as to whether to obey his own will or the will of others, and by some kind of inner defiance of violence. This was his first spontaneous reaction against violence, which is both natural and inherited as the nurtured distinguishing mark of humanity. But things changed in the blink of an eye. After Cratos (literal meaning: strength, power) explains to him how necessary, professionally justifiable and understandable (who else if not the blacksmith should chain Prometheus?), and even how useful it is to chain Prometheus,⁴⁰ he sets out to implement the order with the utmost thoroughness. Hephaestus, the messenger of the Gods and the guide of souls to Hades, even excelled himself in cruelty, as his identity as the master of crucifixion and of tools and methods of torture was on the line and had to be proven at all costs—his 'dark and servile ethos' (Koleva/Koneba 1992, 161). From a professional blacksmith, Hephaestus transforms into the perfect

Violence and Civilization

architect of violence: he chains Prometheus' arms and legs, his waist and his entire body by hitting the hammer on the nails as hard as possible so that the nails fit best into the rocks and so that body, the nails and the rock become one in creating the perfect pain. Then he leaves the sight in the hope that the eagles will do their part in this project of endless torture.⁴¹

Prometheus, whose name in Sanskrit (*pramantha*) means aboriginal mind and *arche-thought* (energy!), is also linked with the proto-icography of the swastika.⁴² He is the inventor of all human crafts and sciences: the alphabet, numbers, new tools (and new technologies!), astronomy, mining, medicine, arts, secret sciences, divination and all crafts. He is the archetype of the enlightener, creator, prophet, philanthropist and semiologist who has the power to invent and interpret the signs (marks) of roads, destiny and dreams. He is the protector of the common people—the mortals—against the wrath of gods and rulers.⁴³ He enables humanity to cross from 'blind disorder' into civilizational order and becomes therefore the synonym for the *birth* of civilization and the prototype of an avatar and philanthropist. Prometheus becomes the opponent of the ones in power because he protects the interests of the people and of humanity: Prometheus 'who 'gainst Gods / hast sinned in giving gifts to short-lived men' (Aeschylus 2001, 1034-5 / Ајсхил 1978, 945). The character of Prometheus initiates the paradoxical human destiny of suffering for those who promote new civilizational values. Precisely because he enlightens/educates humanity, he represents a threat to those in power who identify his act as a crime. Precisely because he obstructs the will to absolute power of the gods/rulers (half-divine and half-human, which symbolically indicates their *dual, binary, half-ethics*), he is accused and punished with a series of violent penal actions. At a certain moment, any institutionalized penal measure may transgress the borders of the legitimate and turn into extreme and supreme evil, monstrous violence and an act of sadism. Government has the mechanisms for punishment and makes use of them. Every new government punishes more ferociously than the previous.⁴⁴ Zeus, who overthrew Cronus, now sentences Prometheus to *peine forte et dure*. It is a long and tormenting pain in the form of prolonged, never-ending dying. The Promethean, or more precisely the Zeusean, prototype of violence is *political*, and political violence initiates all other types of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, verbal). The Promethean model shows that violence can be a reaction to some non-violent acts and even to acts promoting civilization, and that it is enough that an act be avant-garde and ahead of its time (in science, in the arts, in culture) for it to be seen inversely as an act which is *against* its time. This kind of perception is characteristic of governing structures in power:

persons' (desaparecidos) received a specific semantic dimension related to the victims of state terrorism as perpetrated by South American dictatorship regimes (Paraguay, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil).

³⁷ Prometheus tried to protect humanity from *evil spirits* (such as sickness, old age, madness, painful work, passion, vice and false hope) by hiding them closed in a box, but Pandora opened it and humanity became their victim.

³⁸ Graves says that the myth of Prometheus may be a legend which the Ancient Greeks brought with them from their ancient motherland behind the Caspian Sea in the course of their migration (2002, 141).

³⁹ Zeus ordered Hephaestus, Prometheus' friend, to chain Prometheus on the *most fearsome ridge*, 'Where thou shalt know nor voice nor face of man' [26] and 'Thou still shalt keep thy watch, nor lying down, nor knowing sleep, nor ever bending knee; and many groans and wailings profitless thy lips shall utter...' [37-40] (Aeschylus 2001 / Ајсхил 1978, 3-35).

⁴⁰ Prometheus is an archaic pre-Christian model of a martyr. The chaining of Prometheus on the rocks reminds one of the crucifixion of Jesus and the lament of Prometheus reminds one of the lament of Jesus (or vice versa).

Kata Kulavkova

⁴¹ This may be the most mysterious element of the Promethean model of violence, since the natural instinct of the bird vultures is aided by the symbolical function of torturers, and though there is no explicit (sadistic) pleasure ascribed to them in their picking at Prometheus' liver, it is somehow self-explanatory. The birds perpetrate their violence unconsciously and yet tirelessly. There is also a certain explanation here in the fact that Zeus sends his winged dogs to torture Prometheus, so that the dogs become the metaphor for people torturers who symbolically turn into dogs/beasts (figures of torturers).

⁴² It is also thought that he invented the swastika, which represents a solar symbol when turned to the right, and a lunar symbol when turned to the left.

⁴³ *Tyranos* means king or ruler in the Ancient Hellenic language. By a metonymical transfer of meanings, the notion tyrant and tyranny began to signify the characteristics of governing itself, instead of the subject of governing/ruling. The main characteristics of governing/ruling known to history are connected to the phenomenon of tyranny, despotism, torture, violence, murder and other crimes.

⁴⁴ 'Who holds a power /but newly gained is ever stern of mood' (Aeschylus 2001, 41-2 /Ајсхил 1978, 3-35).

it is selective, subjective and biased. From this perspective it is enough for an act to be atypical in comparison with established conventions in order for it to be identified as a threat to the established scientific, ethical, social or political order and to make it a legitimate object of persecution, execution and violence. The violent punishment of Prometheus, therefore, is not a reaction to an unambiguous and rude act of violence. Prometheus does not perpetrate an act of physical violence or any other crime against humanity. Yet the manner in which the torture upon him is explained and legitimized points to the interpretation that Prometheus' punishment is a secondary response (answer) to something which Zeus, from the standpoint of his position of power, defines as violent. Prometheus is punished for an act that could be described as endangering the absolute freedom of the ruler (divine, semi-divine, quasi-divine, secular). Prometheus' world view was a danger/threat to Zeus' governing. He defied the macro-policy that the people should be held in darkness, ignorance and obedience/slavery.⁴⁵ Prometheus perpetrates *symbolic violence* against the law of tyranny which is established as order. He violates the law of despotism, dictatorship and totalitarianism.

Although the act of Prometheus de facto serves to benefit the civilization of humanity, from the point of view of the logic in power personified by Zeus, Prometheus commits an unforgivable violation of the penal code by committing an *unwanted and mischievous good* (an evil-good).

Prometheus' 'crime' is only an attempt to introduce a more humane and more just order in the field of human rights and freedoms. But with his actions in the better interest of humankind he shatters the position of the ruler/tyrant (*the symbolical god*); and since the ruler is in a position that enables him to punish, that is exactly what he does, without any guilty conscience, without limits, and as brutally as possible (the ethics of brutality!). Prometheus acts for the benefit of humanity, but to the detriment and against the interests of the ruling regime (Zeus's tyranny). The gods 'good turns with evil turns repay' (Aeschylus 2001, 1066 / Ајсхил 1978, 975).

Violent *response* to primary crimes may be instigated by various causes which, objectively speaking, are not always violent.⁴⁶ Defining the violent character of a certain action may depend greatly on subjective factors.⁴⁷ Many actions which provoke violent retributory penal measures are not violent but humane. The violent punishment carried out upon Prometheus is a response to his philanthropy, which is seen as a punishable act from the point of view of Zeus' *centre of power*. History knows of many examples in which thousands of people have been killed only because of their physical deficiencies, of millions of people molested and killed only because they belonged to a certain

Violence and Civilization

race, ethnicity, religion, gender, caste/class or ideology (genocide, holocaust, ghetto, exile, forcible religious conversion). This model of violence starts from the presupposition that racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, social, ideological, ethical, linguistic and cultural otherness is in itself a violation of someone else's limits of expectation, tolerance and interests, and of their projects for attaining power and domination.

The myth of Prometheus illuminates the basic elements of the structure of violence.⁴⁸ We will not say that the mythical structure of violence is the perfect ontology of violence, since mythical images are ambivalent while historical ones retain their right to be revised. Still, myth does evoke the constitutive principles of violence because violence also has its own system, language and meta-language. The mythical structure of violence is political. It includes all factors: the subject who conceives violence, the subject who perpetrates it, the subject who endures it/is subjected to it, the subject who observes violence from the side (the individual, collective, or even mass audience), the subject who saves others from violence or who gives amnesty, the act of violence as such, the motive for perpetrating it, the point of view by which it is perceived and evaluated, the function which violence performs, the code it belongs to (ritual, sanction, occupation, colonization, defensive war, revolution, etc.). Aware of his actions, Prometheus reconciles himself to the fact that he is going to be tortured endlessly.⁴⁹ Prometheus knows—on a higher, ethical, conceptual/spiritual and existential plane—that he is as immortal as is his act. Here lies the tragic structure of the myth about violence: its resolution is at a higher ethical and metaphysical level, beyond death, within the sum of civilizational values. The need for a kind of *higher justice* is reached at this point and the need for settling accounts on ethical grounds. Prometheus finds some ironic metaphysical comfort in the hope that 'He shall learn / how far apart a king's lot from a slave's' (Aeschylus 2001, 1015 / A.схил 1978, 925) and that one day the aggressor will be equally punished ('So it is meet the insulter to insult', 1060 / 970). Prometheus is aware that he is a victim of his own ideals projected in the ideals of humanity. As any true creator and avatar, Prometheus suffers in the name of higher goals, as opposed to the government which *punishes* in the name of higher and just goals. Therefore, Prometheus is a ritualistic *eschatological victim* of the birth of humanity and is built into its foundations to serve to the long-lasting gain of humanity.

The artistic image of violence

The tragic idiom of *actions arousing pity and fear* postulated by Aristotle's *Poetics* and suggested even in the mythical image of violence, is reflected in countless artistic personifications of violence in

⁴⁵ Depending on the circumstances, an individual or a group of avant-garde or revolutionary persons like Prometheus may violate the non-written rules (custom law) as well as the written regulations, laws and constitutional amendments.

⁴⁶ Though there are grounds to define primary violence as crime and secondary violence as punitive violence, we agree that their semantic overlapping is a consequence of social antinomies and that they coincide, just as the notions revolutionary violence and political terror also coincide (Frappat 2000, 239).

⁴⁷ Modern legal systems adopt the presupposition according to which the continuous intention to commit violence/ crime is most important for determining the character and weight of a crime. The lack of conscious intention frees from worse guilt (murder without intent, unconscious murder without knowledge, from carelessness, by lack of moral judgment, lessened ability to differentiate good and evil). If the world is inhabited with people who may be tempted not to differentiate good from evil and to do evil instead of good, is then the world inhabited by a predicted and justified evil and isn't it true that this lack of good judgment and lack of consciousness can be simulated and abused? This form of crime without knowledge (*hostis generis humani*) is investigated in detail in: Арендт 2003/ Arendt 1994.

Kata Kulavkova

⁴⁸ On 'structural violence' see footnote 11. On 'structural evil', see: Svensen 2006, 25.

⁴⁹ Prometheus reconciles himself to the physical pain much more easily than to the psychological pain. I do not know if one can talk of the dignified endurance of physical torture, but if there is such a thing then Prometheus must be an example of the dignified endurance of violence. Prometheus feels humiliated and wronged and that psychological and spiritual pain is more terrible than the physical pain.

⁵⁰ When we talk of the mythos and the systasis of 'actions arousing pain and fear', we insist on the re-interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics* by Michail D. Petrushevski, Elena Koleva and other representatives of Macedonian classical philology. Tragedy is a systasis of pragmas arousing pain and fear, instead of a catharsis for the emotions of pain and fear. Aristotle's *Poetics* is not receptional, but structural. (See: Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Classical Philology. *Ziva Antika*. International Periodical for Classical Studies. <http://www.antiquitasviva.edu.mk/en/default.asp>; Аристотел 1979; and compare the two English translations of Aristotle, such as that by Joe Sachs (Aristotle 2006) and by Samuel Henry Butcher (Aristotle, 1902).

literature, theatre, fine arts and film.⁵⁰ The political archetype of violence constitutes a prevalent artistic material precisely because it is a *condition* of civilization par excellence. Since there is no tragedy or history without a mythos and a systasis of actions arousing pity and fear, it may be said that the whole of history is tragic. Historical reality is so filled with *actions arousing pity and fear* which bring back to attention the mythical image of violence and which arouse consternation, shock, transfixion and loss of breath.⁵¹ Astounded by the catastrophes of the past, the *angel of history* is left speechless at the sights of violence, not believing his own eyes and unable to comprehend what monstrous crimes humanity is prepared to perpetrate in the name of goals which are not even real but fictitious and absurd! The *angel of history* appears fascinated by the bloody veil of history, but in actuality he is struck numb with shock by the truth. Usually it is the shocking reality which seems unimaginable and unutterable. The demon of arts, however, is aware that reality is the arche-dome of all that is unimaginable for the human mind inhabited by its idealistic image of humanity and humanity's utopian concepts.⁵² He knows that violence is always a few steps ahead of words; that is why the angel of history is left speechless when told to describe the inhuman deeds of civilization. All that is beyond reason /ing is beyond language, in a nostalgic and desperate search for the sign. After the shock is gone and the angel is able to face the truth about human history and civilization, he wishes to demystify reality. At that moment he calls upon the *demon of arts* and tells him his story. The demon of arts seeks for the 'real truth' (Pinter) and mustn't be left speechless and numb. He creates artistic images of reality which are symbolic and thereby always say more than historical images of reality which are filtered through the system of values of the victors. The image of violence surpasses the usual frameworks of the arts. And this time we are not alluding to the metaphysical dimension of artistic images of violence, but would like to emphasize something completely different, something we usually observe with aesthetical contempt: that is the *realistic* side of the artistic image of violence.

Bearing in mind that the capacity of arts to create pragma of violence is quite low by comparison with the capacity of reality, the arts are compelled to call upon the abundant archives of historical reality whenever they want to show new scenes of violence. The arts are directed toward reality in relation to violence. The theme of violence is the best argument in substantiating the thesis that arts are coherent with reality, even in cases when the arts construct extremely deformed, virtual and negatively-utopian projections of the world! By emphasizing the referentiality of artistic images of reality, we do not seek to deny the symbolic, autonomous and auto-referential character of the arts. Quite

Violence and Civilization

the contrary, we only want to point to this specific fixation of the arts upon *violence as a paradigmatic form of reality*. The presence of the mimetic and the referential in the artistic image of violence, even when simulating reality, is not a negation of the aesthetic nature of the image. The aestheticization of possible, plausible and actual violence indicates that over-saturation with violence in reality does not instigate an automatic need to purge oneself from it, but—by some inertness toward the perception of the world—creates a certain mental dependency on that perception, a kind of reflex to imitate reality, a mass hypnosis which trivializes art by subduing it to the code of reality, to the matrix to which it refers even when it rejects referring to it. The arts are full of indications for reality. Not raw and photographic indications, of course, because arts are the archives of aestheticised references to reality. But if human civilization is stigmatized with the sign of violence, then it is logical that the artistic image of violence is marked by the same stigmas. Only in that way can the arts be understood as an act of aesthetic cognition of reality, even when they appear alienated from it.

In certain epochs, the arts break the great classical Aristotelian principle of *moderation* in an attempt to build an image (not only visual) of *excessive evil*. The poetic conventions of ancient Roman tragedy, for instance, allowed for the abundant use of murder-scenes on the stage, as opposed to classical Hellenic theatre which placed such scenes behind the stage. Contemporary theatre and film bring back to life and radicalize the ancient Hellenic, Roman and mannerist conventions to the point of the abundant use of over-dimensionalized, brutal and antiutopian scenes of violence, regardless of whether these are simulating history or pretending to the spheres of the fantastic. Both have a surplus of violence. In both, violence is either bastardized or stereotyped to the point of its acceptance as a banal ritual. They lack something of the method the Russian formalists called *defamiliarization* (*ostranenie*). The principle of accumulation prevails in them, not the principle of aestheticization. The inclusion of violent behaviour of all types and at any cost trivializes the artistic image of violence (the American movie, the new European drama). *The trivial poetics* of violence erase the border between the virtual and the real and create a new type of *hybrid illusion of reality*. Yet even in this type of excessive inter-discursive mélange of arts and reality, and even as a mimicry of the world, the image of violence in the arts corresponds with the universal civilizational codex of violence and with the mythical image of violence. From the point of view of the artistic image of violence, evoking myth is an actualization of the universal codex of civilization, while going back in the past means coming closer to the present. Arts articulate their *truth* about violence by walking on the edges of the human—and not always humane—civilization!

⁵¹ According to Walter Benjamin, Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* looks terrified by the past filled with humanity's catastrophes, ruins, terror, crime and violence. 'What we see as a series of incidents, he sees as a unified catastrophe which continuously piles up ruins one onto another.' (Benjamin 1974, 83; quotation translated from Macedonian).

⁵² 'Can a Poet doubt the Visions of Jehovah? Nature has no Outline: but Imagination has. Nature has no Tune: but Imagination has! Nature has no Supernatural & dissolves: Imagination is Eternity' (Blake 1888, 270).

Kata Kulavkova

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Kata Kulavkova

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Kata Kulavkova
(Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Macedonia)

Violence and Civilization

Summary

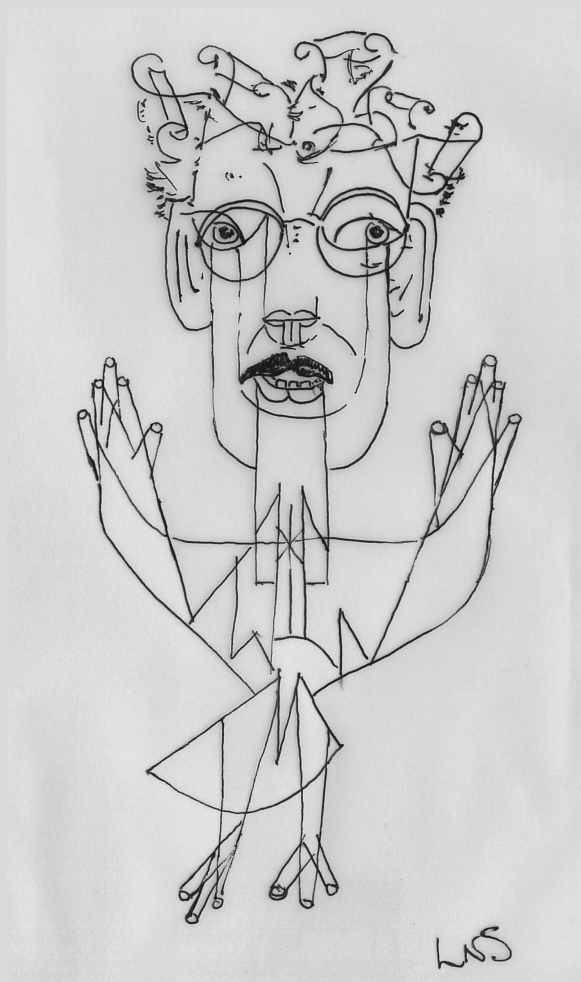
The essay deals with the aporia of the notion of civilization as a consequence of the fact that the so-called evolution of civilization does not abolish violence and even, quite to the contrary, instigates violence to the level of its entropic presence on the historical scene. Violentness is seen as a human and civilizational predisposition to violence and—as the concrete praxis of actions arousing pain and fear—is built into human civilization from its very beginnings to this day. Violence is a socio-culturally codified deviation which has been turned into a constitutive principle of the system of civilization. Awareness of the historical role of violence is initially manifested in the creation of the state and its system's institutions as immanent hallmarks of civilization. The first redistribution of violence to positive and negative, defensive and aggressive, progressive (revolutionary) and conservative (state) violence was then first performed. The dualistic conception of violence as a residue from barbaric, pre-civilizational epochs and as an invention, instrument and strategy of civilization, was introduced then as well. Precisely this dualism is the source for manipulating violence. Due to it, violence can be recoded from primary to secondary, from instrument to purpose, from legitimate to illegitimate. Due to it, violence can be interpreted as state-founding and peace-keeping or as destructive and anarchistic (a crime against peace and humanity), all depending upon the perspective from which it is observed. The notion of civilization does not necessarily imply domination of the humanized values of civilization, but only refers to the practice of re-evaluating those values through the course of history. In the course of that re-evaluation process, certain periods deform the basic concepts of humanity, justice and peace. Thereby, violence and its individual, collective, state and global forms (murder, crimes against peace, i.e. war and crimes against humanity) are defined as not only anti-civilizational categories, but also as eminently progressive, dynamic factors of civilization (the Jupiterian syndrome). In theory, the total absence of the dynamic factor of violence would cause the absolute presence of state terror (absolute governing, dictatorship, totalitarianism, etc.). Violence is answered by violence in order to establish a temporary balance between the two types of violence: a state of affairs which is identified as peace/non-violence. Yet the cognition that in different constellations the same violent phenomena can be interpreted in completely

Kata Kulavkova

opposite ways as well as the knowledge that in this world, which is in constant conflict between barbarian and civilizational matrixes, violence is basically always a reply to other violence, both indicate the need to revise stereotypical utopian concepts of humanity. They bring forward the need for a new interpretation of civilization in the light of the violence it generates or vice versa: they emphasize the need for a new interpretation of violence in the light of the de-humanization of civilization. These issues constitute a good reason to create a specialized hermeneutics of violence wherein art and reality can be interpreted in the light of violence which will no longer be seen as the animalistic input of humans but as their latent predisposition. This is a good reason to emphasize the political structure of violence as a structure of power/governing which has the intention to absolutize and barbarize. It is also a good incentive to re-examine the existence of the phenomenon of violence-for-the-sake-of-violence (torture, terror, peine dure et forte) and to plead that the unconditional limit of penal violence should not be determined only by abolishing the death penalty but also by abolishing brutal torture. It is likewise a good reason to actualize the traditional poetical categories of the aesthetical mimetics (referentiality, reality, probability). In this context, attention is also drawn by the extreme situations in which the governing structures in power and the centres of power identify all forms of opposition and of political otherness—even those which are avataristic, humanistic, reformatory, scientific and artistic—as hostile and violent, and then punish them with cruel and radical punishments (the Promethean structure of violence). Due to the specific interest in these situations of a wrong and violent reading of humanistic projects in the history of humanity, the interpretation of violence in this essay is made in the light of the mytho-dramatic image of violence constructed on the basis of the tragedy of Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound.



MASK: Petrich Karnival, 2006



ANGELUS NOVUS
Paul Klee

Mikhail Epstein

Horrology as a Negative Science of Civilization

This essay discusses a danger that contemporary civilization presents to itself and a new discipline that will explore this self-destructive potential of civilization.

One obvious danger is illustrated by the spread of viruses in computer networks. It is only with the development of such a perfect communicational organ as the Internet that we come to understand how these artificial organisms are vulnerable to their own self-generated diseases. Viruses do not spread in telephone or TV networks, but much more powerful electronic connections fall easy prey to these artificial micro-'misorganisms' (to use the same prefix as in the words 'mistake' and 'misunderstanding'). According to recent prognoses, within five years every other e-mail will be infected by a virus which will eventually crash the whole system of electronic communications. The only consolation is that we still live in the proto-viral condition when the fatal illness of the future electronic community may be properly diagnosed and promptly treated.

Even more ominous 'proto-'—proto-horrorism—can be associated with the acts of terror perpetrated on September 11, 2001. Political terror is not an invention of the 21st century, but its scale and unpredictability indicate a new possible state of civilization that goes far beyond terrorism itself and can be called horrorism. Terror is usually defined as violence or a threat of violence carried out for political purposes; horror is a reaction to terror: a painful and intense fear, dread, or dismay. Etymologically, horror is derived from the Latin word *horrere*, 'to bristle with fear'. It would be more precise, however, to relate terror and horror not as act and reaction, but as actual and potential. Horror is caused by the possibility of terror even more than by its actuality. It is known that illness can cure at least one thing: the fear of getting ill.

Key Words:

- horrology
- ecology
- negative science of civilization:
 - nega-history
 - nega-sociology
 - nega-aesthetics
- self-destruction
- viruses

Mikhail Epstein

Horror is incurable because it is not fear of illness, but an illness brought about by fear itself. This is pure potentiality of fear, the emotional intensity of which increases toward infinity even when the actuality of its causation is close to zero.

Horrorism is a state of civilization which is in fear of itself because any one of its achievements—the postal service, medicine, computers, aviation, skyscrapers, water-reservoirs, bridges—can become a weapon in the destruction of that civilization. Death is everywhere: in air, in water, in innocent powder, in a friend's handshake. You look into your luggage and see a potential weapon among scissors and nailfiles. You are brushing your teeth, or drawing with chalk on a blackboard and, by association with white powder, anthrax, you recall Kabul and Baghdad, the CIA and the FBI. The associative fabric of contemporary life is woven from metaphors of death. In the same way that the computer network has brought forth viral epidemics that threaten its paralysis, so our civilization casts a gigantic shadow that threatens to eclipse it.

The destructive forces of civilization do not even need to assault it from the outside; it is enough simply to turn it inside out from within. Then a passenger jet becomes a missile and a postal service becomes a vehicle for the delivery of bacterial weapons. It is symbolic that in the attack of the September 11 the terrorists did not use as their weapons anything besides the targets themselves. Their mathematics of destruction show how adding together various elements of civilization—airplanes and skyscrapers—amounts to their mutual subtraction or destruction. This accounts for the unusual 'elegance,' efficiency, and effectiveness of the terrorist act, which provoked the German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's shocking exclamation:

*'What happened there was the greatest work of art. These people succeeded in one effort to produce something that we musicians cannot even dream of. They rehearsed as madmen fanatically for ten years for a single concert only and died. This is the greatest work of art in the entire universe. I would not be able to do this. In comparison, we composers are simply zero.'*¹

¹ See http://stockhausen.org/the_true_story.html and the complete transcript of Stockhausen's Sept. 16, 2001 news conference in Hamburg, published in MusikTexte 91, November 2001 (in German, PDF format 98K).

Such anesthetization of terror, certainly, is terrifying in itself. For his cynical statement the great composer was ostracized, his concerts in Hamburg were cancelled, and his reputation suffered an irreparable blow. What Stockhausen failed to acknowledge in his admiration for terrorists is that civilization itself prepared this act of terror against itself, made it practically feasible and aesthetically impressive. Terrorists needed these Towers of WTC that contained the best minds and material values of Western civilization in order to commit such a 'beautiful' evil. Civilization first had to raise its head that high for it to be beheaded in such a 'scenic' way.

Horrology as a Negative Science of Civilization

Terrorists did not simply destroy the New York cityscape but in their own way completed it. The genuine view of New York that will be forever imprinted in the memory of civilization is not the glaring Manhattan with its Twin Towers, nor the gaping Manhattan after their collapse, but the Manhattan of September 11, precisely between 8:45 and 10:29 am, with the silhouettes of planes as if forever stuck to the silhouettes of the Towers. This is the exact image of civilization in its chiaroscuro. The profound archetypal pattern of this event demonstrates that terrorism in its 'highest achievements' is inseparable from civilization itself, which means that civilization is harbouring terror deep within itself.

* * *

This self-destructive potential of hyperactive Western civilization was clearly foreseen by Goethe in the early 19th century. Though often misrepresented as a social utopia, the second part of *Faust* testifies to quite the opposite. The activity of Faust as a social reformer and civilization-builder culminates in his construction of a new city at the shore that is forcefully won from the sea. Faust dreams of settling himself 'on acres free among free people,' and with this last effort he savours his 'striving's crown and sum':

*'I might entreat the fleeting minute:
Oh tarry yet, thou art so fair!'*²

² Faust Part Two, Act 5, lines 11581–82, translated by Barker Fairley, (Toronto) (1970)

However, Mephistopheles, who had incited Faust to undertake this feat, makes a sarcastic note behind the back of his blind and half-deaf patron:

*Mephistopheles [aside]:
'For us alone you are at pains
With all your dykes and moles; a revel
For Neptune, the old water-devil,
Is all you spread, if you but knew.
You lose, whatever your reliance—
The elements are sworn to our alliance,
In ruin issues all you do.'*³

³ *ibid.*, lines 11581–82.

This is a paradigm of the master of terror, whose executor turns out to be 'the sea devil' Neptune himself, Mephistopheles' brother. Terror is not a chaotic destructive action against civilization, but an ironic actualization of the latter's own catastrophic potential. Whatever Faust is at pains to build is designed for ruin. The city on the 'free acres' won from the sea is in fact Faust's generous gift to the sea. Civilization constructs itself in the forms most condensed and comfortable for its subsequent destruction according to the laws of dangerous beauty that is the result of the combined efforts of Faust and Mephistopheles.

Mikhail Epstein

In essence, civilization presents itself now as a great irony that under the guise of protection and comfort, freedom and efficiency, flocks us together in one palace of 'good and light' to expose all of us to one precise and sweeping blow. Civilization is a ladder of progress leading to a scaffold. There is a bitter irony in the fact that Russian terms for the 'West' [zapad] and the 'trap' [zapadnia] are cognates.

The ambiguous recommendation of the American government 'lead your normal life, continue with your business, but be particularly vigilant and careful' invoked a lot of sneers and complaints. How is it possible to combine 'usual life' and vigilance to pervasive danger? Either/or. But these are complaints of past, more relaxed and innocent decades. Mature civilization is a zone of extreme risk that increases with each new stage of progress. The formula of the future is precisely this: 'business as usual plus the horrification of the entire way of life.'

If pollution—civilization's threat to nature—haunted the second half of the 20th century, then the 21st century may fall prey to horror: the threats posed by civilization to itself. Ecology, as the primary concern of humanity, is succeeded by horrology, which explores civilization as a system of traps and self-exploding devices, and humankind as a hostage to its own creations. Horrology, as I understand it, is an alternative, or a negative science of civilization: nega-history, nega-sociology, nega-aesthetics. All that is studied by other disciplines as positive attributes and structural properties of civilization, horrology studies as a growing possibility for its self-destruction.

* * *

The only guarantee of universal security would be the good will of all people, but this cannot be achieved so long as we remain human and preserve free will that is capable of evil. Possibly the increasing pressure and constraint on this dangerous freedom will gradually lead to the mechanization of humans, to the elimination of their biological basis and transformation into cyborgs. Stalin in his time coined the ominous aphorism that anticipated the refined metaphysics of the cybernetic age: 'Wherever there is a human being, there is a problem. No human, no problem.' In the 1930s this was understood and practiced 'naively' in the physical elimination of 'problematic' people, but nowadays, with the progress of intelligent machines and informational technologies, we face a broader perspective: the elimination of humanness as such. Paradoxically, with the disappearance of the perpetrators of evil, the object of this humanistic protection will also disappear; thus the world will not become kinder. We can call it a 'zero solution': the complete triumph of humanism is feasible only in the absence of humans themselves.

Mikhail Epstein
(Emory University, USA)

Horrology as a Negative Science of Civilization

Summary

Horrology is a new discipline that may emerge in the humanities in response to the new realities of the 2000s. At the height of its evolution, civilization poses a horrifying danger to itself. The name of the proposed discipline is no less horrible than its intended meaning. One obvious danger to civilization is illustrated by the spread of viruses in computer networks. It is only with the development of such a perfect organ of communication as the Internet that we have come to understand how these artificial organs are vulnerable to their own self-generated diseases. Viruses do not spread in telephones or TV networks, but much more powerful electronic connections fall easy prey to these artificial 'misorganisms' (to use the same prefix as in the words 'mistake' and 'misunderstanding'). According to recent prognoses, within five years every second e-mail will be infected by a virus capable of crashing the whole system of electronic communications. After September 11th, in the mainstream imagination of many advanced societies around the globe, horror became the condition of a civilization that increasingly views itself as the domain of self-defeating achievements. Any of these achievements—the postal service, medicine, computers, aviation, skyscrapers, water-reservoirs, bridges—could become the weapon for civilization's destruction. This self-destructive potential of hyperactive Western civilization was clearly foreseen by Goethe in Faust, part 2. Symbolically, terrorists did not use anything beside the targets themselves as their weapons. This mathematics of destruction shows how adding together various elements of civilization—airplanes and skyscrapers—amounts to their mutual subtraction. In the same way that the computer network has brought forth viral epidemics that threaten its paralysis, so our civilization casts a gigantic shadow that threatens to eclipse it.

In the second half of the 20th century, civilization was haunted by the threat it posed to its natural environment; the 21st century, from its very beginning, underscored the threat civilization poses to itself. Ecology, as the primary concern of humanity, is succeeded by horrology, which explores civilization as a system of traps and self-exploding devices, and humankind as a hostage to its own creations. Horrology, as I understand it, is the negative science of civilization: nega-history, nega-sociology, nega-aesthetics. All that is studied by other disciplines as positive attributes and structural properties of civilization, horrology studies as the growing possibility for its self-destruction.



RELIEF: *Palette of king Narmer,*
Egypt, ~ 3000 b.c.

Mieke Bal

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

The question of encoding and decoding violence in medial transformation is a complex one. What it doesn't mean, I think, is 'the representation of violence in the media', although that question remains relevant in some ways. I shall interpret the phrase that names this programme as: the media—here denoting language and image—as simultaneously the site of violence and the opportunity for activism against it; the intersection of seeing and speaking, of sound and image, as the place where violence can easily and does constantly occur. But also, I will argue, this gives the media and the people who manipulate the media in public culture a tool for resistance. For if the conjunction of media lends itself to a specific kind of cultural violence, this opportunity can also be redirected to combat violence. I will argue this through discussion of a topic that is obviously relevant to contemporary culture: something which I call, for reasons I shall explain, 'migratory aesthetics.'

This topic is the focus of an international collaboration between ASCA and CentreCATH at the University of Leeds, as well as of a series of video works I am currently involved in making. As the one who initially came up with this term, I feel compelled to begin this reflection with a brief exploration of what it can possibly mean. A 'travelling concept' if ever there was one, migratory aesthetics on the one hand falls back on the notion of aesthetics, while on the other hand the term coins a modifier for it. It is an aesthetic, but takes this concept literally as a condition for the engagement of the senses. Thus it is part and parcel of those concepts—such as 'relational aesthetics' (Bourriaud), 'empathic aesthetics' (Bennett), or simply 'political art'—that attempt to establish an active interface between viewer and artwork. These attempts consider the artwork empty as long as the act of viewing is not inherent in it and that act is called upon to do political work. Consequently, art

Key Words:

- media
- language
- manipulation
- cultural violence
- violence in medial transformation
- visual art
- migratory aesthetics

Mieke Bal

can be involved both in committing acts of violence and in struggling against 'routine violence.'

The modifier 'migratory' does not refer to migrants or actual migrations of people, nor would I, as a user of the concept, presume to be qualified to do so. What the modifier means instead, how it relates to the three concepts above, and how it can help us understand possibilities for art to be politically effective, is the subject of this paper. 'Migratory aesthetics,' then, is a non-concept, a ground for experimentation that opens up possible relations with 'the migratory,' rather than pinpointing such relations. As a provisional circumscription of the modifier, let me call it a feature, a quality of the world in which mobility is not the exception but on its way to becoming the standard, the average rather than the minority.

Migratory, in this sense, emphasizes the fact that migrants (as subjects) and migration (as an act or state) are part of any society today, and that their presence is an incontestable source of cultural transformation. I would like to present the modifier as a constructive focus of an aesthetics that does not leave the viewer, spectator, or user of art aloof and shielded, autonomous and in charge of the aesthetic experience. If aesthetics is primarily an encounter in which the subject, body included, is engaged, that aesthetic encounter is migratory if it takes place in the space of, on the basis of, and on the interface with, the mobility of people as a given, as central, and as at the heart of what matters in the contemporary—that is, 'globalized'—world.

As I am pondering the meaning of migratory aesthetics, I am drawn to those questions that have preoccupied the progressive sections of academia in the West for the last two decades: of cultural identity, of regional specificity, of under-studied provenances, of affirmative action, of trauma, war, and violence, all housed in environments of politically-aware scholars: feminist studies, gender and queer studies, postcolonial and anti-racist studies. The issues that informed these studies have not gone away. Instead they have been recuperated by movements of regressive politics, also called a backlash, orchestrated by those who possess the skill to pick out the critical problem of each of the concepts we believed in and turn these against those who attempt to engage with the world on terms different from banal exploitation. Today the central concern is violence in relation to media: how media are entangled with violence. I will focus on media in two distinct ways: the theme of language, again, not so much in terms of representation, e.g. using hate speech, but in other, more subtle ways; and the means of analyzing the violence of language, which is a priori not so easy to grasp in practice. I will use video for this, a medium I consider particularly apt for this kind of analysis, for reasons that will become clear.

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

As it happens, during the same two decades, interdisciplinary approaches have produced unrest in established disciplines. It is, of course, no coincidence that the two developments are related, although they do not overlap. Having been involved in both approaches, I am interested in exploring the violence of language within 'migratory aesthetics', a specific concern that can be of help in attempts to safeguard what was valuable and remain critical where needed. I will discuss this dual issue—of the meaning of migratory aesthetics and the interdisciplinary nature inherent in what is called either cultural studies or cultural analysis—through a limited experimental approach that is organized around linguistic violence. As an example of a cultural study or analysis for which the library is not even adequate, perhaps does not even have the needed materials, I will present a short video, called *Lost in Space*. This video was an experiment, and concerns migrants. It is also an aesthetic object and as such it is anchored not only in the movement of people, but also of media, of images and voices. Last but not least, the aesthetic was designed around the violence of universalised English.

This was undertaken in order to help me get more of a grip on a question I wanted to address but that remained too vague. How to go from a vague notion of something that you feel passionately is very important to something that can actually be studied? Secondly, like all of you interested in studying violence in relation to media, I am also interested in preserving the ethical imperative that made me raise the question in the first place. The question to which this film was meant to suggest a partial and provisional answer was one of methodology: how can we be culturally specific in our analyses of cultural processes and artefacts without nailing people or artworks to a provenance they no longer feel comfortable in claiming as theirs on the basis of communication in English? Obviously, this topic concerns cultural studies or, as I prefer to call it, cultural analysis, in the present at a time of what is called 'globalization', but that term hinders rather than helps my project. Globalization is better documented in sociological studies such as those by Saskia Sassen, or in economic studies. Cultural studies tend to focus on a more comprehensive approach, on being more inclusive of non-mainstream cultural products. I have not found much to help me with my question, yet it seems an important one.

Globalization sounds very much like the opposite of old terms such as 'provenance', 'cultural location of background', even 'context'. Linguistic context is one of these. As it happens, the contextualists in art history and literary studies—also called new historicists—who revolutionized their respective fields in the 1980s are presently more established than they once were, and with that established condition,

Mieke Bal

more closed to the issues they once found so important. The problem is that they remained loyal to their once-revolutionary positions; they failed to endorse mobility. I am not suggesting one should abandon positions in the wake of intellectual fashion but that one ought to modify them in engagement with other views, in turn generated by transformations of the world.

Globalization appears to suggest that the centre is no longer in the West; that the centre is nowhere. Yet it is in the name of globalization that Western institutions now exhibit artworks from regions hitherto kept at bay, buried in regional museums or considered folklore. At best the masterpieces from a particularly sophisticated culture such as east-Asian Buddhism either get their own museum—as in the Musée Guimet in Paris—or their own somewhat separated section in national museums such as the Louvre. It will take a lot of serious and creative reflection before works from cultures like Bénin can be meaningfully displayed among the masterpieces of Western art, although many agree that they are masterpieces. Precisely because they are so, they require their own context—at least, this is why their separate exhibition remains the only mode of displaying them.

Provenance makes a lot of sense in terms of identity politics. The added advantage of disciplinary decorum is that provenance has always been a staple of art history. This, however, is where disciplinary limitations and continued dominance threaten to join forces. For, at the same time, bringing together art from a region or country on the simple basis of the 'made in' label, in shows like *Indian Summer*, this Fall in the Ecole des Beaux Arts, smacks a bit of exploitation, of the new colonization after de-colonization.¹

¹ Gayatri Spivak's famous phrase "the neocolonialism in postcoloniality" has, by far, not ran its course. See, of many places, her 1999 critique.

But globalization as an issue, a problematic one, is also involved in other ways in art practices where provenance can no longer be taxonomically identified. This would be, then, the migratory of aesthetics. 'Globalized art': what would such a term mean? Not 'art from nowhere', for such art, I contend, does not exist. Since the making of art is a material practice, there is no such thing as site-unspecific art. What I would like to discuss is a practice of art-making that addresses globalization as a problem—that takes it on, so to speak, and that derives its 'provenance label' from that problem which anchors it.

In particular, the medium of video lends itself to such art; at least that is what I have experienced in my attempts at participating in such a video-based art form. I would like to present a short, 15-minute film that I made with an Iranian artist living in Berlin. This collaboration—which, unfortunately, has ended—was an attempt to be responsive to Arjun Appadurai's 2001 appeal to 'grassroots globalization' and the important concept of 'research imagination.' As a team we felt we had

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

enough experience with cultural difference to be able to reflect on the twin issue of over-specifying in an ill-directed identity politics and erasing difference in an equally ill-conceived pressure to assimilate under the label of globalization. What I would like to argue through this presentation of the film itself and of my thoughts about it is the cultural specificity of the film's aesthetic. Specifically, without denying cultural difference it brings it, on the contrary, to the forefront: it is centred in the globalizing movement of people itself.

This aesthetic was not an a priori decision, a starting-point from which we set out to make this work. Instead, this aesthetic happened. Leaving it open to what would happen was the only a priori decision we took. With that decision we wanted to avoid the kind of violence involved in imposing a mode of representation. It happened when I was interviewing people for what was meant to be a series of short films, as part of an installation on the tripartite notion of home, security, and borders. In the course of a few months, the projected installation changed and became a short 15-minute film that is meant to stand on its own. It has experimentation with sound at its heart. The medium that dominates it is the human voice. It was the way voices sounded in their struggle with globalized language that made, or performed, the work with sound. Let me tell you why.

The subject matter, theme, or topic of the film is displacement, dislocation, the subjectively experienced consequences of migration. Hence, the theme focuses on globalization through an intimate approach with actual migrants. But this thematic centring is emphatically not the point of the aesthetic. We conducted interviews with people who were displaced or who worked with people in situations of displacement. This could be because they had moved to another country or because their country had been taken away from under them. But a topic does not make an aesthetic; what does make an aesthetic is the sentient encounter with the subjects involved. In this case, one of the people, a man from Iran who had been an asylum seeker for no less than sixteen years, triggered the experience and the aesthetic of the subsequent film; an aesthetic I consider a good example of a migratory aesthetic. In the remainder of this paper I will explain why and what it means to call the aesthetic migratory—what kind of binding through the senses it performs and why that matters.

This man, called Daryush, spoke very limited English and clearly suffered from his difficulty in saying things that mattered to him. Yet he had volunteered for the project and even insisted when we were hesitant, for reasons irrelevant for this discussion, that we include him. So both his desire to speak and the difficulty of speaking were important. At first I tried to solve the problem by seeing if we had another language

Mieke Bal

in common. We did not, for I did not understand the languages he was fluent in, Farsi and Greek, while he did not speak French. Hence, out of practical necessity we continued to wrestle with English. A situation that any non-native speaker of English will recognize, whereas our British friends may need a leap of research imagination to get the point of difficulty. This need to speak English, of course, is the result of a century-long struggle for world domination, including violence done to enormous numbers of people, entire nations, under colonial rule and later, post-colonial neo-colonialism. It is the basic inequality resulting from this that I want to emphasize as a form of violence that we need to sensitize ourselves to.

The conversation with Daryush was slow and painful and I was wondering if we would actually be able to use the footage. Then something happened that made his speech absolutely central to the project; it determined the aesthetic facture of it. At one point, when I asked him what he most missed about his home, he fell into a frantic expression of the incapacity to speak, desperate to speak yet almost incapacitated by the foreignness of the language we were using. I told him he could speak in Farsi. While I was unable to respond to his answer, I would be able to understand it later since my partner in the project was also from Iran. After a few seconds of total silence in which I was beginning to wonder whether he had understood my proposal, words—sounds that I did not understand at all—tumbled out of his mouth, for me only musical, with a distinct melody and rhythm, while his face had also changed from being cramped with pain to being more relaxed. The differences, his fluidity of speech and his animated face, were all the more striking as his speech so far had shown the typical a-melodic flatness of depressed speech. I asked him what he had said but he only smiled and didn't say. Some time later I got the words translated. To my surprise as well as delight it turned out he had said that what he most missed was speaking his own language.

As I could only acknowledge belatedly, this was the crucial, performative moment of the production; the moment where the violence of language was played out. I was unable to respond to his words when I heard them and yet something in his voice told me he was indeed saying something that was crucially important to him. I took his hand and he hugged me with teary eyes. When, later, I did understand his words, he was no longer there to interact with my understanding. Of course, I felt terribly inadequate: the least I could have given him in return for his collaboration was some comfort, however brief. This double discrepancy—between speech and understanding, between meaningful sound and senseless sound—then became the basis of the film. Migratory aesthetics took the form of a work on and with

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

discrepancy: discrepancy produced by the violence of language. In practice, the result was the following. We decided to sever sound from vision, as in Daryush's interview, and to place sound in competition with noise. The hope was that something radical would happen to the sound, here, especially that part of sound that consists of the voices, of the speakers. This competition was a statement on the violence which 'the world' does to people simply by making it difficult for them to speak and be understood.

I would like to talk about what kind of aesthetic, as I phrased it earlier, 'happened' and what that meant: first, for the relation between art and politics, specifically in terms of the violence of language; and second, for me as a scholar making art as in a laboratory. Here the issue of interdisciplinary study joins forces with migratory aesthetics. In what I call, for want of a better term, art-making, I have so far experienced and learnt things and understood aspects of social life that all the books and journals in the world could not have taught me. I want to propose this experiment as a reflection on the importance, the meaningfulness, and the impossibility of the designation of a cultural area in the organization of artistic production. This issue is related to that of language; for language is a primary aspect of provenance as a lived cultural reality.²

What I learned in making *Lost in Space* had direct resonances with the shortcomings of the discipline of art history as I know it; not because there is anything inherently wrong with that discipline, but simply because as a discipline it is a way of disciplining, of limiting what can be said or written about art. What I learned was, firstly, an experience of perception in its irreducible bond with duration. Duration pertains to temporality, the domain of literature and theatre, film and music. Only recently and reluctantly was this accepted as an issue of art history due to the increasing importance of video and congenital art forms. This was, however, not because the discipline recognizes the crucial importance of duration in the encounter with any art work—any cultural encounter.

Secondly, I learned the importance and consequences of the unity of perception and sensation that undermines the distinction between subject and object. Yet it is on that distinction that visual art has always based its specificity, its 'nature'. To sum up: what I realized through the interview with Daryush is this: the world as we knew it, art as we knew it, the limits and concepts and distinctions by which we lived, were all transformed by the brief sensation of losing clarity. Including the clarity of where the bit of this art production 'comes from'. The sentient encounter that is the aesthetic event became migratory. In that sense it became detached from self-evident certainty of who and where we

² INHA

Mieke Bal

are, and tumbling inside the experience of someone else for whom, paradoxically, mobility became a prison. There lies the violence inherent in migratory experience.

One point of discussion that emerged right from the start was the position of English in the world today: the problem of linguistic imperialism—the advantage English-speakers invariably have over others—versus the need to communicate across boundaries. This can be stated as violence and resistance. With Daryush, as with some others, I felt, almost physically the violence I was doing to the interviewees by imposing a generalized English as the language of communication. Yet there was no question that his contribution was important and his eagerness to participate was a clear indication of that felt importance.

One of the consequences of this double bind was the aesthetics of the accent. Here, linguistic violence could be turned against itself and become a form of resistance. Making the film the way we did was an attempt to make use of the 'accented' English of the speakers. Not only did accented English become the standard, compared to which the 'perfect' English of native speakers was also heavily accented, and the German, or Farsi, for that matter, became just another accent. Also, we tried to probe the accented speech in the effort of translation, to make them speak with their twin tongues: English, and more, not less.

Losing clarity, then, leads to a gain in insight. Amongst the many insights that the difficulty of clear communication provided was that insight, for example, into the need for technological supplementation that sharpens the senses. We may not realize it, but wearing glasses or contact lenses is just one instance of such supplementation. Needing a foreign language to speak, on an everyday basis, is another. This example leads us to the most emphasized element of the film's aesthetic: the separation of language as it is visible, in mouths, in gestures, in bodies, from language that is audible. Language in the film is at first made to disintegrate. First you *see* it and then you *hear* it. And while you hear it, you are almost distracted from it by the written word.

The realization of that need for the written word is a confrontation with our own inadequacy. You see language first when, in the extensive credits sequence that opens the film, the speakers are shown saying what they turn out to be saying in the film, but without voice. This is frustrating; at first, one assumes the sound is defective. Later, some of the gestures seen earlier fall into place. For example, one woman says that politics is like changing pants: every so often you put on a new pair of pants while your body remains the same; and, similarly, politics forces us to 'put on' a new enemy every so often. Just think of the way the misnomer 'Arab' currently replaces the equally problematic qualifier 'communist.' You see that strange gesture of simulating putting on

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

pants, but it doesn't make sense. Not yet. Only later do you realize, if your memory is capable of putting that gesture together with that speech, why she was making the gesture. This appeal to a memory that cannot hold everything is, in turn, a reminder of the durational aspect of film.

Instead of hearing the voices during those first few minutes of the film, you hear a sound track of street noise. Nothing special, nothing to understand, just noise in the physical as well in the informational sense of the term. This noise competes with the sense that language is being spoken. The point of this competition was to bring out into the open a realization that underlies the project, to protect it from a false division. It puts speech on the street, so to speak; it puts private, personal language out in the political domain. This merging of private and public undermines a long-standing false opposition that no one really believes in but which is really difficult to give up. Making street noise the first thing you hear while seeing people speaking that you cannot hear was like a preface that qualifies everything else.

After this sequence, the reverse happens when the film 'proper' begins. Now we hear the voices but no longer see the speakers. The focus is now entirely on the speeches. Yet this is not a reversal between visual and auditory sensation. For, instead of seeing the speakers speak, we see their words while we hear them translated into an English that never quite exactly matches what they say written in large print on the screen. Like the street noise competing with the mouths and the bodies of the speakers, this written English is put in competition with the voices. It is written in such large print over the images that, as a consequence, these become background, a form of visual noise, in turn comparable to the street noise of the opening sequence.

At this point I wish to add a few remarks to keep the discussion focused on the issue of how to develop a research project in cultural analysis: interdisciplinary, and 'migratory' at the same time. A first issue concerns narrative, which is my first theoretical specialization. To the frustration of the viewer—at least, I speculate that this is frustrating—the images that accompany the speeches and the written transcriptions or translations of these go nowhere, narratively speaking. This doesn't mean that the film is devoid of narrative. On the contrary, the lack of a satisfying narrative direction and ending only brings narration to the forefront as a problem; it denaturalizes it from its self-evident cultural domination. Narrativity is inevitably part of film, if only due to the workings of characters in sequence and duration.

But there is more to the problem of narrativity here. The speeches, sometimes evoking memories in brief narrative bits, do not in themselves constitute a narrative. In the film the speeches are short statements

Mieke Bal

spoken directly and hence address the viewer as a second person. The credit sequence had shown this already only visually, the viewer remembers the modes of address. When hearing the voices and reading what they say one remembers their body language when speaking. They talk as if directly to you as the viewer, or sometimes sideways and clearly in conversation with one of the filmmakers. Instead of being elements toward one narrative, the speeches make a narrative out of the encounter with the addressee, the viewer.

But its narrative nature goes farther than this. The visual background consists of four sequences, perhaps four potential stories, thus appropriating through viewers' expectations the most common linguistic or literary, cultural form, or mode as I prefer to call it. But as much as they imply narrative, these four sequences blast it out of the water. These are sequences of images with a narrative quality, even some suspense, and slightly unsettling. But these narratives can only abort; they lead nowhere. This seemed important to me, and again, it 'just happened' during the editing process. The safety measures of the police are inadequate; when the embassy closes off the street bicycles can still go through. Fire-fighters are unable to do more than break a window but the water from their pipes leaks out and sprays the passers-by, not the fire. By means of the failure of the actions shown, the four sequences show the inadequacy of narrative to account for the state of mobility and displacement, as well as of measures to produce security. Mobility does not produce gripping tales of travel; it produces cultural stagnation. A stagnation for which the so-called host cultures must be held accountable.

For example, to mention the four sequences in order of appearance: punk youngsters are just sitting, whiling away their time, thickening duration while their dog is the only figure trying to do something. In a second visual sequence, a futile but coerced effort to clean the public park after the Love Parade in Berlin occupies the time of the unemployed. Policemen protect the US and UK embassies, but are unable to prevent bicyclists from transgressing the blocked-off territory. Fire-fighters only manage to destroy, not protect the house on fire. Together, then, these four sequences do produce a narrative. This is a four-chapter narrative of inadequacy, of impotence to deal with change.

This conclusion about the inadequacy of what is, in fact, a very traditional answer to danger, seemed important. What we see in these visual sequences is a kind of social stagnation. What these visual non-stories have in common is that they inflect, gloss, and further 'accent' the speeches we hear. We can conclude that the impossibility of narrativity which they bring to the fore will flourish under conditions of social stagnation. This is where culture and politics inevitably intersect.

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

They also distract us in the same way that noise tends to distract us when we are concentrating on vision. But there is also sound, noise, street noises, in these background sequences. When the sounds produced in these narratives of futility become louder, threatening to compete with the voices, we realize that the written word is itself a further 'accent' offering only a tenuous hold on communication. This can be seen as a connotative statement—if such a thing is logically possible—on the inadequacy of the library, the primary tool of disciplinary, disciplined research.

This also brings me back to the ability of sound, made so central in this film, to bring to the fore the migratory aesthetic and the violence it encounters and seeks to counter. Sound in this project constitutes a tool, perhaps a weapon, against some of the dominant tendencies in viewing in a culture saturated by cinema and television and its standard modes of identificatory absorption. Sound, not in support of but displaced from the image, is pushed rigorously out of sync; thus it counters, for example, the voyeuristic tendencies built into a cinema of individual story-telling, including witnessing. It counters a documentary tradition of telling the story of one to stand for the adventure of many. This is where, ordinarily, visual and linguistic narrativity join forces, a force we have sought to withstand in this experimental film. I am not saying that this tradition is inherently politically wrong or unethical; it is simply a mode, a very efficient and adequate one, but perhaps for that very reason not a mode that should enjoy a monopoly.

What alternative to the logic of synchronic sound and image might be suitable for an aesthetics that is migratory—that is, one that endorses and explores the mobility of the current social world? If we believe, as I firmly believe we must, the asylum seeker who considers being deprived of his tongue the essence of being severed from his home, then we must reconsider the importance of this *acoustic mirror* (to invoke Kaja Silverman's brilliant account of voice in cinema). I have not uncovered any scholarship on this particular problem whereby the mother tongue is out of reach, in some cases even forgotten, but not replaced with anything of the same identity-shaping force.

For this reason alone, identity politics, important as it remains in some situations, cannot be the sole answer to the problem posed by 'the migratory.' This tool for self-realization that has been taken from people in displacement is a key component of what it is to be human. It turns out, as I discovered while making this film, that this acoustic mirror must be taken very seriously and may perhaps be considered an area in which we can all contribute socially to the further and better shaping of the kind of society that globalization has produced.

Mieke Bal

This is a huge step from the vague initial problem, which I repeat below:

How can we be culturally specific in our analyses of cultural processes and artefacts without nailing people or artworks to a provenance they no longer feel comfortable claiming as theirs?

Let us say, to cut a long story short, that through making this film of which listening was an enormously important part, I have learned to understand an aspect of my vague question which I did not know existed. This is why 'culturally specific' has to be redefined as, say, 'multi-culturally specific': not as a melting pot nor as separate spheres; neither assimilation nor cultural essentialism. By that redefinition the cultural remains in sight even where no central culture can be detected. Now when I say 'listening' I am using a verb that has both an intellectual and an affective, even an ethical, dimension. This is also important in itself. For through that realization I learned that an intellectual, academic project does not stay in its isolated place. It spills over into a world where other values than intellectual achievement are important. This brings me to the relevance of the practice of *making* as a form of research, as a deployment of Appadurai's research imagination.

Let me conclude by connecting the key terms of this research: culture, human existence, art, video, practice. Having, or being in, a culture is fundamental to humanity; one could claim it to be a human right. Yet a number of the migrants speaking in this film have no such thing. If art is one of the means we have to explore and address fundamental questions of what it is to be human, then the current condition of displacement—including displacement 'at home' where the home has been taken away, as in Palestine, for example—is a relevant, indeed, central, place to start for innovative practices of analysing that domain of 'culture'. Video art, which disposes of technological tools to produce experiences one would not ordinarily be able to have, is an efficient, indeed powerful, means of raising such questions and brings us a step closer to a tentative and provisional answer.

The practice of video making can raise these questions at the sensorial level; not—or not exclusively—intellectually. When making this short film we found that questions not easily addressed in text form emerged and imposed themselves when voice and noise were given the same level of importance. The different ways we have deployed to wrench sound away from its facile synchronicity with images constitute our attempt to cope with these persistent questions. This decision, which was aesthetic, ethical, as well as intellectual, 'just happened' in the same way that a fight, or violence, or other kind of encounter just happen. This happening is the performative aspect of the situation we

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

put ourselves in when we go out of the library, organized by disciplines, into the messy world.

The culture of displacement we found there is not 'globalized' in the way westerners tend to conceive of globalization. The steady stream of migrants moves mainly in one direction only; the direction indicated by the fundamental lack of justice in the economic divisions that are called 'globalization'. The centre is nowhere for the displaced to begin with. But where does that put them in terms of any cultural realm they can live in as 'theirs'? In a culture of displacement. The insight that the acoustic mirror is the cultural home of individuals gives settled people a specific ethical task. 'We' (if I may be forgiven for using, albeit ironically, this problematic pronoun, qualifying it as people who do live in their continuous acoustic environment) to be sure cannot give Daryush, or any of the other speakers who might crave it, their mother tongue back; nor can we make up for that loss.

But we can produce a substitute, poor as it may be, to that primary acoustic mirror. We can produce, that is, an acoustic, indeed an integrated sentient mirror that would be, not a mother tongue but a friendly tongue: a linguistic, sonorous environment of friendliness and welcome, interest and collaboration. There is a narrative aspect to this proposition. This environment of friendly voices as a culturally multiple sonic space will be a form a *retroversion*. This narratological term refers to the technique, in story-telling, of referring back to earlier events that happened before the primary story-line. A friendly acoustic mirror, in this sense, can recast the reassuring quality of the home soundscape in the new environment. One, that is, that can engage with, and in the end, help substitute, the soundscape of displacement. This is a cultural provenance as well. This would be the ethical counterpart of migratory aesthetics: the ethical imperative to provide a congenial, friendly soundscape in which mobility—the migratory—is not the despised exception but the valued norm.

Why would art that is ordinarily categorized as visual help to explore this possibility? *Lost in Space*, as I mentioned before, has been an experiment involving the senses. Vision, on the side of the viewer doing the looking, responds on the side of the image to an *appearance*. This word, I suggest, must be given its full weight, not in the metaphysical sense of appearances in miracles, but almost as strongly and powerfully. It was our hope that the mix of rhythm in duration, of linearity interrupted, of technology as a tool to acknowledge fragmentation and supplementation, of sounds competing with other sounds and with images, can suggest a form in which people are encouraged to *appear*, not as *images* to be voyeuristically captured, nor in the name of a cultural provenance that keeps them imprisoned as 'different,' but in a

Mieke Bal

synaesthetic fullness that only becomes possible after the collapse of the effect of the real, that greatest lie of all. The centre is *nowhere*, but it only takes one space, a small, graphic gap, to turn that half-way statement into something more liveable: the centre is *now here*.

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Mieke Bal

(Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Netherland)

Lost in Space: the Violence of Language

Summary

The question of encoding and decoding violence in medial transformation is a complex one. What it doesn't mean, I think, is 'the representation of violence in the media', although that question remains relevant in some ways. I interpret the phrase that names this program as: the media—here denoting language and image—as simultaneously the site of violence and the opportunity for activism against it; the intersection of seeing and speaking and of sound and image, as the place where violence can easily and does constantly occur. But also, I will argue, this gives the media and the people who manipulate the media in public culture a tool for resistance. For if the conjunction of media lends itself to a specific kind of cultural violence, this opportunity can also be redirected to combat violence. I will argue this through a discussion of a topic that is obviously relevant for contemporary culture: something that, for reasons I will explain, I call 'migratory aesthetics.'



GLIGOR CHERMSKI:
The Ritter and the snake,
oil on canvas, 2003



KARNIVAL, Petrich, 2007

Teresa Salema

Lava, Wound, Scar: Violence – Ways of Using

1. *Lava or the original problem.* As a driving force, formless in its origin yet soon proteiform in its omnipresence, violence circulates as a permanent energy, both active and reactive. Violence is always ready to enter most situations without being asked; always with an effect of transfiguration, dislocation, or subversion; always searching for new configurations, always expressing itself in multiple manifestations. Violence reminds us of lava that becomes cold when in contact with air; or of lead melting on a spoon and becoming capriciously solid in contact with water (a practice common in the New Year rituals of some North European countries wherein the shape which is generated in this way inspires speculations about personal questions concerning the coming year).

Expressions of violence range within a wide spectrum, between rough aggression and heroic sublimity, between revolution and the imposition of an everyday routine, between implacable justice and intolerance—to mention but a few topics or areas of fixation which are always transitory, always relational, always contextual, and always contingent. By appropriating to itself fulfilled affects such as love and hatred, violence not only fixates itself upon its objects but also directs communicational flushes. By projecting itself upon unfulfilled affects such as fear and hope, violence models potentially huge, part-virtual, scenarios where (im)possibilities are anticipated.

Without violence it is inconceivable that we would be able to extract from nature the means essential for our survival, i.e. without regarding how the metabolisms concerned are processed, which in turn means

Key Words:

- Systemic energy
- real violence and discourses on violence
- pacifistic illusions
- law and order are not the opposite of chaos
- contingency
- the history of violence as its own memories

Teresa Salema

disregarding the existence (or not) of an ecological conscience which might inspire more balanced forms of resource management. Without violence it is impossible to conceive of any maintainable routine that would reproduce life. Without violence there is no creation, no modelling of any material. Without violence, there is no balance between powers, which in modern societies has replaced the absolute centralization that formerly prevailed. At a push, we could identify violence beyond its origin as a drive, and beyond the neurophysiological implications in human beings as a form of *manipulation*.¹

¹ See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago University Press 1958. In an essay on violence, the same author distinguishes violence from *power*, from *strength*, from *force* and from *authority*, because of its instrumental character (H. Arendt, *On Violence*. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company 1970, p. 44ff).

To read violence as an energetic mode means recognizing its character as prime matter that is inherent to life itself and therefore impossible to root out, which consists of drives and which, above all, is neutral in respect of any kind of value. This impels us to reformulate many questions and affords us the possibility (for instance) of looking critically at pacifistic illusions that do not derive from deep experiences of war wounds. Faced with the images that enter our homes under the label of 'urban violence' (or should we say, to be more precise, 'suburban violence'?) in relation with tribal conflicts, we realize that any kind of 'ethnic' interpretation is always too shallow in its one-sided view of exclusiveness and sectarianism. Perhaps it is not inappropriate, therefore, to ask why it is that in a city (or suburb), between barriers of several kinds that inhibit freedom and signs that we are not always able to read and with which we often don't agree or sympathize, there isn't a higher degree of violence in a city (or suburb). Given the discrepancy between individual freedom that is exhaustively proclaimed as a postulate of modernity, on the one hand, and the systems of rules that condition communication and determine functionality in modern cities (beginning with the architectural paradigm, according to which form follows function, and through different manifestations of disorganisation and contingency, such as new streets or building-works or changes in the signalling system), and given the discrepancy between abstract laws, informal yet effective norms, and the growing degree of impunity allowed by the anonymity of huge urban conglomerates, we may ask ourselves why the use of violence is not even more frequent. The precarious balance between the idea of the free individual, between his or her movements in a modern city, and the constraints of scheduled time, between the capacity for judging, the possibility of taking ethical and civic options, and the thresholds of inhibition, between the game of impulses and drives and censoring or coercive instances, irrespective of whether they are of an internal or external kind, such a balance is further upset in modern cities by fragmentation and by the residual character of the messages which are carried by the mass media, most of all by the yellow press with its sensationalistic and decontextualizing effects.

Lava, Wound, Scar: Violence – Ways of Using

From the perspective of information sustainability, of communication ecology, we could stress the predatory character of information with a strong degree of selective aggressiveness. We should further differentiate between the intentional register of a systematically yellow press and the basic rules of any kind of information that cannot but impose economy on a message, regaining in this way some legitimacy by trying to synthonize its appeal with the limbic system and drive the receptors. (What may today be considered the most problematic lies of all, I would dare to assert, in circumstances of the fragmentation and decontextualization of the three moments which have been for centuries the pillars of ancient rhetoric, meaning the communicational intention of delighting, convincing and motivating. The notion of receptive pleasure through facileness and titillation, which is generally associated with popular and mass culture, tends to be dissociated from a conception of high culture, which is also meant to be elitist and boring; but finally both converge into a model which is so ostensibly deceiving that it may open the way to demagogical discourses and representations which might lead to impetuous and unreflective actions.)

Problematic—and at the same time widely rejected—is each and any attempt to ‘make history’, to draw a straight line from war to peace, in the sense of a so-called civilizational process of control and monopoly over violence that cannot but lead to a tendency (otherwise it risks becoming a form of wishful thinking) to a kind of voluntarism that is a *posteriori* adverse to forms of contextualizing reading that do not reject contradiction and paradox, but on the contrary search for them. Norbert Elias, who undertook the monumental task of carrying out a case-study of the European process of civilization, extending from a medieval society of warriors to baroque court society, later felt obliged to stress the non-linearity of that process in order to analyze cases in which civilization, or pacification, sees itself torn down, as happened during the Nazi regime. In a ‘study about the Germans’ of the 19th and 20th centuries, Elias stresses the moments of fracture and rupture within the psychogenesis and sociogenesis of modern society, within the evolution from the predominance of external control to self-control. Such a process, notwithstanding the apparent choreographic perfection it reached in court society, remained a mere tendency as a result of trying to achieve the goal of a monopoly of violence. This happened partly because in European society the tradition of duelling, which for many centuries was supposed to save or restore honour within a shame-culture, lasted an extremely long time; and also because the tendency towards the internalization of aggressive feelings was never able to prevent or control the appearance of ideologically extremist groups that were always more than verbally violent, or class struggles that often

Teresa Salema

broke the rules of street demonstrations or strikes. We know all too well how such phenomena in Europe upset the precarious stability of democratic regimes and contributed to the low credibility of the parliamentary system, thereby leading to their deterioration and collapse in the nineteen-twenties and thirties. To understand this issue better, we must examine the tension between the civilizing process and violence. In fact, if 'violence generates chaos, order generates violence.'² In this sense we must ask ourselves whether civilized coexistence should imply much more than an idea—or, better, an ideology—of pacific coexistence,³ or whether any pacifistic hopes should be deconstructed as mere illusions and therefore replaced by projects of militant, active engagement for peace as *not* war. What is *not* possible is to start from a supposed anthropological constitution or nature (i.e. the innate goodness or illness of humankind); rather, we should take into account the paradoxical character of violence, in a certain way not only as a detonator of systems, a wake-up call against lethargy which takes civilization for granted, but most of all as a constitutive element of existing life conditions, of our environment as a world that integrates our complex psychosomatic systems. Elias sums up this complex issue by stressing that civilization is ultimately a never-ending, always threatened process. In a long footnote, he explains the reasons why he sees that precariousness:

But civilized coexistence includes much more than non-violence. Part of it is not only something negative, the vanishing of violent acts in human communication, but a whole field of positive particularities, therefore and most of all the specific configuration of individuals into groups, which can only occur when the danger that people might attack or force one another by resorting to stronger muscles, to better arms, to doing something that they would not do without that coercion, is withdrawn. The civilizing configuration of individuals in spaces made peaceful reflects itself in arts, with which human beings mutually delight themselves; in sport games, in which they mutually prove themselves without being hurt; in travels and excursions through peaceful domains, and much more. There is no possible pacification as long as well-being is mostly unequal and power quotients are too different. And conversely, there is no possible well-being in the long term without stable pacification.⁴

Here we notice the projective character of any one-sided anthropologization, of an idea of a timeless 'human nature' and its corresponding mythical representations. On the one hand, a conception of such a nature as being a kind and gentle one, as described by Thomas More and Rousseau (in a certain way secularizing the Christian model of the

² Wolfgang Sofsky, *Traktat über die Gewalt*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1996, p. 10.

³ In this perspective, the designation of the period after World War II until 1989 as one of 'cold war' might be seen as an ironical double of that expression. Its semantic inversion as 'hot peace', used in the nineties by the Vice-President of the German Bundestag and member of the Green Party, Antje Vollmer, to refer to the period that began after the fall of the Berlin Wall and was marked by conflicts in the Gulf and the Balkan regions, also reveals its fully paradoxical character. Cf. A. Vollmer, *Heißer Frieden. Über Gewalt, Macht und Geheimnis der Zivilisation*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Wisch 1995.

⁴ Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen. Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1990, p. 225, note 1 (translated from German by TS).

Lava, Wound, Scar: Violence – Ways of Using

New Testament), would correspond to a mythical space-time conception of peace and plenty. On the other hand, a conception of a twisted and evil human nature, with a permanent longing for revenge (here we recognize the Hebraic matrix of the Old Testament), such as we find in authors like Machiavelli and Hobbes, would correspond to a primitive scene which was supposed to be hostile or even warlike and from which human beings would desire to escape. To fulfil this purpose, they would conclude social pacts of power delegation and violence monopolization.⁵ Here we can easily see how the first perspective may inspire a triadic vision of original paradise in a state of grace, followed by a state of fall into disgrace, alienation, heavy physical work, disorientation and representations of the world as a labyrinth, as a book impossible to be read, a state that was finally supposed to lead to a future state of reorganization, of re-established communicational and universal clearness—in any case, to a 'better world'. The second perspective develops a temporal binomial of a barbaric state succeeded by a civilized state. If this vision becomes even more pessimistic, it may tend to enter a circle of eternal return, towards disbelief in the possibility of reaching any civilized platform as a space-time of lasting peace, towards scepticism about progress because it would soon be denied by unavoidable symptoms of barbarism which would arise in simply human mobility, in a struggle for real or symbolic survival, in the agonistic principle, in mere contingent factors.

Even at a time such as the present, when narrative models that have provided us for many centuries with different kinds of reading maps have been fundamentally called into question, there is yet no analysis that can afford to give up any sort of effabulation, which means the systematization and presentation of collected data. The ambivalent and paradoxical character of any reality (let us only consider the endless number of perspectives through which a single situation is seen, told or described by all parties involved) needs violence as energy in order to move forward: it needs energy as violence in order to be analyzed and/or synthesized.

Any discourse on violence as a problem in a complex context, therefore, cannot give up on searching a framework for its examples, its concrete situations; it cannot but build this framework within a space-time spectrum, taking into account all kinds of conditioning facts, from coercion to stagnation, from sudden or radical political, social and economical changes to war. We must also not fail to consider two main forms of discrepancy: firstly, the informalization of violence, its dissipative character in modern culture in contrast with its strong ritualization and spectacularization in pre-modern, i.e. pre-juristic, societies; secondly, the methodological separation between disciplined discourses

⁵ For further explanations, see Max Horkheimer, 'Egoismus und Freiheitsbewegung', in: *Kritische Theorie, Band II*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, pp.1-81.

Teresa Salema

on violence (or its representations, to be more precise) such as have been practised at universities, and the real violence which explodes on the streets and places on the planet where conflicts are being carried out. Even if we try to deny such discrepancies, for instance by imposing a leading thread of our own effabulation to situations which are accessible to us only through discourses and representations, we must still recognize that no case-study, however accurate and complete, however detailed in its contextualization, however lucid its analysis might be, can enable its author to face similar *real* situations. This happens because the moment that the observer becomes an actor in a directly violent situation a whole constellation of drives comes into motion and places our capacities for judging and acting under unexpected conditions and may provoke unpredictable reactions for better or worse.

What separates naked life, a plane on which many violent virtualities become possible and where any explicit use of violence tends to remain unpunished—or even exalted and glorified—from juridical-political existence in which positive laws challenge the *jus natural* model to formulate concrete proposals of citizenship, always in tension between settled aims and the means to achieve them? In situations of civilizational balance, meaning in spaces and times of peace, it becomes possible to let the functionality of economy coexist with the performativity of politics and interaction and, under such conditions, to point out, to describe and also to circumscribe economic imperatives by exercising critical citizenship. Such tension is also favourable to an amplification or multiplication of public spaces and times, making it possible to open symbolic domains that might consist, for instance, in the creation of art and in the discussion of art, in cultural consumption and its critique, but also in mere leisure attempting to rescue the classical sense of the Greek *σκολή*, of the Latin *otium*, as a form of openness to new attempts of interacting with the world.

There are always possibilities of balances—surely precarious—in the tension between private and public domains, between intimacy and polis. Even in a time such as the present, when public eyes tend to penetrate private territories and bodies, when private lives see themselves crossed over by information technologies, even the most perverse effects of the interpenetration and contamination of both domains brings us forward in the study of communicative networks. Any kind of critical verbalization, as well as any signal of resistance, is always opposed to totalitarian tendencies which operate inversely towards emptying the public domain as a forum for—let us say tentatively—free interaction. We find situations tantamount to political, juridical and normative no-man's-lands in totalitarian regimes, in wartime, in fanatic movements. Most of all when a war is close to its end there is oscillation

Lava, Wound, Scar: Violence – Ways of Using

between the extremely contingent implementation of martial laws and the restoration of constitutional order during the work of physical reconstruction for economic regeneration and the reestablishment of a political system. In such cases we often find not only a minimization of the distance between violent situations and their representation, as well as manifestations of coexistence between forms of order and disorder, when the frontier between rule and exception, order and chaos, oscillates and requires new evaluations of what had formerly obeyed clear criteria of inclusion and exclusion.

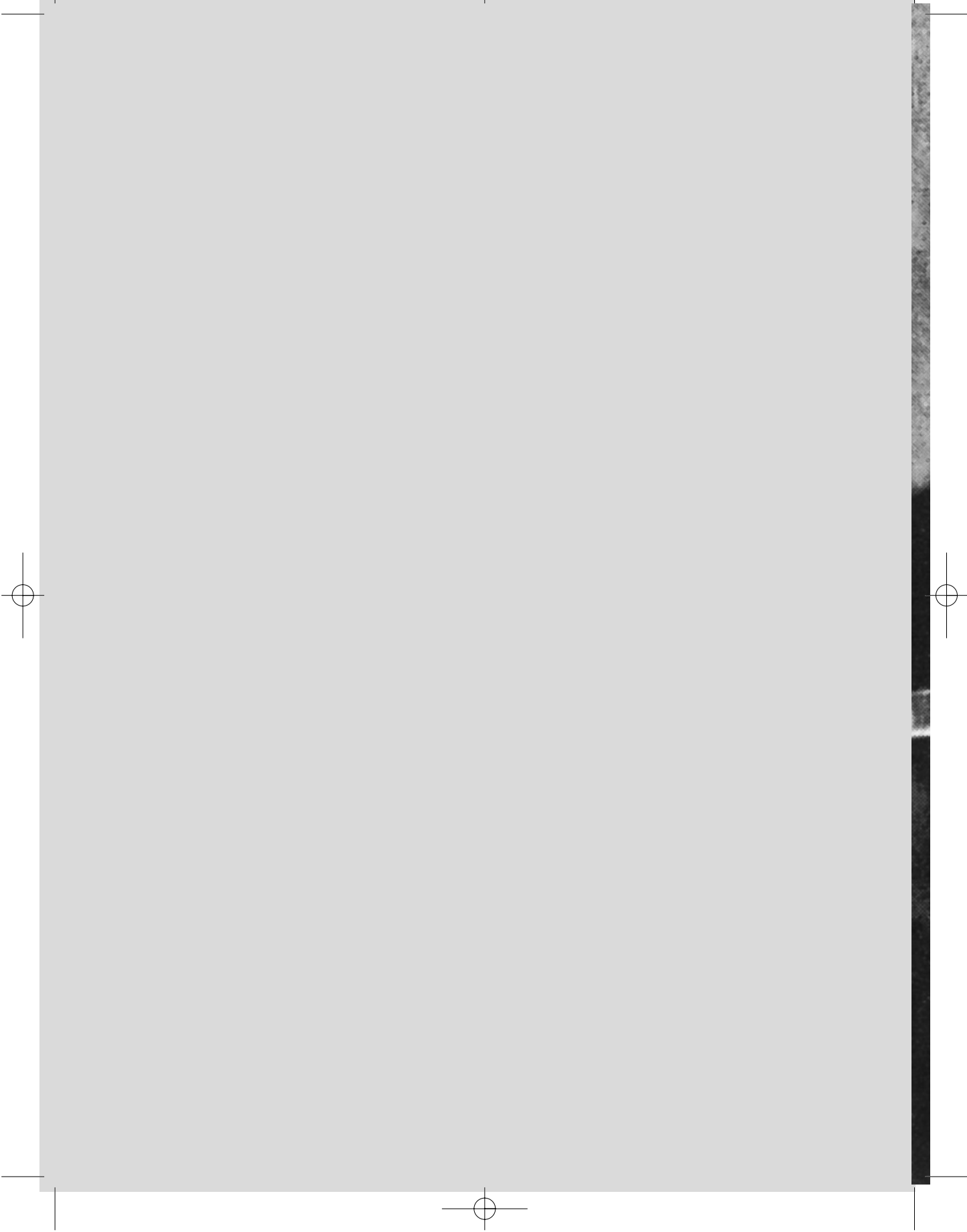
We may therefore see how violence, as a powerful energy driven out of crisis and provoking critical situations, behaves like a sort of lava that strikes and hurts and overrules every element with which it comes into contact in earthly reality. But we must also see that the wounds provoked by violence always leave scars which should be read within the great book of life and hence enable us in this way to think historically about the effects of violence and to act in order to avoid injustice, cruelty and arbitrariness.

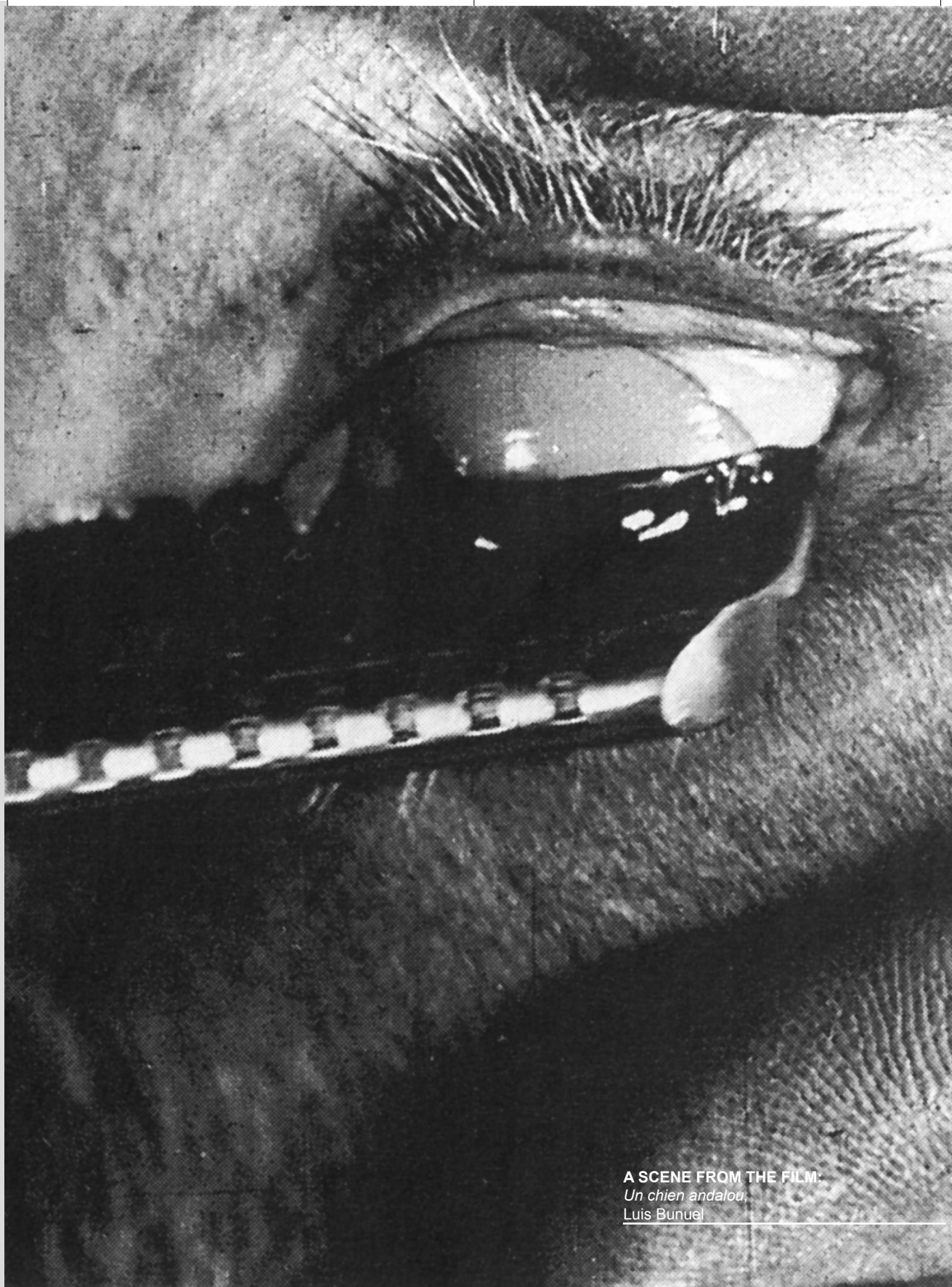
Teresa Salema
(University of Lisbon, Portugal)

Lava, Wound, Scar: Violence – Ways of Using

Summary

Violence has always been and will always remain an unsolved problem unless we begin to look at it not as something disturbing but as a challenge to be manipulated as an inexhaustible energy resource. From this perspective we may gain further possible ways of reading once again the so-called European civilizational process and the narratives which deal with the so-called 'violent nature' of human beings.





A SCENE FROM THE FILM:
Un chien andalou,
Luis Bunuel



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**Violence
in Memory
Practicies**



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Ernst van Alphen

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

Since the 1990s the spread of new ways of remembering in art and literature has been enormous. These memory practices manifest themselves around traumatic issues such as migration, the Holocaust and other genocides, but also in the increasing use of media genres such as photography, documentary film and video, the archive, and even the family album. These memory practices form a specific aesthetic. The major question raised by this flourishing of memory practices is: should we see this as a celebration of memory—as a *fin de siècle* and at the same time a *debut de siècle*? Is this an expression of the desire to look backwards or, by contrast, a symptom of a severe memory crisis or a fear of forgetting? Either way, this art practice so typical of our time may point to the meaning of the present itself. In order to elaborate an approximate answer to this question of the meaning of the present through art practices, I will focus on the work of Hungarian filmmaker and artist Peter Forgacs. His films and installations are exclusively made up of material that he finds in the archive of home movies. As a consequence of this self-imposed limitation, it is clear that his work deals with certain aspects of memory: it is archival and the material selected from the archives consists exclusively of home movies.

Home movies form a particular genre, and as a genre they have specific properties in relation to memory. The genre focuses almost exclusively on the personal. The societal dimension of human life only figures obliquely, if at all. We get to see anniversaries, weddings, family

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- Destruction of memory
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- Kracauer
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- temporality

Ernst van Alphen

outings, the birth and growing up of children. These personal moments in the life of families are restricted on the basis of a specific criterion: they consist entirely of memories of happy moments. But as Forgacs points out in an interview, the home movie is personal in yet another way. It is structured like a dream. In the case of old home movies, it is exclusively visual. There are no words spoken, there is no voice-over. Visual communication is the only medium. Moreover, it contains many strange ellipses.

If Forgacs is right in this view of home movies as analogous to dreams, Freud's explanation of dreams is also extremely relevant for an understanding of them. Take his film *Maelstrom*, for example. Although the macro-structure of *Maelstrom* is narrative, if you look at them the fragments of footage that form the building blocks of this narrative are not so much telling but showing. For this reason, I contend that the footage does not have the form of a family chronicle but of externalized memory. This shift is best explained in terms of temporality.

Whereas home movies are almost exclusively concerned with personal time, Forgacs's montage edits the key moments of history into this personal temporality. History is present in *Maelstrom*, albeit necessarily in a de-centred way. For example, the home movie footage of the Peereboom family, the main archival source for *Maelstrom*, shows a visit of Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana to the town of Middelburg; another fragment shows the celebration in Middelburg of the 40th anniversary of Queen Wilhelmina's reign. When taken as personal, private footage, the fact that the family filmed this can be read as symptomatic of their assimilation into Dutch culture. They identified with the strong attachment of the Dutch to the royal family. But there are other historical references inserted by the hand of the director. Sometimes we hear a radio broadcast, or there are titles or texts written on the screen indicating the historical moment in which the family footage is embedded. At other times, a disembodied voice explains the historical moment. A voice is heard singing, in the style of a traditional Jewish religious chant, rules or articles proclaimed by Seyss-Inquart stipulating how to kill warm-blooded animals, or describing who is considered Jewish and who is not, stipulating what Jews who were going to be deported were allowed to take with them, and so on. Whatever device Forgacs uses to insert History, historical time is never part of the personal time of the home footage but always superposed, *imposed* on it.

Characteristically, however, the imposition of History on personal time never works smoothly. As a result, the completely different temporal dimension of the home footage again and again strikes the viewer. Personal time and historical time are in radical tension with each other. We expect to see traces or symptoms of the dramatic History of those

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

days in the home movie footage. But we do not. While the history of WW II and the Holocaust progresses, the home movies continue to show happy family memories. But what does 'happy' mean?

That 'happy' is a slippery notion becomes clear when Max Peereboom also films the moment that his family prepares for deportation to Auschwitz. First of all, it is remarkable that he decided to film this. We see his wife Annie, and her stepmother around the table preparing the clothes they want to wear or take with them on deportation. They drink coffee and Max smokes a pipe. You could not tell from this footage that they are preparing themselves for deportation. This is done by a written text imposed on the footage. What we see is a happy family situation. Nothing of the History that will victimize them in such a horrific way is able to enter the personal realm of the home movie. This separation of the two domains is visible because the temporal dimension of the home movie does not unfold as a collective narrative, but persistently as a personal narrative. In *Maelstrom*, personal history is not represented as part of collective history, as a synecdoche of historical time; it is in radical tension with it.

In her essay on Forgacs's work, Kaja Silverman argues that his films are based on strategies of re-personalization instead of objectification or categorization.¹ His films evoke the phenomenal world: they are about vitality, enjoyment, about activities such as dancing and playing. Whereas the archival mechanisms of objectification and categorization strip images of their singularity, Forgacs's archival footage keeps insisting on the private and affective dimensions of images. Silverman writes that this is first of all achieved through the many direct looks with which people face the camera. This seems to be a defining feature of home movies as such. When people face the camera in a fiction movie, this kind of look is self-reflexive; for a moment it short-circuits the fictionality of the film by establishing direct contact with the viewer. The film shows its constructedness. In home movies, such frequent looking into the camera is of a completely different order. For here there is no clear distinction between the camera and the person behind the camera. *Maelstrom*, but also *The Black Dog*, contain many examples of that interaction. It is emphasized by how Simon, the youngest brother of Max, makes fun of Max the cameraman again and again, pulling funny faces before the camera. He does this not to spoil the film but to make the cameraman laugh or make him angry. His funny faces function within an affective relationship between two human beings. There is another extreme example of this in *Maelstrom*, this time of a different order. At one of the many weddings, the two- or three-year-old daughter of Max and Annie is being filmed, and when she turns her face to the camera she expects to see the face of Max her

¹Kaja Silverman, in press in *Flesh of my Flesh*, (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press)

Ernst van Alphen

father or one of her relatives. Instead she sees a monstrous object, namely the camera. She is clearly utterly terrified. This negative example shows that people in home movies are not posing for the camera, but for the person who holds the camera. They let themselves be filmed, not to be objectified into a beautiful or interesting image, but out of love for the person who films. According to Silverman, people in home footage do not just convey Roland Barthes' idea of 'this has been' ('ça a été'), but 'I love you'.²

² Silverman, *ibid.*

Barthes was talking about still photographs; like Silverman I am discussing moving images. As Forgacs explains in an interview, there is a fundamental difference between looking at a photograph and watching moving images. He intensifies this difference by his manipulation of film time, by slow motion or even stopping the moving image, reducing it to a film still:

*'The slow-motion technique and manipulation of the film's time, movement and rhythm, give an opposite dynamic or an opposite possibility than in the example of the photo explained in Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes. The frozen photographic second of Barthes' thesis is a good example of why the photo is a tombstone, whereas the moving image is not. [...] If we made a black-and-white photograph of ourselves right now, we could observe the event as already-past time: history. [...] But while we have moving images of the past, we always have the fluxes of life, the contrapuntal notion between Barthes's photo thesis and the movement (=life) on film, which proves forever that we're alive. So my viewers—and you—know that they (the amateur film actors, my heroes) are physically dead; but they are still moving. They are reanimated again and again by the film.'*³

³ www.artmargins.com/content/interview/forgacs.html

Hence the effect of re-personalization brought about by Forgacs's films is not only the result of the specific genre of home movies, but also of his intensification of the qualities of the broader genre of the moving image as such. His manipulation of moving images—the slow-downs, the movements back and forth, the pausing of movement for a few seconds—creates a rhythm that makes the aliveness of the movements a deeply sensorial experience. It creates a distance between real time and the time of the moving images. This de-naturalizes our reception of time and movement, as a result of which we become overwhelmed by the life embodied in these moving images.

Forgacs works with the qualitative difference between historical time and personal time as we experience it. One might wonder if this quality also depends on the filmmaker and the kind of family that is being filmed? In this respect, the difference between the Peereboom and the

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

Seyss-Inquart home movies, his second archival source for *Maelstrom*, is revealing. The distinction I have used so far between personal time and historical time does not automatically apply in the same way or to the same degree to the Seyss-Inquarts footage. The Seyss-Inquarts' position in History is radically different from that of the Peereboom family. I am not referring to the fact that the one family occupies the position of the victim in History, the other the position of the perpetrator. I am referring to the fact that Seyss-Inquart was appointed by Hitler; he represents him in The Netherlands. He is the representative of Hitler, of History; one could say, he *is* History, or rather the embodiment of it. This makes one wonder, can the embodiment of History make home movies of his family and friends? Or is the genre of the home movie disabled when History enters the realm of the personal?

There is, of course, also a class difference between the Peereboom family and the Seyss-Inquart family. Whereas the Peereboom family belongs to a Jewish-Dutch lower-middle class family, the Seyss-Inquarts belong to an Austrian upper-middle class family. This may explain the vitality of the Peerebooms and the more restrained behaviour of the Seyss-Inquart family. It seems that the Seyss-Inquart family members are always aware of the fact that it is not only cameraman who is looking at them but also other, anonymous, abstract, or later viewers. They embody history and, later, just as history will be judged so too will their role in History be judged. When I watch the home movies of this family I cannot avoid focussing on the distinction between useful and useless. It is from the Seyss-Inquart footage that I get information. I become interested from a historical point of view when I notice that Reichs Fuehrer SS Himmler visited the Seyss-Inquart couple at their Clingendael estate in the Netherlands. They were not only fellow Nazi leaders; they and their wives socialized with each other and played tennis—'interesting information'. The fact is that the Seyss-Inquarts' home movies evoke a mode of looking that this genre usually discourages. It is the foregrounds that differentiate the more usual mode of looking at home movies. Forgacs's combination and alternation of the Peerebooms footage with the Seyss-Inquart footage—of personal time and of personal time that is infected by historical time—sharpens our eye for the special qualities of the Peereboom home movies.

As I have argued so far, in *Maelstrom* personal time is shown to be in radical tension with historical time. In terms of my starting question, this tension suggests that the spread of memory practices since the 1990s is the symptom of a crisis of memory rather than of a celebration of memory. It seems to be the expression of a situation in which memory is under siege. This conclusion accords with that of other cultural

Ernst van Alphen

critics. Scholars like Benjamin Buchloh and Andreas Huyssen have argued that this memory crisis is first of all historical and specific. According to Buchloh, mnemonic desire is activated especially in those moments of extreme duress in which the traditional bonds between subjects, between subjects and objects and between objects and their representation, appear to be on the verge of displacement if not outright disappearance.⁴ In the 1990s especially, massive migrations due to economic reasons or wars resulting in genocide have caused such moments of extreme duress. But the memory crisis is not only historically specific in the socio-political sense, it is also caused by media culture, by its overwhelming presence since the 90s and by the specific forms this culture develops. The enormous impact of photographic and filmic media culture has not worked in the service of memory but, on the contrary, threatens to destroy historical memory and the mnemonic image.

⁴ Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's Atlas: *The Anomic Archive*", in *Atlas: The Reader*, (London 2003: Whitechapel), 109

Buchloh elaborates this erosion of historical consciousness in the German context, specifically through a reading of Gerhard Richter's archival work, *Atlas*, as a critical response to that context. The photographs collected in *Atlas* belong to very different photographic registers, namely both to registers that construct public and historical identity and to registers that construct private identity, such as the family photograph. Yet it is the continuous field of banal images more and more prevalent since the 1960s that levels out these different photographic formations into a general condition of amnesia. According to Buchloh, 'banality as a condition of everyday life appears here in its specifically German modality, as a sort of psychic anaesthesia' (112).

In the 1920s, German sociologist and cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer had already explained how media culture can have this devastating effect. In his essay, simply entitled 'Photography', he makes a diagnosis of his own times that seems to be at the same time a prophetic diagnosis of our times:

*'Never before has any age been so informed about itself, if being informed means having an image of objects that resembles them in a photographic sense [...] In reality however, the weekly photographic ration does not all mean to refer to these objects or 'ur-mages'. If it were offering itself as an aid to memory, then memory would have to make the selection. But the flood of photos sweeps away the dams of memory. The assault of this mass of images is so powerful that it threatens to destroy the potential existing awareness of crucial traits. Artworks suffer this fate through their reproductions. [...] In the illustrated magazines people see the very world that the illustrated magazines prevent them from perceiving. [...] Never before has a period known so little about itself.'*⁵

⁵ Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography", in *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, Translated, edited, and with an introduction by Thomas Y. Levin, (Cambridge 1995: Harvard U.P.), 58

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

With relevance to our discussion, Kracauer sees historicism, the scholarly practice that emerged more or less at the same moment as modern photographic technology, as the temporal equivalent of the spatial mediations that take place in photography. In Kracauer's words:

'On the whole, advocates of such historicist thinking believe they can explain any phenomenon purely in terms of its genesis. That is, they believe in any case that they can grasp historical reality by reconstructing the course of events in their temporal succession without any gaps. Photography presents a spatial continuum; historicism seeks to provide the temporal continuum. According to historicism, the complete mirroring of an inter-temporal sequence simultaneously contains the meaning of all that occurred within that time. [...] Historicism is concerned with the photography of time.' (49)

How can we consider a medium and a scientific discourse as parallel? Photography and historicism regulate spatial and temporal elements according to laws that belong to the economic laws of nature rather than to mnemonic principles. In contrast, Kracauer argues, memory encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance of a state of affairs nor its entire temporal course. Nor does memory pay much attention to dates; it skips years or stretches temporal distance (50). Kracauer writes in this respect:

'An individual retains memories because they are personally significant. Thus they are organized according to a principle which is essentially different from the organizing principle of photography: memory images retain what is given only in so far as it has significance. Since what is significant is not reducible to either merely spatial or merely temporal terms, memory images are at odds with photographic representations.' (50)

Memory images are also at odds with the principles of historicism, Kracauer concludes later in his essay.

Historicism's temporal inventory corresponds to the spatial inventory of photography. Instead of preserving the 'history' that consciousness reads out of the temporal succession of events, historicism records the temporal succession of events whose linkage does not contain the transparency of history.' (61) It is in the daily newspapers that photography and historicism join forces and intensify each other in their destruction of memory. In the 1920s, daily papers began illustrating their texts more and more and the numbers of illustrated newspapers increased. For Kracauer those illustrated journals embody the devastating effects of the representation of spatial and temporal continuities mistaken for the meaning of history.

Ernst van Alphen

Clearly, Kracauer's diagnosis of a memory crisis as caused by the phenomena of photography and historicism, relatively new in his day, seems also highly relevant for an understanding of the position of memory in the 1990s and after. His sombre prophecy seems to have come true.⁶ For Huyssen, the spread of these ways of remembering, especially in the visual arts, is symptomatic not of a flourishing of memory but a crisis of memory. The memory crisis that started at the beginning of the twentieth century seems to have accelerated and intensified at the end of that century. The reasons for this are again twofold. Firstly, there is a historical and specific reason; second, this acceleration is a result of the impact of developments in media culture.

⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford 2003: Stanford University Press), 1

Let us examine the second reason first. The principles of mediating historical reality introduced by photography and historicism are intensified through film, advanced electronic technologies such as computers and internet, mass media, by the explosion of historical scholarship and an ever more voracious museum culture. It is among other things the abundance of information that explains the memory crisis of the 1990s. Huyssen writes in this line of argument:

*'For the more we are asked to remember in the wake of the information explosion and the marketing of memory, the more we seem to be in danger of forgetting and the stronger the need to forget. At issue is the distinction between usable pasts and disposable data.'*⁷

⁷ Huyssen, *ibid.*, 18tu

Yet, it is not only this very specific mediation of (historical) reality that has its devastating effects on memory, it is also the nature of the historical and political reality of the 1990s itself. Historical memory used to give coherence and legitimacy to families, communities, nations and states. But in the 1990s these links that were more or less stable links have weakened drastically. In the processes of globalization and massive migration, national traditions and historical pasts are increasingly deprived of their geographic and political groundings (4). Whereas older sociological approaches to collective memory, most famously represented in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, presuppose relatively stable communities and formations of their memories, these approaches are no longer adequate to grasp the current dynamic of the fragmented memory politics of different social and ethnic groups.

It is against this background of a century-old but now accelerated memory crisis that memory practices in the visual arts should be understood. It is in these practices that memory becomes an issue of transforming aesthetics. To assess the social value of such transformations in the aesthetics of memory, the question that remains to be answered is how effective these practices are in countering the threat

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

of oblivion. I would like to address this question by taking a closer look at Peter Forgacs's 2005 film, *El Perro Negro* (The Black Dog). This film differs from his older work in that historical time rather than personal time is the main issue. At first sight this film can be mistaken as a conventional historical film dealing with a specific national and political history, namely the Spanish civil war in the 1930s. It is consistently chronological: it begins with the pre-history of the civil war in 1930 when Alfonso XIII was still king of Spain. Then in 1931 there were the first free elections in thirty years, when the majority of the people voted republican. The king left the country and the Republic was proclaimed. Because of a series of new laws declared by the new republic, among which a law that allowed divorce and the separation of state and church, the clergy, the army and the right-wing bourgeoisie became more and more opposed to the new republic. Ultimately this led to a civil war that broke out on the 18th of July, 1936.

Most of this red thread of official historiographical storytelling is, however, told rather than shown in *El Perro Negro*. More than in most of his other films there is a voice-over that imposes on the images the coherence of public, historical time. The film images we get to see belong, again, to the genre of home movies, or they are made by amateur filmmakers. At the beginning of the film the voice-over (Forgacs himself) declares:

'We travel through Spain's violent decade with the images and stories of amateur filmmakers such as Joan Salvans from Terassa, Catalonia, and Ernesto Noviega from Madrid.'

The films made by the amateur filmmakers can be home movies, but not exclusively. Ernesto Noviega, for example, who is more or less neutral in the civil war, begins to document the civil war in 1936. It is only in 1938 that he becomes a soldier fighting in the falangist (fascist) army, not out of ideological conviction but in order to survive. The angle from which he films remains personal, however. His adventures during the civil war, the events he partakes of, are the events that are filmed and shown.

I wish to discuss *The Black Dog* for its surprising contrast with the artist's preceding work. Compared to Forgacs' earlier work, in *The Black Dog* the balance between personal time and historical time is reversed, so to speak. Whereas in his earlier work the viewer was completely immersed in the personal realm of weddings, anniversaries and the home so that the continuity of historical time had to be imposed on it, in *The Black Dog* it is the other way around. The voice-over's storytelling leads the viewer through the filmic events. The filmic image substantiates this narrative or refuses or fails to do so. And such a

Ernst van Alphen

refusal or failure often occurs. The filmic image usually does not illustrate what the voice-over says, or the other way around: the voice-over does not explain or elaborate what the filmic image shows. Most of the time, the spoken word and the image are not contiguous. This incongruity appears crucial.

Still, in *The Black Dog*, Forgacs is 'doing' or performing historiography. In his earlier work Forgacs was rather deconstructing historiography, exploring the limits or perhaps even the failure of historiography by showing the radical difference between personal time and historical time. In *The Black Dog* he seems to explore a possible remedy against that failure of historicism in order to develop an alternative historiographical mode. In order to understand the principles of this alternative historiography I call again on Kracauer. After a devastating critique of photography as a medium and of historicism as a scholarly practice, he ends his essay 'Photography' with a rather unexpectedly optimistic remark about the possibilities of film:

'The capacity to stir up the elements of nature is one of the possibilities of film. This possibility is realized whenever film combines parts and segments to create strange constructs. If the disarray of the illustrated newspapers is simply confusion, the game that film plays with the pieces of disjointed nature is reminiscent of dreams in which the fragment of daily life becomes jumbled.' (62)

Obviously, the kind of filmic aesthetics Kracauer is referring to differs radically from the kind of film that is dominant now. In the 1920s he would have seen the experimental films of German and Russian tradition as defining the genre. But in spite of this historical specificity of Kracauer's view of film, it is precisely this historical background of the filmic medium that helps us to understand Forgacs's attempts to force a new historiography.

The 'pieces of disjointed nature' that film plays with, according to Kracauer, are in Forgacs's work and time 'pieces' that belong to personal time and 'pieces' that belong to historical time. He presents these as radically disjunct. Although in *The Black Dog* there are certainly moments when personal history functions as a synecdoche of History, usually the relation between the two realms is one of disjunction. These moments of clash between personal time and historical time are the ones that result in a different reading of the genre of home movies. Conversely, this clash makes the genre of home movies a key element in our understanding of time and of history.

So far, I have characterized home movies and historicism as opposites. The home movie genre embodies the realm of personal time, whereas historicism is the ultimate consequence of historical time. But

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

when we approach them from the perspective of the viewer or reader, in other words, as an issue of aesthetics, they have more in common than appears at first sight. Watching somebody else's home movies is usually a rather boring experience. This boredom stems not from the fact that the filmic quality of home movies tends to be rather bad and sentimental, but because what we see does not concern 'us,' but 'them.' Watching conventional home movies does not establish a relationship of similarity but of difference; the genre makes us aware of the privacy of personal time and of the sentimentality of conventional ways of portraying the family. Historicist historiography also establishes a relationship of difference, this time not a difference between personal and public, but between past and present. Memory, in contrast, is fundamentally connected to the present: it is again and again actualized *in the present*, and only those memories that are significant in the present can be activated. As Kracauer argues, the historicism of conventional historiography is fundamentally different from what characterizes memory. As we have seen, in his view historicism attempts to regulate temporal elements according to laws that belong to economic principles of nature rather than to mnemonic principles. For the viewer or reader of historiographical texts or images, this results in an awareness of difference between past and present, between that past political situation and ours, between 'their' culture and 'our' culture.

But when home movies are combined with the historiographical mode, as in the work of Peter Forgacs, another kind of relationship with the viewer or reader is stimulated. The clash between, rather than the harmonious blending of, the personal time of home movies and the historical time of historicism, brings the situations in the home movies closer to us. Instead of sensing an uncomfortable alienation, as usually occurs when we watch other people's home movies, we begin to identify with the people in the home movies. The personal time of the home movies becomes an anchor within the historicist framework with which it clashes.

In Forgacs's *The Black Dog* this strategy of establishing similarity between the viewer and the represented subjects is intensified by yet other means. The title points this out. Throughout the film, shots of animals play a crucial role. The title of the film refers to one of these shots: a clip of a black dog that recurs several times in the film. But there are many more clips of other animals: of pigs that are maltreated, of donkeys, of horses, of rabbits being shot. All these animal clips have a heavily allegorical significance that sets them off from traditional use of animals in visual representation. The animals are never filmed as contextual details to produce a reality effect. In contrast, the animal shots, especially of the black dog, are isolated within the film. This

Ernst van Alphen

demarcation facilitates their allegorical functioning. The black dog becomes an allegory of destruction, of the evil of war.

At one moment the allegorical meaning of the animal clips becomes more or less explicit. We see pigs maltreated by men. Then there is a voice-over. The identity of this voice-over is clearly not the same as the one who provides us with the historiographical narrative. When personal testimonies are quoted, another voice-over is introduced, clearly with another voice, in order to set the historiographical story apart from the personal stories. This personalized voice-over says:

'The peasants hated the bourgeoisie because they treated them like animals. One of them said: 'Once we looked at the landowner, we thought we were looking at the devil himself.'

At this moment it becomes impossible to see the clip of the pigs maltreated by the men as unrelated to what the voice-over says. The image proposes an allegorical interpretation of how landowners or bourgeoisie treat the peasants and the lower classes.

These allegorical devices function on the basis of similarity. The similarity between the maltreatment of the pigs and that of the peasants makes the one into an allegory of the other. This deployment of similarity is key to the polemic Forgacs is conducting in this film. Similarity obstructs the principles of historicism, since historicism is based on the principle of radical continuity, on the temporal sequentiality within which each moment is unique and not comparable to other moments. The possibility of similarity within that logic would confuse the project of re-establishing temporal sequences. If similarity occurs, it has to be disentangled and re-positioned into unique sequential moments. Similarity, hence allegory, is the enemy of historicism.

But in addition to the effect of the allegorical animal clips, Forgacs uses another device to reorient historiography towards the present. Again and again he uses footage in which we see people play-act, or where they are involved in events of a ritualistic nature. In both cases the represented moments or histories relate in a very ambiguous or complex way to the historicists' attempt to establish a continuity of unique historical moments. The opening scene of *The Black Dog* provides the audience immediately with a powerful example of 'play-acting history'. We see two groups of young men facing each other and performing a ritualized dance. Later, and retrospectively, we can read this dance as an allegorical representation of the two parties fighting each other in the Spanish civil war. The dance, then, formalizes the war as a conflict between groups of men. Because they are men the event appears to be exclusively and deeply homo-social. After the dance the same young men play something resembling a law suit that ends in the

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

execution of one of the men. With his arms tied up and blinded he is pushed off a mountain into nothingness, seemingly into a gorge.

This event is amazing in many respects. First of all it is amazing as an event because of the fact that this group of young men executes another young man by pushing him over the top of a mountain into a gorge. This happens after a dance, which turns out to have been a ritualized duel. Secondly, the event is amazing because the film opens with this footage, even before we get to see the title sequence. This gives the whole scene extra significance. Third, this gruesome event surprises us because it is not real—that is, it is not a historical event. It is play-acted. Not history but theatre is the context in which it happens. If this opening scene provides a prelude to the Spanish Civil War, it does so, again, only in an allegorical way.

This opening scene is, however, also a forerunner in a non-allegorical way: again and again in *The Black Dog* we get to see footage of scenes that are play-acted or that concern moments or events that are repeated; that is, are events of a ritualistic nature such as weddings, banquets, or dances. It is not the unique historical moment at which the event takes place that strikes the eye but the fact that the unique history of the Spanish Civil War is so insistently represented through images that show events of a repeatable nature: plays, performances and rituals.

At first sight, Forgacs's use of the genre of home footage explains this: the home footage of which *Maelstrom* consists also shows mainly events that are only 'unique' on a personal level, not on a historical or historicist level. Weddings, births, and the like, occur one after another. The Holocaust, or other violent events, does not intrude into the representational realm of this genre. The home footage of these two Spanish sources is, however, strikingly different. And this difference sheds a retrospective light on the relation between personal and historical time in *Maelstrom*. Many of the performed ritualistic events which are filmed by the two amateur filmmakers provide us with images of the violence of the Spanish civil war, albeit in an allegorical way. First of all there is footage of bullfights, the quintessential Spanish performance of ritualized cruelty. But there is other amazing footage comparable to that of the opening scene.

The voice-over tells us about a conflict between employers and militant anarchists in 1930. It specifies that Juan Salvans—one of the filmmakers—apparently did not feel threatened by this conflict although he was the son of an important employer, for he went out camping in the Pyrenees with a club of mountaineers of which he was the leader. The footage first shows images of a bullfight, then of Juan dancing with his fiancée Merce, then of Juan and his friends and fellow mountaineers in

Ernst van Alphen

the Pyrenees. As in the opening scene, the young men are play-acting: they perform another homo-social conflict resulting in yet another play-acted execution: one of the men is rolled down off the mountain. In contrast with *Maelstrom*, a film that enacted the radical split between personal time and historical time, in *The Black Dog* the personal time at stake in these play-acted performances provides access to the Spanish Civil War by means of the device of allegory.

But if we are to assess the nature and effect of Forgacs' attempt to transform the principles of historiography, we must account for the key fact that in his historiographical project Forgacs does not obey the principles of historicism. He obstructs those principles by introducing devices based on similarity—the repeatable—and identification, and deploying these on different levels. First of all, he obstructs these principles within the film by his use of the allegorical motifs of animals standing for human subjects and of play-acted performances that ritualize violence and cruelty. Second, he conducts his obstruction through establishing a different relationship between the represented human subjects and the viewers. This is how he performs historiography without the overwhelmingly distancing effect of difference. As a result, a film about the Spanish Civil War can suddenly affect us emotionally and politically in our present moment. When similarity becomes a leading device *within* historiography, the Spanish civil war suddenly becomes an experience close to us, although it happened more than 60 years ago far away in the south-west corner of Europe. When it happened we were not there; now we are.

Forgacs's work is a strong example of what I called at the beginning of this reflection the spread of memory practices that have become so prevalent since the early 1990s. Of course, it is impossible and undesirable to generalize about this art and the cultural practices that are performed in it. It is more important to distinguish productive from unproductive memory practices and to try to understand in what respect memory practices are productive or unproductive. Because some and perhaps even most of these practices show a kind of naïve, nostalgic and sentimental celebration of the past, usually limited to a personal past, without actively engaging this past in our political present, it is imperative to look at attempts such as Forgacs' to overcome these distancing practices. My reading of Forgacs's film *Maelstrom*, and in relation to it, *The Black Dog*, suggests, however, that the media and genres used for these memory practices are themselves deeply implicated in the crisis of memory they appear to counter. If used conventionally and uncritically, media such as photography and film, the archive, and genres like the documentary, the family album, or home movies, lead to a memory crisis. They embody the principles of

The Destruction of Memory: Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality

traditional historicism Kracauer criticized, for they are based on the kind of temporal or spatial continuities that are easily mistaken for the meaning of political situations or of personal lives. It is only when the use of these media and genres is performed critically and self-reflectively that they are transformed from embodiments and implements of that crisis to alternative practices that counter the very same crisis. It is only then, in the words of Jill Bennett, 'that art does not represent what already occurred, but that art sets up conditions for relating to the event.'

This is a call for an aesthetics that subverts traditional temporality. Forgacs' systematic clash between personal time and historical time is an example of such a productive practice. His staged clashes do not end in a deadlock, but result in an aesthetics that inserts personal time into historical time, or the other way around, without either false harmony or insurmountable incompatibility. Instead, his aesthetics of temporality gives personal time a broader historical significance. The genres and media he works with and in, genres and media that seem preconditioned for historiographical projects, no longer comply with the principles of historicism. This is how historiography can become relevant again for our political and personal present. This is how, in different words, historiography can return to its mission of serving and preserving, not dictating and erasing what we are and do today, with that past in our present world.

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Ernst van Alphen
(Leiden University, Netherland)
**The Destruction of Memory:
Peter Forgacs and the Aesthetics of Temporality**
Summary

Since the 1990s, the spread of memory practices in art and literature has been enormous. These memory practices manifest themselves not only around issues such as trauma, migration, the Holocaust and other genocides, but also in the increasing use of media genres such as photography, documentary film and video, the archive, and the family album. These memory practices form a specific aesthetics. The major question raised by this flourishing of memory practices is that of whether we should see this as a celebration of memory or, by contrast, as a symptom of a severe memory crisis or fear of forgetting? Through a reading of two films of the Hungarian filmmaker Peter Forgacs, the author argues that these memory practices ultimately lead to a destruction of memory rather than a preservation of memory. Forgacs's films, however, try to counter this destruction by rethinking these memory practices.



FRIDA KAHLO: *Broken Spinal Column*,
1944, Mexico City



WALLPAPER:
Warcraft3, frozen throne

Danuta Ulicka

***The Enemy of the People,
The Formalist Number 2,
The Collaborator* Shostakovich**

1. In the open secret area

In 1957 Dmitri Shostakovich probably completed his musical studies as well as the text of his satirical cantata *Antiformalistyczny rajok*.

In musical circles at least, it is recognized as his work. In January 1989 it was performed in Washington for the first time (Mstislav Rostropovich, the composer's friend conducted the orchestra), then again in Moscow in November. In 1990, the Polish premiere took place at the Contemporary Music Festival 'Warszawska Jesień' ('Warsaw Autumn'). It was released by well-known producers and launched on CD in Russian and in English by the prestigious 'Erato' label. It was highly rated by the specialist periodical 'Diapason' at 8.5 on a scale of 1 to 10. The libretto was published in 1991 by music publishers Boosey and Hawkes, who would not deal with any dubious pieces of work. The authorship is also confirmed by Shostakovich himself in reminiscences addressed to Solomon Volkov,¹ as well as by Krzysztof Meyer, probably the best expert on Shostakovich, who is said to have smuggled the work to the West, dating it back to the years 1948-1957.² However...

The credibility of the recollections written by Volkov can be doubtful at times. Mstislav Rostropovich's wife, Galina Vishnevskaya, an outstanding Russian opera singer and also the composer's old friend, when interviewed by 'Encounter' in December 1986, accused Volkov of compiling anecdotes popular in the circles of Russian émigrés but not

Key Words:

- formalism
- modernism
- double-coding
- parody
- grotesque
- allusion
- stylization

¹ *The Evidence: Dmitrij Shostakovich's Memories, as Told to Solomon Volkov and edited by him*, translated by B. Maluch, Warsaw 1987.

² Compare with D. Shostakovich, *Z pism i wypowiedzi* ('From Writings and Speeches'), selected and edited by K. Meyer, translated by J. Ilnicka. Cracow 1979; K. Meyer *Dymitr Szostakowicz i jego czasy* ('Dmitrij Shostakovich and His Times'), Warsaw 1999.

Danuta Ulicka

³ Meyer, in turn does, not call Volkov's 'evidence' confabulation, though referring to it as an 'apocryph'; however, he seems to value the data it contains more highly than that of the huge but pseudo-documentary monograph by S. Chvenova, published in the years 1964-1996, which he considers 'completely deceitful' (K. Meyer, *Dymitr Shostakovich*, op. cit., p. 16).

⁴ N.B. Which might refute Shostakovich's authorship, as he immediately transformed his works into the instrumental version, criticising others who did so later or who made others do it for them.

⁵ In one of his letters, Shostakovich ridicules the surname and the character of Apostolov, calling him 'Foma Fomich Opiskin', after the character of *Stiepańczykowa, the Village and its Inhabitants*, by Dostoyevsky, a power-seeking manipulator; besides, phonetically 'Opiskin' caricatures Apostolov's intonation.

⁶ *The Evidence...*, op. cit. p. 160.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

necessarily originating directly from the composer.³ Besides *The Evidence*, there is no document of the author's to prove that he wrote *Rajok*.

In *Rajok* itself, following the 18th century novel, the poetics of which is parodied in *Przedmowa* ('The Introduction'), the composer hides behind the mask of the editor of a script found by P.I. Opostylov, a master of art. Opostylov is supposed to have attached an introduction about finding it in a chamber-pot and his efforts to make it usable (the 'editor' skips the graphic details), as well as a brief summary and an evaluation of its musical and literary contents. The 'editor' reduced himself to a few footnotes, either explaining shortcuts in Opostylov's evaluation or making them more precise (e.g. that it is not a musical score but a mere piano composition 'for the time being').⁴

This concealing of the author's identity twice over cannot be justified by censorship (the work was written for the author's own delight), for it masks and unmasks him at the same time. Apparently 'the editor' himself reveals his identity, naming the manuscript's finder 'P.I. Opostylov'. This *nomen omen* ('postylyj' means 'filthy', 'disgusting'), features more than once in *The Introduction* (the representative of the Ministry of Ideological Cleanliness is called Srulin, which derives from the word meaning 'shit', and the doctor's name is Mordercov, deriving from the word 'murderer'), and it refers to a real person, preserving his real name's initials (i.e. to the musical expert Pavel Ivanovich Apostolov, whose name was also significant to Shostakovich).⁵

Apostolov, a squeaky-clean 'apostle' of correct Soviet music, worked as the Secretary of the Party Organization at the Moscow Department of the Society of Composers. 'In the war times, as Shostakovich mentions, he controlled a military division, whereas after the war, he controlled us, composers. (...) He arrived on a white horse and sorted out all music.'⁶ He even had some competence for it, as in adolescence he had attended Stravinsky's vocal courses and had even composed 10 epitaphs. No wonder then, that his opinions were considered as formal oracles, including those repressive of Shostakovich's music. Comrade Apostolov's death is also connected with the composer's works. The Editor assures us that he 'feels so guilty', claiming: 'I did not mean to kill him.'⁷ Pavel Nikolayevich Apostolov died struggling for correct music, monitoring the ideological immaculateness of a suspicious author of the suspicious *Symphony VII* during its rehearsal. Even in *Rajok* he is killed by music: Opostylov drowns in a toilet. His faithful comrades from the Department of Musical Safety fails to rescue him. After his corpse has been taken out, as the Editor reports, there was no way of distinguishing Opostylov from excrement.

The surname itself does not seem powerful enough as an argument to prove that Shostakovich is the author of *Rajok*. Yet somebody must

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

have created the cantata, as well as the folk bard Džambua, who really existed, though he was not the author of his songs. *Rajok* composed itself, as the authors and critics of auctorial novel put it. It was created by the official aesthetic ideology compulsory in the Soviet Union since 1936. Shostakovich had all musical, literary and biographical abilities, as well as useful professional experience in all kinds of art (theatrical, film, opera, ballet and popular). He was also able to use novelties, both verbal and musical, to register a composition. Just to register, not write it. The cantata's text and music consist entirely of somebody else's remarks, language and plot quotations, fragments of authentic speeches and manifestos. Therefore the author's disguise is quite natural: it is reduced to borrowings; he is not the author of the words and the musical content and therefore he has the right not to feel responsible for them (which does not mean he restrains from doing so).⁸

2. The first circle of *Rajok*, or the 'Introduction'

At the beginning the Master of Art, Comrade Opostylov, gets to know the contents of the manuscript—'an outstanding piece with a text full of ideological depth,' the author of which, 'in simple and clear words (...) enclosed indications inspiring to the reader.'⁹ He emphasizes the perfect synchronization of the music and the text, 'with the verse as if sculpted in marble', whose creator, 'in a natural and undoubtedly innovative way' considers 'the great significance of Russian music.'

Then the unfortunate—as it turns out—finder presents the characters and the situation depicted in the libretto. The action of the cantata takes place in the Palace of Culture, where a meeting 'devoted to significant issues of musicology is held', 'as well as on the question of the struggle of the realistic trend in music against representatives of formalism.' Among the participants there are activists, 'though not too numerous at present', who create a polyphonic choir, with Yedinicyn, Dvojkin and Trojkin holding leading positions. They are chosen by the Chairman to speak out according to the number-name hierarchy.

The assembly is opened with an attempt to define formalism and realism by Yedinicyn. The distinction is fairly simple: formalistic music is written by 'national composers', whereas the realistic ones are written by 'anti-national' ones.¹⁰ This assumption, however, leads to the reflection: 'Comrades, here the question arises, why do some national composers write realistic music and some anti-national ones create formalistic music?'. For Yedinicyn the answer is simple again: 'National composers write anti-formalistic music, comrades, because being realists in nature, they can't, just can't help writing formalistic music.' This results in certain tasks for the guardian of artistic purity: 'They consist

⁸ The disguise may also be explained by the grief Shostakovich felt, not understood even by his closest friends. Even the sincere, professional but musically ignorant Mikhail Zoshchenko, who was unable to understand the meaning of *The Leningrad Symphony* and who was good enough to believe that Beethoven's *IX Symphony* was Shostakovich's, exclaimed in amazement 'I knew you could not be a formalist!' (The author of *The Blue Book* was supposed to have said this at a concert whose first part contained Beethoven's compositions while the second part was devoted to Shostakovich's).

⁹ Quotation in my own translation based on the score published by Boosey and Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. (the text is in the collections of the library of the Society of Polish Composers, sign. 19720).

¹⁰ As simple as other contemporary definitions, e.g. by Leo Trotsky, which are based on Kant and Hegel yet which, after a few historical comments switch to commonly used invectives such as 'religious devotion under cover', 'reactionism', etc.; compare *Leo Trotsky on Literature and Art*, ed. and introduction by P.N. Siegel, New York 1970, p. 40-41.

Danuta Ulicka

in making national composers create realistic music, and discouraging anti-national ones from doubtful experiments with formalistic music.' What that is supposed to mean 'in practice' will be revealed by the choir in the final part.

Yedinicyn's performance evokes the enthusiasm of the gathered activists, who thank him 'for this historical speech' with the exclamation 'Glory! Glory! Glory to Great Yedinicyn!', repeated three times. Then Dvojkin takes his chance to speak out. With bitter irony he ridicules 'dissonances' and 'atonalities' and the 'various little theories' of such cacophonous creators; thence he proceeds to specifying the patterns of the required music. Unlike the infamous composers 'we, comrades, are in favour of music which is beautiful and full of grace.' Since 'music which is not melodious, unaesthetic, not harmonious, in bad taste is... is... [apparently he is seeking the appropriate word (D.U.)] is... a drill!!! Or... or... [the intellectual effort is noticeable again. (D.U.)] or... a destruction of the musical soul!' Then he orders anxiously: 'Besides, comrades, Caucasian operas should include Caucasian dances, the authentic ones. They should be simple and popular, lively, simple and definitely Caucasian. And authentic, always authentic. Just authentic. Caucasian dances in Caucasian operas should be simple and authentic.' Ravished by the rhythm of the speech and the folk melody, the activists tramp in response: 'Assa! Assa!'

Trojkin's postulates concerning appropriate music are even clearer. 'We, comrades, should be like the classics. Yes! Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov [Trojkin, significantly, stresses the last syllable: 'Karsakav'. (D.U.)] Musical and elegant! Melodious, beautiful and sonorous! How authentic, how faithful it is! As man, comrades, is a complex organism!' According to the specified pattern, 'national and generous' [in the original version the words impossible to translate: narodnyj – blagonarodnyj. (D.U.)], the genres required nowadays are 'symphonies, poems, quartets and cantatas, sonatas and poems.'

The choir, excited by the speeches, acknowledges the appeals of the spokesmen and adds the hidden meanings. It orders: 'Take care everywhere and all the time!': 'Be constantly alert! Don't speak!' Then Trojkin, encouraged by the applauding audience, clearly points out his demands concerning the only correct response to formalistic music: 'We were all taught by the Great Leader, who used to say: look here, look there, frighten the enemies! Look here, look there and extinguish them without a trace!' The appeal is concluded with a warning against those who would dare to create formalistic music: 'And if somebody acquires bourgeois ideas, we'll imprison him for a very long time! In extremely severe work-camps!' The choir takes this up eagerly: 'Yes! Yes! At severe work-camps!'

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

That's it as far as the text itself is concerned. Words played a special role in Shostakovich's works. The composer believed, having suffered from false interpretations too many times, in the meaning of his music. 'Words are a certain protection against an utter misunderstanding,' he said, 'Every simpleton will understand if there are words.'¹¹ Despite this, what is not obvious in *Rajok* are those very words. Every speech sounds extremely serious. Being familiar with Soviet clichés, we can easily recognize bitter irony in the text. Yet contemporary audiences, especially those familiar with the official attitude of the author, could find acts and resolutions, phrases from compulsory aesthetic and art history handbooks or even the statute-book. They knew the quoted categories and criteria of evaluation: 'popular character', 'national character', 'simplicity', 'clarity'. They knew intonations shifting smoothly from demands to warnings and threats. 'Applause' and 'collective laughter' also belonged to ritual behaviour. They knew only too well that the cantata was a prevailing genre in Soviet music, along with the oratorio.¹² So they could not fail to notice that Shostakovich's 'tragic-satire' fulfilled all the conventions ('with four basses, a choir and a piano') of alternated arias, recitatives and choirs. Trans-accentuation, shifting text into the appropriate stylistic register, occurs later on in the piece.

3. The second circle of *Rajok*, namely music

It is difficult, if not impossible, to paraphrase music. It must be enough for the readers to convince them that it is a great parody, consisting of quotations, extracts of easily recognizable compositions, most of which belonged to the regular soviet repertoire of classical and folk music. While Trojkin's performance shifts from a Mozart recitative to a folk song (demanding 'poems, quartets, cantatas and sonnets', it sounds like the folk song *Kalinka* ('Ech, sonatki, sonatki, kantatki moi. Raz wiesiolyje kwartietiki, kantatki moi. Raz simfonija, poemka, suitka moja' /Oh, sonatas, sonatas, cantatas mine. Once jolly quartets, cantatas mine. Once a symphony, a poem, a suite mine¹³). Dvojkin demands that the classics be followed while being accompanied by Tchaikovsky's waltz. The choir's threats of work-camps are accompanied by a merry popular folk song. Then there can be no doubt about the stylistic quality of the composition or about the author's attitude. The set of hyperbolically accumulated quotations of Soviet musical innovations adds a grotesque quality to the whole, unequivocally emphasizing the bitter irony of the libretto.

The music not only fills the composition with allusions,¹⁴ parodies and irony, but also allows for recognition of the featured characters. It points at Stalin, forcing Yedinicyn to make his 'historical speech' to the

¹¹ *The Evidence...*, op., cit., p. 160

¹² A typical cantata of the times was *Alexander Nevskij* by Prokofiev (from the music to Eisenstein's film); a typical oratorio was *Jemielian Pugaczov* by Marian Viktorovich Koval, especially 'active' in the campaign against Shostakovich, persecuting formalists with an article in 'Pravda' in 1948. In 1949 Shostakovich himself, to fulfil an order, created *The Song of Woods*, officially evaluated as evidence of 'overcoming formalism' and 'choosing the way of realism'.

¹³ How much the fragment 'symphonies, songs, cantatas' got stuck in Shostakovich's memory can be seen in the interview with Polish Radio in 1959 which repeats it precisely. The repetition is crucial; if ignored, Shostakovich's words can be interpreted as a direct criticism of dodecaphony predominant at the Warsaw Autumn (the extract from the interview comes from *Dmitrij Shostakovich* by K. Meyer, op. cit., p. 262).

¹⁴ E.g. to Mussorgsky. In the style typical of that composer, Shostakovich begins the Chairman's performance and finishes it with the accompaniment of triumphant trumpets.

Danuta Ulicka

sound of *Suliko*—the leader's favorite song. This reference, accumulated in Yedincyn's speech repetitions, indirect questions and pseudo-logical syllogisms, is characteristic not only of Stalin's rhetoric but can be considered a parody of the genre of official speech in general. The music also refers to Zhdanov: Dvojkin begins his appeals for 'melodiousness and gracefulness' with exercises in vocalization, commonly known as the minister's 'specialty'. Those, together with Tchaikovsky's waltz presented by Dvojkin, refer to him openly. These aesthetic postulates should not necessarily be connected with the statement of the outstanding music expert that Zhdanov was considered to be on KC WKP/b's expectations from contemporary composers. They may also refer to Boris Asafiev, one of the major academic musicologists, another supporter of 'gracefulness and melodiousness.' Let us credit him with the appeals for 'realistic' and 'national' music, i.e. referring to compositions by the Great Team (or the Powerful Five), namely Modest Mussorgsky, Alexandr Borodin, Nikolaj Rimsky-Korsakov, Mila Balakiriev and Cesar Cui. In the phonetic layer of the text, even the incorrect accentuation of 'o' in the name Nikolaj Rimsky-Korsakov matters. It denotes Dymitr Szepilov, who pronounced it in this way at the Second Assembly of the Society of Soviet Composers. This phonetic allusion reveals the utter ignorance of the critics of formalism. Furthermore, it indicates that *Rajok* was being created over a relatively long period of time. Shostakovich composed even long and complex symphonies quite quickly, so this proves the autobiographical quality of this composition written only for the author's own delight. Moreover, it was not the only one in which Shostakovich hides his name that way in introducing his musical monogram *d-es-c-h* into the main motif.

¹⁵ The words accompanying the Caucasian dances in *Rajok* quote the real situation which took place in 1958 after the removal of the critics of formalism and the official rehabilitation of its main representatives. Galina Wishnevskaja recalls that Shostakovich, having invited friends to his home, was humming the melody of the Caucasian dance 'We need beautiful music, generous music' (G. Wishnevskaja, *Galina. A Russian Story*, translated by G. Daniels, San Diego 1984, p. 229).

'Melodiousness' and 'harmony' was also demanded by Muradeli, who, apart from Stalin, is the most obvious person alluded to in *Rajok*. Vano Muradeli was especially active in the anti-formalistic campaign. His opera *Great Friendship* became a pretext to the memorable resolution of 1948, which was a starting-point for post-Zhdanovian persecutions of musical enemies of the nation. It was caused by the 'beloved' in Shostakovich's cantata 'beautiful and generous', 'compulsorily popular' Caucasian dances.¹⁵ Apparently, Muradeli introduced the folk dance of Caucasian highlanders into his opera in order to endear himself to Stalin. He did not know that the Georgian folk tune *Suliko* was the leader's favourite song. He did not even like the libretto. The action of *Great Friendship* takes place between the Georgian and the Ossetian (i.e. Caucasian). The Georgian commissar, Sego Ordžonikidze, 'clears' the Caucasus of 'destructive elements', making his contribution to the rise of the 'great friendship' between the nations suggested in the title. It was an unforgivable political mistake, despite politically

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

correct intentions. Stalin did not like the reference to the figure of Ordžonikidze, whom he probably drove to suicide. Muradeli, however, criticized himself appropriately: first attacking the audience with 'simple and harmonious' melodies in the required style, and then writing the opera *The October*, in which, perhaps for the second time, Lenin spoke out in Soviet music. Thus he got away with it.

On the other hand, Shostakovich, or to be more precise his compositions, were persecuted from his very first opera *The Nose* to his final works. (Although in the meantime he did create 'correct' compositions, such as *The Sun Is Shining over the Fatherland*, the march from the film *The Decline of Berlin* and *The Song of Woods*. In these officially celebrated compositions, no irony was usually found (e.g. the aliquot tone of the memorable words 'where wood is cut, woodchips gather' in *The Song of Woods*), which is easy to find in parodies (auto-parodies as well), which *Rajok* consists of—since the author of the cantata did not even save himself.

4. The third circle of *Rajok*, or the experienced world

Besides the fact that *Rajok* is a collection of quotations of other people's words and borrowed sounds, it is also a gathering of plot allusions, a register of the innovative etiquette compulsory in the court of Soviet art.

It is generally assumed that the cantata appeared in direct response to Zhdanov's decree of 1948 as well as to the whole anti-formalist campaign flourishing at that time. Indeed, the scenery brings immediate associations with a meeting of culture activists' executives CK WKP/b/, or of the famous First Global Assembly of Composers. Yet it gathers Shostakovich's experiences from other anti-formalist meetings of the 30s. *Rajok* quotes situations the composer experienced himself.

For instance he had the honour of giving a performance to the proletariat in the Moscow-Narvskij Cultural Centre in Leningrad, where three scenes from the opera *The Nose* were performed before its premiere in the Small Theatre.¹⁶ In the exclusive circle of musicologists and friends (like Sollertinski), Shostakovich, perhaps for the first but not the last time, was exposed to criticisms from the average audience to whom his art was supposed to appeal.¹⁷ The singing political leaders may refer to the scene which occurred in the Great Theatre (of which Shostakovich was aware, according to his friend) when Voroshilov and Zhdanov were thrilled to sing folk songs conducted—as in *Rajok*—by Stalin himself.

The cantata's text, moreover, makes reference to persecutions of 'musical trouble-makers' and 'enemies of the people', 'counter-revolu-

¹⁶ Requested by Shostakovich, Jewgienij Zamiatin was originally supposed to write the libretto. He was well-known for his non-conformism and respected by the composer.

¹⁷ Moreover, in this very Cultural Centre, three days after the premiere of *The Nose*, there was a preview of *The Third 1st May Symphony*, officially accepted as a tribute to the proletarian struggle—its poetics based on contemporary popular songs, marches and gallopades, contrasted with oratorio intonations. Shostakovich and Sollertinski's friendship (until Sollertinski's death in 1944), set against the background of their contemporary times, is interestingly depicted by M. Dmitrij and Ludmila Sollertinski in *Pages from the Life of Dmitrij Shostakovich*, London 1981.

Danuta Ulicka

tionists' and 'bourgeois servants', which its composer had experienced himself. Yedinicyn, Dvojkin and Trojkin's performances include precise quotations from the KC WKP(b) resolution mentioned above on Muradeli's opera: about composers 'ignoring tradition', who 'represent the formalistic anti-national trend', referring to characteristic features of their music like 'atonality, dissonance and disharmony'. The resolution is to 'put soviet music on the path of realism'.¹⁸

¹⁸ 'Sovietskaja Muzika' 1948, issue 1.

¹⁹ K. Meyer notes that in 1948 Kachaturian was condemned for using 24 trumpets, whereas Prokofiev was deprecated for using 16 contrabasses, 8 harps and 4 pianos. Both of them were disapproved of for using them in compositions praising the revolution and the end of the war (K. Meyer, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, op. cit., p. 214).

²⁰ The Zoshchenkovski apparently inspired operetta *Moskva Cheremushki*, which is set in a new housing area of Moscow. Nikolaj Oleynikov was supposed to write the libretto to *Karas*, whose opera version Shostakovich planned after *Nos*, (compare K. Meyer, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, op. cit., p. 91 – the author repeats the following after Maria Yudina, '...Wasza rabota dla mienia sobytije na wsju žizn', 'Sovietskaja Muzika' 1983, issue 6). Oleynikov's poem *Karas* is available in J. Czech's translation in the collection *Tragiczna zabawa OBERIU, czyli inna Rosja poetycka*, selected and edited by A. Drawicz. Cracow 1991.

Shostakovich was not an exception as a 'formalist'. In the Party resolution he was listed together with Prokofiev, Vissarion Shabalín, Nikolai Miaskovski and Aram Kachaturian. It was not hard to become infamous or make suspicious music if the trombone became a suspicious instrument,¹⁹ and opera was a suspect musical genre. In critical speeches after 1936 and 1948, 'formalism' lost any meaning, becoming a synonym for 'abstractionism', 'useless experimentation', 'Meyerholdism', 'leftist chaos', 'smugness', 'lack of ideas', 'cosmopolitanism', 'technical abilities', 'meandering', 'atonality' and even 'political indifference'(!). The notion, though less frequent than the list above, yet summing up all the epithets, was 'modernism'. Almost all of Shostakovich's friends became suspected of 'formalism'. Among them were: Nicolai Žylayev, a composer; Sollertinski, a musicologist and a friend (although he managed to get away with it by promising he would start learning Georgian, which was not a challenge to a polyglot familiar with the languages of the Iberian Peninsula); Vsevolod Meyerhold, 'a formalist leader in theatrical circles'; as well as writers such as Mikhail Zoshchenko whom he had met at Yevgenij Zamiatin's, whose work, as that of other suspects (especially Nikolai Oleynikov), was highly valued by Shostakovich.²⁰

Despite this, the composer was 'an enemy' of a unique kind—a 'partial' enemy, so to speak. Persecutions were aimed not at him but at his compositions, and not all of them, either. Some of them, like their author from time to time, were officially approved of. This situation had a great impact on the cantata's style.

While talking about the persecutions of Shostakovich, two dates stand out: 1936 and 1948. Yet a campaign against him started in 1928 when he was called a formalist for the first time after the premiere of *Nos* fragments. The second attack was launched in response to the performance of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*. A two-year period of success ended with a criticism in 'Pravda' (27th January and 6th February). This was later confirmed in April in a discussion at the Society of Soviet Composers, where being a 'naturalist' and 'anti-national' composer were added to already existing epithets as a logical extension of 'unmelodious' compositions. Attacks on the music to the ballet *Jasny strumień* confirmed previous notions. In 1936, not long before the peak

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

of Terror, yet, after sorting out Mikhail Tukhachevsky (one of the composer's friends) and Meyerhold, they were confirmed again on the first page of 'Pravda' in the article *Chaos zamiast muzyki* ('Chaos instead of Music') on the 28th of January. This was probably written or inspired by Stalin.²¹

As could be expected, this triggered other critics who opposed Shostakovich's becoming more and more famous in the country as well as in the West. Needless to say, such fame guaranteed protection. And this turned out to be profitable for *The Eighth Symphony*, which enraged representatives of the Party's organ of culture on the one hand, but stopped more severe attacks after the worldwide success of *The Seventh Symphony* on the other.²² They then made Shostakovich understand that the authorities expected his rehabilitation, preferably through *The Ninth Symphony*, a really triumphant one through which he was supposed to praise the leader 'with four-times stronger hardware'.²³

It was more or less the same after the war, especially after 1948, when Shostakovich was called the 'formalist number 2' (as Prokofiev was number 1). *The Sixth Symphony* was claimed to be a 'comeback of formalism' and an 'abstract-graphic path to nowhere', *Aphorisms* and *The Piano Sonata* were called 'wanton dissonances' and a 'cacophony'.²⁴ In 1951, 24 preludes and fugues were condemned as 'decadent'; in 1954, *The Tenth Symphony*; in 1962, *The Thirteenth Symphony*, which was additionally called 'Zionist' since its first part was composed to the words of a poem by *Jewtuszenki Babi Jar*. And so on and so forth. 'I have bad luck about this formalism' complained the composer perversely, 'A project is proposed, they ask me to compose music, and then a scandal arises', like in Bulgakov's *The Fatal Eggs*.²⁵

5. Two biographies not from paradise

Shostakovich did not only get to know the taste of anti-formalism passively. As an anti-formalist he expressed his views both in music and in words. He used to hide his works, such as *The Fourth Symphony*, which remained unknown for a quarter of a century after it had been banned in the course of rehearsals. He also created compositions that claimed to be the model of the new Soviet symphony.²⁶ He created oratorios such as *Songs of Woods*, poems based on revolutionaries' words, symphonies and symphonic poems commemorating Lenin, such as *1917* and *Faithfulness*. He was awarded prizes by the state (six times), Stalin prizes, Lenin awards, the titles of People's Artist of the USSR, The Star of Nations' Friendship handed to him by Walter Ulbricht himself. Finally, though rather late (in 1960), he entered KPZR. In 1957, probably in the year when the cantata *Antiformalisticeskij*

²¹ K. Meyer presumes its author was a well-known libeller, David Zaslavskij (famous for attacking Gorky and then Boris Pasternak); K. Meyer, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, op. cit., p. 144.

²² Whose premiere took place on the radio in the USA. Stokowski and Toscanini were among those who desired to conduct the orchestra.

²³ *The Evidence...*, op. cit., p.126

²⁴ M. Koval's words; quoted after K. Meyer, *Dmitri Shostakovich*, op. cit., p. 216.

²⁵ *The Evidence*, op. cit., p. 87.

²⁶ This is how *The Fifth Symphony* was evaluated, treated as the composer's admission of the 'fair' criticism of *Lady Macbeth*.

Danuta Ulicka

²⁷ Compare D. Shostakovich *O wriemieni i o siebie 1926-1975*, Moscow 1980.

²⁸ From the interview for 'New York Times' 1931; quoted after: D. Shostakovich *O wriemieni...*, p. 27. On the other hand, the composer's numerous attacks against 'bourgeois musicians', as well as his appeals 'for national music' may express his aesthetic views. It is well known that he disapproved of Schonberg, post-Weberism and aleatorism, similarly to Benjamin Britten or Arthur Honegger—his favourite 20th-century artists.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Op. cit., p. 30.

³¹ As above p. 33. This astonishing remark is just like the phrase from Andrej Platonov's novel *Wprok. Biedniackaja kronika* from 1931, made by a 'kolkhoz rozkulachnik' (which shifts it to the parody of the well-known quotation, like the oxymoronic expression 'the war for peace protection', quoted further on).

³² All the quotations in italics are slightly (inflectionally) alternated titles of Shostakovich articles and speeches. Some of them are quoted in the original Russian version, as it is impossible to find their equivalents in the contemporary Polish language of art critics.

rajok was created, he spoke out at the Second General Assembly of Composers and worked on *The Eleventh Symphony* on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution.²⁷ However, what is extremely significant in the context of *Rajok* is his work as a publicist; his expertise in the use of anti-formalistic weapons clearly shows that the composer learned the language too well so as not to use it perfectly in the cantata.

Anyway, he used his own language there: the language of a publicist insisting that 'there is no music without ideology'. Thus 'we, revolutionists (...), consider Scriabin the worst musical enemy. Why? Because Scriabin's music pursues an unhealthy eroticism.'²⁸ He is assured that 'good music is uplifting', hence 'obligatorily, it should be strong and heroic.'²⁹ Moreover, in 1932 he demanded 'the quickest possible realization of the CK WKP/b/ decision of the 23rd of April in the music area', namely 'concerning music critics struggling against the leftist vulgarization.'³⁰ He appealed for 'utter objection to revenge-like attitudes (...), ruthless opposition to the leftists threatening us from the right side.'³¹

It is enough to look through the very titles of Shostakovich's articles and speeches to understand how fluent he became at the compulsory language style. He defines his work on the 15th anniversary of the Great October 'historically': '*it is a stage on the way from Marx to today*'. He specifies '*Soviet music tasks in the times of the Great Fatherland War*.' He appeals for '*the struggle for peace*,' '*for progressive art*,' '*peace and friendship between nations*' ('*za moguczij podjom tworczeskoj raboty*,' '*za torzestwo principow socyalistczskogo rializma w sowietskoj muzikie*'). He warns against '*some dangerous weapon*'. He orders to '*polno, gluboko i jarko woploszczat sowriemiennost*.' He shows '*ways to great communist music*,' demanding at the same time '*communism vospie'*'. He applies common distinctions praising '*progressive world musicians struggling for peace*.' '*The success of the builders of communism*' is '*the source of inspiration*' for him. Yet sometimes '*the Party is our inspiration*.' Therefore he advocates '*za wysokuju partijnost iskusstwa*.'³²

There is a chance that the titles of the articles from the press come from the editor. Maybe Shostakovich is not their author at all.³³ Still it is no use coming to the simple and dull conclusion that the musical environment produced another collaborator at the beginning of the 50s, a two-faced man with typically Soviet dual morality, or at least an entrapped one terrorized to such an extent that he decided to sacrifice his dignity in self-defence. In fact, he was not seriously persecuted. With his compositions already banned, his 'self-criticisms' were in fact of no use. What strikes one about him in his publicist works is a different

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

issue though, namely his efficiency in playing a role and his astonishing inconsistency. Astonishing due to the results it could bring about.

This can be proved by one rather appealing example. In 1930, in response to a 'Proletariatskij muzikant' survey concerning popular music—those 'NEP quicksteps and gypsy romances'—Shostakovich announced a detailed program on how to approach it effectively. Firstly, it is essential 'to demand from controlling organs (...) a strict ban on publishing and performing 'light music.' Secondly, due to the fact that 'light music' is especially common in workers' clubs (...) thus having a destructive influence on the healthy music awareness of the mass audience (...) to develop in clubs (...) works revealing artistic poverty and the destructive effects of listening to 'light music' as well as its social class meaning.'

This is strange for two reasons. Shostakovich did not keep it a secret that he liked 'simple' music. 'I like all genres,' he announced publicly, 'from Bach to Offenbach.'³⁴ He was even the author of the 'hit', *The Good Morning Song* to the poem by Kornilov from Freidrich Ermler and Sergej Jutkevich *Turbine 50.000 (Wstriechnyj)*. Providing the score to the musical *Supposedly Killed*, he confirmed his fondness for *West Side Story*. He introduced a well-known quickstep *Thaiti Trott* from Vincent Youmans' musical (NB. popularized by Meyerhold, who introduced it to his shows hiring a jazz orchestra, which was a significant move on the part of both artists at a time when jazz was severely condemned) into the ballet *The Golden Age*. He proudly boasted about his non-aristocratic tastes, his fancy for gypsy romances and quicksteps, 'contrary to Prokofiev (...), who probably had better musical education, while at least I was not a snob.'³⁵ As he repeated after Chekhov, 'I write anything but denunciations.'³⁶ In the context of those declarations, his condemnation of 'NEP tastes' must be surprising.

Yet, his efforts surprise with their fluency in using the correct language. It is too perfect to accept it without any suspicion. It gives the impression that Shostakovich recites a lesson learnt by heart, repeating with and after others the compulsory formulas. He studied them well, underlining the ritual 'oak-like' phrases in his diary being written after devastating articles in 'Pravda' in 1936, where he stuck extracts from the press, including opinions on his compositions.³⁷ There is a repetition of the great quotation hidden in this ideal performance. Still, the author's attitude is revealed only when compared with his other efforts on the same subject. In those, *Rajok* in particular, the desk drawer composition, although the author wears masks (not the only one among his works), his irony becomes obvious.

³³ This is claimed by Volkov and Meyer, who consider all his public, avant-garde poet-ics, criticisms, and self-criti-cisms as not having been written by him.

³⁴ 'Sputnik' 1970, issue 2. There are similar declarations in his early speeches as well. NB. in 1934 Meherhol asked Shostakovich to write music to Chekhov's 33 *Swoons*, but he refused.

³⁵ *The Evidence...*, op. cit., p. 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁷ The new style 'wooden' (or in Russian 'oak-like') expres-sions from the press were also collected by Bakhtin.

Danuta Ulicka

³⁸ To see how deeply hidden they are, one should consider misunderstandings around *The Seventh 'Leningrad' Symphony*, commonly interpreted as an expression of the tragedy and the triumph of the city attacked and occupied by fascists, which made him famous abroad. A few musicologists have noticed the composer's unclear attitude (manifested in his application of extracts from *Wesola wdowka* ('The Jolly Widow') by Lehar in his 'symphony of people from the USSR') and have heard in its musical representation a totally different tragedy: the drama of the city being humiliated and oppressed since the 30s. Modern Shostakovich experts realize it is apparent that *'The Leningrad Symphony'* includes materials from outlines preceding the war produced for a future symphony about the drama of the 30s.

³⁹ The sister of the composer's mother, with whom the family kept in touch by mail only, had been in exile since 1923; compare with K. Meyer, *Dmitrij Shostakovich*, op. cit., p. 149.

⁴⁰ K. Meyer remarks that the musical environment had no contact with political opposition; yet Rostropovich, who was the composer's close friend, did so.

⁴¹ I. Sollertinsky, *Gustav Mahler*, Leningrad 1932, p. 7 and 26 (quoted after: E. Rosberry, *Style, Content, Thematic Process and Ideology in the Symphonies, String Quartets and Cello Concertos of Dmitrij Shostakovich*, New York 1989, which includes translated into English extracts of Sollertinsky's dissertation, unavailable to me.

6. In the paradise of hard-won irony.

Shostakovich's decision to stay in the country and publish his works officially is perhaps more telling than the ambiguous gestures and the compositions with their deeply hidden views.³⁸ He knew only too well how dangerous the status of a 'formalist' was. He had learnt it in 1936, 1948 and 1953, from the experience of his relatives and friends: Meyerhold, Tuhchevski, Charms, the principal of Moscow Conservatory, Boleslav Przybyshevski, Aleksander Mosolov, Moisyey Weinberg... Why didn't he emigrate, like many others?³⁹ After all, he was internationally famous (since the last half of the 20th century, most of the world's outstanding conductors, such as Leopold Stokowski, Arturo Toscanini, Leonard Bernstein, have desired to present world premieres of his compositions). He was famous as a persecuted composer, forced to official speeches and compositions, a puppet in the policies of Stalin, Zhdanov and Furcev towards the West. Although his international fame was a blessing in his country, forming a kind of protection, it by no means assured him freedom of artistic expression. Then why did he not choose to publish dissent in the 1960s—which would have isolated him but which would have allowed a consistent attitude? Although it might have been a more difficult choice for a composer than for a writer, it would not have sentenced him to complete silence.⁴⁰

This is not the place for reflections on real (im)possibilities or to ignore excuses, nor it is to evaluate Shostakovich's decisions from an ethical or psychological point of view. It is preferable to point out those aspects of his attitudes which are reflected in the poetics of his compositions. Considering these, one might dare to assume the composer was too conscious of contemporary political attitudes dating from the 20s to adapt any of them as his own. Before and after the revolution, the lives of avant-garde artists and intellectuals who took the challenge of struggling for social emancipation, employing art and artistic, philosophical and theoretical thought, convinced they served the right, exposing their works to selfish abuse, left no hope. Already in the 20s the early-modernist utopia of transforming awareness and the world by means of art and reflection upon it was falling to pieces before young Shostakovich's eyes. He must have read his friend Sollertinsky's publications, 'turned on' to sociology in musicology under the influence of Voloshynov in 1929, who found in Gustav Mahler a protest against 'imperialist pan-Germanism and American industrialization' and placed him amongst 19th-century German music 'fighting for social equality', and who called Beethoven a major representative of the 'great collective bourgeois idea'.⁴¹ He must have known false affirmations of Stalin and Soviet politics written by western leftist intellectuals (Andre

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

Malraux, George Bernard Shaw, Lion Feuchtwanger) published towards the end of the 30s. His bitter remarks from the 60s and 70s prove his growing disillusionment from that time onwards. He mentions Yevtushenka, who in the last moment changed *Babi Jar* verses for which Shostakovich had written the music. In the former version, the words criticized anti-Jewish attacks. He mentions Solzhenitsyn as a false prophet of emigration and Sakharov as a dissenting hydrogen bomb creator who saw nothing wrong in profiting from his morally ambiguous scientific activity.⁴²

In this case silence seemed to be one solution, another was the attitude that the composer acquired from Zoshchenka, the Oberyuts, his favourite classics of Russian literature: Saltykov-Shchedrin, Gogol, Leskov. How by withdrawal into somebody else's words, not just hiding in allusive references, but by means of their strange settings in which gravity bumps into laughter, one could disarm them with grotesque humour. It might be the attitude of an artist who is aware of the absurdity of the world around him, who can in his own voice only make ironic (and auto-ironic) comments.⁴³

Hence this style is significant for the whole work of Shostakovich, but especially emphasized in *Rajok*. It manifests itself even in the ambiguous title, allowing various associations, referring to different places, auditoria, forms of expression and artistic forms joined by one principle: the co-existence of the lofty and the low, Bakhtin's 'up' and 'down'. 'Rajok' means both a panorama as viewed from a mountain (in front of a casual viewer's eyes) and, in theatrical space, the 'gallery', from which simple people watch the shows adding some of their own exclamations like 'o rajul!'. As the 'gallery' is in other words 'paradyz', 'rajok' also means 'a little paradise'. Another association is from 'low' art: 'rajok' is a 'couplet', a funny little song on up-to-date subjects, mean and ridiculing something, sometimes a parody of a 'lofty' song (by Tchaikovsky, Glinka, Bizet). On the other hand, 'rajok' also means 'a collection of portraits'. The cantata indeed might be read and heard as a verbal-musical gallery of great and small people, in which the author's ironically framed portrait takes the central position. Shostakovich's *Rajok* combines and mingles all those shades of meanings as in a carnival.⁴⁴

The cantata is of intertextual character in many ways. At the level of genre it criss-crosses various types of art, those which the composer worked with as the author of opera, ballet, operetta and circus-revue music. Also it reflects his work as a theatrical experimenter (under the strong influence of Meyerhold and his syncretic shows and the constructivist program of Rodchenko's abstract art⁴⁵), dreaming of 'creating a synthesis of music and a theatrical play',⁴⁶ as an experimenter in the

⁴² Andrirej Sacharov himself openly confirms the advantages of living in a closed city; cf. his *Memories*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1991, translated by D. Ulicka.

⁴³ Mstislav Rostropovich interprets the poetics of Shostakovich's works quite differently, pointing to the deliberate technical inefficiency of those compositions which were ordered as a tribute to authority: their conscious banality and lack of sophisticated composition, high range modulation or rich instrumentation

⁴⁴ The reference to Bakhtin's 'carnival' is neither an accidental association nor merely an attempt to define the cantata's poetics in literary theoretic terms. Shostakovich would have known of Bakhtin's theory through his friend Sollertinski who actively participated in Bakhtin 'classes' in Vitebsk and Petersburg-Leningrad, and who also cooperated with Medvedev, Pumpianski and Voloshynov (he was even a competent musicologist) in their theatrical-choreographic activities; compare P. Fairclough, *Sollertinski and dialogical symphonism* in: *The Bakhtin Circle. In the Master's Absence*, ed. C. Brandiist, D. Shepherd, G. Tihanov, Manchester 2004; G. McBurney, *Soviet music after the death of Stalin: the legacy of Shostakovich*, in: *Russian Cultural Studies. An Introduction*, ed. C. Kell and D. Sheopherd, Oxford 1998.

Danuta Ulicka

⁴⁵Aleksandr Rodchenko created scenography for Mayakovsky's *The Bug*, staged by Meyerhold, which Shostakovich wrote music for. Though he did not agree to write music for *The Bath*, despite Meyerhold's proposals.

⁴⁶ D. Shostakovich *O wremieni...*, p. 18.

⁴⁷ In 1934, Shostakovich agreed to make an animated film opera based on Pushkin's *Tale of The Priest and his Workman Balda*. He wrote a libretto and grotesque-trashy music, satirically referring to contemporary times (the film was made but its premiere never appeared; Shostakovich' composition, which he himself considered the most crucial composition of those times, was fortunately reconstructed and is known as it was performed by Genadij Rozdestvenski as 'Sovietskij Kompozitor' 1981).

⁴⁸ Whom Shostakovich hated both as a director and as a man, who produced such a 'masterpiece' as *Ivan the Terrible*. For similar reasons—the artist's ambiguous attitude—he was critical of Tarkovski.

⁴⁹ *The Evidence...*, p. 197.

⁵⁰ Compare 'One need to consider everything with irony, especially that we most care for. Then there are more chances we can preserve it,' quoted in: *The Evidence...*, p. 84. On Shostakovich' poetics, compare E. Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich*, Aldershot 2000.

youngest muse, i.e. film (which he was in touch with since his youth, making a living from silent movies), pursuing a form of 'film-music' or 'movie-opera'.⁴⁷ Finally, it reflects him as a composer of popular hits and the score for a musical. Those achievements from the times when avant-garde theatre and Russian movies flourished need to be mentioned. They were contemporary with Eisenstein,⁴⁸ Aleksandr Dovzenko, Jiga Vertov, the avant-garde Brecht-Picador Leningrad Theatre of Young Proletariat (TRAM) and, as mentioned above, Meyerhold. His works fell in with all avant-garde ('formalism' and 'modernism') rules of artistic text composition, breaking international, genre and stylistic borders and reinterpreting postmodernist tradition.

Another level of intertextuality in Shostakovich's musical art is connected with a blend of 'high' and 'low' forms. He did not hesitate to contrast folk themes with Beethoven and Mahler symphonism, including even revolutionary folklore, fire-brigade or army orchestral music in his compositions. Still, he loved not only 'Offenbach light opera', but also great plebeian shows like football matches, being a dedicated supporter, and 'any spontaneous, happy meeting'.⁴⁹ The third level, most apparent in his 'serious' works, consists in their quotation-like character. 'I am 'all-absorbing', I 'absorb' all music, (...) from Bach's mass to Johan Strauss' operetta', he confessed. Thus his approval of the comedy *Saint Vladimir of the Third Degree* by Sacha Preis is not surprising. Written, as the author joked 'instead of Gogol', every verse and every word in it was taken from Gogol's works. Shostakovich himself used the same method in *The Nose*, whose script, following the composer's suggestion, contains fragments of other Gogol writings (*The Old-Fashioned Gentry*, *Dead Souls*, *The Lunatic's Diary*, *Taras Bulba*, *Marriage*). Intertextuality was to Shostakovich a kind of norm. As one of the three most important lessons he learned from Meyerhold, he enumerates the duty to take from tradition and to overcome it at the same time, yet to make sure it is clear enough in its new version.

The norm when referring to contemporary art took the form of irony, not just because the attitude of an ironist was to Shostakovich a form of existence.⁵⁰ Reality itself was too grotesque to be diagnosed monophonically, whether descriptively, expressionistically, or symbolically. Solemnity belonged to paradise lost: 'In the old days one could fool around a castle with a sword looking for one's spirit. Today a man cruises around the common flat with an axe in hand to watch the flatmate who does not turn out the light in the toilet'.⁵¹

Dostoyevsky appears here more than once; one of the latest Shostakovich works was a vocal series to the words of captain Lebiadkin's poem, which also included prince Yelcyn's aria from Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*. Smierdiakov's song from *Brothers Karamazov* was

The Enemy of the People, The Formalist Number 2, The Collaborator Shostakovich

included in his first opera *The Nose*. Shostakovich's style, as Sollertinski put it, is 'Dostoyevsky told by Chaplin'.⁵² He also liked literary parodies, 'tears and laughter' featuring in one composition like Sasha Chorny (another favourite author of his) to whose witty poems he wrote the vocal series *Satires*. Parody is his favourite tool in great musical forms as well. *The Ninth Symphony* is like that, ridiculing Beethoven's. This also was true in his operas: *The Nose* including grotesque marches, gallopades, a 'jolly' polka and a balalaika tune, then *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District*, where powerful sounds of the symphonic orchestra alternate in sharp contrast with flat, vulgar and mediocre ones.

Without doubt, operas based on Gogol and Leskov alone imposed an absurd, grotesque musical arrangement; Shostakovich's compositions simply improved what the texts included.⁵³ Apparently, the ironic-satirical style, based on multiple, multi-vocal parodies that transform a quotation, is an important trend in 20th century music, targeted on the high-toned gloom of academic art to such an extent that its creators chose strange subjects like invoices, price lists and farm-machine catalogues, which they referred to and illustrated by means of music in their compositions. Shostakovich, alongside Aleksandr Mosolov, Darius Milhaud, and Hanns Eisler, might be one of the style's representatives. However, to the author of *Rajok*, intertextual form is something more than just a polemical dialogue with tradition. Various alternations of intertextuality, particularly allusion, parody and quotation enabled the composer to hide his identity and allowed a free application of the reality 'denunciations'. Both in music and speeches, Shostakovich could fluently use other people's words and create something other that allowed him to stand outside himself. In the case of this satire on anti-formalism it is even more obvious than, let's say, in the case of the triumphant march of *The Ninth Symphony* or the requiem of *The Seventh*.

Competent recipients and music critics like Izrael Nestiev easily recognized the poetics of allusions in these compositions, accusing the composer of an 'inability to overcome sceptical irony and the tendency to stylization'.⁵⁴ The accusation indicates the political liability of the criteria of evaluating 'formalistic' multi-vocal compositions, in which the voice of the author withdrew from direct remarks, unable to speak with a unitary voice. The very inability to find the artist's voice, his attachment to any of the phrases, must have been most annoying in ironic 'scepticism' and ironic 'stylization'.

Speaking in allusions, quotations and parodies through the polyphonic orchestration of literary or musical compositions used to construct an ironic framework was, for creators in the USSR, a relatively safe means of expressing their views on reality. This shield allowed for

⁵¹ *The Evidence...*, p. 94. The first sentence may be a commentary reminiscent of music written in 1931-1932 for a production of *Hamlet* directed by Nikolai Akimovich at the Vachtangov Theatre.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 18. However, it is more like Dostoyevsky told by Oleynikov, whose poem *Cockroach* Shostakovich apparently makes an allusion to.

⁵³ In 1941-1942, Shostakovich was also working on an opera based on *The Players*, accurately depicting Gogol's poetics of grotesque, sarcasm and bitter humour. Shostakovich did not complete it (part of it was performed at a concert in 1978 for the first time, whereas the recording was made in 1982). It might be useful to analyze how Gogol's texts feature in 'formalistic' music and literary studies, as it seems that the concept of parody, predominant in Russian literary studies, derives from an interpretation of his writings (which might furthermore explain the difference between Bakhtin's views and the concept based on totally different mythological, philosophical and literary material produced by O. M. Freudenberg).

⁵⁴ *Zamietki o tvorczestwie D. Szostakowicza*, 'Kultura i Zizn' 1946 (30th September issue).

the polemical expression of critical attitudes towards official discourse, both artistic and artistic-political. It was also a weapon, like irony, disarming those discourses as effectively as laughter. It was not a coincidence that theories of dialogized speech, polyphony, and theories of laughter originated from that area during the 30s and 40s. The main character in the second part of *The Thirteenth Symphony b-moll* by Shostakovich, composed to words by Yevtushenko, uses humour and allusion through one soloist and choir to overcome prison walls, to dance to the sounds of drum and triangle, thereby having a good laugh at everybody else.

Danuta Ulicka
 (University of Warsaw, Poland)
The Enemy of the People,
The Formalist Number 2,
The Collaborator Shostakovich
 Summary

The paper concentrates on Dmitri Shostakovich's little-known composition Antiformalist Rayok, written to be concealed in a drawer. Analysis of the cantata and the official reception of the composer's oeuvre allow for greater understanding of the political and ideological criteria for evaluating art during 1920–70 in the USSR, as well as the reconstruction of prominent features of East and Central European modernist poetics. The abuse suffered by the composer and other artists of sound, word, film, theatre, painting and sculpture, as well as the condemnation of their works and theoretical reflections generally labelled as 'formalism' and 'modernism' were in fact aimed at intertextual and polyphonic rules of text construction (parody, grotesque, multilayered allusions and stylizations), elaborated by the artists. Shostakovich's satirical cantata, distinctive for its double-coding and ironic and auto-ironic modality, is an unprecedented document of its times, all the more valuable in that it shows biographical experience transformed into historical event.



Karnival, Petrich, 2007

adidas



INTERPRETATIONS

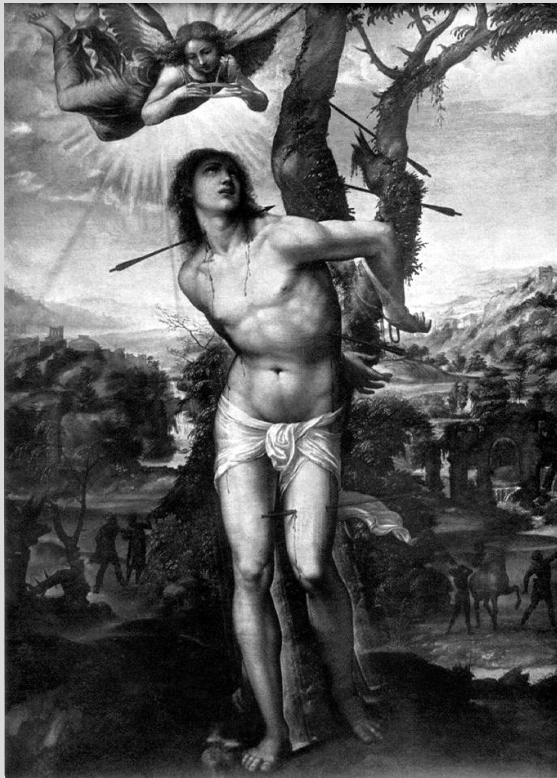
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Violence & ART

Part III

Violence in Literature



Sebastian

Philippe Daros

Images, violences, histoire

Il me semble possible de proposer «un état des lieux» relatif à la question de la représentation, et de ses implications en termes de poétique et d'esthétique à partir de quelques constats tirés de la lecture de fictions récentes et d'essais théoriques, tous aussi récents (2000-2005), qui attestent de fortes convergences autour d'une réflexion sur l'image et sur la représentation aux prises avec les violences de l'histoire du XXe siècle. Convergences qui révèlent aussi un problème de flou conceptuel lié à l'utilisation même de ce mot d'«image», puisque, dans ces ouvrages, il porte tantôt sur le littéraire, tantôt sur l'image photographique et son pouvoir d'attestation radical du *cela a été*, ou encore sur l'image-temps du cinéma.

Ce flou se légitime par la porosité, par l'interaction entre lire et voir puisque, à l'évidence, lire un texte c'est sans doute voir surgir des images (des images mentales, l'un des moyens de la prise en charge du texte par son lecteur) et, symétriquement, quand je regarde une image, toujours en quelque façon, je la textualise. Toujours l'un renvoie à l'autre, aucun des deux, par conséquent, ne peut prétendre fixer une présence. Mais ce flou devient assimilation illégitime dès l'instant où n'est pas prise en compte de façon explicite une différence fondamentale: celle qui fait de l'image cinématographique d'abord un enchaînement réglé par une perception spécifique du temps, rendue plus ou moins singulière par le jeu du montage, de la césure instantanée que ce dispositif permet dans la succession continue de cette image-temps, de cette image-mouvement.

La lecture des ouvrages qui suivent me conduit à une hypothèse générale: l'image à partir de sa caractérisation photographique et/ou cinématographique peut, me semble-t-il, être pensée comme le lieu même de la spécificité actuelle du traitement conflictuel à tous égards

Key Words:

- presentation of violence
- absolute violence
- ludic fictionalization
- the game of time
- heterogeneous textualities
- montage
- history
- humanity
- anthropogenesis
- indifference

Philippe Daros

- de la question de la représentation, et tout particulièrement de la présentation de la violence, en littérature. Les ouvrages de Jacques Rancière, *Le destin des images* mais aussi *Partage du sensible*, celui de Jean-Luc Nancy, *Au fond des images*, de Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout* (et tous ceux qui le précèdent, au demeurant), de Daniel Payot, *Après l'harmonie* qui considère, après bien d'autres, le «montage» comme le moyen même de penser une fonction éthique de l'art, mais aussi celui de Jean Bessière et, tout particulièrement les remarques quasi conclusives «En passant par le cinéma» dans *Quel statut pour le littéraire?*; tous ces ouvrages donc portent preuve d'une réflexion sur l'image pour penser aujourd'hui la question de la représentation, notamment celle du temps et surtout celle de notre rapport au(x) temps historique(s), tout particulièrement à l'Histoire de ce XXe siècle comme siècle où s'est manifestée une violence absolue.

Tous ou presque ont encore en commun de faire une même référence à un lieu singulier de réflexion sur les rapports entre histoire et cinéma, entre pratique esthétique et représentation de l'image-temps: *Les histoire(s) du cinéma* de Jean Luc Godard.

Certes, je l'ai dit, la notion d'image ne recouvre pas un contenu homogène dans ces différents ouvrages. Tantôt pur équivalent – proposé comme tel, sans beaucoup de raffinement théorique, de l'œuvre d'art, à partir bien sûr d'une *arché* platonicienne (Rancière) où la notion de «régime des images» équivaut aux différentes conceptions de l'œuvre dans l'art occidental, tantôt, et c'est l'autre extrême, réflexion en termes d'absolue spécificité chez Didi-Huberman, puisqu'il s'agit après tant d'ouvrages consacrés par ce critique d'art «benjaminien» à l'image picturale, d'un essai polémique autour des «rouleaux d'Auschwitz»: ces quatre images «arrachées à l'enfer» par les membres d'un *sonderkommando*, en passant par un régime intermédiaire et passablement fluctuant, chez J.L. Nancy puisqu'il traite, lui aussi, de la possibilité de représentation de la shoah et de son supposé «imprésentable» mais aussi de l'image littéraire et picturale au gré de la diversité des articles rassemblés dans ce recueil intitulé *Au fond des images*.

N'étant ni philosophe, ni historien, c'est d'une articulation de ces réflexions sur l'image dans leur rapport à l'histoire et à l'historicité que je voudrais traiter rapidement en justifiant cette articulation sur le constat de l'omniprésence d'un «retour» de l'Histoire dans la fiction, depuis une vingtaine d'années (un retour sans retour d'ailleurs, un retour «spectral», une «visitation» exactement pour reprendre une qualification de Jean Bessière relative à la perception du temps au cinéma, à l'un des temps de l'image cinématographique. J'y reviendrai à propos du roman de Kertész *Le chercheur de traces*). Pour attester de ce point, le nombre de romans qui pourraient être convoqués est

Images, violences, histoire

considérable. Aussi et pour motiver mes trois choix, j'avancerai une volonté d'examen de cette articulation à partir d'une réflexion extraite de l'ouvrage de Payot (*Après l'harmonie*), commentant une prophétie de Walter Benjamin qui voit dans le jeu et plus précisément ce jeu qu'est le cinéma, l'avenir même de la représentation. Cette remarque sur la représentation possédant, pour moi, le mérite de pouvoir être commentée en introduisant une perspective diachronique.

Payot rapporte d'abord des propos d'Adorno plaçant toute l'expérience de l'art moderne sous le signe, violent, de «révolte contre l'apparence», le terme «d'apparence» étant une preuve supplémentaire du dialogue, aussi continu que conflictuel, entre Adorno et Benjamin puisque, apparemment (!), cet emploi du mot est directement transposé des affirmations de Benjamin relative à une archéologie de la *mimesis* qu'il propose dans une note (la 10^{ème}) de 1935 (non reprise dans la traduction française) relative à l'essai sur «La reproduction de l'œuvre d'art...». Cette note n'est pas d'interprétation aisée. Elle oppose de façon ambiguë, parce que tantôt présentée comme évolution historique, tantôt présentée comme un fait structurel et donc synchronique de l'œuvre d'art, deux composantes: «l'apparence» et «le jeu».

Ainsi découvre-t-on la polarité qui règne dans la *mimesis*. Les deux versants de l'art: l'apparence et le jeu, sont comme en sommeil dans la *mimesis*, étroitement pliés l'un dans l'autre, telles deux membranes du règne végétal.¹

On doit sans doute commenter cette notion «d'apparence», en la référant à la «belle forme» dont porte témoignage l'art classique. Harmonisation, dans la complétude unifiante d'un *muthos*, du divers de l'expérience, puis, toujours selon Benjamin, faire du «jeu» une relève, dès l'instant où ce rêve de complétude le cède à une fragmentation, à un refus contre la «belle apparence», au nom d'une probité tant éthique qu'esthétique. Les propos de Benjamin donnent donc à entendre un rapport de succession: après avoir été du côté de la (belle) apparence, l'art serait, dans la modernité, devenu jeu, expérience combinatoire, formalisme enfin. Mais il n'est pas simple, alors, de noter que, selon Benjamin encore, la *mimesis*, dès son origine, aurait contenu *in nuce* ces deux éléments. Résoudre cette difficulté n'aurait, je crois, rien d'impossible, mais là n'est pas, pour moi, le propos². C'est la suite de la réflexion de Benjamin qui m'importe:

...dans les œuvres d'art, ce qui est entraîné par le flétrissement de l'apparence, par le déclin de l'aura, est un gain formidable pour l'espace de jeu (Spiel-Raum). L'espace de jeu le plus vaste s'est instauré dans le cinéma. En lui, le moment de l'apparence s'est éclipsé complètement en faveur du moment du jeu (...) Dans le cinéma, le moment de l'apparence a laissé la place au moment du jeu.»

¹ Daniel Payot, *Après l'harmonie*, Circé, 2000, p. 75

² Notamment, l'étrange notation sur la nature quasi maternelle et végétale de la *mimesis*, pourrait-elle être commentée à partir des analyses de la *mimesis* aristotélicienne proposées par Anne Cauquelin dans son ouvrage *L'art du lieu commun*, «la couleur des idées», Seuil, 1999, p. 103. «L'imitation d'Aristote, n'est pas plus une copie que la doxa n'est une opinion. C'est une imitation qui imite non des objets, mais la nature. On n'imité pas quelque chose –un lit, une table, une pomme, un visage-, on imite un processus. Comment la nature fait-elle pour engendrer ? Elle procède par économie, justesse. L'artiste doit imiter les qualités de la nature, non ses produits. Imiter devient alors une opération en soi qui rend visible le mécanisme de production de la nature : économie, composition, juste répartition des parties dans un ensemble, chaque chose à sa place; telles sont les lois de la nature que l'art dévoile et, comme le dit encore Aristote, «achève» en les rendant publiques.»

Philippe Daros

³ «L'émancipation par rapport au concept d'harmonie...», cité par Daniel Payot, *Après l'harmonie*, Circé, 2000, p. 71.

⁴ «Le prétendu instinct ludique a toujours fusionné avec la prédominance de collectivités aveugles. Ce n'est que lorsque le jeu se perçoit avec son propre frisson d'horreur, comme chez Beckett, qu'il participe en art, de quelque façon à la réconciliation. S'il est tout à fait impossible de le concevoir sans jeu et sans répétition, l'art est cependant capable de déterminer comme négatif cet horrible vestige qu'il porte en lui.»

Theodor Adorno,
Théorie esthétique, p. 440.

⁵ Italo Calvino, «Visibilità», *Lezioni americane, Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Einaudi, 1988.

⁶ Daniele Del Giudice énonce cette question dans une conférence prononcée à Ferrare, en janvier 1991. Conférence partiellement reproduite dans le quotidien italien «Il Corriere della Sera» du 17 janvier 1991.

⁷ Et cette définition rend opérante la définition tant du «personnage» que du mode de constitution de «l'événement»- proposée par Iouri Lotman pour le roman «classique» puisque, ici, le

Ce sont ces idées de relève après le «flétrissement» de l'œuvre auratique par le jeu, relève au demeurant sévèrement critiquée comme on sait par Adorno même si, curieusement, celui-ci reconnaît la présence du jeu dans l'art moderne³ (et le légitime, à condition que ce jeu «perçoi[ve] son propre frisson d'horreur»),⁴ puis d'achèvement de cet espace de jeu dans l'art cinématographique que je voudrai commenter en les exploitant avec quelques textes littéraires choisis pour le rôle – explicite qu'ils attribuent à l'image dans le processus de présentation de la représentation.

Plus exactement, l'idée que je voudrai défendre est celle d'une problématisation, aujourd'hui, de cette «apparence» par sa surexposition au moyen d'un *jeu temporel* sur celle-ci. Que l'apparence puisse se donner à lire, aujourd'hui et après deux siècles de déconstruction réflexive de la représentation, comme une complétude formelle «pétrifiante» comme «arrêt de mort», qui fait de l'œuvre «le masque mortuaire de l'art» ne constitue guère une nouveauté critique. Ce qui me semble plus intéressant, par contre, est de fonder une réflexion sur l'énigmatique propos de Benjamin, faisant du cinéma l'accomplissement de cette relève, par rapport à l'apparence, que le jeu aura assumée.

Je voudrai faire l'hypothèse que la littérature depuis une vingtaine peut-être manifeste tendanciellement, non un retour à l'impossible «apparence» pas plus qu'elle ne continue à s'enfermer dans une réflexivité interne référable aux formalismes et aux «mythologies de l'écriture» post-mallarméennes, mais qu'elle atteste d'un *jeu singulier puisque portant précisément sur l'apparence*, et ce pour tenter de rendre compte de l'apparaître d'une violence dont les manifestations attestèrent souvent d'une négation de l'anthropogénèse «humaniste».

J'anticipe un élément conclusif: l'apparence fait retour sous la forme d'une composante historique, dans une forme réglée donc par le moule historiographique (cher à Ricoeur) qui apparaît, dans le tissu fictif, comme un montage: celui d'une représentation-écran et, surtout, comme un écran de représentation, c'est-à-dire une projection de l'histoire quasi mécanique, se définissant comme un point de vue sans point de vue ou, si l'on préfère, donnant à voir, mais à personne (la cécité ou du moins l'inaptitude du personnage intra-fictif à lire ce tissu historique est manifeste), le spectacle – tragique - de l'Histoire, tout particulièrement, bien sûr, celle du XX e siècle. Les trois œuvres, rapidement examinées ci-dessous, détermineront, dans leur succession chronologique, la progression de l'argumentation.

1/ l'héritage: l'image comme jeu ou le romantisme des stratégies d'écriture: Italo Calvino

2/ l'image distincte ou l'apparence illisible: Daniele Del Giudice

3/ l'image comme «visitation» du temps de l'histoire: Imre Kertesz

NaslovImages, violences, histoire

Pour parler de leurs poétiques respectives, Italo Calvino et Daniele Del Giudice, s'interrogent sur la présence d'une image comme principe dynamique de leur imagination narrative (faisant donc, l'un et l'autre, référence à la notion d'image au sens iconique du terme). L'un, en 1985 pose la question:

«*Da dove 'piovono'le immagini nella fantasia ?*» (*D'où 'pleuvent' donc les images produites par l'imagination ?*)⁵

Et l'autre, cinq ans après :

«*Da dove vengono gli immagini ?*» («*D'où proviennent les images*») ⁶

La légitimité de ce rapprochement est évidemment d'abord fondée sur la similitude de ces deux interrogations mais surtout sur le fait que, dans l'un et l'autre cas, ce questionnement se pose en relation explicite avec des «images» qui n'appartiennent pas à un registre théique, des images qui, donc, ne proviennent *apparemment* aucunement d'une extériorité, historique (le monde «réel») ou esthétique (intertextuelle, picturale...), des images issues de «la fantasia», selon la formulation explicite de Calvino et dont l'origine est définie de façon très similaire chez Del Giudice.

Ma proposition de départ sera de réfléchir, à la nature de ces images mais surtout aux modalités de leur traitement (de leur intégration) dans le tissu narratif. Ces images, selon l'explicite de leur caractérisation, apparaissent comme des symptômes ou, mieux puisque dans une terminologie moins directement psychologique, comme des manifestations d'*arrivance*, au sens que Jacques Derrida donne à ce terme. A vrai dire, leur «nature» ne sera examinée que pour dissocier le contrat de lectures qu'elles appellent, dans la mesure, où il apparaît fortement différent chez Calvino et Del Giudice. Il n'y a d'autre chez Calvino que pour être réduit au même, annulant par là l'événement de ce qui arrive.

Calvino définit lui-même, précisément, la fonction narrative de l'image:⁷

*La première chose qui me vienne à l'esprit ; quand je forme le projet d'une histoire, est donc une image dont pour une raison ou une autre le sens me paraît riche, même s'il m'est impossible de formuler ce sens en termes discursifs ou conceptuels. Dès que cette image mentale a acquis assez de netteté, j'entreprends de la développer en histoire ; ou pour mieux dire, ce sont les images elles mêmes qui développent leurs potentialités implicites, le récit qu'elles portent en elles. [...] A ce stade de l'organisation des matériaux, désormais aussi conceptuels que visuels, se situe ma propre intervention qui tend à régler l'histoire en donnant sens à son développement.*⁸

champ sémantique est une extension homogène et edogène de cette concrétion iconique formée sans intentionnalité préalable. Iouri Lotman, *La structure du texte artistique*, Bibliothèque des sciences humaines, Gallimard, 1973 (1970 éd. originale). «L'événement dans le texte est le déplacement du personnage dans le champ sémantique» (p. 326) et «Le mouvement du sujet, l'événement, est le fait de traverser cette frontière qui porte l'interdit, qu'affirme la structure sans sujet.» (p. 332) «Sujet», ici, doit bien entendu être pris au sens de B.V. Tomachevski, par opposition à «fable» et l'expression de Lotman «l'événement dans le texte», c'est-à-dire «le mouvement du sujet» peut économiquement être synthétisée –et actualisée – en faisant recours au terme ricœurrien de «configuration». Si j'insiste sur cette définition de la fiction c'est qu'elle pré-suppose une modalité d'inscription du personnage dans un champ sémantique autonome (déterminé d'ailleurs chez Lotman en des termes fortement anthropologiques) ; or la fiction calvinienne, selon le commentaire fait par l'auteur lui-même, voit son «champ sémantique» produit par l'image initiale, sans recours à une quelconque extériorité.

⁸ Italo Calvino, «Visibilité», *Leçons américaines*, (trad. D'Yves Hersant), Gallimard, 1988, pp. 144-145

Philippe Daros

Propos qui sont systématisés de la manière suivante:

*En somme, ma démarche tend à unifier la génération spontanée des images et l'intentionnalité de la pensée discursive. Même quand l'impulsion initiale vient de l'imagination visuelle, qui met en branle sa logique propre, tôt ou tard elle tombe dans les filets d'une autre logique qu'imposent l'expression verbale et le raisonnement.*⁹

⁹ Ibidem, p. 146.

L'image tombe dans les filets d'une logique qu'impose l'expression verbale et le raisonnement...: tout se passe apparemment ici comme s'il s'agissait d'une prise de contrôle progressive de l'élaboration mentale initiale, involontaire, liminale en tout cas: l'image. Il s'agit de «faire avec» les potentialités dynamiques de cette formation iconique imaginaire «spontanée» (et non de «faire contre», comme, nous le verrons, le suggère Daniele Del Giudice).¹⁰

¹⁰ Je dis «apparemment» parce qu'il convient de ne pas 'forcer le trait': Calvino reconnaît en effet, notamment pour des œuvres qui ne sont pas les siennes, la part d'indétermination, la part d'ombre irréductible que peut recéler l'image. En, 1985, à la fin de sa «conférence»: Visibilité, faisant état de sa lecture de l'essai d'Hubert Damisch, *Fenêtre jaune cadmium*, il dit avoir compris la nature «insurmontable» de l'écart entre expression linguistique et expérience sensible, «l'impossibilité de saisir l'imagination visuelle.» (p. 156) Mais il note cela à partir de l'indexation du *Chef d'œuvre inconnu* de Balzac à la littérature fantastique et comme commentaire de «l'indécidabilité» de ce type de récit.

Les récits calviniens procèdent d'abord d'une exigence de contrôle de l'imagination par l'imagination, d'un rationalisme (post)kantien. Les «filets de la logique» enserrant progressivement l'excédance, le débord de l'image, son a-chronie, dans une configuration narrative où l'étrangeté initiale se trouve réduite par un processus d'unification transcendantal le schématisme de l'imagination - conforme à «la raison», ce «juge qui force les témoins à répondre» (*Du schématisme*, A 141 et B XIII). Au fond, Calvino réactualise, de par la forme du *muthos* qui se développe à partir de l'image initiale, la fonction (cardinale) d'unification du divers de laquelle procède toute l'épistémé de la représentation classique mais en faisant, conformément au constat de Benjamin glisser la quête de concordance de l'apparence vers le jeu. Mais tout comme dans la représentation classique, l'altérité de l'image se trouve réduite dans son annexion par le monde de la ressemblance. On notera que, ce faisant, le pouvoir de déflagration, la violence de l'image se trouvent maîtrisés. C'est là l'exact constat de cette volonté de «défi au labyrinthe» (y compris celui de l'Histoire) longtemps maintenue par Calvino, c'est là encore la vérification de la fonction de l'image «classique» telle que la formule Nancy:

*L'unité forme (bildet) l'image ou le tableau (Bild) de ce qui en soi n'est pas seulement sans image, mais sans unité et sans identité. Par conséquent, «l'image de» ne signifie pas que l'image vient après ce dont elle est l'image: mais «l'image de» est cela en quoi, tout d'abord, ce qui est ce présente - et rien ne se présente autrement. Se présentant la chose vient à se ressembler, donc à être elle-même. Pour se ressembler elle se rassemble. Mais pour se rassembler il lui faut se retirer de son dehors.*¹¹

En fait, dans toute l'œuvre de Calvino (avec des nuances il est vrai, dont témoigneraient sans aucun doute *Les Villes invisibles* ou les

NaslovImages, violences, histoire

commentaires, tardifs, sur la peinture),¹² l'imagination aura, de part en part, vérifié le fonctionnement – transcendantal – que lui confère Kant, celui d'une intégration de la diversité, dans une unité imageante, celui d'une fiction qui «retire l'image de ce dehors» inquiétant d'où elle surgit.

L'imagination kantienne est en effet la première figure moderne [...] d'une faculté de l'image non pas représentative (du moins au sens courant du mot) mais présentative, appréhensive ou aperceptive (c'est-à-dire percevant pour soi, percevant *ad subjectum*), constructrice ou productrice de son objet – ou bien d'elle-même en tant qu'objet- et, en fin de compte, pourvoyeuse de savoir.¹³

Pouvoir quasi absolu de cette faculté maîtresse qui se trouve encore renforcé lorsque Nancy établit une équivalence sans reste entre le «faire-image» ou «la mise-en-image» et la possibilité, pour le sujet, de se constituer en «sujet de la représentation».¹⁴ L'imagination est donc une antécédence de l'image sur elle-même mais elle apparaît surtout comme sa condition de possibilité, de conception de l'image en tant qu'image «retirée de son dehors», c'est-à-dire en tant que représentation. «C'est elle qui voit au-devant et au-dehors d'elle-même la vue qu'elle va nous présenter et nous permettre de nous représenter».¹⁵

L'objection visant à insister sur la nature non thétique de l'input iconique initial (en lieu et place de l'appréhension «imaginante» de l'objet chez Kant) peut être aisément réduite, à la suite de l'équivalence même postulée par Nancy, entre «faire image» et «mise en image» mais surtout se retourne contre elle-même si on la met en partage avec son rôle dans le processus génératif du tissu fictionnel. Cette image apparaît comme un système de contraintes, une «règle» que l'écrivain se donne avec une chaîne de conséquences qui sont celles là mêmes que Gadamer décrit, dans la théorie de l'art comme jeu qu'il propose. Contrainte libératrice de l'image puisqu'elle codifie la logique du développement sous la forme d'un ensemble de variations surdéterminées par les potentialités précisément *réglées* qu'elle fonde. Contrainte libératrice encore puisqu'elle fait de l'ensemble des variations imaginatives qu'elle autorise un univers autonome, fermé dans la mesure même où il apparaît comme jeu combinatoire. Contrainte libératrice enfin puisque le sens premier du jeu, Gadamer y insiste fortement, «est un sens moyen, au sens où l'on définit du point de vue grammatical la voix moyenne comme n'étant ni passive, ni active»,¹⁶ comme voix participante, faisant ainsi du sujet de l'énonciation une conscience qui, absorbée dans son jeu, n'en a pas l'initiative.¹⁷ Ce jeu enfin fonde l'idée même de représentation «autonome» dont la fonction cognitive sera à chercher dans la figure que la totalité des «coups réglés» du jeu fictionnel permet de dessiner métaphoriquement.¹⁸

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 51. A dire le vrai, ce commentaire se présente, par certains aspects, comme paraphrase de celui de Heidegger dans la partie de son ouvrage *Kant et le problème de la métaphysique* intitulée «Le caractère de l'imagination transcendantale». Par d'autres, il témoigne d'une importante prise de distance épistémologique en dégageant les rapports que cette imagination kantienne entretient avec la volonté «violente» d'établir un empire du même, en niant, dans son activité d'unification, toute figure de l'altérité, en annexant toute extériorité par sa réduction en une représentation unitaire. Il semble vraisemblable d'avancer que les deux citations de J. L. Nancy ont pour «origine» cette réflexion de Kant : «L'expression «former des images» [Abbildung] requiert une courte explication. Cette expression ne vise pas la constitution d'une reproduction (d'un décalque) mais la vue qui peut *immédiatement être* prise sur l'objet, présent lui-même. La formation des images ne consiste pas à reproduire des images d'après l'objet, mais à mettre en image, si l'on entend là la saisie immédiate de la forme de l'objet lui-même.» (*Kant et le problème de la métaphysique*, p. 230 pour l'édition utilisée : Tel, Gallimard, n° 61.)

¹² Cette inflexion semble pouvoir se lire dans la «valeur» intitulée «Visività/visibilità» telle que la propose la quatrième des «Leçons américaines» à propos du rapport à la peinture. Calvino dit avoir

Philippe Daros

voulu moins interpréter de façon unifiante ces représentations picturales de saint Georges et de saint Jérôme mais plutôt les raconter «comme si [elles] formaient une histoire unique, la légende d'une même personne, et en identifiant ma propre vie à celle de Georges-Jérôme.» (*Leçons américaines*, Seuil, trad. franç. D'Yves Hervés Hersant, p. 152/153.) Mais comment ne pas constater que cette immersion imaginaire s'effectue précisément dans le lieu même où se vérifie le pouvoir unificateur de la représentation: la peinture classique.

¹³ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Au fond des images*, Galilée, 2003, p. 148 (passage souligné par nous)

¹⁴ «Ainsi le corollaire du «sujet de la représentation», ou plus exactement sa condition même, consiste dans ce qui n'est encore ni sujet, ni représentation, mais le *faire-image*, la *mise-en-image*, l'*Ein-bildung*. *Ibidem*, p. 152

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 162

¹⁶ C'est là un point sur lequel, Françoise Dastur insiste, à juste titre, dans son essai «Esthétique et herméneutique, La critique de la conscience esthétique chez Gadamer (in *Phénoménologie et esthétique*, volume collectif, Encre marine 1998, pp. 41-60 et p. 48 pour la citation.

Classicisme des stratégies d'écritures chez Italo Calvino qui visent à réduire le surgissement du sensible par sa concaténation rationalisante dans un intelligible ludique et surtout, constat rétrospectif fort d'une évacuation de l'histoire, d'une évacuation de tout rapport au temps historique, d'une absolue déproblématisation, en dernière instance conforme à l'art classique, du temps. Ce projet, il faudrait le noter, ne pourra être maintenu qu'au prix des plus réelles difficultés dans les œuvres des années 80, mais ce serait alors une orientation sur l'œuvre de Calvino qui ne m'intéresse pas ici.

Sans doute peut-on dire que l'œuvre d'Italo Calvino aura durablement porté preuve d'une *religion de l'image* puisque sa caractérisation, dans la dynamique du récit, n'est pas très différente de la définition que J.L. Nancy donne de la religion: «l'observance d'un rite qui forme et qui maintient un lien». Or, et j'ai essayé d'argumenter dans ce sens, Calvino affirme l'existence de ce rite (la notion de jeu doit donc ici être reçue comme une variante profane du rite) dans le développement syntagmatique qui rassemble, *qui fait lien* par rapport à l'inquiétante étrangeté du surgissement iconique initial.

En tout état de cause, ces commentaires sur les modalités d'exploitation de l'image, de «sages images» recourent de façon très significative les intuitions benjaminienes et permettent une épistémologie des fictions calviniennes des années 50 et 60. Elles m'apparaissent aujourd'hui comme un ultime témoignage, en forme de variation moderniste apparente, à une très ancienne conception de l'art et de sa fonction. Telle que Schiller la définit, à la fin du XVIIIe siècle dans ses *Lettres sur l'éducation esthétique de l'homme* (1794-1795), comme le lieu de réconciliation de l'intelligible et du sensible et telle que la commente Payot:

Schiller [...] s'efforce de penser le divorce ou la blessure qui caractérise l'humanité moderne comme la désolidarisation des deux facultés qui étaient chez les Grecs unies: la sensibilité et l'entendement, la faculté de recevoir ou d'être affecté et le pouvoir de concevoir. Les Lettres se présentent comme le constat de cette séparation, mais aussi comme le programme d'une réconciliation à venir; il ne s'agit pas de restaurer purement et simplement l'harmonie perdue depuis la Grèce, mais en surmontant l'hypertrophie de l'entendement et la répression de la sensibilité qui sont les signes distinctifs de l'époque moderne, de construire une nouvelle unité...¹⁹

Et on sait que, pour Schiller, c'est précisément par le *jeu* que cette réconciliation *rationnelle* peut advenir. Puisque c'est la raison qui, «pour des motifs transcendants», exige cette réconciliation entre notre «instinct» sensible et notre «instinct» formel: «il doit y avoir un instinct

Images, violences, histoire

de jeu (*Spieltieb*), car le concept d'humanité ne peut se parfaire que par l'unité de la réalité et de la forme, du hasard et de la nécessité, de la passivité et de la liberté.»²⁰

Les chaînes de conséquences épistémologiques que l'on peut extraire de ces propos me semble quasiment infinie. Je ne les évoquerai qu'allusivement.

Une première relèverait les affinités entre modernité, réflexivité et jeux formels, et, susciterait peut-être, rétrospectivement, une relecture de la poésie de Mallarmé ou de nombre de «nouveaux romans» comme fictionalisation ludique, comme jeux réglés ou dé-réglés par artifice.

Une seconde, autour de l'inquiétude adornoïenne (inquiétude dans une large mesure «inspirée» de Benjamin) suscitée par le renoncement de la littérature à la moindre interaction avec le monde, renoncement auto-proclamé (renversement d'une mise au ban qui lui aurait été imposée du dehors?) de son «statut d'exception»; une inquiétude sur l'espace découvert par ce reflux, d'abord consigné par les Romantiques allemands puis matérialisé par l'espace littéraire en général, une inquiétude fondée sur la crainte, hélas par certains aspects plus que vérifiée par l'Histoire, de le voir, cet espace laissé vacant, annexé par un retour du mythe proclamé par d'autres voix et d'autres voies: celle de la politique et l'absolue violence fondée sur une mythologie comme le nazisme la mit en oeuvre. Cette seconde chaîne de conséquences pourrait encore donner lieu, je crois, à une lecture rétrospective de la «modernité» comme une mythologie converse de celle développée par «le mythe nazi»: une mythification de l'écriture comme utopie de contre discours, comme «mythe retourné contre lui-même» pour parler comme Adorno (d'où, bien évidemment, cette forclusion de l'Histoire au «profit» d'un temps vide et d'une aporie générale de l'esthétique dénoncées par K. H. Böhrer ou par ce même Adorno).

Existerait enfin une troisième chaîne, si utopiquement proclamée de façon chorale par les intellectuels de gauche allemands (à l'exception, évidemment, d'Adorno), de Kracauer à Benjamin, puis aujourd'hui encore par Daniel Payot (*Après l'harmonie*, 2000) ou, encore plus récemment, par Didi-Huberman (*Images malgré tout*, 2004) de *voir, dans le jeu, un montage*. Mais alors c'est de discontinuité, de brèche, de césure, bref de «choc» dû au rapprochement de ce qui ne peut être rapproché dont il s'agit. Tout le contraire d'une intégration schillérienne du sensible et de l'intelligible puisque l'image devient éperon, surgissement violent d'un dehors dans le nappé de la représentation. Alors, de «religieux», le régime de l'image s'inscrit-il dans le distinct. Cette *distinction de l'image*, c'est-à-dire sa séparation conduit à l'œuvre de Del Giudice.

C'est dans une conférence, prononcée à Ferrare en 1991, que Del Giudice propose une réflexion sur le rôle des images dans ses fictions.

¹⁷ C'est de manière très répétitive que dans l'œuvre (parenthèses méta-fictionnelles) ou dans ses propres méta-discours critiques sur son œuvre, Calvino aura fait état de sa volonté de se libérer de sa subjectivité. On se reportera, par exemple, à la méta-fiction que développe le personnage d'écrivain de Silas Flannery, dans *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*: «Comme j'écrirais bien si je n'étais pas là ! Si, entre la feuille blanche et le bouillonnement des mots ou des histoires qui prennent forme et s'évanouissent, sans que personne ne les écrive, ne s'interposait l'incommodé diaphragme de ma personne...» ou encore à toute la section finale de Palomar. Cette dé-subjectivisation est, précisément, autorisée par le jeu puisque, fondamentalement, celui-ci possède une existence indépendante de celui qui joue. Le joueur, en effet, n'est nullement le sujet du jeu mais c'est le jeu lui-même qui, à travers le joueur, accède à la représentation.

¹⁸ Calvino fait une synthèse rétrospective, si j'ose dire, de mes propos, dans une lettre adressée à Emilio Garroni, le 26/10/1965, dans les termes suivants: «...ce que j'écris en ce moment tourne plus que jamais autour de problèmes 'iconiques' (ce qui, pour moi, signifie développement d'une image de départ selon la logique interne de cette image ou du système d'images) et de problèmes sémantiques (ce qui, pour moi, veut dire

Philippe Daros

l'éventail de significations possibles de chaque signe-image-mot ; significations trouvées la plupart du temps en termes d'allégories, historiques et culturelles, allégoriques qui se révèlent comme telles a posteriori et dont je ne dois pas me préoccuper trop si je veux trouver l'exacte organisation dans laquelle la logique du signe [qui est une et une seule] et la logique sémantique (qui doit pouvoir jouer sur différents plans) se fondent pour devenir un tout.» Lettre citée in Philippe Daros, *Italo Calvino*, «Portraits littéraires» Hachette Supérieur, 1994, p. 52.

¹⁹ Daniel Payot, *Après l'harmonie*, op. cit. p. 83.

²⁰ Cité par D. Payot, *ibidem*, p. 84

²¹ «...les images sont des fantasmes engendrés par le non-être des personnes et des objets, présence-absence perturbante de ce qui n'existe plus ou de ce qui n'a jamais existé. En somme l'imagination (la fantasia), c'est-à-dire l'attitude qui consiste à engendrer (*secernere*) des fantasmes est, depuis ses origines liée à un élément *noir* qui arrive jusqu'à notre siècle, depuis le surréalisme qui plus que toute autre esthétique a réfléchi à la noirceur de l'image ou depuis Blanchot pour qui l'image littéraire était dépouille, littéralement un cadavre jusqu'à Roland Barthes qui, à

Loin de parler en termes généraux, il se réfère à celles qui, obsessionnellement semble-t-il, peuplent son imaginaire. C'est tout d'abord en des termes absolument calviniens que la question de l'origine des images se trouve posée.

D'où viennent les images? Je ne me réfère pas avec cette question au bombardement auquel notre regard se trouve soumis à une époque de l'image totale et réalisée... [...] Je fais référence au contraire à ces images bien plus obsédantes, bien plus lointaines et mystérieuses que nous ne savons attribuer ni à notre perception, ni à notre mémoire consciente, ni à notre faculté d'invention...

Mais ensuite, l'analyse de Del Giudice emprunte des chemins bien différents. Il avance une première polarisation (il y en aura deux), moins choisie que subie, de son rapport à l'image: c'est l'image comme mort, comme cadavre,²¹ c'est ensuite l'image comme énigme qui tire sa force du «cône d'ombre»²² qu'elle développe (de son «commerce avec l'obscur»). Enfin, il insiste sur la nécessité de conserver à l'image son extériorité, de ne pas tenter sa réduction dans une lecture de rassemblement de sa dissemblance. Del Giudice dénonce toute volonté de réduction de la puissance de déflagration de l'image, définissant par là même une démarche résolument «anti-calvinienne».

Et, de fait, les fictions de Del Giudice sont remplies d'images dont l'étrangeté joue sur tous les registres de la fixité cadavérique, au sens propre et, évidemment, en termes de poétique de la représentation, de déni de la «belle apparence». Ces images, serties dans le récit apparaissent comme telles, provoquant un effet de montage. Mais en tenant compte du fait que l'image est singulière chez Del Giudice (même si elle ouvre à des points de vue souvent impossibles), il semble préférable de parler, à la suite d'Adorno, d'utilisation paratactique ou, selon la terminologie plus récente de Jacques Rancière de «phrase-image». La parataxe comme mode d'organisation conflictuel des matériaux esthétiques: Adorno désignait par là une forme intérieurement antagonique, divisée en elle-même, disloquée par des tensions internes sans résolution possible. L'esthétique de la parataxe équivaut, note Payot à une esthétique du déchirement, de la blessure sans cicatrice.²³ Quant à la «phrase-image», elle se trouve définie par Rancière non sans résonances avec la terminologie adornienne: «La vertu de la phrase-image juste est donc celle d'une syntaxe paratactique. Cette syntaxe, on pourrait aussi l'appeler montage, en élargissant la notion au-delà de sa signification cinématographique restreinte.»²⁴ Et, après tout, l'écart n'est pas si grand, entre les définitions ci-dessus et celle que J.L. Godard propose du montage, au sens purement cinématographique: le fait de donner à voir, non des choses, mais des rapports, un triple

Images, violences, histoire

rapport: entre les images et leur entrecroc dans le montage puis ce choc en rapport avec le spectateur (ou le lecteur). J'ai cherché à le montrer ailleurs mais on peut synthétiser le rapport à l'image «cadavérique» chez Del Giudice, de deux façons: ou bien (*Dans le musée de Reims*, 1988), la fiction nous présente un tableau de cadavre, celui de Marat assassiné et peint par David ou bien, il s'agit de monuments issus de la monumentalité propre à l'art classique (une forteresse, un cimetière), mais dans chaque cas, l'image de la représentation s'avère «montée», c'est-à-dire que son insertion, sa lisibilité dans le contexte fictionnel où elle surgit est explicitement niée, «absentifiée» dans un exercice de neutralisation ou encore fait l'objet d'une *misreading* volontaire de la part des personnages. *Des images qui préservent leur force de questionnement précisément parce qu'elles sont dissemblantes d'elles-mêmes*. Je n'ai guère la possibilité d'analyser ici en détail les fictions de Del Giudice, produites depuis une douzaine d'années mais la présence des phrases-images, de par leur mode d'inclusion distinct dans la fiction (d'où, par exemple, le recours à des variations typographiques et à une description de type rigoureusement architectural et historiographique du cimetière – appartenant à l'histoire napolitaine des Lumières - dans «Fuga»)²⁵ conduit très exactement à un double questionnement, celui-là même qui conclut le dernier livre de Didi-Huberman, portant au demeurant sur une image totalement incommensurable - les rouleaux du *sonderkommando* d'Auschwitz, le double problème consécutif au maintien de l'image dans son extériorité et, donc, dans son pouvoir de déflagration, dans le récit où elle apparaît: un problème éthique et temporel dans notre tentative de mise en relation de cette distinction irréductible. Pour le dire beaucoup trop vite, l'irresponsabilité de la stratégie narrative donne à penser une responsabilité, essentielle aujourd'hui, celle d'être des héritiers sans testament: comment penser la continuité/discontinuité avec le XVIIIe siècle, comment nous situer par rapport à l'anthropogenèse de l'humanisme dans son ensemble et, bien entendu face à la question du symbolisme défait de la mort. Bref, ces récits posent la question de notre historicité, de notre héritage nécessaire, impossible: celui d'un monde «d'après l'harmonie». La poétique de Del Giudice, dans *Mania*, prend l'exact contre-pied de celle de Calvino, dans sa filiation schillérienne, en insistant précisément sur l'incompatibilité entre le sensible et l'intelligible puisque tout l'ouvrage est placé sous l'épigraphe, emprunté à Foscolo, «la manie dérive du trop sentir», posant alors en termes esthétiques la question de notre possibilité même de reconduire le discours de l'idéalisme postkantien de Schiller sur l'art comme synthèse du sensible et de l'intelligible.

propos de la photographie, parla de 'retour du mort'. Voici une première contradiction: je pense faire une œuvre de vie, alimentée par la passion d'être avec les autres grâce à la complicité d'un récit, et pourtant je travaille avec des cadavres, je me perçois comme un trafiquant de cercueils, un *dealer* de cadavres. La puissance d'une image, son *action* consiste, dès lors, [...] dans sa faculté d'échapper à sa nature de mort pour produire un sentiment de vie.»

²² Le second pôle de sa réflexion sur la nature des images à l'œuvre, volontairement ou non, dans ses fictions insiste sur un «type» très particulier d'images, celles qui, au-delà de leur visibilité immédiate, développent, font naître un «cône d'ombre», un mystère essentiel, une contenu invisible derrière leur apparence, et ce, en réaction à un monde, le nôtre aujourd'hui, caractérisé par la volonté d'une visibilité totale, sans restes. Enfin, se discerne un troisième pôle de réflexion sur l'image: mais il s'agit, me semble-t-il, davantage d'une épistémologie de la relation aux images définies précédemment, que d'une approche supplémentaire. Del Giudice dénonce toute volonté de réduction de la puissance de déflagration de l'image, définissant par là même une démarche résolument «anti-calvinienne». Il invite à lutter contre l'instinct de domination, un rapport de possession que

Philippe Daros

nous avons avec la langue, comme avec toutes choses.

«...ce qui nous attire plus que tout est précisément le désir de dévitaliser l'image, de 'l'expliquer' aussi complètement que possible, de faire en sorte que la plus petite part d'ombre qu'elle pourrait encore recéler ou qui pourrait se reconstituer dans ses franges soit extirpée, interdite.»

²³ Au sujet de cette «absence de cicatrisation», on se reportera à Daniel Payot, *Après l'harmonie*, op. cit. p. 93 et suiv.

²⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Le destin des images*, La fabrique éditions, 2003, p. 58

²⁵ «Fuga», récit inclus dans le recueil de Daniele Del Giudice, *Mania* (Einaudi, 1997), traduit en français sous le titre de *L'oreille absolue*, «La librairie du XX e siècle», Seuil, 1998

²⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Le destin des images*, op. cit., p. 240

²⁷ Jean Bessière, *Quel statut pour le littéraire ?*, op. cit., p. 240

En fait, nous sommes, dans le cas de «Fuga» très près de cette vision, cinématographique, d'un point de vue (la description architecturale du cimetière) sans point de vue partageable par le personnage de Santino, perdu dans ce lieu inconnu et inconnaissable, tout comme la forteresse de «Dillon bay» est montrée par une figure de la deixis, le vieux Colonel, sans que le personnage auquel il s'adresse ne puisse s'associer, anthropologiquement, à ces points de vue sur le temps, sur l'Histoire qui ne peuvent plus être les siens. C'est là retrouver cette interdépendance entre réalisme et figurativité par le jeu de la métaphorisation (du monument, du phénomène cosmique) sur laquelle réfléchit J. Bessière, à la fin de *Quel statut pour le littéraire?*, pour souligner que la littérature en effectuant le montage de superpositions temporelles, hétérogènes, ne refigure aucunement le temps (Ricoeur) mais présente celui-ci sous la forme d'une image, d'une figure, contre lesquelles se définit notre historicité. Figurer le passé de façon complexe, exige, dans les récits de Del Giudice, une problématisation des modalités, aujourd'hui, de réception de ce passé, comme différence mais différence que nous devons interroger (devenir actuel du symbolisme de la mort et des rites funéraires, imaginaire des formes liées à l'anthropogénèse de l'humanisme, etc.). En fait, ses analyses s'associent pleinement aux constats de Jacques Rancière :

*D'un côté l'image vaut comme puissance déliante, forme pure [...] défaisant l'ordre classique des agencements d'actions fictionnels, des histoires. De l'autre elle vaut comme élément d'une liaison qui compose la figure d'une histoire commune. D'un côté elle est une singularité incommensurable, de l'autre elle est une opération de mise en communauté.*²⁶

Ces récits n'entendent refonder ni la puissance organisatrice de la mémoire, ni vérifier une quelconque synthèse de l'aporétique du temps (la *Mimesis* III de ricoeurienne mémoire), mais ils ne se donnent pas non plus comme pure et simple négation du passé. Ils vérifient exactement, me semble-t-il, l'idée, développée en conclusion de *Quel statut pour le littéraire?*, à savoir que...

*L'historicité n'est dicible que dans la mesure où les désaccords des discours sur l'histoire sont marqués, et où le roman n'est pas la prosopopée de l'histoire, mais ce qui récuse toute fin inscrite dans le roman – que le mot s'entende comme finalité ou comme événement.*²⁷

Et il y va aussi d'une perspective éthique dans la présentation conjointe et disjointe de ces discours sur l'histoire, de ces discours agonistiques. La dimension éthique, comme le note Didi-Huberman, à

Images, violences, histoire

l'explicit d'*Images malgré tout*, non seulement ne disparaît pas dans ce heurt des images-temps, dans ces images-phrases, mais, au contraire s'y exaspère "...c'est-à-dire qu'elle s'y refend du double régime que les images autorisent. C'est alors une question de choix: nous avons, devant chaque image à choisir comment nous voulons la faire participer, ou non, à nos enjeux de connaissance et d'action".²⁸

Ces deux citations rendent encore exemplairement compte, il me semble, de *Le chercheur de traces*. Je n'ai jamais été à Buchenwald. Mais j'ai lu la fiction du franchissement de son portail et ressenti que ce seuil n'était que leurre, passage vers un ensemble de traces pas mêmes illisibles mais insignifiantes après le surgissement de la description très précise, quasi photographique de celui-ci, à la page 61 du roman d'Imre Kertész, *Le chercheur de traces* (1998-2003 pour la traduction française).

Celui-ci était petit, insignifiant, il se perdait dans le paysage, il était presque ridicule...

Une image nue, émergeant dans un cadre spatial et temporel, celui de ce bref roman, très largement sous déterminé jusqu'alors et s'opposant à lui, de par l'absolue surdétermination de ses modalités de présentation, objectale, neutre, précise dans la représentation. Comme un éperon, comme une déchirure dans le tissu du raconté: le «dehors» d'une image de seuil, dans l'aridité désertique d'un non lieu. Je viens de parler «d'image» alors que ma prétention était de dénoncer la confusion régnant autour de ce terme! Comment justifier cet emploi? D'abord en notant que cette description ouvre sur un ensemble de notations, comme une succession de plans, qui caractérisent l'au-delà du portail en termes temporels: barbelés rouillés jusqu'à la pulvérulence, nature rase et à l'abandon, puis description allusive d'un lieu d'exposition donnant au personnage le sentiment de «s'être égaré dans un aquarium, parmi des monstres morts, des dragons empaillés, des fossiles préhistoriques...», autant de notations descriptives qui cristallisent donc en une sorte d'image-temps, figurant un monde pétrifié, d'une absolue altérité. Mais surtout -ce qui précède n'est guère probant en soi- parce que cette «visite» ou cette visitation par un temps autre devant lequel le personnage est dans un paradoxal rapport d'inclusion (projetée) et d'exclusion (phénoménale) est explicitement commentée, à de multiples reprises, en terme de *spectacle* mais sans aucune participation possible: moins théâtre donc que cinéma. Comme si le personnage se trouvait devant ce spectacle de l'absolue violence de l'histoire dans des conditions de passivité qui sont celles-là mêmes du spectateur devant la reproduction mécanique de cette image-temps qu'est l'image cinématographique, l'image d'un temps qui, par définition, ne peut être celui du spectateur. Ce qui, je crois,

²⁸ Georges Didi-Hubermann, *Images malgré tout*, op. cit., p. 223

Philippe Daros

autorise ici le terme d'image est que ce «spectacle» va surdéterminer un étrange rapprochement dans le roman avec une autre image, au sens pictural du terme cette fois: un autoportrait peint par un auteur, d'origine hongroise lui aussi, convoqué depuis les plus lointains de l'histoire, de l'histoire de la représentation, celui, peint en l'année 1500 par Albrecht Dürer ! Il m'est impossible de rapporter analytiquement les modalités complexes de cette association dans le roman. Mais le personnage affirme être vainement allé dans le lieu où le portail-trace fait déchirure pour «réparer» «en portant témoignage de tout ce que j'ai vu» (p. 80). Puis de retour en ville (toujours avec la même large sous-détermination aspectuelle), il observe la vie quotidienne et son agitation qui semble être celle de la grande ville et, tout à coup, le monde bascule dans un phantasme d'apocalypse à partir de la fascination qu'exerce sur lui un jeune homme anonyme aperçu dans la foule.

L'envoyé fut saisi d'une impression étrange, [...] il avait effectivement déjà vu ce geste, ce visage, ce jeune homme, si ce n'était dans la réalité, alors peut-être au cinéma, sur une photo, éventuellement dans un tableau.²⁹

²⁹ Imre Kertész, *Le chercheur de traces*, Actes sud pour la trad. franç., 2003, p. 89.

Ce jeune homme est Albrecht Dürer, explicitement donné pour ce qu'il fut: un témoin «de tout ce qu'il avait vu par une série de gravures.» (p. 89), un relais essentiel dans l'établissement de cette théorie de la représentation plaçant le monde sous l'empire du regard. Cette double fonction d'enregistrement visuel, de fonction testimoniale, s'achève dans la violence d'une superposition, tout aussi fantasmagorique que la scène dans son ensemble, anamorphosant le présent en un déluge d'images apocalyptiques, inspirées à l'évidence par le cycle où Dürer illustre le récit mystique avec une précision qui aurait pu, précisément, être celle d'un témoin oculaire, tant les différentes descriptions y sont prises au pied de la lettre. Et, dès lors, de cette superposition hallucinée naît le constat que le destin de chaque homme est, a été...

soumis aux ordres inflexibles des tyrans tout-puissants ou à la volonté maniaque des grands artistes d'assujettir leurs fresques à une seule idée, sans oublier le moindre détail, dans la folie lucide de l'exercice de leur pouvoir...

Ici, à nouveau, la chaîne des commentaires apparaît infinie. Par rapport à l'échec du témoignage visuel de l'envoyé venu à Buchenwald, et ce serait toute la polémique sur la possibilité même de «témoigner» -et selon quelles modalités- de la Shoah (la fiction de Kertész se situant en plein cœur du débat sur l'image qui alimente toute l'essai de Didi-Huberman dans *Images malgré tout*). Par rapport à l'*episteme* de la représentation et ce serait tout le débat qui, de Blanchot à Marin, plus récemment à Rancière, à Nancy et, de façon

Images, violences, histoire

peut-être encore plus radicale, plus ancienne aussi, à Lévinas, mais qui renvoie aussi exactement à Del Giudice, aura problématisé les liens entre représentation et violence, «arrêt de mort». Bien loin en tout cas d'une pure réflexivité interne du littéraire !

J'esquisserai seulement un commentaire de la première hypothèse, qui me semble au cœur de la question actuelle de l'héritage, de notre rapport à la violence de l'histoire et qui se conjugue aux constats précédents, en rêvant à partir du tableau de Dürer...

«*Moi, Albrecht Dürer me représentais moi-même ainsi avec des couleurs durables à l'âge de vingt-huit ans*».

C'est là l'inscription, on le sait, sertie, en haut à droite du tableau de Dürer qui réalise un autoportrait dans une troublante identification avec l'image du Christ. Cette phrase est, de toute évidence, l'un des plus saisissants témoignages de l'anthropogénèse de l'humanisme renaissant. Mais elle est, peut-être, plus secrètement, la raison profonde du montage de ces deux «images» pour souligner leur impossibilité. Vouloir «témoigner» de la violence de l'Histoire, de cette histoire qui est la nôtre ne peut advenir selon les protocoles de l'affirmation de soi que la représentation narcissique de Dürer impose comme illustration de la souveraineté historique du sujet, *comme l'éternité de soi, peinte avec des couleurs durables, dans le temps*. Et de fait, si «l'envoyé» (et ce terme prend enfin un sens second qui le rapproche de celui de «messie») échoue, c'est d'abord qu'il est resté *mélancoliquement* «devant l'histoire», incapable d'en prendre non pas la mesure – qui le pourrait ? - mais incapable d'y faire face parce qu'il n'est au fond parti qu'en quête de lui-même, dans l'absolue ignorance de l'autre. Ceci le roman va le dire. Deux fois, au moins. Je ne retiendrai que l'explicite, le trop explicite, peut-être: "L'envoyé s'arrêta soudain, frappé d'étonnement, il avait découvert cette vérité... [...] C'était donc cela qu'il cherchait ? Il voulait un témoignage ferme de son existence douteuse?" (p. 110).

Choc dialectique des images, dialectique à l'arrêt non pour faire que l'Autrefois éclaire notre Maintenant mais pour suggérer que le passage de l'histoire ne advenir selon une pensée de l'un, ne peut advenir que dans la différence des temps, dans le dés-accord des mémoires.

En définitive la question que pose l'œuvre de Del Giudice et, avec une urgence particulière, celle de Kertesz, est celle là même que ne pose pas celle de Calvino: la question de la responsabilité de l'œuvre comme problématisation de l'acte de transmission, indépendamment ou non du contenu à transmettre. L'auteur hongrois, dans *Le chercheur de traces* retrouve cette conviction kafkaïenne, à laquelle fait allusion Giorgio Agamben, à la fin de *L'homme sans contenu*, à savoir que le

Philippe Daros

devoir de l'art est de poser la question de son devoir au jour du Jugement Dernier qui est, pour l'un et pour l'autre, l'état historique présent même de l'homme. Alors, peut-être, convient-il de voir dans ce retour sans retour, dans cette visitation sans visitation de l'histoire, moins un état historique qu'une *ex-tase historique*: la nôtre aujourd'hui, incapables de nous approprier notre condition historique mais en sachant que nous devons, dedans/dedans y faire face. Faire donc nos comptes avec cette puissance de contact entre temporalités hétérogènes non en termes de traduction ou d'explication (de réduction, en fait), mais pour savoir où nous nous tenons.

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Philippe Daros
 (University of Paris III, France)
Images, Violence, History
 Summary

The text 'Images, Violence, History' deals with the anthropogenesis of humanism, envisioning art as a possible testimony to the violence of our time. It contemporizes the question of representation and presentation (having in mind different images: pictorial/painted, moving/film, photographic, Romanesque) from the point of view of violence in the history of the 20th century as being a century of absolute violence. Furthermore, it contemporizes its representations in several novels and several works of theory of a more recent date (2000–2006). The essay points highlights common aspects shared between watching and reading, i.e. between the image and the text, since literary texts 'abound in images, and images are textualized', thus the image is represented as a specific point of violence in literature. Literature presents time/history in the form of textualized images. Art embraces the special return of History ('a return without a return') through the interest in violence throughout the last twenty years. The violence in contemporary art appears as a factor in history, i.e. in the montage of the tragic spectacle of history, and the game emerges as a profane variant of the ritual as a factor of the historical montage. The author emphasizes some epistemological consequences for the term 'humanity', which can be restored by renewing the unity between reality and form, contrasted with the Benjamin–Adorno anxiety over the impossibility of literature to engage itself in any interaction with reality (the self-proclaimed alienation of literature from the world). The essay poses the question of discontinuity with regards to the 18th century, pondering the need for a new reconsideration of the anthropogenesis of humanism and the need for distancing from the passivity/indifference to absolute violence as an imminent obligation of art.



Instruments of torture

Manuel Frias Martins

Violence, Literature and the Canon

In the last two decades, both literary theory and literary criticism have gradually broken away from the formalist atmosphere which dominated their practices, particularly in academia, since the so-called linguistic turn. They are more and more motivated by the human factor presented by literature. This general trend reveals a new shift in intellectual interests that, in my view, has had two major interlaced causes. The first can be located in the demise of the *technical fallacy* in literary studies, which was for quite some time wrongly associated with a scientific approach, though in fact that had very little to do with it. The second cause is linked to the return to interpretation that has been stimulated by the pressure of the most sophisticated versions of contemporary cultural studies.

The return of the human to literary theory and criticism, if I may be so bold as to put it in these terms, should not be separated from contemporary awareness of the condition that connects us all as *global citizens*. This is undoubtedly intellectually enticing, engaging us critics and theorists in political, social and ethical issues. In fact, it is one of the reasons why, being neither a philosopher nor a political scientist, I feel compelled to think and write as a global citizen beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries of the study of literature. In the words of Edward Said it might be called a 'practice of participatory citizenship' associated with what Said also designates as 'the practice of humanism' whose purpose 'is to make more things available to critical scrutiny as the product of human labor, human energies for emancipation and enlightenment' (Said, 2004: 22).

It is also in this spirit that I would like to recall, at the very beginning of this essay, the German scholar Werner Krauss and his decision to write about Corneille while awaiting execution in Nazi-ruled Berlin.

Key Words:

- violence
- literature
- canon
- moral responsibility
- global citizenship
- war
- torture
- terrorism
- palindrome
- ecumenical intelligence
- modern subjectivity

Manuel Frias Martins

Firstly, his is not only a sublime example of intellectual strength and detachment, but also a powerful recognition that *it is literature that we can trust for helping us to imagine the most everlasting human truths about the intersections of life and death*. Secondly, particularly after the tragic Nazi experience, Werner Krauss's example also compels us to acknowledge that we are all citizens of the world with a *moral responsibility* in global human affairs. The critical thematization of violence in this essay—and of the fears from which violence partly stems and the which violence partly produces—also allows me to interrogate that moral responsibility when facing the extreme, collectivized form of violence represented by war, which saturates, one should never forget, the very first texts of our Western literary tradition (see Hans Van Wees, 1992: 61-166).

Finally, as a literary essayist I am convinced that an understanding of violence is of the utmost importance for bringing to light some of our own personal avenues of literary interpretation. The avenues that will be explored in this essay are strongly founded on the belief that violence is by no means extraneous to literature, since all *moral dilemmas* that feed violent actions end up being not only present in many poems, novels, short stories and plays, but above all are at the core of the major canonical literary texts of our Western cultural heritage. It should be said, however, that my notion of canonicity has little to do with moral issues. On the one hand, this is because, in spite of Harold Bloom's very disputable notion of (and attack upon) what he considers to be the school of resentment, I share his 'amalgam' for breaking into the canon: 'mastery of figurative language, originality, cognitive power, knowledge, exuberance of diction' (Bloom, 1994: 29). On the other hand, this is because I believe that moral limits or moral standards have nothing whatsoever to do with canonical strength. As I see it, the violent actions inscribed in canonical literary texts are fed by moral dilemmas as a result of a sort of *inverted cognition of the human experience* by the author, something similar to what Harold Bloom calls 'cognitive negations' (Bloom, id: 35).

1. The moral disapproval that we find associated with the word 'violence' has a modern origin. In a book about how the French medieval text *Chanson de Roland* celebrates violence while opening the genealogy of a postclassical tradition of European textualities that will be labelled literature, Peter Haidu summarizes:

'There is no single equivalent to 'violence' in Old French, even though the term itself derives from the Old French violer, meaning the use of force in general, as well as its particular use meaning 'rape' (...). Our term 'violence' perforce bears a seme of disapproval, of condemnation: our culture assumes peace as the desired and desirable norm, and negativizes its opposite. In other cultures, such

Violence, Literature and the Canon

as the nomadic and the early feudal, the use and display of force were positively coded, at least in a particular class, as sources of profit, honour, social rank, and release from various servitudes. To some degree, and from some perspectives, the use of force in forms we consider violent was a social norm in medieval society: society was unimaginable without its presence' (Haidu, 1993: 3).

Philology has taught us well that knowing the epochal codes is vital for approaching the past in its own terms. However, as is clear from the passage cited above, our modern language may also constitute an impediment to properly understand and study earlier cultural forms. In this context, the ideological content of the word 'violence' is certainly a question of historical perspective, and we will be driven to uncomfortable anachronisms if we forget that in the medieval world, for example, and even in classical times, 'violence is not transgression' (Haidu, id: 199). But no matter in what point in time we locate the constitution of our *modern subjectivity*, one thing has to be acknowledged: we are presently and consciously speaking about violence from a modern platform, or from the platform of our modern culture in which the word 'violence' circulates as *transgression* with *moral disapproval* attached to it. Although the ideas revealed in his 'critique of violence' (based on the two central concepts of law and justice) evolve more towards the comforting confirmation of 'divine violence' than as tools of objective analysis, Walter Benjamin seems to point in that same direction when he states that 'a cause, however effective, becomes violent, in the precise sense of the word, only when it bears on moral issues' (Benjamin, 1986: 277).

It is therefore in the terms of a subjectivity fully conscious of its own modernity that we may finally say that *there is no innocent violence*. Putting it as clearly as possible, violence is an *act of will* that has a negative effect over someone (another human being) or something (nature or natural beings). As such, violence becomes a clear category of behaviour, having little to do with any sort of relativist cultural legitimizations. Actually, I believe that it was the acknowledgment of something similar to this (modern) feature that led Hannah Arendt to separate *violence* from 'power', 'strength', 'force' and 'authority', asserting that violence is distinguished by its instrumental character (H. Arendt, 1970: 44-48). Violence and moral responsibility are therefore inseparable at the level of analysis, and will continue to be treated as such in this essay.

As citizens of the world today we are forced to have *extended responsibility* in human global affairs. In its continuous and almost self-evident reality, violence is perhaps the most distinctive human characteristic that drives us to give expression to that responsibility. On the other hand, although it is globally extended in its human scope and

Manuel Frias Martins

significance, that responsibility is not extraneous to the way we may envisage our own singular human condition. And this, in turn, cannot be detached from the moral framework that locks all of us in the unavoidable dispute between good and evil. Whether being showcased by the fertile fields of memory or by our own exposure to its daily workings, violence ends up by bringing to light a moral experience as well as our concomitant *responsibility* with regard to it in a way that is not far from Dostoevsky's dialectics of guilt and salvation:

Everyone is really responsible to all men for all men and for everything. (Dostoevsky, 2004, p. 266)

In truth we are each responsible to all for all (...). In truth perhaps, I am more than all others responsible for all. (id, p. 274)

There is only one means of salvation, then take myself and make yourself responsible for all men's sins, that is the truth, you know, friends, for as soon as you sincerely make yourself responsible for everything and for all men, you will see at once that it is really so, and that you are to blame for everyone and for all things. (id, p. 294-295)

The terms of Dostoevsky's responsibility keep addressing each and every one of us every time we bring violence to the forefront of our concerns. In the Dostoevskian version, no one is blameless. But if the responsibility for violence cannot be clearly assigned to anyone in particular, what sort of blame do I deserve with regard to the others? And what blame do we all deserve in relation to everyone else? How can we deal with this troubling burden? These are, of course, questions that cannot have satisfactory answers. It is precisely because of the aporic quality of these questions, however, that they can stimulate different insights about the role that violence plays in our lives.

Our memory is certainly more easily jogged when reviewing the reality of the violence of the events that have taken place in our modern age. However, as we shall see in greater detail below, *war* is almost as old as the human species, demonstrating that the actions which human beings have most persistently known how to carry out best since the existence of primitive societies have been violent (see Pierre Clastres, 1997). The political philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was perhaps one of the authors who exerted the greatest influence on the different forms which modern political discourse has since taken in legitimising violent action carried out by the state. Especially relevant was his recognition of 'this war of every man against every man' (T. Hobbes, 1651, 1962, Chap. XIII, p. 66). No less important was the combination of his 'First and Second Natural Laws and of Contracts', in which he

Violence, Literature and the Canon

states that 'every man ought to endeavour peace' (id: ch. XIV, p. 67), with the essence 'Of Other Lawes of Nature', in which he states: 'and when he cannot obtain it [peace] that he may seek, and use, all helps and advantages of Warre.' (loc. cit.). These ideas have reverberated in the political thinking of all those who have led humanity into (or who have been fellow travellers through) one violent conflict after another. On the other hand, the apparently—and only apparently—strange notion Hobbes had that 'the Kingdom of God is gotten by violence' (ibid. ch. XV, p.75) aptly sums up the most substantive of human aspirations.

In more recent times, and with later implications on a world scale that were more visible than those of Thomas Hobbes, Karl Marx was able to untangle the agonistic knot of man's violent material existence and set himself to outlining the political physiognomies of his own historical day and age. In revealing man's agonistic existence, Marx is still right in his beatific confirmation of violence. However, in projecting the end of violence in the violent future utopia he was proved tragically wrong, or rather he was ironically proved right in the continuing violence of the utopian truth. What I have just stated is an interpretation of Marx's philosophy, obviously ideological as all interpretations are, although in no way belittling the kind of modern awareness Marx possessed of the role of violence in history. This acknowledgment was taken a step further and gone into more thoroughly later on by a wide number of thinkers. René Girard may be singled out from amongst these. His work *Violence and the Sacred* is a landmark in reflection about the human mechanisms of violence, about violent instincts and drives, and about violent expiations (both collective and individual) of violence itself.

At the beginning of his book, Girard clearly states that 'the physiology of violence varies very little from one individual to another, even from one culture to another.' (Girard, 1977: 2). Violence therefore exists according to dispositions that are congenital to the individual as well as to the way the individual becomes inscribed in particular cultural (and social) orders. But it does not exist in the abstract; nor is it simply a property of others. It is comforting, so very comforting, for us not to see ourselves as the executioners, generously taking the side of the victims. We may even imagine what it is like to be in their shoes. Of course, this fact is not bad in itself. Nevertheless, it would appear to be closely bound up with the *cult of the victim* that characterizes our day and age rather than the recognition that violence exists in each of us as a defining element of our very being in the world. To live with others is to be in conflict with others. It is to exercise power over others and at the same time to suffer the effects of others' power over us. It is certainly the violence of power that authors such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Foucault talk of. But I believe it is also something more than this. In fact what violence

Manuel Frias Martins

teaches us at its most extreme is that before being a victim of any physical or psychological violence, before any process involving collective victimization, we, each one of us, are the first victims of violence that defines us as agents of violence—or, rather, as victims of the violence through which we act out our own socialisation.

There are those who counteract violence with a supposedly effective antidote: love. If I still had any doubts about the hypocrisy of such an antidote, the visit I paid to the Exhibition of Instruments of Torture and Capital Punishment in Lisbon in January 1996 removed all such illusions (a few photos are available online; see works cited). There I was shown, concretely shown, that the hearts so filled with love and piety were also the hearts that invented the terrible instruments which would inflict excruciating death on thousands of human beings. *Agape* (selfless love) may exist; but if it does, then it has been well-disguised through the ages. *Nor should it be said that there are degrees of violence and that love comes in several guises.* There are no degrees in mutilating a man or woman; nor in literally sawing a living body in half; nor in penetrating a person's anus and dilacerating their innards with a pointed stick by forcing them to sit on it; nor in the construction of a box bristling with nails into which a person was squeezed only to have the nail-studded door close in upon them and have nails driven into their head, eyes, chest, genitals, legs. There are no degrees when driving an iron object that opened up into two pincers deep inside the vagina or anus. There are no degrees in cutting off a woman's breasts using metal hooks, in slowly perforating the throat and going up into the brain by using an iron fork tied to the neck of a person accused of heresy, robbery, political crime. Those were some of the instruments of torture used in Europe in the not-so distant past; and in the same exhibition one could also find a number of instruments still used in our own times by several Latin-American dictatorships. Among other more sophisticated devices on display, one could find the electric cables that torturers would put in the vagina, breasts or testicles, in order to extract political confessions through tremendously painful electric shocks. And it must always be remembered that similar tortures and deaths occur in countries with different cultural layouts and less technological means—for example, in Cambodia, to cite but one of the most appalling contemporary cases, where the almost surreal genocidal drunkenness of the Khmer Rouge led not only to the most horrific sufferings and killings of their 'enemies', but also to the more ritualistic and macabre eating of their livers 'to increase the 'heat' of their [the killers'] bodies, a sign of the anger they feel toward their enemies and a felt imbalance that propels action' (Alex Hinton, 2004: 179).

By the same token, there are no shades of love. For a very simple reason: love comes at the expense of much labour; it is the fruit of both an

Violence, Literature and the Canon

ecumenical intelligence that only knows when it wishes to know more, and of a reflexive spirit infinitely ready to acknowledge the diversity of the *One*—or *Uno*—in the version of the man who was its most brilliant paladin. This man was led to a burning pyre four hundred years ago wearing an iron mask that had an enormous nail driving into his mouth, through his palate and up into his nose. His name was Giordano Bruno and he was a man of love; that is, a man who knew how to use his violence to try and understand himself, his world, and the universe, always choosing the path to more understanding—or, rather, to further violence in order to understand himself, the world, the universe; excluding nothing but ecumenically including everything in the finest of harmonies. His faith was knowledge, which survived torture and finally the flames of the *auto-de-fé* carried out by the pious agents of the truth. His faith was knowledge and this knowledge was, for those who killed him, a violence made to the measure of truth that should be punished by torture and death.

We are still overwhelmed today by Giordano Bruno's life and death. For the agents of religious truth, the purpose of killing Bruno was not only to silence what he stood for, but also to take a vital step *to change the world* in a direction contrary to what he stood for. This is crucial in any practice of violence. So crucial that in a certain sense it can even be said to embody the most fundamental function of violence in history. Hannah Arendt has captured this aspect well: 'The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world' (H. Arendt, 1970: 80). This decisive instrumental aspect of violence is certainly at the core of the continuous collective embrace of violence that one finds in armed conflicts and wars. Actually, as we shall see, the very depths of the topic of violence gain a specific relief when set against the backdrop of war.

2. During World War I, and even more so in its aftermath, Freud wrote abundantly on the meanings and psychological frameworks of war, having come to the conclusion that there must be 'a natural aggressive instinct, the hostility of each against all and of all against each' (Freud, 1985: 313). It is true that, according to Freud, war (and our aggressiveness) usually conflicts with our need for civilization, in short, with what Freud famously called the 'pleasure principle'. But as he also admits, 'it is not easy for men to give up the satisfaction of the inclination to aggression' (id: 302). Although not necessarily sharing the Freudian view of the human drive to violence, most psychologists have subsequently come to agree that the instinct of aggressiveness underlying war is likely to be congenital to most of the human race. In short, war seems to display as much a drive on the part of individuals to violence as it does a collective embracing of destruction.

Manuel Frias Martins

It is of little importance at this point that many men on many occasions have refused to fight a war or fled abroad and have had heavy sentences passed on them for doing so. Or if this is of importance it will always be so only within the framework of the ethical necessity of responsibility, of a moral standard which places good as taking precedence over citizenship, of a higher call to discriminate between right and wrong. It is also of little importance at this point that war is not a normal condition of society, or put another way, that a society at war undergoes a kind of unnatural state of collective frenzy. What is important at this point is for us to acknowledge the inescapable fact that war and violence have accompanied mankind since the dawn of time and will most likely continue to do so. One of the questions that consequently should be raised is this: how is one to cope with this painful remembrance of the human condition?

Comparing and reflecting upon mythological and biblical representations of violence, René Girard has shown that the major difference between them lies not in one being less violent than the other (actually they are both extremely violent), but in the fact that: 'whereas in myth, we learn about lynching from the persecutors who maintain that they did the right thing in lynching their victims, in the Bible we hear from the victims themselves' (Girard, 1999: 392). Independently of the way in which both traditions have shaped our imagination, one thing is certain: we are bound to be either persecutors or victims of our fellow men. A cynic would say that to play one of those two roles is just a matter of circumstance. However, if we feel we have a moral responsibility in human affairs, as stated in the beginning of this essay, then we are forced to judge the reality of war from a standpoint that must be anything but neutral or nihilistic.

War—any war—is a terrible thing. Being human, all too human, a war can be carried out for many different reasons. At least since Augustine, but particularly after Thomas Aquinas's intelligent discussion of the conditions for justly resorting to war and for justly waging war (see Aquinas, II, 2:40), the concept of *just war* has been a long-held belief in Western culture. The way in which Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) legitimized warfare, in spite of seeing it as sinful from the start, still carries a lot of weight (for a good synopsis of the just war tradition, see Brian Orend, 2001). If Aquinas's ideas may still be intellectually captivating in our days, particularly in their appeal to justice and morality, his central notion that a just war can only be waged by a state make it hardly suitable for contemporary political situations. But the concept of just war is certainly something we can still work with. For example, as a man who holds a pluralist view of the world, I thank all those who decided to fight a war against Hitler. The war against Nazism appears to

Violence, Literature and the Canon

me as indeed a just war. Pacifism becomes ridiculously unreasonable in face of the horror of the Holocaust. It would be foolish to argue against this war on moral grounds, and even more foolish to accept the validity of the rationalisation of evil carried out by the ideologues of Nazism.

The pacifist vision is undoubtedly appealing, and the power of non-violence is certainly not negligible. In this respect, it is worth remembering the tragic history of Tibet as well as the words of peace and the non-violent attitudes of the Dalai Lama towards the barbaric Chinese dictatorship. But no matter how profoundly outraged I may be by the genocide (both physical and cultural) that is still going on in Tibet, I was not brought up in a Buddhist culture or in a Buddhist environment. My culture (both pagan and biblical) is a culture of violence that has not only instilled in me the idea that there were, are, and will continue to be either persecutors or victims, but has also forced me to cope with the moral responsibility of taking sides with one or the other. Gandhi today is a good topic for discussion, but I am not a Hindu and nor do I want to become one. My universe of experience is that of a culture that first gave me the motto 'liberty, equality and fraternity', then produced a man like Hitler and the doctrine of Nazism, and finally demands that I size up the two realities, pass my own judgment on them and act accordingly. (It should be noted that, neither Hinduism nor Buddhism are totally devoid of the violence exhibited by Christianity, Judaism and Islam, (see *Contagion*, 2002).

War—any war—is a terrible thing. A world at peace is a wonderful vision undoubtedly worth fighting for. But if we want to take a positive role in a battle against war (any war), what is needed first and foremost is for us to become fully aware of *our violent condition as human beings*. This does not mean that we end up being blocked off in a sort of intellectual cul-de-sac, or that our efforts for achieving world peace are bound to fail. On the contrary, what it means is that in defending peace we are equipped with a sound representation of man and of the violence that has permeated human society and the interaction of cultures since the dawn of time. Therefore any cry for peace should be accompanied, in my view, by the conviction that there are, in fact, just wars.

How, one may ask at this juncture, can we judge a war as a just war? If I had lived in 1939, would I have realized that embarking on a war against Hitler was the right thing to do? Many men and women thought so at the time, but I cannot honestly answer this question. All I can say in the present time is the following: facing the harsh realities of the world in which we live, I strive to avoid the trap of acting in a vein similar to those many silent 'monsters of innocence and blindness' (Rochus Misch, 2006: 10) that helped Nazism to develop. Consequently, whenever I feel compelled to pass judgment on the justice or injustice of a

Manuel Frias Martins

war that is going on in the world, I try to place myself into two domains simultaneously. On the one hand, into what the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas calls the 'ethical situation': that is, a movement toward the survival of the other, a relation with and exposure to the condition of the other, a deliberate extensive attention to (and knowledge of) the human face of the other that may be killed in a war. But on the other hand, I try never to lose sight of the signs of the good which exist in that complex territory of right and wrong that is prior to knowledge.

People did not suddenly become unable to tell right from wrong in Germany during the Nazi regime. If we are to believe Peter J. Haas, what happened was that under the influence of Nazi ethics 'vast numbers of people simply came to understand evil in different terms and, in perfectly predictable and comprehensible fashion, acted upon their understanding' (Haas, 1988: 2). This new ethic, again according to Peter J. Haas, 'did not define the arrest and deportation of Jews as wrong and in fact defined it as ethically tolerable and even good' (id: 7). Therefore, and insofar as the Nazis carried out 'a reversal of the ethical system of the West' (*ibidem*), we may accept the general idea that their truths were the falsities of the Allies and vice-versa. But that is as far as I can go in accepting the cognitive force of the conscious acts undertaken on both sides. I have to go beyond the mere knowledge that places tyranny and tolerance on the same plane of analysis. Goodness inevitably becomes an imperative surpassing all arguments and rationalisations, bringing with it the responsibility that I have in fighting not only for goodness, but also against what is wrong and evil. If we hold as good the defence of human life and the right to be different, then goodness was not on the side of the Nazis, but evil was. If I can pass this judgment on a war of the past, why should I be prevented from passing a similar judgment on a war of the present? And if this argument makes sense, as I think it does, are we not faced with the possibility of approaching the discovery of a sort of basic ethical consensus that allows us to unite the common human values put forward by all great philosophical traditions—and particularly by all religions, reaching far beyond their dogmatic differences?

No matter how optimistic those last words may sound, I keep sensing an uncomfortable echo attached to them, particularly when I think about today's *terrorism* as well as the so-called 'war on terrorism'. Consequently, a few lines on the subject will follow in the spirit of the 'participatory citizenship' that has also informed this essay from the beginning.

2.1. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (New York), March 11, 2004 (Madrid), July 7, 2005 (London), and so many others, were evil deeds—as evil as the numerous deaths caused directly or indirectly

Violence, Literature and the Canon

by North-American foreign policy in several regions of the globe. The military response to terrorism that is going on at this very moment may not be as clear-cut as the North-American and British politicians say it is, but no concord is possible when facing a network of terror that may strike our own lives or the lives of our loved ones—as the long-suffering Palestinian people also know all too well.

What I have just stated in the previous paragraph is a cold *mixture of sequentiality and causality* regarding today's political and military events. But it is exactly that *mix* that we keep finding at the core of the uncomfortable sentiment developing everywhere in the world in relation to North-American belligerence, and this *seems to be melting away the opposition between good and evil in relation to the violent acts that come to our knowledge*. I find it unacceptable that terrorism is a form of political violence like any other, but the melting away of that opposition has led some political theorists to defend the idea that some acts of terrorism can be justified by classic just-war theory (see, for example, Andrew Valls, 2000), or a philosopher like Jean Baudrillard to interpret, not surprisingly, terrorism as 'the intelligence of Evil we need' (2005:164).

The literary form called *palindrome* (from the Greek 'running back again') designates those words, sentences or dates that read the same both ways (for example: civic, level, radar, 30/11/03, etc.). What we are all facing today is a sort of palindrome in contemporary political and military actions: that is, we are *forced to read the same violence both ways* in a painful intellectual process of regression and circularity—the formulation of the tremendously complex concept of 'state terrorism' being one of its most visible and disturbing symptoms.

The basic ethical consensus that allowed us to reject Nazism is much more difficult to achieve in a time like ours where the mirror metaphor is becoming more and more the centre of a process of reversibility in the moral sphere, making it very hard to determine just who the adversary really is. This has no parallel in Western intellectual tradition and it *risks paralysing us*. As sequentiality and causality of time and space are annihilated in the literary palindromic motion, so too *the moral grounds of the inter-human are becoming more and more blurred in contemporary palindromic political arguments and military actions*. I maintain that good and evil are not empty concepts, nor concepts that exhibit a kind of empty signification. They continue to make sense, namely when thematised by the violence contained in war (any war). But it certainly is much more difficult to find a safe moral haven today than it was before. In the end, maybe what is needed is the building up of a real *palindromic civic attitude* in current world events, alerting us to the fact that we should always see things both ways.

Manuel Frias Martins

3. The palindromic attitude I have been referring to also throws light on the fact that the faces of violence may be as numerous as the possible moral distinctions that men make about violence itself. But whereas in daily life we are always being forced to reduce these distinctions to a single (moral) level of action, *in literature all those possibilities may be put to work at the same time as conflicting points of view*. This important feature of literature, and particularly of major literary works, makes literature stand apart from all other art forms. Weaving a complex pluralistic fabric of possibilities of understanding the world, *literary representation pluralizes the available ways of dealing with the complexities of the world*, becoming itself, as a form of knowledge, an open process of knowing the world, a dynamic (and quite often dramatic) platform for moral conscience to play its role upon. In the immense constellation of available literary examples, I should like to cite the *sentimental pain* that I find in the fragmented writings of the Portuguese novelist Rui Nunes:

does it make any sense?

what?

To continue.

who knows.

disinterest is the way you exert your violence on the world.

those are usually my sort of sayings.

I'll repeat the question: does it make any sense?

no. Because of the question.

(Rui Nunes, *My translation*, 1995: 143)

What do canonical literary works possess that guarantees them unquestionable and enduring status? Their purely aesthetic value might be the answer in a candid post-Kantian fashion, deliberately ignoring the fact that the identification of the 'aesthetic value', not to mention the aesthetic preferences associated with it, is transitory, always based on temporal codes or norms, and as such is changeable. In spite of his insightful identification of the canonical in relation to the aesthetic strength of some literary works, Harold Bloom evades this decisive aspect of the aesthetic. We might try answering the question in a more general way by stating that what ensures the survival of some texts through time is a very special aura of artistic sensitivity. But then again, the artistic specificity of something is mainly related to a natural impulse for giving experience an imaginative configuration and is not, therefore, the agent of a collective recognition or a collective sharing of this configuration as artistic configuration. What is left, then? What is left is *the represented human element* and above all, *the depth, breadth and scope of the representation* of this human element.

Violence, Literature and the Canon

Whether we are considering canonical literature in general or bringing different canonical works into focus, *the common represented element is violence*. If we think of, for example, any one of Shakespeare's major plays, it is without great difficulty that we come to agree that the common connection between all of them is violence, i.e. those portions of either expressed or latent violence which we may identify today both in ourselves and in whosoever lives with us in our contemporary world. The same applies to any writer who has lasted in our cultural memory as a symbol of great artistic achievement. What we have as the touchstone of their aesthetic cognition is violence. But it is violence that these authors neither celebrate nor deplore, accepting it, rather, as a basic fact of life. And if there are victims in their writings (sometimes in great number, as a matter of fact), they are always there as parables of ourselves: human beings that are human exactly because we are violent; in short, they are parables of all of us as victims of ourselves. It is in this feature that the scope of their aesthetic cognition resides and their artistic difference can also be found. However, it would be a serious error to universalize this aesthetic notion of canonicity or to consider it already present in the literary workings of the past because it represents a way of reading that is typically *modern*.

Peter Haidu rightly states that 'violence was always already inscribed in the European psyche' (Haidu, 1993: 196), citing the example of the *Iliad* to show how classical antiquity was obsessed with its own violence. But the way in which violence is perceived in literature by our *modern subjectivity* necessarily has an *aesthetic value added* to it, which in turn is itself in a constant process of redefinition because of the different shifts happening in culture and society. And the relevance attributed to some authors inevitably changes accordingly. Our modern subjectivity may find it intellectually stimulating and culturally challenging to study, especially from a historical and comparative point-of-view, the bloodthirsty religious dramatic works of the middle ages. But the presence of extreme violence in medieval texts and performances has nothing to do with the modern valorisation of aesthetic cognition and its subsequent critical and canonical preferences. The cruelty and violence of medieval (and early Renaissance and early modern) theatre is well summarized by Jody Enders:

(...) *Medieval religious theatre might have come to include the portrayal of physical suffering as a pivotal means by which to reveal its own truths. (...) Much of that theatre not only was violent but (...), at some level, it had to be violent because it was unable to escape the conceptual and philological similarities among creative invention, dramatic catharsis, and human suffering that emerged from the rhetorical treatments of torture (which circulated in the*

Manuel Frias Martins

classical, medieval, and early Renaissance educational systems) (...) There is nothing sensational about the complicity of torture, rhetoric, and law in the construction of a Truth that is as violent as it is theatrical (Enders, 1999: 5).

Motivated by the logic of modernity itself, the canonical status of literary works is bound to change in time. In the modern epoch this seems to occur only through aesthetic causes (at least in the Bloomian version), but in fact the reasons for such change are social and cultural; and, if we accept the arguments presented so far, they are deeply related to the way in which people, at a certain point in time, experience violence and understand the role it plays in their own lives. The responses are to be found in easily-identifiable aesthetic practices, but the existential undercurrent leading to them has very little to do with aesthetic matters.

The imaginative status of literature as fiction does not rob literature of the weight of its representations precisely because what is being represented brings into play a shared imagination. And the most active existential truth intuitively shared in the imaginary is certainly that of our violent condition, or of our violent modes of existing both as individuals and collectively. The fictional process of selecting, combining and representing the violence which defines our own condition as human beings takes place according to differences in kind and degree—those differences being responsible for guaranteeing the survival of certain texts and the disappearance of others. Yet once again we may call upon memory to help us. Consider, for example, the so-called minor or second-rate writers or authors whom we simply write off, labelling their work sub-literature, as we do for example in the case of romantic pulp-fiction. What we are doing then has nothing to do with a criterion of selection empirically based upon great aesthetic models, but all to do with sharing an *acquired condition of culture* that has taught us to reject fiction that deviates from a violent truth: that violence defines us. Romantic pulp-fiction is exactly the kind of fiction which *does not* mirror our violent image of ourselves, and it is therefore condemned to an inferior positioning in the ranking established by literary canonical tradition. Conversely, if we now think of a great writer universally recognised as such, we see that the way in which he/she has affected generation after generation of readers (or different readers within the same generation) is due to the way in which *something we can all relate to* is represented, regardless of time, place or circumstance. This *something* can only be the truth of violence that rages inside us because of what others do to us or because of what we do to others.

Therefore, the violence of canonical literature has very little to do with the presence of monsters, torn arms and legs, people being killed,

Violence, Literature and the Canon

etc. Of course, it can include some or all of that. But we do not find one single murder in the action of *The Merchant of Venice*, and yet this play represents one of the most violent conflicts of men's collective existence and, as a literary work (following its first theatre performance), it has continuously been read by mankind over the centuries and well into the tragic events of the 20th century and beyond. It is not Don Quixote's death that turns his story into a violent novel but the sublimely human representation of the contradictory madness of his quest. Every poem in *Leaves of Grass* is the expression of Walt Whitman's powerful dispersion of himself—his famous Soul, Me and Real Me (or Me Myself)—in order to better 'touch' mankind's conflicting emotions, i.e., the troubling and harsh 'inner life' of all of us. Examples of other writers could be multiplied *ad nauseam*. In short, the conflicts upon which all great literary works build their interpretations of the world they represent point to the undeniable reality of the many forms of violence that we all have to experience, live with and deal with.

3.1. We have now arrived at the most sensitive point of our subject. Is there any alternative to violence? An affirmative answer to this question is certainly not to be found in René Girard's general theory of violence, which is invariably challenging and illuminating. The most we can aspire to is an awareness of what Girard considers to be 'the dual nature of violence':

The secret of the dual nature of violence still eludes men. Beneficial violence must be carefully distinguished from harmful violence, and the former continually promoted at the expense of the latter. Ritual is nothing more than the regular exercise of 'good' violence. (...) If sacrificial is to be effective it must resemble the non-sacrificial variety as closely as possible. (René Girard, 1977: 37)

'Good violence' or 'beneficial violence' is evident, for example, in rituals, mainly violent 'purification' rituals involving animal or human blood. Irrespective of rites, to be aware of the 'dual nature' of violence is important. In fact, it is of the utmost importance, because it is by way of this awareness that we may come to a behaviour that systematically rationalises our own violence, making it beneficial and placing it at the service of the *common good*, where in other conditions or according to other temperaments (i.e., other men) it serves to destroy the other. It is, therefore, a matter of an affirmative ethical disposition of values related to respecting the other and ourselves as human beings wishing to strive for the negation of violence.

Nevertheless, this fact does not cancel out the awareness of violence as an undeniable part of human existence; rather, it reinforces it.

Manuel Frias Martins

An act of love may very well underlie it. But if it is so, then it will always be in Gordiano Bruno's sense that I referred to earlier. In other words, it is in the sense of knowing how to use violence in order to try and understand ourselves, our world, our universe, always taking the path to a deeper understanding, or rather, to more violence so that we may understand ourselves, our world and our universe, excluding nothing but ecumenically including all and aiming at the finest of harmonies.

Dignifying the other so that we dignify ourselves may seem like a generous illusion in this day and age (which is just like any other age) that is marked by the soaring egoism of petty power. However, it is only by following this path that the common good can be reached. Be that as it may, the dignifying process of being ourselves as human beings freed of violence can only be achieved if we understand our own violence as well as the violence with which we see our own face in the mirror of others' violence. *Literature is perhaps the most consistently available mirror*, and for this very reason it has been responsible for generating more contradictions within culture than any other art form. It is well worth perceiving *literature as an act of violent love*: for us, for the world and for itself. And it is well worth doing so precisely because it is that violent love that holds the most profound fascination that literature keeps exerting in an age such as ours, which is so little given to fascination.

In conclusion, my main argument concerning literature in this essay is that the status of indisputable landmarks held by many texts is founded on an implicit belief that ultimately points to the violent condition of our being in the world, or to the violent modes of our individual and collective existence. This contention can certainly be read as being pessimistic, or at least as being related to the long lineage of Western cultural pessimism. That is why I cannot resist citing a passage from Sorel, who scorned the 19th-century 'illusion of progress' and its optimism, favouring instead a sophisticated pessimism. Commenting on the controversy around his book on violence, Sorel wrote in a long letter, dated 15 July 1907, to Daniel Halévy:

'The concept of pessimism derives from the fact that literary historians have been very struck by the complaints of the great poets of antiquity about the sorrow and pain that constantly threaten mankind (...) Literature of grief has had an appeal throughout almost all history. But we would have a very imperfect idea of pessimism if we considered only this kind of literature' (Sorel, 1999: 11).

Sorel's sophisticated pessimism reminds us that the violent human condition that is represented by literature is not necessarily an end in itself. The best literature demonstrates that violence is, in fact, almost

Violence, Literature and the Canon

dematerialized or sublimated into something that we cannot explain but only feel in the most secret and private regions of our own self. The last scene of *Hamlet* may show a stage full of dead bodies, but what I experience in my mind when leaving the theatre or closing the book is a serenity and a joy that makes me live for a while (even if only for a few minutes) in a platform of thoughts and emotions which are much closer to a sense of reconciliation with the world that surrounds me than to a mere confirmation of its 'sorrow and pain'. However, this artistic effect in no way redeems the violence upon which it is built, because the solid truth of the human landscape is always there. Finally, this is also the reason why, no matter how comfortable we may feel believing in redemption through literature, we are forced to acknowledge that literature is not religion, artists are not gods, and readers are certainly not pious interpreters.

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Manuel Frias Martins

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- Photos of some terrible instruments of torture and capital punishment can be viewed at: <http://www.torturamuseum.com/index.html>

Manuel Frias Martins
(University of Lisbon, Portugal)
Violence, Literature and the Canon
Summary

In the last two decades, both literary theory and literary criticism have gradually broken away from the formalist atmosphere which dominated their practices, particularly in academia, since the so-called linguistic turn. They are more and more motivated by

Violence, Literature and the Canon

the human factor presented by literature. This general trend reveals a new shift in intellectual interests that, in my view, has had two major intertwined causes. The first can be located in the demise of the technical fallacy in literary studies which was for quite some time wrongly associated with the scientific approach, but which in fact had very little to do with it. The second cause is linked to the return to interpretation that has been stimulated by the pressure of the most sophisticated versions of contemporary cultural studies.

The return of the human to literary theory and criticism, if I may be so bold as to put it in these terms, should not be separated from the contemporary awareness of the condition that connects us all as global citizens. This is undoubtedly intellectually enticing, engaging us critics and theorists in political, social and ethical issues. In fact, it is one of the reasons why, being neither a philosopher nor a political scientist, I feel compelled to think and write as a global citizen beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries of the study of literature. In the words of Edward Said, it might be called a 'practice of participatory citizenship' associated with what Said also designates as 'the practice of humanism', whose purpose 'is to make more things available to critical scrutiny as the product of human labour, human energies for emancipation and enlightenment' (Said, 2004: 22).

It is also in this spirit that, at the very beginning of this essay, I would like to recall the German scholar Werner Krauss and his decision to write about Corneille while awaiting execution in Nazi Berlin. Firstly, his is not only a sublime example of intellectual strength and detachment, but also a powerful recognition that it is literature that we can trust for helping us to imagine the most everlasting human truths about the intersections of life and death. Secondly, particularly after the tragic Nazi experience, Werner Krauss's example also compels us to acknowledge that we are all citizens of the world with a moral responsibility in global human affairs. The critical thematization of violence in this essay, of some of the fears violence partly stems from and partly produces, also allows me to interrogate that moral responsibility when facing the extreme, collectivized form of violence represented by war—which saturates, one should never forget, the very first texts of our Western literary tradition (see Hans Van Wees, 1992: 61-166).

Finally, as a literary essayist I am convinced that an understanding of violence is of the utmost importance in bringing to light some of our own personal avenues of literary interpretation. The avenues that will be explored in this essay are strongly founded on the belief that violence is by no means extraneous to literature, since all moral dilemmas that feed violent actions end up being not only present in many poems, novels, short stories and plays, but above all are at the core of the major canonical literary texts of our Western cultural heritage. It should be said, however, that my notion of canonicity has little to do with moral issues. On the one hand this is because, in spite of Harold Bloom's very disputable notion of (and attack upon) what he considers to be the school of resentment, I share his 'amalgam' for breaking into the canon: 'mastery of figurative language, originality, cognitive power, knowledge, exuberance of diction' (Bloom, 1994: 29). On the other hand, it is because I believe that moral limits or moral standards have nothing whatsoever to do with canonical strength. As I see it, the violent actions inscribed in canonical literary texts are fed by moral dilemmas as a result of a sort of inverted cognition of human experience on the part of the author—something similar to what Harold Bloom calls 'cognitive negations' (Bloom, id: 35).



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**Is the War Inside your Mind?
War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's
Theatre of War and *War Fever*¹**

Photographs of guns and flame
Scarlet skull and distant game
Bayonet and jungle grin
Nightmares dreamed by bleeding men
Lookouts tremble on the shore
But no man can find the war

Tim Buckley

Key Words:

- James Graham Ballard
- war
- short story
- United Kingdom
- mass media
- the death of affect
- Vietnam
- Beirut
- Lebanon
- violence

James Graham Ballard (born in 1930 in Shanghai) is one of the most prestigious writers in the United Kingdom. His reputation and popularity arise not only from his frequently controversial books—amongst which one should mention *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), *Crash* (1973), *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and *Super-Cannes* (2000)—and the successful film adaptations of *Empire of the Sun* (Steven Spielberg, 1987) and *Crash* (David Cronenberg 1996), but also from the high profile Ballard has achieved amongst the British public as an indefatigable, witty and irreverent reviewer of books, art, and films. In addition, Ballard is well-known as an outspoken commentator on contemporary issues in Britain and elsewhere, from the events of 9-11 to the uncertain political future of Tony Blair. Ballard's growing popularity is such, indeed, that Collins Dictionary recently included the adjective 'Ballardian' amongst its entries, defined as 'resembling or suggestive of the conditions described in Ballard's novels and stories, esp. dystopian modernism, bleak man-made landscapes, and the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental development.'

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Umberto Rossi

War is not necessarily the first thing that comes to mind when one tries to picture the Ballardian world. The writings of this flamboyantly visionary writer—perhaps the last great surrealist active today—seem rather to be focused primarily on the life led by the British bourgeoisie in the metropolitan landscape of London and its suburb of Shepperton (the home of the writer): a landscape of empty swimming pools, airport terminals, endless motorways and middle-class houses conjured up in a detached yet gorgeously metaphorical style. This apparently peaceful British urban environment is always on the verge of an outburst of violence, however, as in his recent novels *Millennium People* (2003) and *Kingdom Come* (2006). Moreover, Ballard's abiding interest in the heterogeneous flux of images circulating in the mass media (the unconventional interpretation of which comprises the fundamental purpose of his non-fiction work) has also led him to address on a number of occasions that greatest and most frightening manifestation of all violence—war.

A fine example of Ballard's concern with war can be found in his 1977 work 'Theatre of War', a piece that could only be defined as a 'short story' with substantial effort. The text reads like the screenplay of an imaginary TV documentary, although it also includes such all-too-detailed descriptions of images on the screen as the following:

'Inner London, a back street in Lambeth, where confused street-fighting is taking place. Tank engine noise forms a continuous background to heavy machine-gun fire and intercom chatter. Twenty soldiers, five American and the rest British, move from door to door, firing at the other end of the street, where Big Ben is visible above the shabby rooftops. Helicopter gunships circle overhead. A tank stops by a house and soldiers dart in. A moment later a woman emerges, followed by three exhausted children and an old man carrying his bedroll. They run past with stunned faces. Bodies lie everywhere. Two negro GIs drag away a dead enemy soldier with shoulder-length hair. The picture freezes, and the camera zooms in on the Union Jack until it fills the screen, soaked in the soldier's blood.' ('Theatre of War', 953)

This lengthy quotation allows us to fully appreciate the uncanny atmosphere of the text, a text which superimposes images of urban combat from the 20th and 21st century taken from Stalingrad to Baghdad (and Beirut, as we shall see) onto an urban landscape highly familiar to British readers and easily recognizable to most readers outside of Britain. One might suspect that Ballard inserted Big Ben in the picture so as to make the scenery even more recognizable.

But this should also lead us to ask what the text really is. Surely not a short story like those of Chekhov or Hemingway, or indeed of Ballard

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

himself, who had earlier dealt with the theme of a counterfactual British civil war in a more conventional way in his 1969 short story 'The Killing Ground'. The term 'screenplay' which I used just before the quotation is an awkward approximation inasmuch as documentaries cannot be said to have screenplays in the same way as films. But the *Acknowledgement* which Ballard added at the end of his text could tell us something of relevance about the way in which the text was written and what it really is: 'For all the dialogue above, to General Westmoreland, President Thieu of South Vietnam, Marshall Ky and various journalists, US and ARVN military personnel' ('Theatre of War', 967).

This confirms the feeling which arises while reading the text that 'Theatre of War' has a powerful subtext, namely the Vietnam War (at least, as seen in films and on TV), which provided the materials Ballard used to build what we should see as a crafty textual collage, recycling fragments of information which the author—or we might well say the 'bricoleur'—picked up from the mass media stream. We can easily imagine Ballard copying huge textual chunks taken from *Time*, *Life*, or *Newsweek*—magazines which Ballard has admitted 'devouring' in several interviews (a good example is found in his recent 'An Evening with J.G. Ballard')—and adapting them to the British 'scene' by carefully replacing names and toponyms. A good example of such an adaptation is this speech by the British Supreme Commander:

As commander of the British loyalist forces, my job is to win the war and unify the country again. The enemy is increasingly fighting out of desperation. Our intelligence tells us that he is running out of men, out of steam and out of material. He simply doesn't have the economic potential to maintain a war. The people in Europe and the United States who criticize the war don't really know what's going on. Quite evidently the people of this country don't want anything to do with the people up north, or with the communist way of life.

('Theatre of War', 957)

To understand this quotation one needs only to know that in the alternative Britain depicted by Ballard the country has been torn apart by civil war and is split between the communist north and the US-controlled south, a situation which clearly reflects that of Vietnam before 1975. It may almost be only a matter of changing certain adjectives and toponyms and putting the words of the 'British Supreme Commander' into the mouth of Marshall Ky.

The striking effect that such geographical displacement has on readers could be discussed at length. By staging the Vietnam War in the British 'theatre', Ballard makes his own statement on that conflict and on the socio-political situation of contemporary Britain. For example,

Umberto Rossi

Ballard hints throughout the text at the fact that the communist guerrillas are mostly young, while the supporters of the US-supported government in London are mostly elderly, so that the generation gap of the 1960s is manifest in the civil war itself. Moreover, the clash between the South and North of England may well reflect the class differences between the predominantly upper- and middle-class south and the predominantly proletarian north (differences which were to become more evident under the Thatcher government in the 1980s). Seeing the deployment of napalm and search-and-destroy tactics—as graphically described in Part Two of the text, whose title, ‘Pacification Probe’, is highly and bitterly ironic—in a small Far Eastern country, amongst palm trees and somatically different peoples is no longer so shocking since the Western European audience has (sadly) become accustomed to scenes of destruction and misery in certain areas of the world; but seeing this kind of warfare conducted in England’s green & pleasant land is something totally different. Here we have the application of a ‘classical’ displacement strategy which Ballard evidently developed in the science-fiction works that characterised his literary output from the beginning in the late 1950s up until 1970—a period best represented by such novels as *The Drowned World* (1962) and *The Drought* (1965) in which Britain is defamiliarized by the superimposition of a luxuriant tropical rainforest or a scorched desert as a result of some science-fictional climatic catastrophe.

Far more interesting, however, is the opportunity to glimpse into Ballard’s literary workshop, to understand what his writing strategies are. Ballard has repeatedly expressed his admiration for William Burroughs, a writer he called ‘Myth Maker of the Twentieth Century’ (that is the title of one of the reviews collected in his *A User’s Guide to the Millennium*), famous for his Dadaist-derived cut-up technique. We are not sure whether Ballard has used a similar technique—though rumours to this effect have been in circulation—but critics have more than once hinted at the ‘assemblative’ nature of Ballard’s fiction. Already in 1977, Robert Scholes and E.S. Rabkin defined *The Atrocity Exhibition* as a set of ‘ghastly collages’ (Scholes & Rabkin, 96), and this term reoccurs in the best book-length critical analysis of Ballard’s oeuvre to date, Andrzej Gasiorek’s *J.G. Ballard*, in which *Atrocity* is described as ‘a collage of ‘condensed novels’ (Gasiorek, 16).

It might be pointed out that the critics cited above are not talking about ‘Theatre of War’; however, many aspects connect the quasi-story written in 1975 to the quasi-novel of 1970. For example, the same names mentioned at the end of ‘Theatre of War’ had already appeared in the short story/chapter ‘Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A.’ (which is also—significantly—the title of the first US edition of *Atrocity* published

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

in 1972 by Grove Press, though we know Ballard didn't like the idea [*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1990, 89]): the 'leading public figures associated with the Vietnam war, e.g. President Johnson, General Westmoreland, Marshal Ky' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 115). Moreover, Vietnam is a strong presence in *Atrocity*, not only in the 'Love and Napalm' chapter/story, but also in 'Tolerances of the Human Face' (a key part of the book, as we shall see) and elsewhere.

And there are yet deeper ties between the two texts. In the section of the essay specifically devoted to Ballard's highly experimental 'novel', Gasiorek describes *Atrocity* as a literary collage, a Surrealist potpourri assembled out of found objects taken out of popular culture, images culled from elusive art-works, fantasies woven round representative political events, obsessions drawn from the fragmented psyche of its unstable central protagonist, and conceptual extrapolation from the hidden meanings of everyday events. (Gasiorek, 58)

The return of the term 'collage' is remarkable, but we should rather focus on the elements that—according to Gasiorek—make up the 1970 quasi-novel, elements that can also be found in the 1975 quasi-story. Statements picked up by interviews found in magazines are indeed 'found objects taken out of popular culture'; a civil war which opposes the communist Northern England (and Scotland) to the US-controlled South can be legitimately defined as a fantasy 'woven round representative political events' (i.e. Vietnam); and although there is no central protagonist in the 1975 text, stable or unstable, there are certainly traces in the text of the main obsessions which haunted the fragmented collective Western psyche at that time. One of these obsessions was the generation gap, a major concern after the Summer of Love and the French, Czech, and Italian events of '68 had torn open a rift between the young and old. This fear is reflected in the remark of a commentator in 'Theatre of War' (958) that 'most of the young men and women here have long since left to join the Liberation Front,' and incisively summarized in the words of a Canadian journalist: 'All the NLF have to do to win this war is wait ten years. By then everyone on the government side will be either dead or in a wheelchair.' ('Theatre of War', 958.) The only aspect that cannot easily be found in the quasi-story is that of conceptual extrapolation from the hidden meanings of everyday events (to which we shall return later), but surely most of what Gasiorek noticed in *Atrocity* is also present in 'Theatre of War', including its 'assemblative' texture.

Gasiorek himself uses the term 'assemblage' in the Appendix to his exploration of JGB's œuvre:

'The turn to the techniques of surrealist collage, Pop Art assemblages, Dalían critical-paranoia, and the rhizomatic 'map' rather than the axiomatic 'tracing' discloses the need to shatter

Umberto Rossi

narrative form and to produce a textuality that does not look for a premature resolution but rather remains fugitive, open-ended, aware of the numerous unaddressed issues that naggingly remain outside the textual frame.' (Gasiorek, 209)

As an example of such fugitiveness, open-endedness and awareness, Gasiorek quotes 'The Index' (1977), one of Ballard's most brilliant textual experiments, the fake analytical index of a non-existent biography of a mysterious individual, Henry Rhodes Hamilton, who has met and influenced the most important public figures of the 20th Century, from Winston Churchill to Albert Schweitzer, though 'of his existence nothing is publicly known' ('The Index', 940). Surely the missing biography mapped by the fake Index is an excellent example of the shattering of narrative form outlined by Gasiorek, yet one might wonder why the critic did not also mention 'Theatre of War', which can be seen as an earlier and somewhat more disconcerting example of such a rhizomatic mapping ('Theatre of War' is also missing in Gasiorek's Index). One cannot in fact say that a TV program wholly represents or depicts a historical event, and Ballard is well aware of this. While commenting on his own *Atrocity Exhibition*, he says:

'Jacopetti's Mondo Cane series of documentary films enjoyed a huge vogue in the 1960's. They cunningly mixed genuine film of atrocities, religious cults and 'Believe-it-or-not' examples of human oddity with carefully faked footage. The fake war newsreel (and most war newsreels are faked to some extent, usually filmed on manoeuvres) has always intrigued me—my version of Platoon, Full Metal Jacket or All Quiet on the Western Front would be a newsreel compilation so artfully faked as to convince the audience that it was real, while at the same time reminding them that it might be wholly contrived. The great Italian neo-realist Roberto Rossellini, drew close to this in Open City and Paisà.' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1990, 69)

Obviously the problem of war newsreels is not just that they can be faked—and are frequently systematically faked, as was demonstrated, for example, after the First Gulf War—but also that they cannot offer a total representation of modern, industrial warfare, only a rhizomatic mapping, that is a fragmentary view whose fragmentariness is inescapable; and this is not only true of newsreels (or photographs, or other visual media), but also of narratives, be they fictional or historical (the inescapable fragmentariness of war narratives is one of the central issues of my doctoral dissertation, cf. Rossi 1995).

However, it is interesting that Ballard mentions Italian screenwriter and director Gualtiero Jacopetti (born in 1919), whose 'shockumentaries'

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

(such as *Europa di notte* [1959], *Mondo Cane* [1962], *Africa addio* [1966], plus the uncanny *Addio zio Tom* [1971], all having recently been made available in a DVD set called *The Mondo Cane Collection*) consisted of a collection of mostly real archive footage displaying mankind at its most depraved and perverse, displaying bizarre rituals, cruel behaviour, and animalistic violence, war scenes, etc., all carefully assembled and edited with the emphasis on the lurid and the shocking. Ballard's approach is certainly far more sophisticated and less commercial, yet the basic idea of an assemblage of mass media materials is there, and also the idea of an exhibition of atrocities.

The collage technique is not so evident in 'Theatre of War' as it is in *The Atrocity Exhibition* because it is hidden behind the form of the TV program which structures the former, that is, *World in Action*. In the brief introduction to the text, Ballard declares: 'I also assume that the television coverage [of a British Vietnam-like civil war] would be uninterrupted and all-pervasive, and have therefore cast it in the form of a TV documentary, of the type made popular by *World in Action*' ('Theatre of War', 953). One should notice that our hesitations about the genre of the text (is it a short story or a screenplay?) are mirrored by Ballard's use of the non-compromising pronoun 'it' in place of a classifying name, such as 'short story'. But what really matters is the reference to a famous British TV program, an investigative current affairs series produced by Granada Television from 1963 to 1998, which was famous for its bold, hard-hitting investigative techniques. Yet it is not the content of the program, but its form (what in contemporary TV parlance is called its 'format') that is especially relevant to us.

In fact the basic difference between *The Atrocity Exhibition* and 'Theatre of War', their common assemblative nature notwithstanding, is the undeniable fact that the former is a sort of *unicum*, a text which is neither a novel nor a collection of stories, a highly experimental literary endeavour that cannot be said to belong to any existing genre, and has thus in fact left a mark on the history of literature (its problematic nature being also made evident by the fact that Ballard himself didn't always call it a 'novel' in his interviews); while 'Theatre of War', its undetermined textual status notwithstanding, is more easily readable because it is based on the structure of a TV format that everybody knows, a structure which organises many other current affairs programs in the UK and abroad. 'Theatre of War' is not a TV program, yet it evokes a TV program and reads like a TV program transcript, even though such an episode never existed. This also happens in Ballard's quasi-story 'Answers to a Questionnaire' (1995), a list of answers to questions we do not know, which is as 'fragmentary and elliptical' (Gasiorek, 209) as 'The Index', but manages to imply 'a world of events,

Umberto Rossi

relations and contacts'—that is, a story that the text does not fully narrate, but only offers as a 'heap of broken images' in the style of T.S. Eliot (and this is one of the many points where modernism and postmodernism meet). Yet there is a remarkable difference between 'The Index' and 'Answers to a Questionnaire' on the one hand, and 'Theatre of War' on the other: the first two texts are based on a structure that belongs to the world of the printed word, while the third mimics a TV program, a multimedia construct whose broken images are put together by an Eisenstein-derived montage.

If we can read 'Theatre of War' as a postmodernist, deconstructed, non-linear war narrative (and its being a war narrative is what matters here), we should ask ourselves what the consequences are of Ballard's decision to organize his text by mimicking *World in Action*, that is, a TV program. Surely what is important here is the role of TV when the story was published in 1975; and there is no doubt that in the 1970s TV was not simply one mass medium, but *the* mass medium. It is no coincidence that, only a year later, US and European cinemas would show the film *Network*, directed by Sydney Lumet, in which a deranged anchorman acquires an abnormal charisma when he turns into a TV demagogue and begins to manipulate the TV audience. Besides, one should not forget the role played by TV in showing the shocking images of the Vietnam war that reached millions of people around the world and were instrumental in ending that conflict; we might also remember what president Lyndon B. Johnson said after the prestigious CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite had declared that the war in Vietnam was unwinnable: 'If I've lost Walter Cronkite,' said Johnson, 'I've lost the country.'

But the power of this medium, which can well explain Ballard's choice, cannot hide the fact that a medium is a medium, after all: 'a channel or system of communication, information, or entertainment', as the Merriam-Webster dictionary says, but also 'something in a middle position', inasmuch as it derives from the Latin term *medium*, 'middle'. It can be seen as a passage as well as a barrier; something that brings us information, keeping us in touch with the rest of the world, and something that stands between us and the world, something that can prevent us from reaching the 'real' world. We might discuss such current issues as embedded journalists and the manipulation of the media in the First and Second Gulf Wars, then we might start complaining about the fact that there is no such thing as an 'honest' mass medium, and get lost in lengthy discussions about the influence of economic-political systems on the media and vice versa. Since this is an essay on literary texts, however, I will content myself with suggesting that propaganda is a fundamental component of modern warfare and that a huge part of propaganda consists of forging news; that several critics

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

have tackled this issue, from Paul Fussell—whose rightly celebrated *The Great War and Modern Memory* and whose less celebrated but even more compelling *Warfare* both deal with deliberate misrepresentations of war—to Richard Buitenhuis and his fundamental study on propaganda in the First World War. But some of the most memorable depictions of propaganda and mass media manipulation can be found in classics of war literature, such as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* or Karl Kraus's monumental *The Last Days of Mankind* (whose only English edition is unfortunately abridged), which is one of the most impressive satirical explorations of the ambiguous relation between mass media and warfare. (Kraus' gigantic play is also an early specimen of mass media assemblage, having been written by way of a painstaking collage of newspaper articles.)

However, the issue of mass media is inextricably intertwined with the jeremiad about the unreliability, falsity, and deceitfulness of the media. It ultimately brings us back to the etymological roots of the term 'media': the mediated character of the media, as opposed to the directness and the immediacy of personal experience. This is an issue that has been endlessly discussed in relation to war literature, and one that has been crucial in the reception of several classics of that branch of fiction and/or non-fiction (one might mention the discussions about E.M. Remarque's 'real' war experience or the discoveries about Hemingway's 'real' role in W.W.I, cf. Eksteins, 278-9 and Lewis): it is a dichotomy—questionable and questioned, but recurring—between the 'real' experience of those writers who have taken part in a war (usually as combatants) and then narrate it, and those who narrate a conflict without having personally experienced it. A dichotomy heavily charged with moral and political connotations, one should add, because the testimony of a fighter is usually read as something telling us 'what it was really like'—and 'what this war is/was really like' remains a burning issue in political discussions, whether we are discussing W.W.I, the Vietnam War, or the two Gulf Wars.

Obviously, Ballard's text is on the 'wrong' side of such a dichotomy: he talks about an imaginary war and has never been personally involved in the historical model of his counterfactual British civil war, i.e. the Vietnam War. Moreover, he builds his representation of war by craftily assembling materials found in the media, so that his experience of the 'real' war has all the flaws of a (mass) mediated experience: it is indirect, it is distant, it is impersonal. Ballard doesn't 'live' the war, readers (and critics) might think, like other celebrated examples of war narrative authors who had direct experience of it, such as Stendhal, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Joseph Heller, Mario Rigoni Stern, Vonnegut, and many others. Some might even consider Ballard's emotional distance as a

Umberto Rossi

sophisticated form of cynicism, and this is an issue that has been often tackled by his commentators, in relation to the idea of the 'death of affect'.

Originally this was the title of a paragraph/section in one of the stories/chapters of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, that is, 'Tolerances of the Human Face' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 85-6). Very little happens in this short narrative fragment: Travers (one of the many names of the enigmatic asylum patient that Roger Luckhurst called 'T-cell', cf. Luckhurst, 86) and Karen Novotny visit a stretch of motorway where a car crash took place four years before. The event must have some connection with Travers' private life, and might be one of the causes of the mental illness that brought Travers (and his several alter egos) to the asylum where most of the quasi-stories (or quasi-chapters) of *The Atrocity Exhibition* are set. Yet the original traumatic event is lost: after four years 'the oil stains had vanished' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 86) and whatever psychic traces are left in the mind of the T-cell are difficult to decipher, as the 'infrequent visits, dictated by whatever private logic, now seemed to provide nothing.' The area of the almost forgotten crash is now 'a terminal moraine of the emotions that held his memory and regret'; and when Karen asks the T-cell to explain the mechanics of the accident, he does it in almost aesthetic architectural terms, 'in terms of the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, of the 'fifties school of highway engineering, or, most soigné of all, the Embarcadero Freeway.' Thus the title seems to hint at a cold, detached contemplation of violent events, where all feelings have been somewhat abraded.

The phrase 'The Death of Affect' has undoubtedly struck critics (for an extended discussion, see Smith's *The Work of Emotion*): for example, Michel Delville used it as the title for a chapter in his critical essay *J.G. Ballard* in which he discusses *The Atrocity Exhibition* (Delville, 22-33). Delville suggests that the death of affect is a phenomenon consisting in 'our gradual alienation from any kind of direct (that is, unmediated) response to experience combined with the unlimited expansion of the mind's possibilities afforded to us by modern technology' (Delville, 30-1); an unmediated response being obviously impossible when our experience (or whatever impoverished surrogate for it is left to us today, cf. Benjamin) is mostly mediated by the mass media, the omni-pervasive filters of any experience—war experience included. So what we have is once again 'the gradual numbing of our emotional response to mediatised violence' (Delville, 30), which ultimately leads to perversion (Delville, 31).

Gasiorek also has to tackle the problem of the death of affect: we can even find this phrase used as the title of a paragraph in 'Deviant Logics', the chapter Gasiorek devoted to an articulate reading of *The*

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

Atrocity Exhibition (Gasiorek, 67-70). He sees two possible meanings of such a death: one connected to science and its 'instrumental approach to phenomena' (Gasiorek, 67); the other, which is relevant for our analysis, 'linked to the intense over-excitation of the psyche encouraged by the spectacularisation of society, which gives rise to over-cerebralised responses to reality that are coupled with dissociation from the emotions.' And the best example Gasiorek can quote of such dissociation is the perverse reactions triggered by mass media images of warfare:

'In terms of television and the news magazines the war in Vietnam has a latent significance very different from its manifest context. Far from repelling us, it appeals to us by virtue of its complex of polyperverse acts. We must bear in mind, however sadly, that psychopathology is no longer the exclusive preserve of the degenerate and perverse. The Congo, Vietnam, Biafra – these are games anyone can play. Their violence, and all violence for that matter, reflects the neutral exploration of sensation that is taking place now, within sex as elsewhere, and the sense that the perversions are valuable precisely because they provide a readily accessible anthology of exploratory techniques. Where all this leads one can only speculate – why not, for example, use our own children for all kinds of obscene games? Given that we can only make contact with each other through the new alphabet of sensation and violence, the death of a child or, on a larger scale, the war in Vietnam, should be regarded as for the public good.' (The Atrocity Exhibition 1979, 96-7)

One should note that these words are uttered not by the insane T-cell, but by Dr. Nathan, the psychiatrist who is studying the T-cell's case, and has organized the annual exhibition which opens *The Atrocity Exhibition* (*Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 7), where the artworks of patients are displayed for the benefit of doctors working in the mental hospital. This makes the dispassionate, pseudo-scientific analysis more striking, because it cannot be easily dismissed as the ranting of a madman—though in the textual maze of *The Atrocity Exhibition* it is not clear who is really the doctor and who the patient (*Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 12), who is sane and who is insane. However, here the mass media viewer is presented as a voyeur who gets sexually aroused by the view of atrocities (or the exhibition of atrocities, and this leads us to read the title of the quasi-novel—and the book itself—as an equivalent of the mediascape). And Ballard is quite explicit about these perverse effects of exposure to violence through the media: 'Sexual stimulation by newsreel atrocity film, (...) In all cases a marked increase in the intensity of sexual activity was reported, with particular emphasis on perverse oral and anogenital modes.' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 115)

Umberto Rossi

Should we take such disturbing comments at their face value? Gasiorek says that they should be read as 'An example of double voiced discourse,' because 'this savagely satirical chapter cloaks the author's subversive intent in its straight-faced deployment of scientific language, while exposing the role it plays in sustaining the military-industrial complex' (Gasiorek, 68). Thus Ballard's (or better, his fictional alter-ego Dr Nathan's) 'serious' remarks should be considered as a deadpan mock-commentary aimed at exposing (exhibiting) the madness of an apparently rational economic and political system aimed at waging a technologised warfare to maintain a certain world order and keep the abovementioned system running (for an extended and unconventional analysis of this historical situation seen through literary lenses, see Gnisci). Destruction and poverty in some parts of the world brings affluence and social peace in others, but Westerners shouldn't be shocked by this dismal economy; and if they think such a world order is perverse, Dr Nathan reminds them that 'psychopathology is no longer the exclusive preserve of the degenerate and perverse' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 96). This remark, if satirically interpreted, might tell us that the degenerate and the perverse are normal in a radically degenerate and perverse world—*our* world, unfortunately.

But Gasiorek himself expresses a less absolvitory view of the issue in the appendix 'Coda: Violence and Psychopathology' to his essay on Ballard. All in all, the detached, voyeuristic, mass mediated subject that Ballard's rhizomatic narratives like 'Theatre of War' seem to ask for coincides with a subject 'isolated from human contact with others, [which] now exists in some derealised, depersonalised space' (Gasiorek, 210). A lonely and presumably pathological subject, like the members of the deranged family Ballard portrayed in 'The Intensive Care Unit' (1977)—surely one of his bleakest stories—who can only relate through information and communication technologies. Such a subject can only live in the space of mass media fruition, that space where the spectacle of war and violence is one of the staples. And it does not matter whether it is set in Vietnam, Great Britain, or Iraq; what matters is an archetypal form or structure of violence, something that may satisfy the perverse needs of a voyeuristic subject; and such an archetypal form (the war, to paraphrase the title of a song by Tim Buckley, that is inside your mind) is the core of an apparently more traditional story by Ballard, 'War Fever' (1989).

The metaphorical core of the story is the similarity between war/violence and plagues. The roots of such an equivalence can be found in one of the traditional interpretations of the four horseman of the Apocalypse (Revelation, 6:1-8), which identifies the rider of the white horse (Revelation, 6:2) with War and the rider of the red horse (Revelation, 6:4)

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

with Pestilence. Though based on a disputed interpretation of the four horsemen, such a biblical reference is not out of place in Ballard's imagery, whose recurring apocalyptic undertones I have already analysed in another essay (cf. Rossi 1994). However, according to Ballard, war *is* a plague, something that might be quarantined in a place that has a highly representative value when it comes to war and violence: Beirut.

The story depicts Beirut ravaged by civil war (1975-1990), the urban battlefield contended by Christian, Druze, Sunni, and Shi'a militias, plus the PLO, but projected thirty years into the future of the readers: it is a wasteland made of heaps of ruins after 'the civilian population had gone, leaving a few thousand armed combatants and their families hiding in the ruins (...) fed and supplied by the UN peacekeeping force' ('War Fever', 1147). The wrecked metropolis is devastated by a relentless and purposeless war that can only be temporarily paused by Ryan, a charismatic young man whose pacifying efforts are eventually neutralized by the UN themselves. It is then that Ryan finds out that the place he lives in is not the 'real' Beirut, but a rebuilt copy of the Lebanese capital. The gigantic simulacrum is actually a laboratory where war can be quarantined, preserved, and studied. This is the reason why Ryan is not allowed to stop the conflict: the experiment (or better, the show) must go on. Dr Edwards, the UN doctor, justifies this by tracing a parallel between the isolated war in the bogus Beirut and smallpox:

'Left to itself the smallpox virus is constantly mutating. We have to make sure that our supplies of vaccine are up-to-date. So WHO was careful never to completely abolish the disease. It deliberately allowed smallpox to flourish in a remote corner of a third-world country, so that it could keep an eye on how the virus was evolving.
(*'War Fever'*, 1157)

This epidemiological strategy requires that somebody pays for the health of humankind: the people in the remote corner of a third world country sacrifice their lives, something which may be scientifically sound but is nevertheless ethically questionable. Ballard doesn't tell us whether they chose such a dire destiny, and Dr Edwards' speech makes one suspect that they never did: the physician only tells us that 'it's worth it for the rest of the world', but his opinion is not objective and trustworthy, as he is part of the (lucky) rest of the world.

A similar strategy has been adopted for the small enclave where the 'virus of war' has been isolated and allowed to flourish. 'The virus of war'. Or, if you like, the martial spirit. Not a physical virus, but a psychological one even more dangerous than smallpox.' ('War Fever', 1157) The young people confined in the fake Beirut are like the inhabitants of

Umberto Rossi

the 'remote corner of a third-world country', unaware of being guinea pigs in a gigantic permanent psychosocial experiment devised by an impersonal, indifferent organization which wants to know 'what makes people fight, what makes them hate each other enough to want to kill' and 'how [to] manipulate their emotions, how [to] twist the news and trigger off their aggressive drives, how [to] play on their religious feelings or political ideals.' ('War Fever', 1158)

One cannot help feeling that the real purpose of the UN in the story is simply power. Being able to manipulate the emotions of people is what the totalitarian regimes of the Twenties and the Thirties tried to do and often managed to do. It is what merciless mass media strategists like Goebbels analysed with the scientific tools that were available at that time. Once you learn how you can switch off people's 'aggressive drives', you probably also know how to trigger them on. And if you know how to play on their religious feelings or political ideals, who can tell to what use this knowledge will be put? Socio-political catastrophes like Rwanda or Bosnia started just because somebody knew too well how to play on those peoples' religious feelings or political ideals—or some muddled mix of both.

But the plan doesn't work, because Ryan decides to kill the doctor and to escape from the fake UN forces, to 'unite the militias into a single force' ('War Fever', 1160). By doing this he is simply metonymically expanding the highly questionable analogy of Dr Edwards. If the UN sees the bogus Beirut as a psychosocial laboratory where the 'virus' of war/violence can be kept alive for research (& development), Ryan sees the happy and healthy rest of the world as a 'far larger laboratory waiting to be tested, with its millions of docile specimens unprepared for the most virulent virus of them all.' ('War Fever', 1160) Just before being killed by Ryan, Dr Edwards wonders 'how far human beings can be pushed', while contemplating the corpses of twenty hostages slaughtered by the Royalists (among whom lie Ryan's bogus aunt and sister), and says that they can be pushed 'sadly, all the way'. The physician thinks that the maximum intensity of brutality is what takes place everyday in the controllable airtight artificial environment of the fake Beirut, where such atrocities can be scientifically measured and analysed, and ultimately explained and controlled. But when Ryan levels his rifle to the doctor's head, he metonymically expands the enclave: 'All the way is the whole human race'. Unlike smallpox, war and violence cannot be safely contained in a laboratory: they can spread again in any moment. There can always be 'another Hitler or Pol Pot' ('War Fever', 1158).

Obviously, both Edwards and Ryan accept the core metaphor of the story—blatantly proposed by the title 'War Fever'—that War is

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

Pestilence; or, in other words, that violence is like a virus, a disease. The difference between the two characters is that while Dr Edwards believes that violence is a virus that can be safely quarantined in a small space, Ryan knows that violence cannot be isolated and contained, that it is always ready to spread in unexpected ways. One might suspect that Dr Edward's belief is not so far from those Cold War strategies which displaced the confrontation between the two super-powers in remote corners of third-world countries, be they Vietnam, Angola, Afghanistan, Korea, or any crisis area in the Middle East. This led to a paradoxical situation where a condition of peace in the European continent, ravaged by almost thirty years of wars in the first half of the 20th Century, was maintained by discharging international tensions in different parts of the Third World in the second half of that century. But the Yugoslav crisis of the 90s proved that Ryan's intuition was right after all: war and violence came back to Europe—albeit in a relatively 'remote' corner of the continent—and proved that epidemics were still possible.

It could easily be argued, however, that the involvement was once again mass mediated for most Europeans. We have *seen* the war in Croatia and then Bosnia and Kosovo, seen it through those images which were detached and frozen in the death of affect which is the fundamental condition of the mass media networks according to Ballard. Yet 'War Fever' does not suggest such a condition of distancing and 'affectlessness': if the fake Beirut is a space of containment and safety, one that allows the 'affectless' (and voyeuristic) observation of such phenomena as war and violence (and death, which is usually their outcome), then the final killing of the observer, i.e. the detached scientist who should safely study the 'virus of war,' hints at a breaking of the medium insulating war from its spectators. And this might as well be the meaning of 'Theatre of War,' if we read it against 'War Fever'; because the fictional operation carried out by Ballard is to replace the horrors of a faraway Eastern country (Vietnam) with the familiar landscape of what is home to his British readers—a displacement which is obviously lost to non-British readers, for whom Britain may be closer than Vietnam but not immediately 'home' (thus the translation of this quasi-story into other languages should also include a change of toponyms and characters, so that Italian readers, for example, could be provided with a version set in Rome and some place in the Italian countryside to be reached and laid waste by the Pacification Probe—but this is probably asking too much of today's publishing industry).

In any case, Ballard has deliberately staged a movement that breaks the mediating barrier and cancels the borders dividing spectators and exhibited atrocities both in 'Theatre of War' and in 'War Fever'.

Umberto Rossi

Obviously the movement is staged, that is, is part of the fictional construct we call story, novel, quasi-story, or quasi-novel. Yet in that ambit the movement is remarkably powerful, and makes up much of the added literary value of the text. And we might discover that whenever war is involved, Ballard always tries to build something in the text that takes us near to the horrors which the mediascape (and the underlying world order) should keep us far from; even in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, his most voyeuristic text, the one that proposed the death of affect and a morbid fascination with exhibited atrocities.

As we have already seen, 'Tolerances of the Human Face' is the chapter/story of *The Atrocity Exhibition* in which Ballard first introduced the concept of the death of affect; and it is just there that we find something that complicates this complex opus (it should be said that this 1969 quasi-story is the last part of the book that Ballard wrote, so its arguably pivotal role is probably not casual). This complication is the section of the text called 'Too Bad', which is rather different from the rest of this heterogeneous opus. 'Too Bad' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 89-91) is somewhat anticipated by the last line of the previous section, 'Cinecity': '*Travers found himself thinking of the eager deaths of his childhood*' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 89). Those deaths (of Japanese POWs) are described in 'Too Bad', which begins with the introductory, framing sentence 'Of this early period of his life, Travers wrote...', and consists of two pages of first person narrative in a remarkably simple and linear style, closer to Hemingway than to the surrealist masters Ballard usually derives his baroque metaphors from. A brief excerpt will be sufficient to exhibit the stylistic differences between this text and the others:

'At eight o'clock that night a fight broke out among the Americans. A Japanese sergeant was standing on the bridge deck, his face and chest covered with blood, while the Americans shouted and pushed each other. Shortly after, three trucks drove up and a party of armed military police came on board. When they saw me they told me to leave. I left the ship and walked back through the darkness to the empty stockades. The trucks were loaded with gasoline drums.' (*The Atrocity Exhibition* 1979, 91).

Stylistic differences from Ballard's mature style (which gradually evolved from his early science-fiction output of the late 50s and early 60s) suggest that this text might be a fragment taken from some autobiographical—or partly autobiographical—narrative written by Ballard before he started his activity as a professional writer in 1956 with his first published short story, 'Prima Belladonna' (this hypothesis has been recently discussed on the J.G. Ballard mailing list, where it was

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

originally proposed by David Pringle, an authoritative Ballard expert who has helped the writer in the editing of *A User's Guide to the Millennium*). That narrative could also be the source of Ballard's subsequent short story, 'The Dead Time' (1977), arguably one of his greatest literary achievements, and the semi-autobiographical novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984), the book which gave Ballard popularity and success beyond the science-fiction ghetto: both these works are directly based on his experiences in Shanghai, and the time (1943-1945) he spent with his parents in the Lunghua Civil Assembly Center, where the Japanese imprisoned American and European citizens who lived in Shanghai—though it should be clear that none of the texts, not even 'Too Bad', can be read as a straightforward autobiography or memoir.

All this should induce us to ask whether our reading of Ballard's approach to war and violence was not too simple and naïve, after all. By including this semi-autobiographical fragment, the British writer did something quite similar to Caravaggio's typical inclusion of self-portraits in his paintings (something the Italian painter did in his masterpieces *Davide con la testa di Golia* [1609-10], or *La cattura di Cristo* [1602]); Ballard similarly included a fragment of his life in the atrocity exhibition. If that book can be read as a gigantic collage or assemblage of mass mediated materials, we should not forget that the place and time of Ballard's adolescence, the war-torn Shanghai of the Forties, is included in that assemblage. It is a universal judgement where the artist put himself among the souls of the saved or the damned; a baroque move reminiscent of another masterpiece of European painting, Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1652).

Far from distancing himself from war, Ballard is telling us that war is inside his mind, not just as a perverse form of contemplation of somebody else's sufferings, but as a traumatic memory that the author could only deal with at length almost forty years after his imprisonment experiences. And that memory is deeply rooted in the most tragic and relatively direct experience of the Second World War and its most exclusive nature, that of imprisonment in a concentration camp. John Keegan, one of the greatest living military historians, suggested that 'what went on behind the barbed wire of Stalagluft III or Colditz' (Keegan, 288) was the *ne plus ultra* of traumatic war experience, that 'to have been the enemy's chattel, not his opponent, that was really dangerous in the Second World War' (id.). And this might well mean that Ballard's strategies of rhizomatic mapping, the Freudian displacements and condensations (cf. Freud, Ch. 6) which have shaped his oneiric fictional worlds, may well be defensive strategies through which traumatic experiences can be at the same time removed and faced. Traumatic experiences that are perhaps summarized in Ballard's short

Umberto Rossi

story 'The Dead Time', where the fate of an adolescent narrating 'I forced to drive a lorry full of corpses in deserted Shanghai bespeaks old scars in the author's memory.

Ballard is at the same time the dispassionate observer (Dr Nathan or Dr Edwards) and the victim/patient (the T-cell or Ryan). He is the spectator who looks at the people imprisoned in the horrors of late modern societies, but he is also the inmate of the prison (or the asylum), *because he was a prisoner*. And such a condition is expressed in a passage of his 1991 semi-autobiographical novel *The Kindness of Women*, when he says 'In Shanghai, from 1937 to the dropping of the atom bombs, we had been neither combatants nor victims, but spectators roped in to watch an execution. Those who had drawn too close had been touched by the blood on the guns.' (*The Kindness of Women*, 94). The inmates of Lunghua were not combatants, and were surely spectators 'Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, /Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters'—and one may legitimately wonder whether they were or were not victims (or potential victims). Let us not forget that Ballard's perception of his condition in the camp was that of a teenager (he was 13 when he entered the camp, 15 at the moment of liberation), and that in narratives of survivors protective tropes abound; moreover, traumas take a long time to resurface and become acknowledged.

However, Ballard is at the same time both outside and inside the war, because he knows too well that the war is inside our minds and thus cannot be so easily eradicated or removed. So, at the end of 'Theatre of War', the death of the *World in Action* commentator ('Theatre of War', 967), announced by the voice of a second commentator, is not just a pathetic touch but reminds us that we are all involved. And this admonishment, coming from a man who did not just sit in front of the TV set but was behind barbed wire, should absolutely not be overlooked.

Is the War Inside your Mind? War and the Mass Media in J.G. Ballard's 'Theatre of War' and 'War Fever'

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Films

- *Crash*, dir. David Cronenberg, 1996.
- *Empire of the Sun*, dir. Steven Spielberg, 1987.
- *Network*, dir. Sidney Lumet, 1976.

Umberto Rossi
(Istituto superiore "Pascal", Pomezia, Italy)

Is the War Inside your Mind?

Summary

*War is certainly not the first thing that comes to mind when one mentions the name of British novelist and essayist James Graham Ballard, born in Shanghai in 1930 and currently living in the London suburb of Shepperton. Yet it cannot be denied that the first film adaptation of a book by Ballard, *Empire of the Sun* (1987), directed by media mogul Steven Spielberg, was based on his lyrical and visionary 1984 war memoir. Ballard had already dealt with the issue of warfare and violence in earlier short stories such as 'The Killing Ground' (1969), and a highly original quasi-story, 'Theatre of War' (1977). This essay tries to read the 1977 piece by connecting it to other Ballardian texts, such as the short story 'War Fever' (1989) and the quasi-novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970). It also seeks to place Ballard's war-related fictions against the background of well-known examples of war literature and its critical dilemmas. It also tackles a key question in Ballard criticism, that is, the complex issue of the death of affect. The proposed interpretation is that Ballard's early exposure to the horrors and the physical/psychological violence of war made him sensitive to the issue of violence (in both peace- and wartime), and triggered his unconventional and fascinating reflections on (post-)modern warfare which can be found in those short stories as well as in some of his major works (*The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Empire of the Sun*). Thus Ballard's fiction offers us a highly original and disturbing perspective on the issue of war and violence in late modernity against the background of a number of historical conflicts, from W.W.II to Vietnam and the Lebanese civil war.*

EMPIRE OF THE SUN



Scenes from the S. Spielberg film:
EMPIRE OF THE SUN



stelarc_suspension

Laura Mintegi

The Effect of Political Violence on Literature

Introduction

The wording of the invitation to participate in this journal suggests that Violence and Art may be treated as a broad subject.¹ In view of the nature of the subject, then, I shall be endeavouring to examine what kind of effect political violence has had on literature—and, in particular, on novel writing—in Basque. I shall be looking at its effect in two areas: firstly, how it has influenced themes; and secondly, what kind of attitude is expressed by authors in their works. In other words, in addition to the area that is the most obvious (whether or not the theme of political conflict appears in the storylines of the novel), I also want to examine the hidden aspect, because although the subject of violence may not appear very much in the storylines, its effect could be very present in one way or another in novel writing.

It is nothing to be proud of, but written Basque literature has been in constant contact with political conflict from the very moment the first book to be written in Basque was published in 1545. Being located between two powerful states, being a stateless nation wanting to exist autonomously have all given rise to numerous political tensions in the Basque Country because the neighbouring states have not responded very favourably to the Basque Country's aspirations. This little country has been involved in four wars in the last 200 years, and from the end of the 1960s until almost right up to the present day it has known more pronounced expressions of violence because the violence of an armed organisation has to be added to the quiet repression of the years following the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). The violent activity of this

Key Words:

- political violence
- literary response
- autism
- facing anguish
- Basque literature
- psychology
- philosophy

¹ The essays should reflect on all kinds of violence and images of violence projected and memorized in some artistic form (murder, evil, sadism, inexplicable unmotivated acts of murder, psychological torture, genocide, holocaust, extermination, exodus in society, in family, violence and confession, myth, tragedy, Bible...), on different types of memory of Violence, different interpretations in different periods/cultures/traditions, different significations and evaluations. Thus, different approaches and perspectives would be taken into account (theoretical, cultural, dramatic, philosophical, interdisciplinary, etc.).

Laura Mintegi

organisation and the policy of repression implemented with the excuse of fighting against it (carried out by the state itself or by paramilitary groups) has left hundreds of dead and countless arrests and attacks on both sides of the trench dug by ideology. Grief has spread down the generations and throughout society.

Thus we can say that Basque writers of all generations have co-existed with political violence as a result of the violence caused by the policy that has been imposed on the Basque Country or as a result of the violence that has arisen in the Basque Country in response. Writers have been in contact with violence either because they have been attacked directly or because they have lived in a suffocating atmosphere. How has this reality affected Basque literature?

The Autism of Written Literature

First of all, a distinction should be drawn between oral and written literature. Even though it is possible to detect traces of conflicts in oral literature (Basque folk songs and verses are full of the painful testimonies of those who have gone into exile), written literature does not, at first glance, refer to conflicts. For nearly four hundred years, Basque literature has been more concerned with pointing out the features of the language itself or with spreading Christian doctrine. Both took on an almost missionary zeal because they both had a religious touch—as if the mission of writers was to save the language as well as people's souls. Other types of writing portrayed the Basques' calm idyllic farming work as a model of virtue, as there was no trace of conflict in ordinary relations in the Basque rural milieu.

We are speaking about 19th century literature at a time when realism was the main literary trend. However, the echo of the political conflict that the citizens were enduring remained outside that realism. It seemed that the war going on outside their homes was one thing, while the situation being endured inside was quite another; as if by closing the doors and windows of their houses they were trying to shut out pain and grief.

This autistic trend persisted during the first half of the 20th century, at least as far as narrative writing was concerned, though conflicts were to be found reflected in poetry from time to time. The first signs of change appeared from 1970 onwards, coinciding with the beginnings of modern literature. Firstly, a more permeable literature was being produced. This literature showed that it did in fact have eyes and ears. Writers were closer to the protagonists of the conflict. In some cases it turned out that the writer himself was a political activist; on more than one occasion the writer was acquainted with the attackers and the

The Effect of Political Violence on Literature

attacked in his or her own close circle. A whole generation felt damaged by the emergence of the armed organisation, and politics found its way into literature, but as yet only in a very modest way, as if it were operating silently and begging forgiveness.

There were many reasons for this change. Firstly, contemporary literature made an about-turn from realism towards intimism. The perspective of writers changed and instead of looking outside they turned their sights towards the inside. Each one began to speak from the heart and individualised literature was produced. The group was not capable of responding, so questions were addressed to the individual. Human beings found themselves alone, far from the protection of the group; they experienced each armed action as a question addressed directly to each one; and even if writers initially turned a blind eye (like the broad majority of society), as time went by it became much more difficult to disregard the conflict. Writers (from the point of view that they were also citizens, but above all because they were writers) saw themselves compelled to take up a position with respect to the situation. So every time they had to respond they saw themselves reflected in the mirror of the conflict.

The Manifestation of Anguish

As mentioned above, political conflict has hurt not only Basque citizens but also writers from one decade to the next; the sensation that arises when faced with political disorder is one of chaos or *'horror, horror'*, as Kant said when he witnessed the French Revolution. The media often offer us politics in the form of a spectacle: they put the bloody consequences of an attack right before our very eyes, but they strip it of political reasons and causal logic. When portrayed superficially, the spectacle is cruel, crazy and excessive. The information we are given makes no attempt to provide true information, its aim is not to make us aware of the reason for the conflict. On the contrary, the reporter is trying to touch our emotions, to appeal to our feelings and move us, not to make us understand.

As Kant said, *'we tend to be full of sensitivity when we are devoid of thought'*. When Joseph Conrad saw the atrocities committed in the Belgian Congo, he felt the same horror as Kant had felt at the news coming out of Paris. It is that horror he portrays with such mastery through the character of Kurtz in his novel *'Heart of Darkness'*. Horror, horror... admitting he was unable to understand the cruelty perpetrated by man against man.

One hundred years on, horror was portrayed once again by Francis Ford Coppola in the film *'Apocalypse Now'*, when he took Joseph

Laura Mintegi

Conrad's novel out of Africa and set it in Vietnam and had Marlon Brando embody the character of Kurtz. Horror, horror, brought before our eyes again and again, in different places and times, and we cannot explain why or how it happened. Auschwitz, the gulags, Hiroshima, Pol Pot, the Twin Towers, Afghanistan, Iraq... Horror has no form, like the merciless monster that rises up out of the bowels of the earth. And whenever we feel unable to explain why, that is when we start counting the drops of blood. As Toni Morrison said, *'There is really nothing to say except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how.'*

We sense horror when, instead of having the roots of violence examined, we only have its effects described to us. Evil has overcome Good and we proclaim the need for Morality. The problem is that morality is based on rules, and rules belong to the Old Order; they sustain the Old Order so that Order remains unchanged. Furthermore, we can say with Nietzsche that morality is the collection of rules imposed by one society and thus has specific space-time coordinates and can change at any time. It always responds to the interests of those in power because it is placed at their service. Ethics, on the other hand, as Rousseau believed, are inherent in people: like virtues they are universal.

Instead of the old morality, a call should be made for a new Ethic; but a new Ethic would demand a new order, a new Justice. And writers (citizens, intellectuals, and artists alike) are mere onlookers—the passive observers whom the spectacle needs. The spectacle needs spectators and we onlookers are only asked for our opinion. And let us not deceive ourselves: opinions do not have the power to change anything.

And yet the observer who also wants to think instead of (or in addition to) feeling is fully aware that it is no use condemning political violence in the name of morality; and he or she knows very well that the only way to end the violence is to turn the political structure upside down and use justice as the basis. But he or she feels incapable of implementing this change. He or she is nobody and, moreover, this is not his or her sphere. The writer does not see him- or herself changing things. He or she does not have to 'experience' these changes; the most he or she can do is 'think' about things *a posteriori*. But he or she cannot avoid feeling anguish when faced with the spectacle of conflict. Kantian horror, Conradian horror, horror that leads to anguish.

We can understand anguish in two ways. One definition is that from philosophy developed by Spinoza: in his view, anguish is fear, the fear of yet again going through a negative experience one has known in the past. But the definition of anguish produced by psychoanalysts lends

The Effect of Political Violence on Literature

itself to understanding the anguish of writers better. In the view of Lacan and his followers, anguish is unease, the unease felt in the period before a decision is taken. In other words, we are anxious until we face the problem, when we hesitate to decide one way or another, when we do not know which way to turn.

Seen from this perspective, writers experience anguish about political conflict insofar as they have not decided where they stand and insofar as they do not want to take up a specific position—when they do not want to identify themselves with one side or the other.

Ways of Overcoming Anguish

Until recently, political conflict has not appeared in literature written in Basque (save for certain rare exceptions²). Seeing traces of conflict in Basque novels is a very new phenomenon, at least as far as themes are concerned. One thing is for it not to appear in the themes and quite another is for there to be no trace of violence. As so often happens, absence can be more conspicuous than presence. And when we speak of absence, we must grasp what is being ignored or hidden or forgotten by means of symptoms. Most widespread among Basque writers has been the trend not to express the subject, to avoid conflicts—in other words, to escape.

And how are we to avoid a painful subject that is all around us?

One way is to set the details of the story in childhood. Adult problems are not experienced in childhood because it is a kind of Arcadia. It can be cruel, violent, but that violence starts and ends there, its origin does not lie in external problems. Many writers have sought refuge in childhood because the internal logic of childhood has sufficed to enable them to build stories, to create another world outside the real one, to invent stories that have a beginning and an end without the need to give any explanations.

Another resort of writers has been to retreat into the past, to the Middle Ages in particular. We know very well that there were problems in the Middle Ages, too, and political ones, too, but the author does not find him- or herself compelled to explain them, and even less obliged to adopt a position with respect to them. History can form the backdrop and conflicts do not require explanations because we view them from the watchtower of time. The author does not need to put him- or herself on one side or the other because time appears to have filtered all the ideologies.

Another means resorted to has been to invent imaginary places, because a story set in a non-existent place needs no real justification—neither social nor political. We all know that Macondo is in Colombia

² Such an exception could be the novel 'Ehun metro', written by Ramon Saizarbitoria.

Although the main character is an ETA member, one could not say that the novel deals with political themes. As one critic said, politics is not the main theme of the novel. More than the militancy of the main character, the main themes are the very structure of the novel itself and the stream of consciousness.

Laura Mintegi

and we can sense the character, the idiosyncrasy and cosmogony of that country when we read García-Marquez's novel. But as it is set in Macondo, the author has no need to explain the drugs problem, poverty, political abuse or the conduct of the authorities. This is because Macondo does not exist anywhere, whereas the Colombian context is too specific for the novel to be set there without referring to the socio-political ups and downs.

Science fiction offers another effective means of not speaking about the here and now. Although it is a genre little developed by Basque literature, the future has the same advantages as the past: one does not have to position oneself on one side or the other of the trench caused by conflicts. Moreover, science fictions = allows us to invent whatever kind of place we want, a conflictive or a peaceful one, a chaotic or an ordered one, an unjust or a just one, and we do not have to make it clear where we stand.

Facing Anguish

We said before that anguish is the unease felt until a decision is taken. Once the decision has been taken, human beings can feel concern due to the consequences the decision will bring; or fear, due to not knowing whether one will be able to respond to what is coming. But anguish *will* disappear, because anguish is like a fever: it cannot go on for a long time.

If the decision has been not to face up to the unease, then self-justifications are sought for because it is difficult to admit that we have not had sufficient courage to maintain the position that ethics has required of us and because we have bowed to conventional morality instead. We justify ourselves and the temptation is not to break new ground but to immerse ourselves in the fields that are already known. In such situations, the temptation for plagiarism arises, even if plagiarism is given any other name: producing 'metaliterature', making cover versions, remakes or updating: everything has been done, nothing new can be said, so let us say what has been said already, but in a different way. Moreover, let us say the same thing that others have said by adding a small new element, and let us combine the formula that has been successful until now with new elements. Plagiarism is defended as if it were an option that could be defended. Furthermore, plagiarism does not assume any risk, does not put forward any new aesthetics, its aim is not to turn anything upside down. It suffices to engage in the game of combination.

We can detect this attitude in structuralism and its aesthetic manifestation can be found principally in the impressive Musée d'Orsay in

The Effect of Political Violence on Literature

Paris: the works of art that achieved success in their day (challenging the aesthetics and knowledge at that time) have been gathered together in one single place and positioned next to each other to mix up different periods and styles: neoclassical alongside Art Deco, impressionism and abstract, classical architecture and new glass buildings, textiles and sculpture, brittle materials and granite. The only transgression is the order, the break in chronology, the classification criterion, anachronism. Pure contrast has been regarded as a transgression. The aim has been to produce new products by gathering together old ones and the combination comes across as innovation. There is nothing entirely new and no attempt at aesthetics has been made, no contribution is made to the development of art. The only aim has been to give a new look by means of contrast, by mixing together old things; and this mere combination succeeds in giving the spectator the impression of something new, but it does not take any risks whatsoever because acceptance of all the elements is guaranteed.

In contrast to the position of the Musée d'Orsay we have the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris, where the creators clearly put their faith in a new aesthetic. For that very reason they came in for fierce criticism when the building first went up, because building something like that was unacceptable from the point of view of knowledge at that time: staircases on the outside, transparent walls, pipes and corridors in full view... they exposed what up until that moment had been concealed and kept inside. At that time they paid a heavy price for their daring, but today, by contrast, this kind of aesthetics has been everywhere incorporated into today's architecture. Lifts and corridors are to be found on the outside of buildings, walls and ceilings are transparent, equipment which is essential to its functioning is put on view as accessories/ornaments of the building. The system effortlessly absorbs innovation: something changes so that nothing can change.

But let us turn once again to the question of the creator's situation. He or she could decide to stand up to pressure and not be content with the nth version of the same thing. It could be that he or she wants to respond in his or her own way to the anguish he or she is suffering. He or she will emerge out of the crisis stronger and will not hide him- or herself in clichés. He or she will try to put forward new proposals. Even if the result is failure, he or she will be opening up new ways and will be pioneering and innovative to the extent that he or she confronts the knowledge of the time and starts creating new aesthetics. Academies, museums, encyclopaedias, and universities are unlikely to recognise the value of what he or she has accomplished. In the early stages the path of the innovator is one that will have to be trodden alone. And even if he or she were to get it right there would be no guarantee that he or

Laura Mintegi

she would get it right the next time. Each attempt carries a risk. And this is the way that Joseph Conrad understood literature: as an activity that tries to achieve a new truth. When he gave a definition of art, he linked the function of literature to justice and truth, and not to anguish or the super-ego. As he said in the preface to his novel 'The Nigger of the 'Narcissus': '*...art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect.*'

Art and society progress by linking together new small just causes. By scorning the anguish that the super-ego seeks to impose, the writer discovers new ways. Just as proposed by Kant, the quest for truth will also enable humankind to progress. Both Kant and Conrad believed in progress, and not just in technical progress, but in social organisation, too, in social justice and, of course, in moral and ethical values, as well.

Political violence naturally puts pressure on writers. When faced with such pressure the writer can immerse him- or herself in anguish, but it is impossible to remove the anguish completely, because anguish, unease, need, concern, suffering, rejection are indispensable for creating works of art. But each one knows him- or herself and will have to realise when anguish is an incentive and when it is an encumbrance.

Translator: Sarah Turtle

Laura Mintegi
(University of the Basque Country, Bilbao, Spain)
Effect of Political Violence on Literature
Summary

The aim of this paper is to examine what kind of effect political violence has exerted on literature, in particular on novel writing in the Basque language. Firstly, it will point out the fact that the presence of political violence in novels written in Basque has been very limited up until a few years ago; for many decades this theme has been virtually invisible in Basque literature, even though most writers have experienced a suffocating political atmosphere.

Secondly, it will take a look at the kinds of techniques writers have resorted to in order to reject political and social reality: stories have been set during childhood, imaginary places have been invented, the past has been resorted to, and science fiction has been created.

Thus the aim is to draw attention to a theme thought to be completely absent but which is very much present in Basque literature; and in this way it is possible to see what kind of efforts are made to turn one's back on anguish. On the other hand, by descending into the logic of structuralism, some authors have resorted to producing the nth version of what has been done already; they experience dizziness when faced with innovation.

Finally, the paper deals at length with the anguish of writers. In the way that political violence is presented, as if it were a spectacle, the system turns writers into passive onlookers. Writers feel anguish every time their consciences are pricked by political actions and only very few can pluck up sufficient courage to give an original literary response to the reality they face.



*A scene from Tarkovski film:
Andrej Rubljov*

Aco Peroski

PerFet Violence

1. Art and Violence

Supplement of the conjunction: from conjugation to equivalence

Art and violence are linked by an ontological thread. 'Violence begins with *articulation*' (Derrida 1978, 147) and is itself immanently engraved in the possibility for a discourse, in the shaping of each speech. On the other hand, the entire ontological concept of art is based on the articulation of the world through a new meta-speech. Thus, the conjunction *and* between art and violence, pressured by disjunction and difference, is given a supplement of equivalence. Art *is* violence, because it *is* articulation, because it *is*. This supplement, usually ambitiously named a creative process, is a functional principle of the artistic articulation of reality, which initiates the explosiveness of the hermeneutic 'project' of reproductions and allows the dismemberment of the bloody corpse of reality in the name of aesthetic pleasure. Such a practice of covering up, replacing and reproducing names in the name of great concepts longing for the meta-hopeful sanctuaries relies, in a fascinating way, upon the deeply enrooted, almost genetic, tradition of *paradoxologic*, which develops and supports the entire functional apparatus of 'Western society' (whatever this clichéd phrase may mean). Its direct consequence is the new supplement with justifications of creativity, creative rethinking, taken as a radical dialogical model leading toward the multiplication of the discourse, toward the creation of a new speech extract from the body of the dead language, toward the white nobility of the hermeneutic 'project' of searching for the truth. This is the source for all the various concepts of differentiating between

Key Words:

- violence
- articulation
- paradoxologic
- hermeneutics
- subject
- chaos
- love poem

Aco Peroski

art, violence and reality—for example, ‘the aesthetics of the ugly’ (Baudelaire), ‘Dionysian art’ (Nietzsche), ‘the aesthetics of the black’ (Adorno), etc.—who, in awe and admiration, claim that the result of such differentiation is art, nevertheless—art, nevertheless!

**Art, Nevertheless
(The False life of Ars Artis)**

The passion for violence and the desire for horror are powerful mechanisms of seduction which set the trap of pleasure and promise a harmless simulation of suffering, pain and death. The root of this concept is in the *arche*- of art, which penetrates through carnival traditions and extends all the way to acts of sacrifice. Once again, the firm logic of the paradox stands behind this mechanism as an initiating point and igniting power.

The institution of sacrifice tames and colonizes (I deliberately omit the term *channels*, because ‘the realization and enforcement’ of violence is actually a general and wild ‘practice’ in the different points of development in society, regardless of how structured it may be) violence; it identifies it as an otherness with which it begins a dialogue, as a violence of the others. The illusion created in the process is a metastasis of violence which makes the entire concept less perilous, less cruel and painful, since in that way violence becomes always (and always *already*) the violence of others, which we denounce and which ‘we negate being ours every time we are not able to refrain from it’ (Bataille 1988)—a pure reproduction. Such reproduction and replacement of names occurring under the pressure of the explosion of interpretation in the world creates *merely* an illusion of lessening the yearning for violence, but it is precisely there that the key differentiations begin and open the space for morals. Destruction as a desire is directed toward concealment which is, ironically, termed as violence awareness. Specific destruction, destruction as an action and an act, remains alive and well and is directed toward the only object without the power to defend itself, or the power to rebel, that can only accept and fully absorb all violence. That ‘perfect’ object which ‘unconditionally abides by all possible hypotheses’ (Baudrillard 1998, 15) is, of course, reality.

The logic of the paradox charmingly poses the question of violence fascination. Who could resist the dismemberment of the corpse of reality? Who could resist reproduction? Who could resist the practice of violence dressed in such an innocent, harmless and carnivalesque costume of language? Perhaps this is just a human, all too human, weakness? Another human, all too human, principle of pleasure and satisfaction? Questions, questions...But, it is with all these questions

PerFet Violence

that we penetrate deeper into the field of articulation, deeper into the labyrinth of language and the hermeneutic 'project' of constant production of meanings, new violence.

And, once again: art is an articulation of violence, a violence of articulation; articulation is an art of violence; violence is an artistic articulation of destruction...Hypotheses, hypostases, hypertexts, hyper-simulations, inter-facing, inter-horror. Names borne by reality thus creating a 'reality' of itself. Merely new names for—in terms of today's fashion—'politically correct violence'.

A Horizon of Disappearance

I would like to reiterate: the yearning for violence is a *powerful* pleasure mechanism. 'What we have been waiting for all our lives is precisely the creation of disorder in the suffocating order' (Bataille 1988). The pure articulation of violence—art—is an embracing of chaos, a negation of all structure and limitations (even the limitation of death), an anticipation of the irreversibility of the universe which turns our world into ruins, a subverted and diversely poisonous modification of the scream which created the world and which lasts through it until its 'thermal death'. Contrasting all hermeneutic 'projects' and 'tendencies' which save the world and are the cure in and through writing, the pure form of violence carries the poison of the writing, the metastases of the gnawing of paradoxologic tissues away from all justifications and beyond any compromise.

Just like identity, art is an enforced exile from oneself. However, it is not an exile into otherness which is to be colonized, conquered and assimilated, but an exile from oneself into oneself, into one's own fractality—into the realization that the corpse of dismembered reality is no other body than one's own. The road to embracing chaos passes through all the stages of dissipative self-organized structures, all self-alienations and classifications into subjects and objects. On that journey one becomes acquainted with the taste of the writing-cure, the taste of interpretations which is sweet food for the mutilated corpse, but which remains the bitter poison of bodily destruction. Interpretations of the world are the horizon of its disappearance. No matter how much art is part of that hyper-re-production, its initial violence of articulation remains a venomous sprout, blossoming when pleasure is realized in the terrifying implosion of meanings, all the way to the point of meaninglessness. The forms of beauty are forms of terror. Art is nothing but a love poem, full of despairing violence over the frail epidermis of reality in an attempt to preserve, to immortalize the very same. Art is a poem of sadness, mourning over the paradoxes through which the cognition of reality functions and through which differences in sameness are

Aco Peroski

created. Art is violence over paradoxologic, which attempts to destroy the possibility of any mechanism, to destroy conjunctions and supplements, conjugations, disjunctions and equivalences, and, as in sacrificing, as in its *arche-*, to address the almighty God, to recognize God in one's own fractality. Futile, tragic, ridiculous, terrifying—wonderful!

2. The Nightmares of the Love Poem: Politics of Love

Dark overtones: A Mournful Poem, a Love Poem

The right to suffer is a true rampart of art, as within this right lies the right to language and articulation. The possibility for referencing involves a possibility for violence. The longing for reality sublimated in language leads to an indispensable confrontation with the difference between the subject and the object, between the one who speaks and the one who is being spoken about.

Poetry, although traditionally determined as a genre with the least referencing toward (a determined, specific, given) reality, is a rich example of the awareness of that difference. Lyrical discourse, due to its emphasized subjectivity, is essentially bound to the speaking subject. That emphasized subjectivity creates the awareness of the otherness being spoken of ('the lyrical object') and, through language, tries to reach it. The articulation of lyrical speech is a yearning for the ever-absent object; articulation is anguish over the alienated otherness of the object. The mechanism of lyrical speech, faced with the traces of the ever-absent 'original', tries to create its own object out of itself, to recreate the object in itself and of itself. In order to achieve this, it has the arsenal of figurativeness, soaked in emotionality (as the only sublime extract of subjectivity) and the burdening of sound. Lyrical speech is a realization of the God-given right to suffer for the other and create chaos of oneself.

This general characteristic of lyrical discourse, as of art in general, is specific to the love lyric. The love poem is a lyrical articulation of the fossil form of the primal scream—uniting the duplicity of the creative act and the destructive genetic input in suffering for the ever-absent object. The key act of violence is therefore directed toward the inside, toward the subject of the speech who destroys himself, has 'an epilepsy of identity and (...) succumbs to his own absolute reality' (Baudrillard 1998, 65). In that case language no longer has the role of a cure, but becomes the venom attacking its own body, allowing for chaos and becoming one with the absent, the object. All separations and oppositions, all differences and distancing, all structure and 'humanity'—all survival in and through language—becomes dying in language, dying through language. The price for surviving through language—suffering

PerFet Violence

—is the destruction of the subject, completely succumbing to violence and turning itself into a perfect articulation, 'objectifying' itself into simple reality.

To articulate love is no easy task. This almost cynical statement sounds true by its very banality. For love is articulated through a gloomy language, a language with a dark overtone. 'These dark sounds are the mystery, the root burrowing through the mud we all know is there—something we cannot understand, but which offers us the essence of what art is made of. Dark sounds...The mysterious power everyone can feel, but no philosophy can explain...Power, and not construction; a struggle, and not a concept.' (Lorca 1998, 48-49). Accordingly, art is articulated through violence, through the entire chaos of identity, of semantics, relations and states in and toward the world. This primary violence implodes the possibilities of language and all meaning to a simple form in which all identifying characteristics are lost and in which there is no possibility for separation, for difference. The love poem conditions its articulation by the destruction of the subject and the love poem is a mournful poem; art conditions its articulation by the destruction of reality and art is itself an act of sacrifice, bloodshed.

***The Destruction and Reparations of the Subject:
Forms of Violence, Figures of Art***

The paradoxical logic of 'the founding of identity' (this phrase is an oxymoron in itself, of course) prescribes and canonizes conventionalized processes of identification based on similarity or difference, belonging or exclusion. Thus, otherness is clearly differentiated—all that which is not part of the direct designations of a subject. Such identifying logic starts with the premise of the hermeneutic 'project', according to which the possibility for structuring an identity is a priori and is found at the root of the idea of the subject, regardless of its centering or decentering. The constitution and building of the subject is, according to this logic, humane, colonizing, founded on the principle of affirmative dialogic. Needless to say, it does necessarily involve the principles of endless differentiation (most often arrogant, daring, hypocritical and narcissistic) and the endless alienation of the otherness from itself. Thus, a structured subject is created, set on the explosive possibilities of politically correct hypocrisy.

The paradoxological bases of the subject establish 'peaceful' projects of interpreting the objects which constitute otherness. The first step of this 'humanization' is their identification as objects. With a faint smile, reality is turned into an illusion, a well-supported misconception, an absence undermining all attempts at communication except through the medium of the noble skill of polemic, seen as the skill to speak and

Aco Peroski

yet say nothing. This last characteristic defines the modern super-aesthetic, hyper-technocratic, extra tolerant and inter-two-faced art politics. 'Art politics', yet another oxymoron, but functioning quite smoothly, logically justified and rationally legitimate, leading to artistic articulation producing messages which, carried away by the reproductive rush, convey nothing and address no one. This is the remarkably sterile and sterilizing veil placed over the lacerations of reality's corpse and proclaimed as a false excuse for its repulsiveness. In an effort to escape entropy, communication dies.

I needed this digression to get to Derrida's fascinating realization. 'Survival - there it is, another name for pain, whose possibility is never overdue. We cannot survive without enduring pain. It is a tautology no living being can prevail over, a tautology of survival. There, even God is helpless' (2001, 43). Derrida is perhaps right (most probably he isn't), but the pain of surviving and suffering for articulation does not necessarily end in alleviating the pain by the medicinal paradoxes on which the constructed reality forced upon us is based. On the contrary, outside the margins of interpretations' good intentions, the dark overtones of art, artistic acts of haemorrhaging and destruction, resonate in their search for the perfect addressee, yearning for the object whose existence they can sense through themselves. The challenge of the artistic act, a true roll of the dice thrown by the entropic storms of chance and chaos, is a challenge for violence over itself, its own annulment and chaos, in order to establish communication with God, the only hopeful sanctuary, who is so illusory, insecure and absurd that He becomes the only thing probable.

The gory prose of the Old Testament, with its abundance of violence, hatred, vengeance, ecstasy, longing and love, accepts the challenge of addressing God with the complete openness of the subject as well as the body of the text itself addressing world chaos in the core of its formation and establishment. Once again, irony brings together the chaos and the structuring in the fragile form of dissipativeness and performs a violent act of articulation. The equivalence between violence and art is particularly evident in the love poems of the Old Testament, known as the *Psalms*. With a tone of desperate longing and brutal violence, the Psalms address God in a hymn-like, exalting, confessional and praying tone expressing love in its different forms. Blood-stained and sadistic, the words of this love lyric address God directly in an effort (desperate, longing, all too human) to fill the absurd and terrifying void between the promise of godly love and the paradoxes of reality, thus sacrificing—without regret, without a second thought—the subject of their utterance.

The articulation of the love for God begins with an invocation of the promise for that love: 'I will love thee, O LORD, my strength' (Psalms 18.1). It then continues through the various stages of praiseful gratitude to

PerFet Violence

reach its inevitable violent ending: 'I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed. /I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet. /Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets. /The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places' (Psalms 18.37, 38, 42, 45). The expression of love necessarily implies the need to destroy the reality of the paradox, thus only entering it more deeply, sinking in its filthy gaping wounds and becoming one with them, coming in its futility to the tamed, barely audible scream of the prayer. The prayer for help is basically a hopeful concept longing for complete realization and longing to encompass divine love: 'In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness' (Psalms 31.1). The 'greatness' of fulfilling this prayer, or of fulfilling hope in general, would involve: 'Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave./Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous' (Psalms 31.17-18). The creation and fulfilment of the longing for comfort in reality, in survival, is possible only by the promise of love in violence. 'Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?' (Psalms 58.1). The articulation of the idea of reality, one of whose many names is *justice* (in the sense of balance, order) absurdly promotes violence over reality in the name of the desire for a different—new, better, just—(hyper)reality. 'Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. /Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces./As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. /Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath' (Psalms 58.6-9). Finally, the articulation of art, of love poured into artistic discourse, involves double violence: the external, which transforms (destroys) reality; and the internal, which destroys the subject. Psalm 137, shocking in its brutal and explicit combination of sorrow, of love for one's homeland, of longing, and violent scenes and curses, is an excellent example which confirms this:

'By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

Aco Peroski

*How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her
cunning.*

*If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

*Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of
Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof.*

*O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he
be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.*

*Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against
the stones.'*

The challenge in the articulation of this psalm, in the articulation of a poem, *a joyful hymn of the Lord*, sets in motion the bitter despair of the subject of the speech toward the articulation of violence. To sing the joyful hymn, the subject of the speech sets a condition of violent punishment and gory vengeance; hence the fulfilment of joy comes to mean murder. The absurd despair of this conditioning is also equivalent to the internal destruction of the subject of the speech himself: faced with his own atrocious attitude toward reality, he denounces his voice, his own identifying and creative mark, thus denouncing any possibility for love, any possibility for a poem. The cry in this psalm is a cry of love longing to be forever united with the object of its longing, even if that means giving up oneself. The comfort in this case is the only possible comfort, the only possible realization of love, the only approach to reality and the only possible form of art.

The psalms reveal the 'mechanism' specific to a love poem and crucial for all art. In the love poem the subject is destroyed, transformed into language. This violent and bloody turning into a language, this self-violence over one's own destruction means erasing the differences and traces leading toward a semantics of a supposed and condemned meaning, a disintegration and increase of the entropy of the subject through the implosive compression of meanings in the language, until there is nothing left but articulation, nothing but the pure violence which the Same performs on itself and, perhaps, some desperate and dark fractal form of love or beauty.

The Perfect Violence

Art is a bloody act, an act of bleeding. It bleeds continuously, permanently and extensively, but due to a strange, all too human, principle of survival, it renames its bloody stains as semantic flowers of a seductive but deadly aroma. The writing-poison remains engraved in the reproductions of violence, even when they modify and disfigure

PerFet Violence

themselves into healing paths that lead to a previously promised truth. From the spirit of this paradox of promised truth interpretations are born; writing is born with all its tendencies, manifestations and glorifications of infinity, but the initial poison of articulation remains imprinted as a scar in the face of the writing. It is precisely the potential of this scar which artistic speech uses in its addresses and screams, directed toward self-destruction. All interpretations, all compromises with the cruel world (in all the *cruelty* of this cliché phrase), all alleviations of the traumatic act of facing death, all fears and frustrations aroused by someone else's otherness, all noble 'projects' of interpreting the world grow mute before the cruel form of communication, before the dark and sonorous language of artistic speech which promotes the disorder of the universe and proclaims itself to be a part of that disorder, One with chaos, a simple moment of dissipativeness in the infinity of non-existence.

True art remains an articulation of the world which defiantly exists despite all its explanations, descriptions and interpretations. In opposition to this, the reproductions of the world, the reproductions of reproductions, and the so ons of so ons, with all their technocratic, hypocritical and seductive-consumer-modern smiles of false affirmation, are, to say the least, 'fake' art which should not be trusted. Apart from this rough and inept distinction there stands the concept of love whose main specification is its lack of concept, the destruction of the possibility of creating any concept. The world may be a scenario, as poorly described by the structuralists; a scenario of empty schemes being filled by our misconceptions and prejudices, so that no exaltation (love, imagination, fascination...) could be anything more than 'a short roundtrip' (Kristeva 1996, 331) from oneself to oneself, through someone else's space containing some vague otherness. However, these mini-structuralistic mechanisms of saprophy, just like all other structural organizations, contain a self-destructive code whose name can be none other than love, the hideousness of the world which needs no excuses (or interpretations).

The love poem, seen as a cry of pure longing toward its desired object, a cry of terror, despair and pain, in a fascinating way demonstrates the potential of artistic discourse for the implosive destruction of semiotic survival dumps. Contrary to the saprophytic concept of survival in and through writing, the principle and tradition of love poetry (and love in general!) as their own, pure, original and uncompromising alternative offer dying in the writing - the perfet violence, the perfet crime.¹

Translated by: Ana Kechan

'The spelling mistake' in the title is due to the 'mistake' the author made right here. Needless to say, it should be: 'the perfect violence, the perfect crime' thus alluding to the concept of 'the perfect crime' of Baudrillard as well as the overall point of the text. However, this 'mistake' was not overseen only by the author, but also the editor and the translator and the first few readers of the text, to be detected, as silly as it may sound, by the computer spelling and grammar check. So, the author decided to accept the challenge of this 'mistake' and leave the imperfection of the word perfect, not to fill in the 'missing' letter, in order to confirm perfection in all its imperfection, from which begins all artistic/violent articulation of one's voice and which is, actually, the object of that articulation: the primordial conception of suffering. Needless to say, this 'mistake' being made innocently (not on purpose, fits perfectly in the almost subconscious longing of the author of this text to speak of the dying in/thru writing and the imperfection of the perfect crime, therefore meeting all the necessary criteria to be treated as a mystification too. Regardless of whether it be a mystification or an accident, the 'mistake' was in any case one reason more - 'to have something to write about'.

Aco Peroski

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Aco Peroski
 (University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, Macedonia)
PerFet Violence
 Summary

Art and violence, in an ontological sense, are linked by articulation. Violence is imminently engraved in the possibility for a discourse, while the entire ontological concept of art is based on the articulation of the world through a new meta-speech. The right to suffer is a true rampart of art, as in it lies the right to a language and articulation. The possibility for referencing involves a possibility for violence, which legitimates itself through the paradoxologic mechanisms of civilization. The violence of artistic articulation, on the contrary, is intrasubjective, aimed toward the subject of articulation, and contained in his desire for self-destruction and becoming same/one with the object of its articulation.



A SCENE FROM THE FILM OF MILCHO MANCHEVSKI: *BEFORE THE RAIN*



INTERPRETATIONS

European Research Project for Poetics & Hermeneutics

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Violence & ART

Part IV

**Interpreting
Violence
in Performance**



*Murder, Vietcong,
Saigon police-chief Eddie Adams*

Milcho Manchevski

Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes Tone and Function: Art and Ritual

violence

Function: *noun*

1 a: exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse (as in warfare or effecting illegal entry into a house) **b :** an instance of violent treatment or procedure

[...]

3 a: intense, turbulent, or furious and often destructive action or force <the *violence* of the storm> **b:** vehement feeling or expression

ritual

Function: *noun*

1: the established form for a ceremony; *specifically:* the order of words prescribed for a religious ceremony

2 a: ritual observance; *specifically:* a system of rites **b:** a ceremonial act or action **c:** an act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner

- Ingmar Bergman is quoted as having said that film is a perfectly legitimate way of ritualizing violence in society.

- *Ritualize*, mind you—not glorify.

- [Bergman is also quoted as having said: ‘When we experience a film, we consciously prime ourselves for illusion. Putting aside will and intellect, we make way for it in our imagination. The sequence of pictures plays directly on our feelings.’]

Key Words:

- film
- ritual
- media
- art
- brutality
- tone
- taboo
- violent feelings
- society
- response
- portrayal
- reality
- narrative
- art critics
- teaching
- experience
- realism
- Bergman
- oral history
- horror

Milcho Manchevski

- The ritualistic aspect has to do with (among other things) creating a substitute, a mock-up, a representation of a particular experience.

- This representation and re-creation provides the experience of the real thing without the necessity of facing the consequences. More importantly, it also allows one to deal with the meaning of the real thing—the thing that is being represented.

- For example, riding a roller-coaster is a mock-up of a particular experience, that of falling down. The fear is real, but the danger is not, as we know the contraption is supposed to be safe.

- Film is often like a roller-coaster for the mind, the gut and the heart: experience without the danger, experience without the consequences ('...we consciously prime ourselves for illusion').

- Even though as viewers we know perfectly well that the film/painting/story/play is a lie ('When we experience a film, we consciously prime ourselves for illusion'), one still desires to respond as if it were real. This is simply because the lie is at the same time a truth.

- As the hero fires his gun, he really does fire a gun, even if it is one loaded with fakes.

- As an actor at the receiving end of this shot falls down, playacting, we know that he is pretending he has been hit. Yet, we also know that he really fell down, cried in anguish, writhed in the dust.

- Playacting or not, all of these actions really did take place. And they suggest what the filmmakers wanted to suggest and what the audience has agreed to assume—that the actor is dead.

- The meaning has been put together.

- That is part of the contract ('...we consciously prime ourselves for illusion'): the viewer knows full well that the actor is not dead; yet the viewer accepts that these more-or-less realistic symbols and gestures say 'I am dying/dead.'

- More importantly, the viewer's heart and gut respond to these as if they were real.

- Ultimately, as the piece wraps up, the viewer has accepted the emotional, narrative or philosophical point; the meaning that the artist wanted to communicate has travelled via the work of art.

- One aspect of contemporary rituals is not that different from ancient rituals. Experiencing it without really doing it.

- How much do we fill in the blanks? Is the actor's death realistic without our participation and without our acceptance of the rules of the

Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes Tone and Function: Art and Ritual

game? Will an unsuspecting viewer who doesn't know that this is a piece of fiction think the actor has really died?

- Is this any different from the experience in the syncretic art?
- Is it different from an experience of a ritual around a bonfire thousands of years ago?
- Is it different from what the audience of the oral storytellers experience? The audience of Homer, bhopas (bards and shamans, oral storytellers in Rajasthan) or guslars (musician/storytellers of the Balkans)?

- Society's survival depends on its ability to pass on information.
- In other words: to teach.
- What would happen if every generation had to discover fire anew? Or the wheel? Or electricity?
- Society facilitates the transfer of information from the teacher (the one with the experience or knowledge) to the pupil (the one without the experience or knowledge).
- The cornerstone of this activity is the potential for the pupil to absorb information without having to personally experience it.

- Narratives are one way to teach.
- The Bible teaches its students how to behave.
- Even the less overt instruction manuals do so by providing templates of behaviour (if Zeus can cheat on his wife Hera, why shouldn't I?)
- Narratives were only oral at first.

- Speech, written language, mental concepts.

• Art is non-verbal conscious communication. ('Putting aside will and intellect, we make way for [art] in our imagination.')

• Rituals, and by extension, art: experiencing (and exploring) it yourself without the consequences. Participating in and experiencing the emotional impact. Learning— or at least feeling.

• Do technological developments make the experience more convincing? Is a bhopa listener in Rajasthan less convinced of the 'realness' of the story she's experiencing than a kid at an IMAX theatre in New York with its gigantic screen and sophisticated surround-sound? (A standard IMAX screen is 22 m wide and 16 m high (72.6 x 52.8 ft), but can be larger.)

- Were 3-D films too realistic? Or were they irrelevant?

Milcho Manchevski

- Is the intensity of the experience relative to the personal investment, or do the technical attributes add to the experience? Is it relative?

- I remember reports of adults in cultures unexposed to film who were confused when they had their first experience with film. They were confused by many conventions of the form that we take for granted: editing, changes in shot size, time compression, parallel action...

- The obituary of the movie theatre has been composed several times at each new technological discovery affecting film exhibition has arisen, but always prematurely. The film industry itself has certainly contributed to this with its own paranoia. (Anyone who uttered the word 'television' on a Hollywood movie set in the 40s was fired on the spot; Universal sued Sony over the invention of the Betamax video recorder. Today film studios make more money from TV or video than at the cinema box office. Theatrical grosses account for less than 20% of total movie revenues.)

- In spite of the convenience of TV, pay-per-view, video, ti-vo, video iPods, people still go to the movie theatres by the millions. Is it the collective experience?

- Film is experienced alone: we usually don't talk much while watching a film: we don't chant, we don't boo or hiss (unless in Cannes). Still, we usually prefer company while engaging in this solitary experience. Even when we rent a film, we often invite friends or significant others to see it with us.

- Does the collective aspect of this solitary experience resemble the experience of participating in a ritual?

- In this respect, how much does a movie theatre resemble a temple?

- The first time I saw John Carpenter's Halloween I was blown away by the effect the film had on its audience. It was profound and it was visceral. The viewers were so terrified that it was almost palpable. I saw the 6 o'clock showing and then decided to stay for the 8 o'clock as well. The new audience reacted in much the same way: screaming, shrieking, shouting at the screen and covering their eyes—and at the same places in the film.

- Halloween kick-started the renaissance of a venerable old genre (going back via Hitchcock, Frankenstein and Dracula to The Cabinet of

Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes Tone and Function: Art and Ritual

Dr. Caligari and way beyond). There were half a dozen sequels to Halloween alone, as well as a series of other scary sequel-spinning films. Over the following couple of decades these scary films evolved into films of gore. Horror no more, gore now.

- Yet there was not a drop of blood nor gore in the first Halloween. Only masterful manipulation of the cinematic elements and the Freudian subtext to cause a pure visceral reaction in the viewers.

- All of this on top of a rudimentary narrative; a strategy that only further enhanced the mastery and the subtext.

- Marshall McLuhan reportedly said that characters at the movies are like gods—big and powerful; while characters on TV are like friends—accessible.

Dialogue: of Donkeys and Zoologists

- The emotional, visceral and intellectual responses to art are only personal. They are ultimately in the eye of the beholder.

- It seems absurd to discuss the experience of experiencing art. It is like discussing the experience of experiencing love, or fear.

- In spite of how absurd it seems, we do discuss those, as we are social animals. It may even help us deal with the experiences themselves.

- Art provokes what's inside the beholder.

- The force of the emotions stirred is an indication of the powerful effect the work has on the beholder. The root is often in the taboo and is triggered by the tone of the work of art.

- If the beholder lies to himself/herself, then a reminder of the lie in the form of art feels like a provocation.

- Art functions on a personal level. It is a proto-emotional, super-philosophical one-on-one meta-communication.

- The arts deal with the personal needs—and by extension the social needs—of the society as reflected in the individual (as no man is an island). The plane of communication of the arts is personal: emotional, by extension philosophical, sometimes conceptual.

Milcho Manchevski

- The social reaction to art has everything to do with society and nothing to do with the art: Guernica, The Wild Bunch, Lolita, Damian Hirst...

- A public debate of the personal experience is a bastardization of the experience; yet the impulse to discuss and judge is understandable as homo sapiens is zoon politicon.

- The public re-telling of the beholder's personal experience with art is not unlike pornography.

- This public re-telling may be relevant to the teller or even to some listeners, but it is irrelevant both to the work of art and to future works of art.

- The loudness of the voice debating the work of art has no correlation to the work of art. Even its relation to the experience itself is often doubtful. Yet it has everything to do with societal structures.

- Mass-media treatment of the arts (film, but also other arts).

- [• Picasso is said to have said: 'Computers are useless. They can only give us answers.']

- Society responds/reacts to art that deals with taboos.

- Art is equipped (and indeed expected) to deal with taboos.

- The representation of violence is taboo in contemporary society.

- The hypocritical nature of the social attitude towards art is reflected in society's attitude towards the representation of violence.

- The reactions to works of art in other representative arts (painting) and narrative arts (literature) dealing with violence seem less vitriolic nowadays. This might be due to the fact that film (rightly or wrongly) appears to be more convincing. One often hears that film is the most 'realistic' art.

- What is realistic? It is often taken for granted that what we find convincing or what 'seems' to be realistic or to 'reflect reality' is realistic.

- Is a real-time eight-hour film of a man sleeping realistic?

- And what if there is a cut in the middle? Does it make it less realistic?

- What if the eight-hour experience has been condensed to two hours? Five minutes? Ten seconds? Do these interventions make the film less 'real'?

Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes Tone and Function: Art and Ritual

- In film is it realistic to hear music as the hero and heroine finally consume their relationship on the beach (more music preceding this at their first encounter, perhaps)? Where is the orchestra?

- Realism is just another form of stylization.
- Like Expressionism or Cubism or Impressionism.

- Realism is a form of stylization which convention has declared closer to our desired perception of physical reality outside the plane of the work of art (outside of the movie theatre).

- What is realistic changes with the times. Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* was once deemed too realistic/naturalistic. His acting today feels highly stylized, not gritty.

[• It is said that a graduate student once asked Daisetz T. Suzuki whether he spells reality with a small or a capital 'r.' professor Suzuki nodded, then closed his eyes, went on nodding, and—it seemed—thinking. Ten seconds passed, then a minute, then five. As it started to look as if he had fallen asleep, he finally opened his eyes and answered the student's question. 'Yes,' he said.]

- Still, if the artist wants to have a dialogue with society or with those who have declared themselves its spokespersons, s/he is compelled to take art critics into account. As inspiration and as the object of (sociological?) (anthropological?) analysis, not as a guide in creating art.

- The artist needs critics as much as a donkey needs zoologists.

- Debates about art often centre on the 'representation' of the world, as perceived in a work of art.

- There are several issues here:

- *The artist deals with her or his world, not with the world outside. The outside 'real' world comes into play as something to be refracted through the artist and the work of art, and as the host of the final result, the work of art.*

- *The way the beholder sees the world 'portrayed' has more to do with the beholder's perceived (or ideal) world, not with the aspects of the scraps of reality refracted through a work of art.*

- It is more likely that a disturbing 'portrayal' is disturbing or undesired not so much because it 'shows' an outside world that the beholder

Milcho Manchevski

does not like/appreciate, but rather because the 'portrayal' awakens an inner world in the beholder which disturbs the beholder, upsets him/her, angers her/him, leading him/her where s/he consciously would not want to go, regardless of whether the work of art is dealing with a taboo or not.

- It is not that important what/how the work of art 'portrays.' It is much more important what the goal is and—even more importantly—what the tone is.

- Ultimately, dialogue about and through art is an intimate experience and has to do with the individual's experience of him/herself and the universe around.

Tone, or God is between the lines:

- Thousands of painters could have painted Mona Lisa. Some possibly did. Including Leonardo. It is his touch that made her 'portrayal' what matters, not the thing/person he was painting.

- Picasso and Braque painted the same still-lives in the same studio, often painting together, each on his easel. Even though the paintings were done in the same style, they are very different.

- Several directors have worked from the same scripts, most notably from the classics. Each film is distinctly different. Do Polanski's, Welles's and Kurosawa's Macbeth even have a similar tone? How about Zeffirelli's and Luhrman's Romeo and Juliet?

- So, it's not the text.
- It is between the lines.
- Humanistic, reflective...?

- An often-heard complaint about mainstream studio and independent films is that the stories are all the same.

- I don't think that this is the main problem with mainstream studio and independent films.

- I think the main problem with them is that the tone is always the same.

- Open endings, mixed feelings, fractured feelings, shifting feelings, unpredictable tone, tragedy, and especially doubts, are big No-Nos.

- Even though the outside ('corporate,' 'committee,' 'money') control over film works of art centres on the story, it is actually more concerned with the tone of the work. This control, however, is more subtle and involves several layers of controllers and middle-men.

- If the tone is what's between the lines, what kind of tone does the social art critic like in his/her work of art?

Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes Tone and Function: Art and Ritual

- What about violence in art?
- Does s/he like gleeful violence?

• Is it supposed to be dismissive and easy? Like Arnold Schwarzenegger? (In one film, his character promises a minor movie villain that he would let him go if he gave him the information he needed; once he gets it, he throws the petit villain into an abyss, saying 'I lied.') Like Sylvester Stallone (the vehicle for the stunning transformation of the bottled-up Rambo from First Blood into a killing machine in Rambo 2 and 3)? Like Michael Bay, Simpson/Bruckheimer + Co, the Hollywood blockbusters of Ronald Regan's 80-90s?

• Sadism might be an explanation for this tone, but somehow that doesn't seem to be the real answer, as these films seem to suggest an emptier, less affected, less involved tone than that of a sadist.

- The tone of psychopaths?

• It is easier for the suburban and politically correct latter-day transfigurations of the Mayflower and Salem judgmental spirit to focus on measurable quantities like minutes than on empirically imperfect elements like tone and intention. Tone is not a scientific, nor a statistical category.

• Professor Charles Harpole mentions in his lectures that in Hollywood films of the 40s and 50s a character would shout 'Darn,' after being shot in the knee. Not 'Damn!' or more appropriately 'Fuck!' After being shot in the knee.

• Desensitizing the viewer to the impact of violence (both real and filmic) has more adverse social consequences than portraying violence in its full glory.

• Types of violence: which is worse: a wounded soldier, a dead dog, or an employee laid off after 20 years of service?

• How influential is film?:

• On the one hand, little Roma kids coming out of the Napredok or Karpos Cinemas, jumping and air kick-boxing à la Bruce Lee.

• On the other hand, neither Genghis Khan nor the agents of the Inquisition watched violent films.

• Check a report that the U.S. Air Force pilots watched porn films before going on air raids.

• Press briefings from the NATO bombings in Kosovo and Serbia.

• Ditto the First Gulf War.

- The view of real death and destruction as seen from 30,000 feet eerily resembles the gleeful victory accomplished in a video game. A cloud of white smoke. Game over.

- Detached, fun.
- Getting desensitized to violence.

- If one hopes for a work of art to have a social function (and it is not meant to have a direct social function by any stretch of the imagination), then one should certainly hope that exposing violence in its despicable and repulsive brutality—if not absurdity—is one of the socially beneficial side-effects of art.

- Thus, society is better served by gross 'portrayal' of violence than by sanitized studio fare. A matter of tone.

- What is the tone of snuff? Real-life violence. Does it begin to matter only if we **know** that this is portrayal of real violence?

- Yet it has been mediated/transfigured to a new place/new meaning.

- The God is in the detail.
- The art is between the lines.
- It is not the 'what'; it is the 'how.'

Milcho Manchevski

(Tisch School of the Arts, Kanbar Institute of film & TV,

Graduate program, New York, USA)

Art, Violence + Society: A Few Notes

Tone and Function: Art and Ritual

Summary

Film-viewing shares important aspects of ritual. In both, violence and violent feelings may be played out and experienced, typically collectively, without necessarily incurring violent consequences. This allows for the possibility that audiences might learn from exploring such violent narratives and their responses to these narratives.

Given this potential 'teaching' function, it would seem more harmful either to desensitize viewers to violence or sanitize violence than to portray violence in all its repulsive brutality.

Society's responses to violence in the arts and to violence in film in particular, as the most 'realistic' of media, reflect society's unease with its hypocritical taboo treatment of representations of violence; just as all our individual responses to film reflect less upon the film or filmmaker than they do upon ourselves. What is important, however, is not what is portrayed in film (the text), but the intention of the work and the tone with which it is portrayed.



GUERNICA PABLO PICASSO - detail



Metajoy 2_1

Sibila Petlevski

Violence in the Arts: Performing & Witnessing

Introductory Notes

Perhaps the easiest way to approach the vast subject of violence in the arts would be to choose from an open-ended list of examples in which aggression and suffering comprise the subject-matter and then to comment on the selected titles in historical perspective. Another possibility would be to undertake a cross-media comparative analysis focused on well-known topics of violence such as the Passion of Christ or the Holocaust.

One could examine the concept of pain in the performing arts, with special emphasis on endurance theatre; explore art intervention within the borders of conceptual art; gain new insight into paradigmatic examples of artistic expressions of war; or study famous examples of fascination with 'great' leaders such as Alexander the Great, Ivan the Terrible, or Napoleon, in literature and music. One could also explore the link between artistic thematization of violence and issues of gender socialization, social stereotyping and ritual violence; search for traces of racial, religious and class discrimination in literature; or study how the narrative structure of war propaganda in different media has changed over time.

There would hardly be any novelty in elaborating upon the ever-growing amount of aggressive messages incorporated in video-clips, trailers, TV-ads and other commercials. Many cultural critics have already commented on the ideology of the visible in documentary films, detected invisible hegemonic master-narratives in the content of television, film, literature, popular songs and the daily news, and analyzed

Key Words:

- body in pain
- conceptual art
- Dada
- emic
- empathy
- etic
- imagination
- intervention art
- in-yer-face
- performance
- performing arts
- violence

Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing

the cultural import of cover-images in news magazines and other mass media artefacts.

The broad subject of violence in art presents the scholar of today with a whole range of theoretical possibilities in the treatment of the chosen topic. The change of major aesthetical concepts in the period of modernism, post-modern aesthetic egalitarianism with its levelling of traditionally high and traditionally low genres, new treatment of identity issues, cultural relativism, and other symptoms of post-modernity have all brought about new narrative strategies, causing dramatic change in all aesthetical concepts, offering new perspectives on old ideas such as the concept of empathy.

Although we intend to tackle some of the aforementioned aspects of the topic, the main aim of this text is to analyze some recent works on the crossroads of art intervention and performance, and to highlight the difference between ideas-based conceptual subversion on the one hand, and body-based transgression in performances that involve physical endurance on the other. A body in pain no longer concerns itself with ideas. Fully concentrated upon itself and the pain it endures, the body itself constitutes the stage on which the performance takes place. In a conceptual interaction with previously existing, aesthetically approved and canonized artwork, the concept involved in interventionist work takes precedence over aesthetic and all other concerns.

One topic of special interest is that of identity-based, corporeal thematization of violence in performance. This paper explores violence in relational spaces determined by gender, sex and body, in the context of a theatrical event. The subject of violence in theatre could be explored in connection to the specific relational spaces based on identity that have implications in the performing domain with special reference to urban, institutional, colonial, postcolonial, national and transnational spaces of identity constructed under the influence of popular culture; marginal and liminal spaces and 'liminoid' experiences, including the related terms of periphery, border, the Other and the Different.

The Death of Sarpedon

The obverse side of the Euphronios krater, a bowl used for mixing water and wine, depicts the death of Sarpedon, one of the heroes of the Trojan War. Sarpedon was hit, according to Homer in Book 16 of *The Iliad*, by Patroclus' spear where the midriff clasps the beating heart. Fatally injured, he lay moaning for a long time, clutching at the bloody dust. The agony of the dying hero is observed by Zeus, an invisible, all-seeing god who happens to be his father. Blood gushes from the slain body. Euphronios shows two winged figures, Hypnos and Thanatos, representations of Sleep and Death, in the process of lifting the

Sibila Petlevski

body from the battlefield to transfer it to Lycia for proper burial. Two calm and impassionate onlookers, Laodamas and Hippolochos (two previously killed heroes), witness the scene from an unearthly perspective. Zeus remains out of the picture, although he watched Sarpedon's agony and even wanted to save his son's life in spite of the fact that Sarpedon was fated to die at the hands of Patroclus. During the fight between Sarpedon and Patroclus, Zeus sent a shower of bloody raindrops over the Trojan's heads expressing his grief at the inevitable death of his son who was about to die. Hera talked Zeus out of the idea of sparing his son's life. Her argument was that Sarpedon was not the only half-god fighting in the Trojan War. Zeus was supposed to show solidarity with other gods whose sons died in the course of action, and on this occasion he acted according to the moral law, preferring common benefit to selfish emotional impulses.

Scholars are not agreed as to Aeschylus being the author of *Carians or Europa*, a play featuring Sarpedon's death at Troy and the return of his body to his home for burial (see Radt 1985; Keen 1996), but at least there is a brief reference to Sarpedon's grave in the fifth act of *The Suppliants* by Aeschylus. The Danaides of the chorus constitute the collective protagonist in the impending abduction. They have fled a forced marriage to their Egyptian cousins and found refuge in the city of Argos. The protection they requested from King Pelasgus was granted to them only after a vote by the Argives at the moment of greatest suspense, when it already seemed as if the Herald and his helpers would force them to continue their voyage to Egypt and suffer the consequences of the unwanted marriage. In the passage quoted, a herald of the Egyptians tries to force the maidens to board the ship and continue their voyage to Egypt. He threatens them physically, while they put a curse on him invoking his death in a sea storm (Aeschylus, trans. Morshead 1881):

'Herald of Aegyptus:

Shrines, shrines, forsooth!-the ship, the ship, the ship be shrine.

Aboard, perforce and will-ye nill-ye, go!

Or e'er from hands of mine

ye suffer torments worse and blow on blow.

Chorus:

Alack, God grant those hands may strive in vain

with the salt-streaming wave,

when 'gainst the wide-blown blasts thy bark shall strain

to round Sarpedon's cape, the sandbank's treach'rous grave.'

Sibila Petlevski

When the Chorus of Danaides speak of Sarpedon's grave, they are mentioning a geographical metaphor of death in far-off lands, but this metaphor also brings to mind the famous passage from *The Iliad*: the scene of Sarpedon's death and the ship-related imagery used in the description of his collapsing body:

'And he fell as falls an oak, or a silver poplar, or a slim pine tree, that on the hills the shipwrights fell with whetted axes, to be timber for ship-building; even so before the horses and chariot he lay at length, moaning aloud, and clutching at the bloody dust.'

(Homer, transl. Lang, 2005, Book 16: 108).

When Voltaire in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764) speaks about the 'concatenation of events' he starts his argumentation with an example from Classical Antiquity:

'Events are linked to each other by an invincible fatality: it is Destiny which, in Homer, is above even Jupiter. This master of gods and men roundly declares that he cannot stop his son Sarpedon dying at his appointed time. Sarpedon was born at the moment when he had to be born, and could not be born at another moment; he could not die otherwise than before Troy; he could not be buried elsewhere than in Lycia; had at the appointed time to produce vegetables which had to be changed into the substance of a few Lycians; his heirs had to establish a new order in his states; this new order had to exert an influence over the neighbouring kingdoms; from it resulted a new arrangement of war and peace with the neighbours of the neighbours of Lycia: thus, step by step, the destiny of the whole world has been dependent on Sarpedon's death, which depended on Helen being carried off; and this carrying off was necessarily linked to Hecuba's marriage, which by tracing back to other events was linked to the origin of things.' (Voltaire 2001)

Voltaire added a slightly ironic twist to the subject of concatenation by mentioning the origin of things at the end of the paragraph. The dramaturgy of the world is not all that simple. Present events, he argues, are not the children of all past events: they have their direct lines as well as a thousand little collateral lines that do not serve them at all.

Having chosen the motif of Sarpedon's death as the opening metaphor in this paper that treats of the link between art and violence from a predominantly dramaturgical perspective, we have opted for two major lines of interpretation: one concentrates on the change in the concept of empathy in the modern mind; the other traces changes in the treatment of the human body as a mediator of suffering. Yet what connects these two approaches is the underlying thesis that violence

Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing

in the arts, regardless of the media, could not be treated otherwise but as an event-based, proto-dramaturgical concept.

An event is usually defined as a significant change in state. What could be treated as significant depends on the perspective. Love is certainly an event in the context of a romantic poem and the death of a hero is an event in the context of a tragedy, but love and death are not perceived as events in a chronicle that comprises an open-ended list of the names of married couples and of deceased people. Events are directly related to specific changes of conditions. Correlation between events can be causal, temporal, spatial, or combined.

The cause and effect model and the special model in the treatment of violence usually has a strong link to the system of social values. We could also analyse historical and culturally typical patterns of behaviour that include violence and see how any interpretation of these patterns (defining 'normal' versus 'abnormal', 'acceptable' versus 'unacceptable', 'native' versus 'foreign', etc.) is dependent upon the perspective and the level at which the structure of a cultural event communicates with the structure of an event in artistic performance. The concepts of *etic* (coined from phonetics) and *emic* (coined from phonemics) are of great value for such research (Pike 1954). Emic units are usually described as those relating to features or items analyzed with respect to their role as structural units in a system, as in behavioural sciences or linguistics. The term emic, having crossed the border from the fields of linguistics and anthropology, has found its way elsewhere: *emic* (Ducrot and Todorov 1979: 36) interprets events according to their particular cultural function, while *etic* characterizes events only by spatio-temporal criteria. Hymes (1970: 281-282) discusses in an early work why the most commonly applied meaning of emic, as 'native point of view' or insider's point of view, is inadequate and misleading; namely, that natives are normally neither conscious of their emic system nor able to formulate it for the investigator (Headland 1990). The theoretical basis for our research on violence in performance would not be applicable to the subject without Victor Turner's pivotal study of cultural performances:

'With the post-modern dislodgement of spatialized thinking and ideal models of cognitive and social structures from their position of exegetical pre-eminence, there is occurring a major move towards the study of processes, not as exemplifying compliance with or deviation from normative models both etic and emic, but as performances. Performances are never amorphous or open-ended, they have diachronic structure, a beginning, a sequence of overlapping but isolable phases and an end. But their structure is not that of an abstract system; it is generated out of the dialectical oppositions of processes and of levels of process. In the modern consciousness,

Sibila Petlevski

cognition, idea, rationality, were paramount. In the post-modern turn, cognition is not dethroned but rather takes its place on an equal footing with volition and affect. (Turner 1986)

When Turner uses the term *Homo performans*, a performing animal, he defines man as a self-performing animal whose performances are reflexive to the extent that he is capable of revealing himself to himself. This reflexivity is two-fold: singular and plural. The actor gets to know himself better through acting and enactment (singular reflexivity), or one set of human beings may come to know themselves better through observing, participating, or observing and participating in the performances generated and presented by the group to which they belong one way or another (plural reflexivity). Turner defines plural reflexivity on the assumption that 'though, for most purposes, we humans may divide ourselves between Us and Them, or Ego and Alter, We and They share substance, and Ego and Alter mirror each other pretty well - Alter alters Ego not too much but tells Ego what both are!' (Turner 1986)

The link between performance in the performing arts and cultural performance opens space for discussion of socio-cultural influences on psychopathology with a cluster of 'culture-bound' syndromes. Emic symptom complexes are not only described but also acted out as linked to typical stress areas in a particular culture, a particular social group, or a culture-change situation. Interventionist Theatre programmes use drama to challenge criminal behaviour and build self-awareness by re-establishing a balance between the singular and plural reflexivity of a self-performing individual. Some interventionist theatre models try to get to grips with violence-associated emic-symptom complexes such as acculturative stress through existence in a culture-alien milieu, race and gender-based fear of persecution, or fear of not being able to make a pleasing impression on others. Maybe the best-known, dramaturgically important, socially effective and programmatically well-grounded concept of interventionist theatre is Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal 1971). Already Boal's concept of Newspaper Theatre—with its system of twelve techniques of scene-building based on the material taken from daily newspapers—was leading towards the much more elaborate model of performativity developed in the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed. The principal aim of Boal's type of theatrical interventionism is to show a situation of oppression that the Protagonist does not know how to fight against by putting up a scene or making a play out of the raw material of life. The spect-actors are invited to replace this Protagonist and to act out—on stage and not from the audience—real problems: to turn them into ideas and resolve the 'plot' by developing an adequate 'dramaturgy'. The most prominent

Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing

example of such a form of theatrical activism is Forum-Theatre viewed by its inventor as a collective rehearsal for reality. The Theatre of the Oppressed is defined as an antithesis of Discipline and Freedom in the Game of Dialogue with explicit didactic purpose. Boal is reacting to social violence by giving the audience the means of production rather than the finished artistic product for observation.

Killing Warhol

Systematic questioning of the validity of aesthetic judgements based on 'old' concepts of beauty, harmony, purity, goodness, decency, compassion, and the sublime, has turned some of the practices of modernist art violently against the Canon of the past. The conceptual art of the sixties, especially 'action art', founded some of its concepts on rejecting object-based art practices. The ontological status of the work of art has been changed dramatically; what is perceived as art is no longer an object, but rather an event. The body is used as a podium for staging transgression—as in *Degradation of a Female Body, Degradation of a Venus* (1963) by Otto Mühl and Hermann Nitsch. The concept of *Orgien Mysterien Theater* by Hermann Nitsch, involving the staging of crucifixions and animal slaughter, connected performance to violent ritualistic practices. In 'corporeal' actions, time is added to the dimension of the body and space (Muehl 1963, *Versumpfung eines weiblichen Körpers Aktion*, Nr.2).

The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), held in London in 1966, launched a series of events bringing together artists and scientists. Speaking on the topic of destruction in art in Covent Garden in London that September, representatives of the counter-cultural underground took part in the process of the canonization of the new aesthetics of transgression—perhaps for the first time and without realising it.

In the announcements for the opening night of the performance entitled *kaBoom!*, 'staged' in the highly institutionalized framework of the Detroit Museum of New Art in 2002, the museum audience were invited to exercise personal intervention in the concept of the new art by destroying the museum's exhibits. Audience enthusiasm overwhelmed the exhibit. Visitors—who turned into active agents of vandalism—destroyed not only objects of arts but also pedestals and wall shelves; fires were started in isolated galleries; a wrecking ball for one display was removed from its chain and used instead like a bowling ball; someone took out an installation as well as the corner of the wall. The paroxysm of intellectual 'enjoyment' in vandalism, masked in the new concept of destruction-based creation, reached its peak on the following morning. One could read in the press releases how the director of the museum Jef Bourgeau, wading through the carnage of the exhibits,

Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing

said 'on a surprisingly bright note' that the event was a wild success 'in a twisted way':

'Bourgeau pauses to gingerly pick up some burned photographs of Marcel Duchamp cross-dressed as Rose Selavy. He drops them where he found them. They are unsalvageable, a few charred remnants dripping with the urine that was used to douse their flames. (Available at: <http://www.detroitmona.com>.) You have to give them credit for being creative. The challenge now, he adds excitedly, is to pick up the pieces and somehow turn all of this back into art.'

The director of MONA did not show much feeling for the famous Dada photograph entitled *Marcel Duchamp cross-dressed as Rose Selavy* (Ray 1921). It was not only the artefact, the photograph of Man Ray dripping with urine, it was, by the power of metonymy, Marcel Duchamp himself lying on the floor of the Museum. Duchamp's programmatic idea 'Dada is nothing' literally comes to truth. The director of the museum, a disinterested onlooker, is caught by the media in the Homeric moment when he, like Zeus watching the death of Sarpedon, first plays with the idea of saving the exhibit, then just lets the museum staff pick up the pieces.

Tony Shafrazi's spray-painting over Picasso's *Guernica* in 1974, or the recent hammer-assault on Duchamp's Fountain (one of eight porcelain urinals created by the artist to replace the original lost in 1964), are representative examples of criminal art interventionism. Pinoncelli claimed that by damaging Duchamp's ready-made, he had created a new 'original'. Shafrazi has latterly become a successful New York art dealer. Both cases—each in its own way—are symptomatic of narcissistic character disorder, exemplifying a wish to win attention by committing a violent act, and an expression of conceptual egotism, showing the interventionist's wish to get credit for being creative.

The conceptual link between Duchamp's ready-made, based on depriving the object of its common, daily functionality, and Warhol's pop-art objects, made out of commercial designs, is obvious. Warhol 'replicated' a stack of Brillo shipping cartons, making it out of wood rather than cardboard. Opting for solid material typical of traditional art-objects, Warhol had put to irony the aesthetic idea of permanence guaranteed by the choice of perennial subjects, the tenability of the material the artwork is made of and the complete trust in the skills of *métier*. When Valerie Solana attempted to murder Warhol, her violent act was an implementation of a thesis from her militant feminist *SCUM Manifesto*. In 1967, the same year in which she published *SCUM Manifesto*, Solana shot and wounded Andy Warhol. That was her intervention against a living pop-art icon and 'Great Art' as representative of male art:

Sibila Petlevski

'The male is completely egocentric, trapped inside himself, incapable of empathizing or identifying with others, of love, friendship, affection or tenderness. He is a completely isolated unit, incapable of rapport with anyone. The male, having a very limited range of feelings and, consequently, very limited perceptions, insights and judgments, needs the 'artist' to guide him, to tell him what life is all about. But the male 'artist', being totally sexual, unable to relate to anything beyond his own physical sensations, having nothing to express beyond the insight that for the male life is meaningless and absurd, cannot be an artist. How can he who is not capable of life tell us what life is all about? A 'male artist' is a contradiction in terms (...) Being totally sexual, incapable of cerebral or aesthetic responses, totally materialistic and greedy, the male, besides inflicting on the world 'Great Art', has decorated his unlandscaped cities with ugly buildings (both inside and out), ugly decors, billboards, highways, cars, garbage trucks and, most notably, his own putrid self. (...) The male likes death – it excites him sexually and, already dead inside, he wants to die. (...) SCUM will destroy all useless and harmful objects – cars, store windows, 'Great Art', etc. Both destruction and killing will be selective and discriminate.' (Solana 1967)

Solana describes the killing of men as an 'act of mercy', euthanasia for human beings 'incapable of empathizing or identifying with others'. In her anti-utopian world populated with dominant women and some obedient men, the male survivors exist 'fulfilling themselves as spectators' and 'vicarious liverers'. They live only through the feelings and actions of women. Their experience is second-hand, derivative, surrogate and finally, empathetic.

'It will be electronically possible for him to tune in to any specific female he wants to and follow in detail her every movement. The females will kindly, obligingly consent to this, as it won't hurt them in the slightest and it is a marvellously kind and humane way to treat their unfortunate, handicapped fellow beings.' (Solana 1967)

Solana's episode with Warhol has already served as film-script material and excerpts from her manifesto have been anthologized. If nothing else, empathetic voyeurism is certainly an interesting concept of the Society for Cutting up Men (S.C.U.M.).

'Bitter Arrows' of Empathy

Using expressions that represent things as being in a state of activity can make listeners 'see things'. In Book III, Chapter 11 of *Rhetoric*, Aristotle shows how things have the effect of being active because they

Sibila Petlevski

are made animate. The 'bitter arrow' that is 'flying on eagerly' then 'panting to feed on the flesh of the heroes' is an example taken from Homer's *Iliad*. Shameless behaviour and fury are forms of activity. 'The poet has attached these ideas to the things by means of proportional metaphors: as the stone is to Sisyphus, so is the shameless man to his victim.' (*Rhetoric* 1412a).

Activity attached to the object is often violent. However, the Homeric universe does not recognize what later western aesthetics would call empathic understanding. Vividness achieved on the rhetorical level makes listeners of Homer imagine scenes of violence as real. They 'see things', but they do not witness them. That is why, unlike the audience of a tragedy, Homer's listeners do not experience what they have 'seen' with personal involvement. There is no catharsis without mimesis.

Robert Vischer's idea of empathy in *Das optische Formgefühl* (1872) explores the dynamics of formal relations in a work of art with the thesis that dynamics inherent to the work of art suggest muscular and emotional attitudes in a viewing subject. The subject experiences his own feelings as qualities of the object. Aesthetic pleasure is thus defined as an objectified self-enjoyment produced by the active fusion of subject and object. An involuntary act of transference (*Einfühlung*, a concept described by Friedrich Vischer), is the process of adding vital content to the object observed.

Two relatively recent books have changed the course of intellectual discourse on violence in art: *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World* by Elaine Scarry (1985), and Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003). Starting from Virginia Woolf's unjustly forgotten and marginalized reflections on war in *Three Guineas* from 1938, Sontag ponders Woolf's concept of the 'difficulty of communication' and her proposition to see whether when we look at the same photographs of mutilated bodies we feel the same things. Sontag comments:

'Condemning war as such did not seem so futile or irrelevant in the wake of the paper fantasies of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, in which fifteen leading nations, including the United States, France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Japan, solemnly renounced war as an instrument of national policy; even Freud and Einstein were drawn into the debate with a public exchange of letters in 1932 titled 'Why War?' Woolf's Three Guineas, appearing toward the close of nearly two decades of plangent denunciations of war, offered the originality (which made this the least well received of all her books) of focusing on what was regarded as too obvious or inapposite to be mentioned, much less brooded over: that war is a man's game—that the killing machine has a gender, and it is male. Nevertheless,

Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing

the temerity of Woolf's version of 'Why War?' does not make her revulsion against war any less conventional in its rhetoric, in its summations, rich in repeated phrases. And photographs of the victims of war are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus.'

(Sontag 2004, 5-6)

For Sontag, 'a cityscape is not made of flesh', but 'sheared off buildings are almost as eloquent as bodies in the street'. Pictures say: 'this is what it's like', 'war dismembers', but we frequently fail to hold this reality in mind. Our failure is one of imagination, of empathy, says Sontag. (Sontag, 8)

When Aristotle speaks about the power of 'seeing things' being connected to the capability of making and understanding metaphors, he is choosing some of his rhetorical examples from battle-scenes in *The Iliad* containing detailed description of war carnage. Both culturally and stylistically (at least we claim so from the distance of centuries) epic text did not provoke empathic reactions. Something in the nature of the Homeric universe disconnected the power of imagination from the power to feel it.

There must be something in the nature of our media-dominated universe—maybe it is the speed with which we can change TV channels to see pictures of bloodshed at different locations?—that leads to a lack of empathy. What is left out of the picture, the atrocities that are chosen not to be shown, might be the new starting point for critical imagination.

Elaine Scarry starts from the belief that pain experienced by others is essentially un-shareable because its existence destroys the language necessary for it to be conveyed. She then proceeds to a subtle analysis of the language that uses the reality of the body in pain to secure the truth of a cultural/political position. The body in pain is viewed in historical perspective. Scarry points to the reality-producing quality of pain in Judeo-Christian scriptures and in the relationships of humans with inanimate objects. She identifies five groups of people who create a 'language of pain', artists among them. The ability to force pain into speech, to 'deobjectify the work of pain by forcing it into avenues of objectification', 'to enable pain to enter into a realm of shared discourse', is the principal quality of the artistic 'language of pain' (Scarry 1985, 6)

Superficial Engagement

The dictionary-definition of the phrase 'in-your-face' comprises qualities such as blatantly aggressive, provocative, confrontational, impossible to ignore or avoid. Sarah Kane, Mark Ravenhill and Antony Neilson are the best-known representatives of the new British drama that

Sibila Petlevski

conquered other European stages in the early nineties. Aleks Sierz, the author of *In-Yer-Face Theatre: British Drama Today* (Faber, 2001) and *The Theatre of Martin Crimp* (Methuen, 2006), defines the genre on his in-yer-face theatre website:

'How can you tell if a play is in-yer-face? Well, it really isn't difficult: the language is filthy, there's nudity, people have sex in front of you, violence breaks out, one character humiliates another, taboos are broken, unmentionable subjects are broached, conventional dramatic structures are subverted. At its best, this kind of theatre is so powerful, so visceral, that it forces you to react - either you want to get on stage and stop what's happening or you decide it's the best thing you've ever seen and you long to come back the next night. As indeed you should.' (Sierz, www.in-yer-face-theatre.com)

There is a tint of avant-gardism in a type of theatrical provocation that confronts onlookers with taboos in their own psychological and cultural 'operating systems' in order to free their language and help them break habits of passive observing. Some of the plays written and staged in the dramaturgical model of in-yer-face theatre based their success on exploring the theatrical potential of violence and have already had a major impact on new playwriting, simultaneously creating a new type of audience.

Thomas Hirschhorn, an artist who mixed together photographs of mangled corpses from Iraq, scenes of political violence around the world with mannequins riddled with nails, enlarged newspaper headlines and reproductions of abstract drawings by the Swiss visionary artist Emma Kunz, exhibited at New York's Gladstone Gallery in New York very recently, in November 2006. One of the critics called his exploration of the subject of violence and death a 'walk-in manifesto', others were simply revolted by the chaotic bricolage of revolting details that somehow failed to provoke empathy. The aim of the artist is that of aestheticizing violence through the interplay of war and art. Although Hirschhorn's project, significantly entitled *Superficial Engagement*, brings to mind photographs of individuals in the morgue by Andres Serrano, it lacks the purity of concept and solemn atmosphere around Serrano's objects of death-art. The artist is shouting in vain: Let's take the images of destroyed bodies seriously! The mannequins shot through with nails are not references to martyrdom and suicide bombings, as one of the journalists Sarah Douglas wanted to suggest while interviewing Hirschhorn for *Artinfo* (Available at: <http://www.artinfo.com>):

'The mannequins, ' says the artist 'when I made them – wanted to be the poor, contemporary, amoral, non-religious version of somebody or something who endures in place of another, a kind of fetish,

Violence in Arts: Performing & Witnessing

which is in African culture an object charged with a supernatural power, either favourable or evil.'

Maybe our failure is one of imagination, as Sontag would say, or maybe our failure is one of superficial engagement and the lack of empathy caused by fixation with empty cultural fetishes.

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Sibila Petlevski

(Academy of Dramatic Art, University of Zagreb, Croatia)

Violence in the Arts: Performing & Witnessing

Summary

The broad subject of violence in art presents the scholar of today with a whole range of theoretical possibilities in the treatment of the chosen topic. The change of major aesthetical concepts in the period of modernism, post-modern aesthetic egalitarianism with its levelling of traditionally high and traditionally low genres, new treatment of identity issues, cultural relativism, and other symptoms of post-modernity have brought about new narrative strategies, causing dramatic change in all aesthetical concepts, offering new perspectives on old ideas such as the idea of empathy. The main aim of this text is to analyze some recent works on the crossroads of art intervention and performance and to point to the difference between ideas-based conceptual subversion and body-based transgression in performance that involves physical pain.



LA MÉMOIRE, RENÉ MAGRITTE, 1948



Metajoy 3_1

Jasminka Markovska

Performing Violence Live: - an essay on violence and performance art -

Violence is not easy to conceptualize. The famous Marquis de Sade was one of the first to write about violence *per se*, positioning the flat characters of his novellas in such a way that they themselves are not as important as their acts or the experiences arising from these acts. Acts of violence, as de Sade wrote of them, accentuate the pleasure one experiences while committing violence. Violent acts are simply presented in his novellas without any judgment or moral, ethical, or religious comment.

The following discussion of art and violence is limited to naked (re)presentations of violence in art, similar to those of Marquis de Sade. (For there is violence committed *to* art, as well, and there is also violence committed in the name of art.)

Long before, as well as long after de Sade brutally uncovered the individual's fantasy of violence, violence has consistently proved to be the overwhelming reality of our world. Violence is at the core of the rhetoric of our world. The most current political 'dialogues' in the world are concentrated on stopping violence and treacherous violators by perpetrating violence on objects, living creatures, natural laws, sacred spaces, concepts, countries, as well as already established human laws. Violence is in the roots of nations, it is history reflected in the present... Hopefully, it does not have to be the future. It seems only 'natural', therefore, to presume—and accept—that violence is one of the most persistent characteristics of 'human nature'. Worldwide rhetoric aimed at preserving and justifying violence teaches us that we

Key Words:

- violence
- art
- nature
- Apollonian
- Dionysian,
- performance art
- live performance
- living art
- violent act
- society
- culture
- construct
- structure
- public
- private
- feminist
- violation
- identity
- guilt
- subject

Jasminka Markovska

have always been violators, and we have always been subjected to violence. Nevertheless, we are the only violators, and violence is our tool. It is like a curse in the shape of a boomerang that always returns to hit us when we throw it in a certain direction. We never manage to bury it and be done with it forever... It seems as if we have a compulsion for violence on a personal, as well as a global scale.

In her essay 'Sex and Violence, or Nature and Art', Camille Paglia (1995) takes the point of view of de Sade: namely that aggression is intrinsic to human nature. She sees violence as an aspect, a representation and manifestation of the scary and chaotic chthonian character of nature and, accordingly, of the human psyche as well. For Paglia, society and culture are not what create violence and conflicts, but rather what keeps us away from violence and conflict. Following the classical Freudian definition of culture as a constant restriction of our drives, she argues that without society and culture people would have never been able to structuralize, function, or conceptualize. Whenever violence prevails in a society or overrules certain social relations, this does not mean that people have gone wrong or insane; rather, it just means that society is not functioning properly and that people are returning to the aspect of their own nature that represents nature itself. 'Society is not the criminal but the force which keeps crime in check.' (Paglia 1995, 3) Although Paglia is primarily concerned with the problem of the two sexes and their relation to nature/violence by developing her discourse on the radically different ways of male/female thinking and patterns of creation, I am inclined to read Paglia's text as a general meditation on human nature and art. When speaking of art and artists, she speaks (mostly) of the male artist. For her, gender difference is not a mere construct but something that is naturally given to us: sex is a physicality that determines our emotions, our imaginary structures and the ways in which our reason develops. Her interpretations are very close to Durand's classification of the structures of the imaginary, and she herself constantly refers to Nietzsche's famous distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian forms of art. Her analyses of the relations between sex and violence in connection to art lead to the conclusion that violence is a natural and acceptable part of ourselves that can be channeled through expression, and that awareness of this fact can be used for the purposes of adopting and accepting a turned-around, humorous and light-hearted attitude towards it—an attitude which should eventually lead us closer to a balancing of the relations between the sexes and violence. Her interpretation points to the imaginary worlds of men as being structured and materialized, closer to the daytime-related cluster of schemes, symbols and archetypes; while the imaginary structures of women are more closely related to nighttime

Performing Violence Live

clusters, a result of the biological functions and natural rhythms of the male and female bodies. However, I believe that her analysis can be applied not only in analyzing the relations between the sexes and thus reaching a conclusion about male artists, but in analyzing the relation between violence and artists, as well as their art in general. Although women are dispersedly plunged in the chthonian and men are focused and craving to go upwards, my belief is that both of the sexes hear the same whispers from below and above at the same time. Even though the artistic tradition of the West has been established mostly by male artists and their concepts, still the female artistic tradition founds its artistry on this very same male tradition. It is inevitably encrypted in art, and no matter how much 'structured maleness' there is in art concepts, and no matter how much 'chaotic emotional femaleness' women show and represent, I believe that the relation between violence and conceptualized creativity for both sexes leads to the same result. It leads to art. Perhaps male-artists conceptualize in order to transform the natural violence that they experience coming out of them. Perhaps women-artists show violence in order to erase the concepts of men: to transform these and show violence as it is, pure and natural. The result is STILL, ART.

Paglia speaks of the conflict between poetry and science, i.e. the emotional and conceptual ways of perceiving, and defines the male artist as the one with the role of keeping the channel open between emotion and reason, as the one having a 'cultural function in keeping the line of emotions open from the female to the male realms' (Paglia 1995, 26). Women are merged in emotion, dissolved, close to nature and death, violent. Men are concentrated, conceptualizing, focused, negating nature, death and violence. The male artist, however, because of unresolved issues or other psychological dilemmas in connection to femininity, is more open to emotion and feels the connection to nature stronger than ordinary men. Therefore, Paglia sees the whole tradition of (male) art as a result of nature (i.e. violence) penetrating society. However, women's art can also be seen from the same perspective: as an attempt to conceptualize, form and structure the violence committed by nature on their own bodies—as an effort to articulate feelings through material. The fear of the chaotic, of the violent, of the Dionysian, of nature, of sex, of overwhelming emotion, of death and of birth, is what art is all about. Sometimes male artists use art as an attempt to completely erase the possibility of such emotions, as in art traditions and genres which praise light and order and concepts and are based on precise structure. Sometimes art cruelly shows the darker side of nature and is closer to the feminine: it is plunged in the chthonian, dark, violent, and unreasonable.

Jasminka Markovska

'We may have to accept an ethical cleavage between imagination and reality, tolerating horrors, rapes, and mutilations in art that we would not tolerate in society. For art is our message from the beyond, telling us what nature is up to. Not sex, but cruelty is the great neglected or suppressed item on the modern humanistic agenda. We must honor the chthonian but not necessarily yield to it. ...Western art is a cinema of sex and dreaming. Art is a form of struggling to wake from the nightmare of nature.' (Paglia 1995, 57)

The human race seems to manifest constant and ever-increasing pleasure in observing persistent and ever-more inventive representations of violence in media. The capacity of the world to look at violence is becoming greater as the world's violent conflicts, undertaken in the name of stopping violence, grow stronger and fiercer. Artists, of course, react to this paradoxical situation. In the last 60 years, and especially in the period between the 60s and the 80s, in and through a particular form of art—performance art—artists have developed a live, immediate, and critical reaction to what is going on in the world at the same time as it is going on. Of course, performance art had its history before the 60s and continues to live now as an undeniably significant influence on the development and foundation of contemporary art. However, the violent emergence of this "new" hybrid that combined so many media and broke so many rules about what art was supposed to be, 'brought to light issues of the political, social, artistic, bodily, gendered, conceptualized being in ways that are shocking and very often openly 'too' violent' (Anderson, 1998). Performance art has another quality that adds to the shock of its presentation of violence: it is Living Art: ¹ it is instantaneous, unrepeatable, on the border between real life and art; it is not realistic but unbearably real, too personal and too energetic; it does not protest against representations of violence in the Hollywood-related mass media industry (though sometimes it is a mockery of it), but to violence committed in the real world. It is extremely political. Just like an act of violence, it is highly momentous and bursting, and any attempt to capture it, freeze it and preserve it is not so much impossible as it is incomplete. And very often, especially in its very beginnings, it was performed by female artists who were violently attacking the 'male Western art concept' as well as showing shocking acts exposing personal trauma and violence on stage. If they had not hidden behind the alibi of performing art, a large number of performance artists would probably have been arrested or put into medical institutions. Some were indeed pursued for their art by governmental institutions, as in the case of the Czech artist Tomas Ruller, who 'was forced to perform in secret, often documenting his events on video' (Goldberg 1998, 56). In one of his

¹ For clarification on the concept of Living Art, see the interview with Linda Montano in *Angry Women*. 1999. Research #13. Edited by A. Juno & V. Vale. New York: RE/Search Publications. 50-65, her manifesto on Living Art)

Performing Violence Live

performances, he set himself on fire, 'as a reference to Jan Palach who burned himself in protest' (Goldberg 1998, 56). Performance art was born together with the big changes that took place in the 60s: the sexual revolution, the student protests, the emergence of feminism, the strengthening of the roles of the western patrons of the world... In a period of very violent turmoil in recent history, a violent form of art began to show openly that violence is ourselves.

Because of its private and personal character and its close relationship to reality on many levels, performance art does not analyze violence and its relation to art but shows it. The artists who themselves represent and actually commit acts of violence on stage do not employ rhetoric or a hypocritical justification of violence. They present raw violence in the face of the observer, thus violating consciousness. In cases when they employ rhetoric, they use it as an amplification of cruelty. It is not a form of irony or parody; it is a violent straightforward message. During one of her performances, while she was 'lamenting that we always keep our victims ready, moved between WASP hostess and harpy for over an hour until we didn't know whether to laugh or cry,' performance artist Karen Finley turned to the audience in which a person was laughing, and said directly:

'This isn't funny!'

Finley's words had a shocking effect on Simon Herbert and presumably the whole audience: 'My testicles disappeared in my throat and I was nothing but grateful that I hadn't laughed first!' said Herbert of the experience. (1994, 31).

In 1978, four feminist art workers performed a ten-day travelling performance entitled *Traffic in Women: A Feminist Vehicle* on the way between Los Angeles and San Diego: 'aimed at converting women's experience of fear and victimization into positive feelings of power and community support' (Roth 1983, 94). As part of the performance, a large billboard sent the message 'RAPE: is everybody's concern.' This public statement is pure and naked and does not refer to any particular violence or violator. It could happen to anyone: either to be the victim or the violator. That is why it is everybody's concern: IT IS EVERYBODY. At first glance, this statement does not seem to be converting fear and victimization into positive feelings, but neither is it in the form of an accusation. It is simply a statement about the presence of violence in the form of rape. It does not force questions and answers; it is only an acknowledgment. It is ruthlessly real: a real message, and in a way a forced consciousness of violence. It can be perceived as the ultimate catharsis, both for the artist and the public. There is theatricality and drama, but not in the sense of tragedy and theatre. The reaction to the

Jasminka Markovska

statement 'this is not funny' is nothing but rising consciousness of pure, unbearable uncanniness. When a passing person reads on a billboard 'RAPE: is everybody's concern', the initial reaction to this is also a rising, pure sense of uncanniness.

I consider performance art to be a very liberating wake-up call, a violation of the hypocrisy and sleepiness of concepts. Even archetypes and symbols have a changed value when used in performance art. Artists use them, especially when performing an emphasized conceptual or visual performance; but there is also another kind of violence in performance art, one that denies the use of symbols and archetypes simply because they are a part of our conceptualized protection from the awful truth about reality. In a way, performance art deconstructs the imaginary by not allowing it to hide behind a structure. It is like a dream that does not have to be interpreted because it says everything by itself—not hiding behind symbolism and images that need to be interpreted. Performance art and artists use unconcealed, raw action: violence live, or Living Violence. If they want to show that people like to have orgiastic experiences dripping in blood and flesh, then they actually do that: they perform an orgy dripping in blood and chicken intestines, as Carolee Schneemann performed *Meat Joy* in 1964 (McPherson 1979, 63-87). Or if they want to show that there are people in this world who find pleasure in cutting themselves, piercing themselves with needles, hanging from hooks, or SM-lovers who find their greatest pleasure in creating pain through violence on the body, then they actually perform these acts on stage, enjoying and showing the horrifying pleasure they get in front of an audience. De Sade in action. When speaking of the self-violence he performs on stage in connection to the violence he committed upon himself as a non-artist while he was a teenager, Ron Athey (2004, 90) says: 'Later, in my performances, this became stylized. Giving bravado to a small sacrifice, I used facial punctures to represent the knife slashing, the act still violating my face and causing profuse bleeding, but leaving no scars. For an act as bold as castration, I created a zipper using surgical staples, tucking the compressed genitals beneath and behind, the way a transvestite uses a tape.' The actions of Ron Athey are not a metaphor of cutting and mutilating the body, they are actual acts of violence to the body performed in reality, only transformed in such a way so that they can be repeated. If the performer castrated himself once, he would never be able to perform the same piece again; if he actually cut himself, it would take too long for the scars to heal before he could perform the act again.

Chris Burden, in his 1971 performance entitled *Shoot* '...actually had a friend shoot him in the arm from a distance of 15 feet. Burden claimed that all those in the gallery where this took place were

Performing Violence Live

implicated in his act of self-inflicted violence through their failure to intervene.' (Goldberg, 1998, 107). This is an attitude that is grounded in performance art as Living Art, positioning performance and real life on the same plane. This is not a movie, nor is it theatre: that is the message of the act. It is not fiction, and you are a part of it. The weapon is real and you are co-accomplices in a violent crime in the name of art. This art will change your point of view radically and will become your life: you are its material and so you are art. The spectacle the audience sees acts upon their awareness and sense of responsibility. The violation of public-private relations goes both ways: there is a violation of the private sphere of the spectator that came to see a public act of performance and gets accused of taking part in a violent and shameful action and is being burdened as an accomplice. Guilt, feelings of uncanniness, mixed with disgust and morality emerge. There is also a violation of the public sphere: a violation of laws and a violation of artistic convention since the private life of the artist is on stage instead of a representation of something.

Because of the intention of performance art to erase the border between the spectator and the artist, the involvement of the audience is inevitable. The artist that performs sends a message; and this message, even if related only to a personal experience, never remains private. Sometimes the artist commits violence that is pre-recorded, as for instance in the first work of Marina Abramovic (1994, 49) when she recorded the sounds of 10 sharp knives that she herself was stabbing rapidly between the fingers of her left hand. Each time she cut herself she would change the knife with a different one until she had used them all. Even if this is violence that the audience does not really see but is only aware of, it still makes the observer a witness of something that really happened: it is a recording of reality. She did hurt herself and indeed she was bleeding. And she did it so that you could 'enjoy' it as art. This is what the recorded sound says. Abramovic (as many others have done) took violence from recordings to reality as well. 'I couldn't go back to anything that is a two-dimensional illustration of reality. I just wanted to do things in real-time and real-space. I think that was the form I found which was really the most fitting for my personality,' she said in an interview (Abramovic 1994, 49). And she did push things a lot further. In her 1974 performance in Naples, titled *Rhythm 0*, she put seventy-two items on a table in a gallery and, while claiming full responsibility for the event, she 'invited the audience to use the objects on the table in any way they desired. These items included a feather, a gun, a razor blade, a bullet, a perfume bottle, lipstick, a Polaroid camera, a rose.' (Abramovic 2004, 18). Some of the audience stuck the rose thorn in her hand, some took her clothes off with the razor,

Jasminka Markovska

others carved bits of flesh from her neck, and a loaded gun was placed in her hand and pushed against her head. 'By accepting both her audience's care for her safety and her audiences desire to hurt her, Abramovic transformed the relationship of the event. ...had the capacity to allow her spectators to transform her intended performance to such a degree that they became co-creators of the event itself.' (Abramovic 2004, 19). In interviews, Abramovic often emphasizes the aspect of the mental and physical condition of the artist. Her workshops are training sessions for artists in which they have to undergo violent training and hard conditions in order to let the creative outlet come free, unburdened by concept. Action in this way is so real and personal that many times it can be meaningless unless it is proclaimed as art—unless it is performed.

The performance itself can be nothing but the act itself; it is only attitude that changes it. What changes is the awareness of its being art, the awareness of the possibility of using (violent) action as art. The *Rhythm 0* performance could have resulted in Marina Abramovic's death, and this is not the only performance in which she has been close to death. In her series of performances entitled *Rhythm*, she lost consciousness in the middle of a burning star, she cut herself on the stomach while whipping herself, she took psychiatric disorder medicine and once again she lost consciousness. She committed acts of extreme violence upon herself while performing. She violated her body and presented this as art. She showed that the artist also has to be aware of the danger that live performing carries. In the example of *Rhythm 0*, the audience became the violators of Marina's body. The body of Marina is a female body, a passive body, and an artist's body. For some, her body invited violence; for others, it invited protection; for some, probably, it was not inviting for anything. The body is the tool as well as the material in performance art.

Violence to the body in real time is very serious because of the special dimension of involvement in the act. 'So we create situations where we confront life very heavily with our art concept. And then, through the execution of the work, we find our experience and our life on a different level. ...Life does not change the art; it's really the other way around. ...our function is very difficult; it is to do this purification work, to do it the same time as we are public,' (Montano 2000, 332 – 333) said Marina Abramovic in one interview. If one considers the views of Camille Paglia in relation to art and the statements of artists I have mentioned or cited, it seems that art is not nature screaming in our ears but artists screaming in our ears. What Paglia calls male art is needed to euphemize the same messages and truths with which performance artists violently attack us. Male art, or Apollonian art in the good old

Performing Violence Live

Nietzschean sense, still exists. It exists in performance art as well, since performance art is not *only* violence shown in public. Conceptual performances, musical and visual performances, minimalism, uses of technical equipment, preciseness, high artifice—all this is very much Apollonian and is very much present in performances. Performance art that uses violence, strongly emphasizing the body, sex, food, death, ritual, power, is Dionysian in this respect.

Sometimes advanced technology is used to show acts of violence committed publicly in reality: such as records, videos or photographs of violent historical events. Once they become a part of a performance or a public exposition, they do not have the same value as when looking at these events on a daily news program or in a documentary or when looking at photographs in newspapers. Both male and female artists use these techniques. The truths thus exposed gain higher political value as art gives extra weight to the presentation of absurd destruction. But such artefacts serve the purpose of reminders; they can be repeatedly observed... They are memory. They can be used in a performance more as choreography or stage setting because they will never transmit energy in the way that a living person can do performing living art. They can alter but not transform. I would say that Dionysian art tends to transform the subjects (both those performing and those observing), while Apollonian art tends to preserve the artefact. Transformation is sudden and not material; memory remains and is based on proof. The world has too much recorded violence and the only time we truly realize how it relates to our own selves is when we are part of the act. However, male artists can prove to be very Dionysian just as female artists can prove to be very Apollonian. As far as consciousness is concerned, we all need to wake up and open our eyes to certain facts. Our nature is us, and nature is violent: it causes pain, confusion, chaos, it is full of instability, of time passing, of death. Art and artists constantly remind us of this.

In his book *Violence and the Arts*, John Fraser discusses the cultural situation in the USA in the late 50s and 60s and reaches the conclusion that this period saw violence gradually beginning to penetrate culture, but that it did so in a way that euphemized it: in a way that made it 'fun'. Although his book is concerned with analyzing literature and movies, his analyses of the ambiguities of violence in movies such as *A Clockwork Orange* by Stanley Kubrick provide an insight into the reasons why society accepts extreme violence in popular culture, while in other cases it demonises violence and censors it. He perceives *A Clockwork Orange* as having established a new genre of violence and calls it 'a violation movie', meaning a violation against (mainly) the white western middle class by someone unexpected and random. (Fraser

Jasminka Markovska

1974, 17) This movie was labelled extremely violent and was prohibited from being shown in some states of the USA despite the fact that, in comparison to this film, many popular movies incorporated far more vigorous and numerous scenes of violence. Fraser also discusses *The Godfather*, which was released around the same time and which became a box-office success, and finds that in comparison to this movie *A Clockwork Orange* contains significantly less scenes of violence and, furthermore, that these scenes contain far less explicit violations of the body than those depicted in *The Godfather*. Nevertheless, the public was outraged by *A Clockwork Orange* and praised *The Godfather*. Fraser interprets this through an analysis of the relation between the violator and the victims in movies. He points out that in movies such as *The Godfather* violators are usually introduced to us in terms of their relationships to their victims and that there are usually either pathological or social reasons given for their becoming such violent persons (Fraser 1974, 20). However, there is also always a certain amount of sympathy towards such a person, mainly because the character is portrayed as a victim of society and its apparatus, or due to other contextual clarifications. There is a kind of tolerance for criminals, especially when the viewer seems not to be included in the social type represented as being under threat. In some cases there can even be such a strong sympathy for the violators that there can arise an identification with them. In *A Clockwork Orange*, on the other hand, there is no representation of any context by which the violator became such. There is simply a pure representation of violence being randomly perpetrated—'animalistically' and completely pointlessly; there is not even any sort of story about a pathological condition. As in the stories of de Sade, the act of violence is committed as a form of joy, as a form of freedom from which one can derive pleasure.

Compared to popular mainstream movie culture, performance art is even further removed from explication. An artist on the stage commits acts of violence and forces the audience to witness such acts. Of course, the audience is not forced to be there, but it is an audience interested in art. Or is the audience just a group of people who take pleasure in sadomasochistic acts committed in the performance? The distance between the spectator of a movie and the actual projection is vast compared to the closeness of the people who scraped off little pieces of Marina Abramovic's skin. The distance of the spectator of a pornographic movie is incomparable to the closeness of the person that looks at Annie Sprinkle's exposed cervix (Sprinkle 1999). Who is the violator and what is actually being violated? Is it the artist that is playing the role of a psychopath, behaving against morality, society, culture, art? Is it the spectators that agree to be a part of such violence

Performing Violence Live

because it is said to be art? Are we purified by involvement in such an experience or do we become so aware of our violent side that we have no choice left but to accept it and then again euphemize it so that it becomes bearable? How did performance artists come to express violence in such ways and does it really change or help anything that they are able to expose violence publicly?

In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler (1997) investigates how social and power-relations affect the psyche and its formation. She discusses Althusser's doctrine of interpellation through his famous example of the person on the street that has been hailed by a policeman. (Butler 1997, 106 - 131) The person turns around and accepts the terms by which he/she is hailed. Butler asks what makes the subject turn when he/she hears the voice of the law when there is no demand, only calling. She sees this turning towards the law as turning against oneself, or turning back on oneself. This is in fact a movement initiated by conscience. We are unable to criticize the law because we have a primary attachment to it. There is no room or time to question who it is that is really calling, because this would mean a questioning of facts we have already adopted as part of our social life. As Butler puts it: 'if (the law) is compelling, in a less than logical sense, [it is] because it promises identity.' (Butler 1997, 108) And change of identity is neither pleasant nor easy.

Althusser's theory of interpellation presupposes acceptance of guilt, or better, a constant readiness to accept guilt. The person is being hailed by the voice of the law (God's voice, the state's voice, etc.), which does not only name but creates as well. It establishes a connection: one of origin and belonging. Butler reads this yielding to the law as a narcissistic attachment to one's own continuing existence, because the law implies subjection in order to become a subject, so one is always inclined to yield to the law 'in order to assure one's own existence' (1997, 112). Conscience is required prior to responding to the law, so there is a sort of 'double play' at work: the subject replies to the law in order to be submitted to it, at the same time already being conscience of it. In this sense, it is necessary that one is proclaimed guilty only to submit to the process of proving that it is not so.

If we accept Butler's analysis on subjection as a process that creates the subject at the same time as it is under the influence of some sort of power which the subject wants to free itself from—and if we replace the policeman in Althusser's sense with the performance artist screaming from nature into society's ear—then it is inevitable to conclude that there is a new kind of power emerging: the power of the artist to bring awareness or guilt to the audience, guilt which they must free themselves of after the show. Audiences go to see the shows of

Jasminka Markovska

performance artists full of violence and accusations. Performance art is hailing:

'This is you. This is not funny. You are a part of it. And you will leave the act changed; you have been subjected to horrible scenes and reminders of your nature, the body, the chthonian, the Dionysian. And art has shaped you as a subject in the process, so you will always be compulsively tempted by guilt to turn around when it hails you again. Or you will avoid it as much as you can in order never to be hailed.' Whether there will ever be a release from this accusation is a problem of the individual as well as the world.

Performance artists and performances are subjected to society, art and nature. They also accept guilt and turn around when art, society and nature hail them. They are aware of their guilt before the act, so the act itself can be seen as a freeing from accusation. Radical performances have been performed less and less in the last 15 years. The artists have already screamed in our ears. And they have changed some of us as subjects. That is why that they don't have to scream in the same way anymore. They have also changed themselves as subjects, and society and art have already reacted to their action. As the world does not seem to have changed too much since their activism, and as their art becomes artefacts in books, videos, photographs and other recordings, performance artists have begun to teach in academia and explain themselves instead of performing simultaneous actions. Their works are studied in academies and the concept of performance has become a leading cultural paradigm, replacing the previous one of the text. Perhaps performance artists have accepted another kind of guilt.

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Jasminka Markovska

Jasminka Markovska
(Masters student at the Centre for Ibsen Studies, UiO, Norway)
Performing Violence Live
Summary

Live performance art became developed and used by protesting and aware artists in the period between the 60s and 80s. Artists started to develop a live, immediate and critical reaction to what was going on in the world at the same time as it was going on. The political and cultural turmoil of the second half of the twentieth century was reflected in their particular and new form of art on many levels and they used it for extreme political action and for introducing personal traumatic issues to the public. Radical political messages and feminist liberation were constant topics on the agenda of live performances, as well as psychological trauma inflicted by society and its constructed conventions. Violence became a major topic as well as a tool in their deconstructive performances.

This essay is an analysis of some of the aspects of self-inflicted violence committed by artists in live performances. Following Camille Paglia's understanding of art as the emergence of natural violence within the safe constructs of society and culture, and connecting it to some of the problems of private-public relations and violations of these relations in the manner of Butler's theories of power and subjection, the essay attempts to throw some light on the influence of violent acts on audiences and the message that performance artists send to us by these violent acts.

It also opens up some questions and issues regarding the nature of performance art and the consequences of the acts of art performed live on stage on the moral, ethics and psyche of both the artist and the audience; the mechanism of evoking guilt that it relates to, as well as the position and function of art it posits.

The essay is not an answer to these problems but an analysis that opens them. Radical and violent performances are still performed, although less and less so in the past 15 years. Live performance art has become a matter artefacts in books, videos, photographs and other recordings; and performance artists have begun to teach in academia and explain their actions instead of performing them. What is left to investigate are the consequences (if any) of the messages they are trying to emit.



MARINA ABRAMOVIC: 1RITUALE



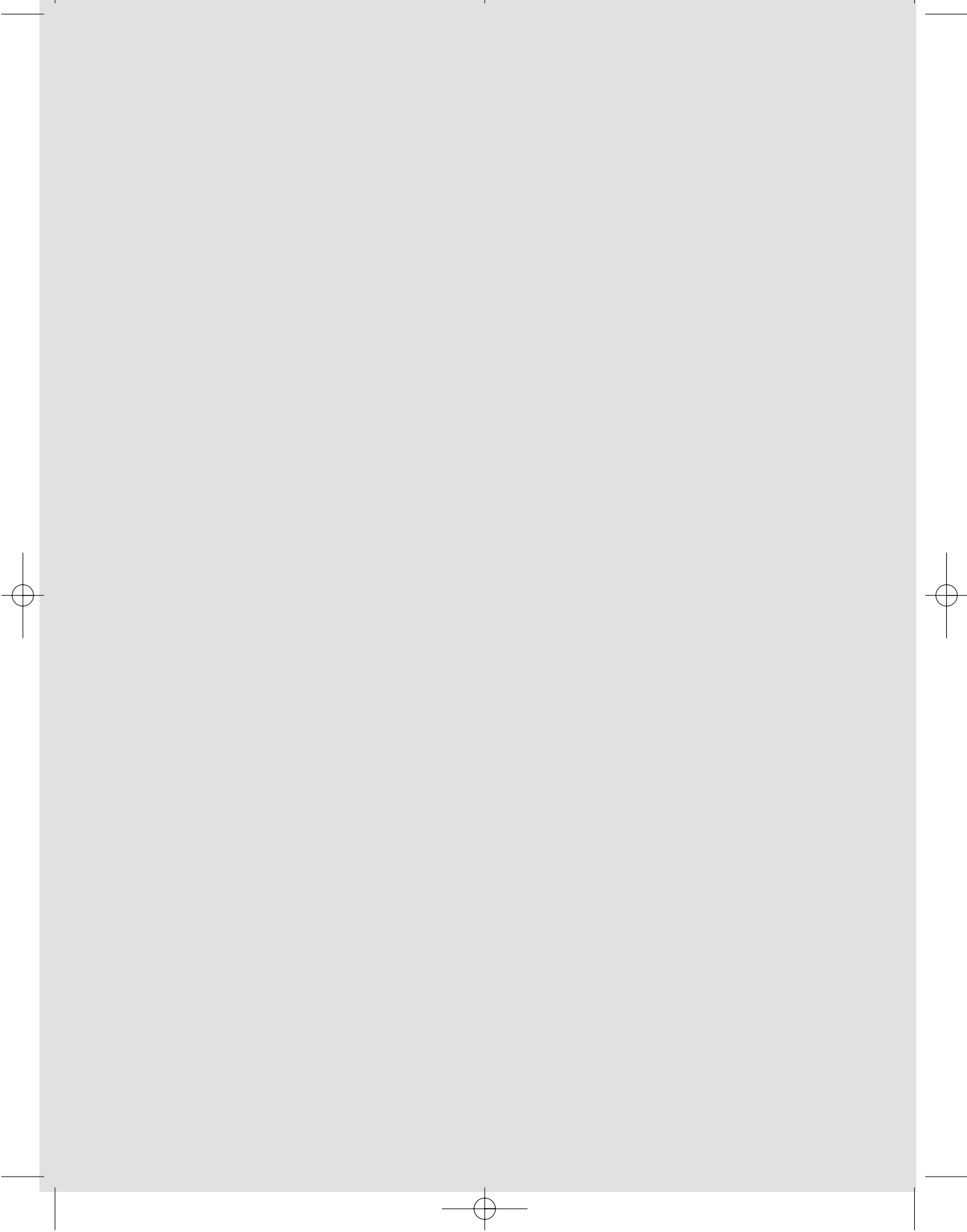
INTERPRETATIONS

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Appendix



GLOSSARY of VIOLENCE and ART

BODY IN PAIN

Fully concentrated upon itself and the pain it endures, the body in pain no longer concerns itself with ideas but constitutes the stage on which the performance takes place. The body in pain uses a specific language in order to secure the truth of a cultural/political position and this kind of language can be considered in historical perspective (for example, the reality-producing quality of pain in Judeo-Christian scriptures). Artists create a 'language of pain'; they have the ability to force pain into speech, to 'deobjectify the work of pain by forcing it into avenues of objectification', 'to enable pain to enter into a realm of shared discourse' is the principal quality of the artistic 'language of pain'. In a conceptual interaction with previously existing, aesthetically approved and canonized artwork, the concept involved in interventionist work takes precedence over aesthetic and all other concerns.

CRITIQUE OF PACIFISTIC ILLUSIONS

To treat violence in an energetic way means to recognize its character as prime matter that is inherent to life itself and therefore impossible to root out; which consists of drives and which, above all, is neutral in respect of any kind of value. This impels us to reformulate many questions and affords us the possibility (for instance) of looking critically at pacifistic illusions that do not derive from deep experiences of war wounds. To understand this issue better, we must gain insight into the tension between the civilizing process and violence. In fact, if 'violence generates chaos, order generates violence.' In this sense, we must ask ourselves whether civilized coexistence should imply much more than an idea, or better, an ideology, of pacific coexistence, or whether any pacifistic hopes should be deconstructed as mere illusions and therefore replaced by projects of militant, active engagement for peace as not war. What is not at stake is starting from a supposed anthropological constitution or nature (i.e. the innate goodness or badness of human kind); rather, we should take into account the paradoxical character of violence, not only as a detonator of systems, a wake-up call against lethargy which takes civilization for granted, but most of all as a constitutive element of existing life conditions, of our environment as a world that integrates our complex psychosomatic systems.

DESTRUCTION OF MEMORY PRACTICES

The spread of memory practices in art and literature has been enormous. They form a specific aesthetics and manifest themselves around issues such as trauma, the Holocaust and other genocides, migration, etc., but also in the increasing use of media and genres like photography, documentary film and video, the archive, and the family album. It is in these practices that memory becomes an issue of transforming aesthetics. The spread of memory practices since the 1990s is a symptom of a memory crisis rather than of memory celebration. It seems to be the expression of a situation in which memory is under siege. Due to the fact that some and perhaps even most of these practices show a kind of naïve, nostalgic and sentimental celebration of the past, usually limited to a personal past, without actively engaging that past in our political present, it is imperative to look at attempts to overcome these distancing practices.

FACING ANGUISH

Anguish is the unease felt until a decision is made. Once the decision has been made, a person can feel concern about whatever consequences the decision will result in, or fear from not knowing whether they will be able to respond adequately to what is coming. But anguish will disappear, because it is like a fever: it cannot go on for a long time. If the decision has been not to face up to the unease, then self-justifications are sought, because it is difficult to admit that we have not had sufficient courage to maintain the position that ethics has required of us and have bowed to conventional morality instead. We justify ourselves and the temptation is not to break new ground but to immerse ourselves in fields that are already known. In such situations, the temptation of plagiarism arises, even if plagiarism is given another name: producing 'metaliterature', making cover versions, remakes or updating: everything has been done, nothing new can be said, so let us say what has been said already but in a different way. Moreover, let us say the same thing that others have said by adding a small new element, and let us combine the formula that has been successful until now with new elements. Plagiarism is defended as if it were an option that could be defended. Furthermore, plagiarism does not assume any risk, it does not put forward any new aesthetics, and its aim is not to turn anything upside down. It suffices to engage in the game of combination. But, Facing Anguish also means that the author could decide to stand up to the pressure and not be content with the nth version of the same thing. It could be that he or she wants to respond in his or her own way to the anguish he or she is feeling. He or she will emerge out of the crisis stronger and will not hide behind clichés. He or she will try to put forward

new proposals. Even if the result is failure, he or she will be opening up new ways, will be pioneering and innovative insofar as he or she confronts the knowledge of the time and starts creating new aesthetics. Academies, museums, encyclopaedias, and universities are unlikely to recognise the value of what he or she has accomplished. In the early stages, the path of the innovator is one that will have to be trodden alone. And even if he or she were to get it right, there would be no guarantee that he or she would get it right the next time. Each attempt carries a risk.

HORROLOGY

Political terror is not an invention of the 21st century, but its scale and unpredictability announce a new possible state of civilization that goes far beyond terrorism itself and can be called horrorism. Terror is usually defined as violence or a threat of violence carried out for political purposes; horror is a reaction to terror, a painful and intense fear, dread, or dismay. Horror is triggered by the possibility of terror even more than by its actuality. Horrorism is a state of civilization which is in fear of itself because any of its achievements: its postal service, medicine, computers, aviation, skyscrapers, water-reservoirs, bridges can become weapons for the destruction of that civilization.

Horrology is a new discipline that is emerging in the humanities in response to the new realities of the new millennium. At the peak of its evolution, civilization presents a horrifying danger to itself. The name of the proposed discipline is no less horrible than its intended meaning.

Horrology explores civilization as a system of traps and self-exploding devices, and humankind as a hostage to its own creations. Horrology, as I understand it, is an alternative, or negative science, of civilization: nega-history, nega-sociology, nega-aesthetics. All that other disciplines present as positive attributes and structural properties of civilization, horrology presents as comprising a growing possibility for civilization's self-destruction.

IMAGE OF ABSOLUTE VIOLENCE

Although the term representation/image has already been deconstructed reflexively for two centuries; there still exists a certain conceptual vagueness in its definition. This arises from the fact that the concept representation/image has not only a conceptual, but a visual dimension as well. Even when one initial impulse comes from the visual imagination, sooner or later it falls into the net of another logic imposed by verbal expression and common sense which generates the narrative function and intentionality of the discursive practice. The term image in art does not refer to any homogenous content but follows the changes

in theoretical concepts of the work of art in Western art. The image may be grasped as the very place of the actual specificity of the conflicting (conflicting in any sense) treatment of the issue of representation, in particular of violence in literature. So long as the artistic image is an image of history (time, reality), it has a future. The image is an indication of the two opposing parts of the work of art: (external) appearance (l'apparence), and (internal) play. Mimesis is dominated by the inseparableness of the beautiful form and play, between the image and montage. While in modern art, play gave way to form, in contemporary art in which history has returned (images of violence in movies and literature), the form withdraws before the temporal play/montage. The concept of representation simultaneously refers to many various images of history in art: to the (fictional) literary image; to photography, which has the power of a radical witness; and to film's temporal moving picture. Literary, pictorial and cinematographic images of hell from the 20th century depict the omnipresence of the spectral return of History. The representation of violence in movies, novels and in photography is simultaneously a way of perceiving as well as a way of interpreting time. The image of violence presented in recent fiction production is an image of the 20th century as a chronotope of absolute violence. 20th century absolute violence is a negation of the 'humanistic' anthropogenesis. There is a commonplace between film and 20th century history, between the image-time of film and absolute violence, between the motion picture, montage, and the most recent practices of violence. The term appearance opposes the temporal play in art, especially in film. The artistic form/appearance returns as a historical component. The historiographic mould/template of film follows the logic of the montage. Montage is a means to think of the ethical function of art, especially important today. It is the template of the screened representation and of the screen of the tragic spectacle in 20th century History (the quasi-mechanical projection of history which is defined as a viewpoint without a viewpoint). The testimonies of the violence of our contemporary history are so specific that they cannot be expressed through the usual application of narcissistic procedures (also referred to by the historical sovereignty of the subject standing melancholically before history). They are a sign of the increasing gap between ourselves and others and of the growth of indifference toward the other, indifference generating an absolutisation of violence in history.

MIGRATORY AESTHETICS

The mixed societies that have emerged as a result of migration have benefited enormously from the arrival of people from different cultures. Cities have become more heterogeneous ('colourful'), music and cinema

have been greatly enriched, and philosophy gratefully uses the potential offered by thinking along the lines of and through metaphors relating to migration. This has been the case much longer, as Mary Jacobus argues, for psychoanalysis. Theorizing itself becomes more creative as a result of the need to overcome the limitations harbored by local habit. There is an aesthetic of thought as much as there is of, say, fashion, film or food. In short, this concept examines: the positive import for everyday life coming from migration, the now-common state of hybridity (where speaking of origins becomes almost forced and often impossible) and 'small' aesthetics. It focuses on the utterly small yet significant aspects of everyday culture and academic thought that are 'foreign' in origin but not considered 'foreign' any longer. In a sense, these aspects are 'beyond' identity but carry traces of 'foreignness'.

MONSTROUSNESS

The anthropological distinctiveness of humanity is not so much determined by animal violentness as by its specific inclination toward monstrousness, as a compound of radical violent practices upon the other, such as practices of torture with sadistic implications (long and agonizing pain), which have not only existed as an alternative and underground experience/reality throughout history, but have been installed as legalised penal and investigative practices that have been brought to perfection and put into practice for political and state purposes/interests.

MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Violence is an act of will that has a negative effect over someone (another human being) or something (nature or natural beings). It becomes a clear category of behaviour, having little to do with any sort of relativist cultural legitimizations. Therefore, violence and moral responsibility are inseparable. When facing the extreme collectivized form of violence represented by war, moral responsibility is of the utmost importance in bringing to light some of our own personal avenues of interpretation. If we feel we have a moral responsibility in human affairs, then we are forced to judge the reality of war from a standpoint that must be anything but neutral or nihilistic. Our culture (both pagan and biblical) is a culture of violence, which has not only instilled in us the idea that there were, are and will continue to be either persecutors or victims, but has also forced us to cope with the moral responsibility of taking sides for one or the other.

PARADOXOLOGIC

If the 'project' of hermeneutics is regarded as affirmative and supportive of life (of signs and their meaning and of life in general), then its

sustainment will encompass an unavoidable infringement of its own postulations and expectations. That is to say, in upholding itself, the 'project' of hermeneutics must depart from the object which it seeks in order to achieve greater proximity to that object. In that respect, the roots of hermeneutics can be distinguished in the strict logic of paradox, which enables and prompts interpretational legitimizations under the label of hope, charity and insemination. Paradoxologic is fundamental to the possibility of interpretation, as well as to the prospect of upholding the (post-modern) concept of survival.

PERFORMING VIOLENCE

Performance occurs. It happens and takes time. It has a past and a future, and hence, a present. From linguistics and the philosophy of language we take the notion that utterances do something: they perform an act that produces an event. From theatre, we borrow the notion of role-playing, which can be extended to include social role-playing, then restrict it to that aspect of playing that is effective in that it affects the viewer. From anthropology, we take the idea that the performative speech act, in the extended sense, requires participation in the production of meaning on the part of the ethnographer's partner, that is, of the people belonging to the culture studied. In art, this entails the indispensable participation of the visitor to the museum or the viewer of the work, without whom the artwork is simply nothing, just a dead object.

The subject of violence in theatre could be explored in connection to the specific relational spaces based on identity that have implications in the performing domain with special reference to urban, institutional, colonial, postcolonial, national and trans-national spaces of identity constructed under the influence of popular culture; marginal and liminal spaces and 'liminoid' experiences, including the related terms of periphery, border, the Other and the Different. Man can be defined as a self-performing animal whose performances are reflexive for as far as he is capable of revealing himself to himself. This reflexivity is two-fold: singular and plural. The actor gets to know himself better through acting and enactment (singular reflexivity), or one set of human beings may come to know themselves better through observing, participating, or observing and participating in the performances generated and presented by the group to which they belong one way or another (plural reflexivity). Theatre programmes use drama to challenge criminal behaviour and build self-awareness by re-establishing a balance between the singular and plural reflexivity of a self-performing individual.

Performance art, thus, can be considered to be a very liberating wake-up call, a violation of hypocrisy and the sleepiness of concepts. Even archetypes and symbols have a changed value when used in per-

formance art. Artists use them, especially when performing an emphasized conceptual or visual performance; but there is also another kind of violence in performance art, one that denies the use of symbols and archetypes simply because they are a part of our conceptualized protection from the awful truth about reality. In a way, performance art deconstructs the imaginary by not allowing it to hide behind a structure.

It is like a dream that does not have to be interpreted because it says everything by itself, not hiding behind symbolism and images that need to be interpreted. Performance art and artists use unconcealed, raw action: violence live, or Living Violence.

REAL VIOLENCE VS. VIOLENCE DISCOURSES

A methodological distinction can and should be made between disciplined discourses on violence (or its representations, to be more precise) as practised in universities, and the real violence exploding on the streets and places on the planet where conflicts are raging. Thus, a difference is made between the informalization of violence, its dissipative character in modern culture, in contrast with its strong ritualization and spectacularization in pre-modern, i.e. pre-juristic societies.

Even if we try to deny such discrepancies, for instance, by imposing a leading thread of our own effabulation to situations accessible to us only through discourses and representations, we must still recognize that no case-study, however accurate and complete, however detailed in its contextualization, however lucid in its analysis, can enable its author to face similar real situations. This happens because the moment the observer becomes an actor in a directly violent situation, a whole constellation of drives is set into motion activating our capacities for judging and acting under unexpected conditions and provoking unpredictable reactions. Such differentiations give insight into how violent virtualities become possible and where any explicit use of violence has a tendency to remain unpunished or even exalted and glorified from the juridical-political existence in which positive laws challenge the jus naturalistic model to formulate concrete proposals of citizenship, always in conflict between settled aims and the means to achieve them.

RITUALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

The ritualistic aspect of art has to do with creating a substitute, mock experience. Just like a roller-coaster for the mind, the gut and the heart: experience without the danger, experience without the consequences.

Art is a perfectly legitimate means of ritualization of violence in society.

Of ritualization, mind you, not glorification. Ritualizing means facing a concept, form, even technology; as in ancient rituals: experiencing it without really partaking in it. Even though the viewer knows the film/

painting/story/play is a lie, s/he still desires to respond as if it were real. This is because the lie is at the same time the truth.

TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE OF WAR

It is unacceptable that terrorism is a form of political violence like any other, but the melting away of that opposition has led some political theorists to defend the idea that some acts of terrorism can be justified by classic just-war theory to interpret (like Jean Baudrillard does), not surprisingly, terrorism as 'the intelligence of Evil we need'. What we are all facing today is a sort of palindrome (the words, sentences or dates can be read the same both ways) in contemporary political and military actions; that is, we are forced to read the same violence both ways in a painful intellectual process of regression and circularity—the formulation of the tremendously complex concept of 'state terrorism' being one of its most visible and disturbing symptoms.

TORTURE

In theory, and even in some penal practices and systems, there prevails the conviction that state terror is legitimate as long as it does not involve the death penalty. Hence the policy of abolishing the death penalty is presented within state penal violence as an indication of humanness/humanitarianism on the part of the regime. But it is the concept of the death penalty that raises another essential issue: does the illusion that state violence is humanized by the abolition of the death penalty in fact constitute implicit legitimization of entropic state terror and endless torture? Seemingly liberal and humanistically tailored, the philosophical interpretation of the borders of penal violence (Paul Ricoeur) is grounded on a shocking civilizational paradox. By determining the ethical codex of non-murder as the legitimate threshold of humanness, the state actually implicitly (and grotesquely) proclaims the codex of torture. It starts from the principle of a penal policy which follows the idea that everything is allowed but murder. Thus, a hierarchy of state violence is promoted (murder is the supreme violence, torture is a lesser violence) and the borders of tolerance of violence are laid down. That *everything-but-the-death-penalty* is neither the sole nor the primary precondition for the humanization of the penal-corrective, investigative and security system. That *everything-but-the-death-penalty* implicitly allows for every other type of institutionalized violence in addition to murder, including manslaughter in taking certain investigative and penal measures. That *everything-else* allows for torture, (torture of death and torture to death). This is an occasion for the policy of tolerating violence-for-the-sake-of-violence to be revised (torture, terror, long and agonizing pain/*peine dure et forte*) and, in that sense, to point out

that the unconditioned limitation of penal violence is not exhausted by the abolition of the death penalty but only after *the abolition of brutal torture*. *The unconditioned border* of state penal violence and state terrorism ought not to be exhausted with the abolition of the death penalty but with the abolition of the mechanisms of brutal torture and repression (on the other).

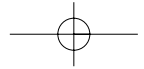
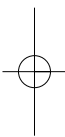
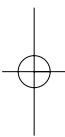
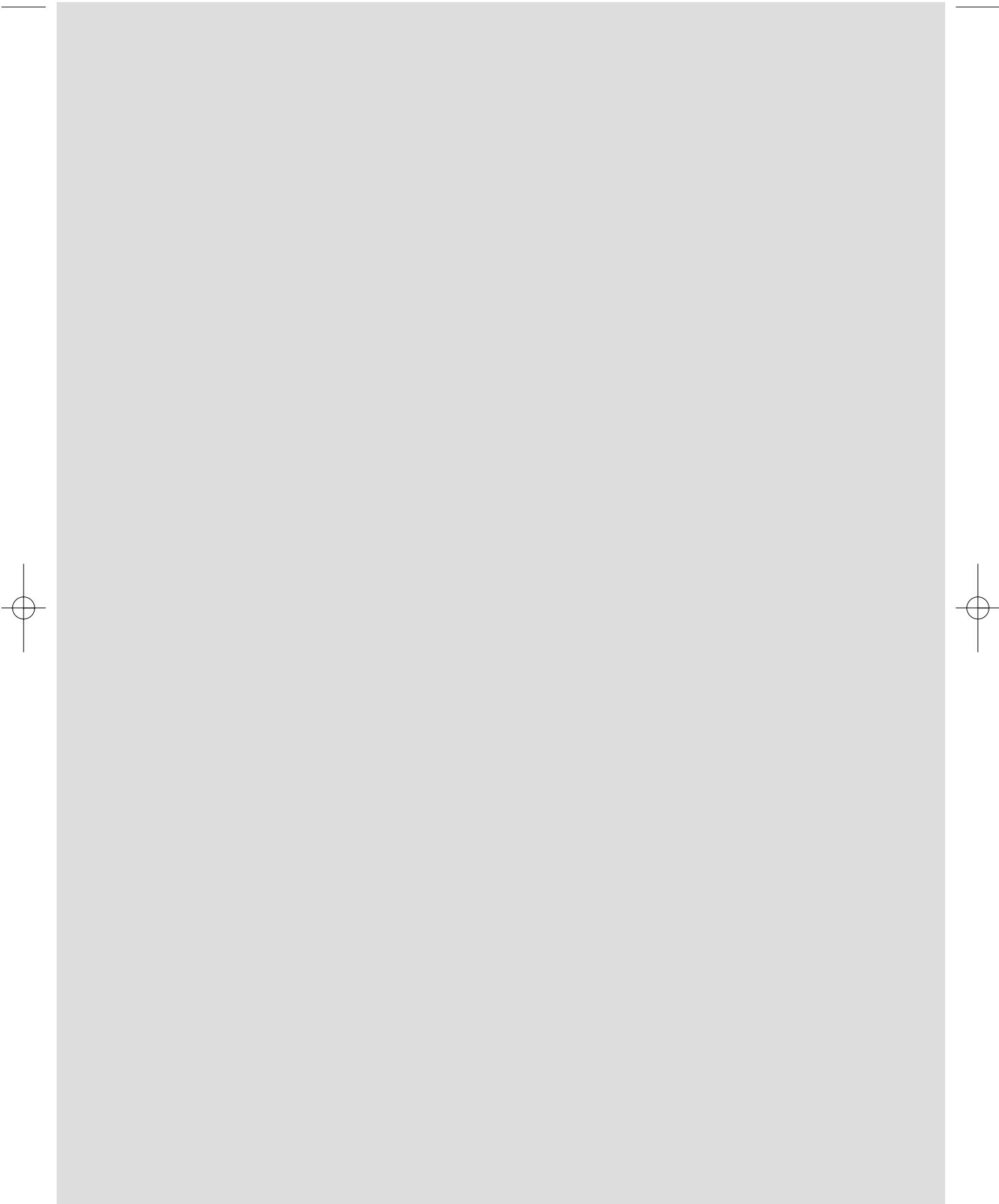
TRAVELLING CONCEPTS

A series of case-studies demonstrate the consequences of replacing paradigm- and discipline-based methodologies with an open re-examination of concepts which have a history of 'travelling' between disciplines, historical periods, contexts, and even cultures. Under the rubric 'travelling concepts' I work on incidental, often commissioned papers.

A major new development is a collaborative project with the Ministry of Justice and the University of Leiden. A small group of us are organizing a series of discussion sessions at the Ministry as an attempt to establish a dialogue between policy-makers and academic analysts of culture.

VIOLENTNESS

As opposed to violence, which can be defined as a recognizable praxis, violentness refers to a latent anthropological and social predisposition typical of all civilizational matrices of humanity. If violentness is the other face of humanity, if it is a symptom of the human potential for aggression (violence as the choice and personal will of the individual or of the collective) and for survival/self-defence (violence as a compulsion and as an act against human will), then it deserves to be freed from taboo and deconstructed. Violentness is an enigmatic mix of several basic structures of humans and humanity: (1) the human will to power, to hegemony, to superiority, to possession and knowledge; (2) the human need to satisfy one's urges for life and death (suicidal and homicidal), then the urge to survive and self-defend, the urge to satisfy one's lower passions of torture and sadism, to punish and take revenge; and (3), the human need to articulate one's identity (physical, racial, ethnic, religious, sexual, ethical and spiritual), one's self, one's ego, including the need to articulate one's inherited and acquired flaws, vices and per - versions. Violentness is in correlation with passions and obsessions which are an energetic metamorphosis of the urge to power. Whenever appropriate social conditions exist, violentness will articulate itself in the form of concrete violent acts, starting from the most naïve and ending with the most monstrous (punishing the other, murder, torture, terror).



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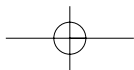
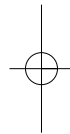
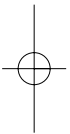
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INDEX of TERMS and CONCEPTS

A

abuse/abusive (24; 101; 114; 184; 204)

aesthetics (10; 14; 47; 50-58; 63; 66; 78; 88; 92; 93; 184; 186; 190; 222; 226; 252; 254)

aestetization of terror (48)

aggressive, aggression, aggressor (24; 26; 28; 30; 31; 32; 36; 43; 68; 71; 72; 142; 143; 144; 170; 172; 216; 217; 228; 234; 260)

ambiguity, ambiguous (10; 12; 14; 31; 36; 50; 52; 109; 111; 112; 167)

anarchist (26; 43; 92)

anguish (181-189; 194; 206; 253; 254)

animal, animalization (14; 28-31; 42; 82; 91; 92; 94; 159; 164; 208; 222; 223; 234; 242; 256; 258)

anthropological (16; 24; 25; 72; 210; 253; 257; 261; 283)

anthropogenic feature (23; 29)

archetype (26; 34; 36; 235; 236; 238; 258)

art (10; 205; 217; 282)

autism (181; 182)

B

balkan, balkanization (16; 72; 206; 282)

barbarism, barbarian (16; 17; 22; 23; 25; 26; 42; 72)

body, body in pain (32; 33; 54; 60; 61; 142; 191; 194; 196; 217-223; 227; 228; 229; 239; 241; 242; 243; 252)

brutal, brutality (30; 32; 36; 39; 44; 172; 196; 197; 205; 214; 215; 233; 254; 260)

C

canon (137; 152; 222)

centre (22; 36; 44; 52; 54; 55; 64; 65; 146; 186)

chaos (26; 69; 72; 74; 104; 106; 184; 193-196; 199; 242; 252)

civilization, civilizational violence (22; 28; 31; 33; 36; 38; 40; 42; 70; 74)

code, (XV; 36; 37; 38 200)
colonial, colonization (36; 56; 218; 256)
communist, communism (31; 32; 60; 108; 161; 163)
community, communities (14; 24; 33; 47; 88; 238)
conflicts (24; 28; 70; 72; 74; 142; 143; 151; 178; 182; 185; 186; 234; 236; 255)
crime (10; 15; 25; 26; 27; 31-39; 43; 142; 151; 178; 182; 185; 186; 199; 234; 236; 239; 255)
cruel, cruelty (23; 24; 34; 75; 93; 94; 150; 183; 199; 236)
culture, cultural analysis, cultural studies (53; 54; 55; 136; 154; 233)

D

deadly (196)
death penalty (XI; XVII; 30; 32; 42; 258)
death, dying (24; 26; 29; 30; 32; 37; 34; 42; 43; 46; 111; 137; 142; 143; 151; 155; 158; 167; 168; 169; 173; 174; 176; 178; 190; 191; 194; 195; 199; 200; 206; 207; 213; 218; 219; 220; 221; 224; 226; 229; 236; 240; 242; 259)
defamation (24)
demystification (15; 26)
destruction (XVI; 34; 47-51; 81; 83; 87; 91; 95; 96; 102; 142; 162; 170; 192; 193; 195; 196; 198; 199; 200; 214; 224; 225; 226; 242; 252; 253)
dialogue (27; 113; 121; 161; 192; 209; 211; 212; 223; 259; 279; 284)
difference XIII; 28; 56; 57; 82; 84; 85; 88; 91; 93; 94; 117; 144; 149; 165; 172; 191; 194; 195; 196; 218; 231; 233; 257; 279)
discourse (violent discourse) (XIV; 32; 33; 35; 72; 87; 113; 141; 169; 191; 194; 196; 199; 200; 225; 228; 234; 251)
dissipative (74; 256)
domination (24; 26; 28; 31; 32; 37; 43; 58; 61; 129)

E

empathy (217; 218; 220; 226; 227; 228; 229; 231)
enemy, enemies of the state (26)
entropy (196; 198)
epic (30; 33; 228)
ethics (23; 24; 35; 36; 184; 186; 247; 252)
evil (XI; 25; 31; 33; 34; 35; 36; 38; 39; 48; 50; 73; 91; 140; 143; 146; 147; 148; 181; 182; 229; 257)

F**fatwa** (24)**facing** (50; 92; 138; 146; 147; 155; 181; 186; 189; 191; 199; 252; 255; 257)**fear** (XI; XII; XIII; 26; 27; 32; 34; 38; 39; 47; 48; 69; 81; 96; 163; 184; 186; 204; 209; 223; 236; 238; 252; 253)**film** XIII; XV; XVI; 24; 2; 38; 39; 55-64; 81-84; 88-96; 99; 103; 104; 111; 114; 133; 159; 164; 169; 178; 183; 204; 205; 206; 208; 210-215; 218; 226; 241; 252; 254; 255; 257; 285)**fine arts** (33; 38)**fiction** (XII; XIII; 83; 119; 120; 123; 125; 129; 131; 133; 150; 160; 162; 167; 174; 178; 186; 189; 206; 239; 278; 280; 285)**function** (XVI; 29; 34; 36; 37; 70; 83; 92; 143; 188; 205; 214; 222; 234; 236; 241; 247; 254; 285)**G****global, globalization** (55; 56; 57; 63; 64; 88; 137)**grotesque** (28; 99; 103; 110; 112; 113; 114)**H****hermeneutics** (XI; XVI; XVII; XIX; 26; 29; 30; 33; 43; 191; 279; 284)**hero, anti-hero, negative hero** (24; 25; 206; 211; 219; 221)**history, histoire** (XI-XVI; 23; 25; 27-33; 36-39; 43; 44; 47; 50; 51; 55; 56; 59; 60; 71; 82-93; 101; 119-135; 141; 143; 145; 153; 165; 185; 205; 234; 236; 237; 253; 254; 255; 259)**Holocaust** (XI; 37; 81; 83; 93; 96; 145; 181; 217; 252; 281)**horrorology** (47; 50; 51; 253)**horror** (XIV; 47; 48; 50; 51; 145; 183; 184; 185; 193; 205; 209; 253)**humane, human right** (XII; XV; XVII; 24; 30; 31; 36; 40; 64; 119; 195; 226)**humanism** (23; 50; 135; 137; 155)**humanization** (XII; 27; 29; 30; 32; 43; 195; 258)**hypocrisy** (142; 195; 238; 256)**I****identity** (XVI; 24; 26; 28; 31; 32; 34; 54; 56; 63; 86; 92; 100; 113; 193; 194; 195; 218; 230; 233; 244; 255; 256; 259)**illegitimate** (30; 31; 32; 43)**image** (XIV; XV; XVII; 25; 33; 38; 39; 40; 44; 49; 53; 63; 65; 66; 81; 84; 86;

90; 92; 119-132; 253; 254; 279; 282)

imperialist, imperialism (59; 110)

institution, institutionalization (15; 23; 24)

instrumentalization (31)

instinct (24; 27; 29; 36; 122; 127; 129; 143; 144)

interpretation (XIII; XVI; XVII; 30; 33; 36; 39; 43; 44; 70; 92; 113; 137; 138; 141; 155; 160; 170; 178; 192; 221; 235; 258; 282)

inter-violence (29)

J

justice (23; 25; 26; 37; 43; 64; 69; 139; 145; 146; 184; 188; 197; 259)

K

kill, killer (82; 100; 171; 172)

L

law (26; 33; 36; 37; 69; 89; 92; 139; 150; 219; 244)

life (XIV; XV; 24; 39; 48; 50; 59; 70; 72; 74; 75; 81; 82; 86; 90; 105; 138; 143; 146; 148; 151; 155; 161; 168; 174; 175; 192; 214; 219; 224; 237; 239; 240; 241; 242; 251; 252; 255; 259)

limit (23; 28; 30; 44; 70)

literature (XIII; XV; 24; 28; 33; 38; 59; 81; 96; 101; 110; 135; 138; 148-155; 165; 167; 178; 181; 182; 183; 185; 186; 188; 189; 210; 217; 218; 242; 252; 254)

M

manipulation (XIII; XV; 25; 31; 53; 84; 166; 208)

massacre (XVI; 26; 27)

media (X; XII; XIV; XVI; 25; 29; 31; 53; 54; 55; 66; 71; 81; 86; 88; 94; 95; 96; 159-173; 178; 183; 202; 208; 215; 216; 218; 221; 224; 228; 236; 237; 252)

memory, cultural memory, collective memory (24; 26; 27; 32; 33; 34; 49; 60; 81; 82; 85-88; 91; 94; 96; 103; 140; 148; 149; 150; 166; 168; 175; 181; 242; 252)

migration, migratory (migratory aesthetics) (XVI; 35; 53; 57; 81; 86; 252; 255)

military (XVII; 32; 33; 100; 147; 148; 161; 169; 174; 175; 258)

monstrousness (XIV; 28; 255)

moral (XII; XV; 24; 28; 30; 38; 137-140; 144; 145; 147; 148; 155; 156; 167;

188; 219; 233; 247; 255)

multi-culturalism (32)

multi-ethnic society (32)

murder (XV; XVII; 23; 25; 26; 27; 30; 32; 37; 38; 39; 43; 151; 181; 198; 225; 258; 259)

music (59; 99-113; 211; 217; 255)

mythic image (23)

N

nazism (XVII; 145; 146)

narrative, narration (30; 31; 33; 61; 62; 65; 73; 82; 83; 89; 92; 123; 129; 163; 164; 166; 167; 168; 174; 182; 205; 206; 209; 210; 217; 218; 231; 254)

non-violence (XII; XVII; 24; 25; 27; 28; 43; 72; 145)

O

occupation (28; 32; 37)

Other (otherness) (23; 25; 28; 37; 44; 192; 193; 194; 195; 199)

P

pacifistic (69; 70; 251)

pain (28; 35; 38; 39; 43; 56; 146; 153; 182; 192; 196; 199; 217; 218; 227; 228; 231; 239; 242; 251; 255; 258)

paradox (30; 71; 192; 197; 199; 258)

paradoxologic (191; 193; 194; 200)

parody (103; 108; 111; 112; 113; 114; 237)

peace (23; 25; 26; 27; 28; 31; 32; 43; 71; 72; 73; 74; 108; 139; 141; 145; 170; 173; 178; 220; 251)

peine dure et forte (23; 28; 30; 44; 258; 289)

performance (93; 102-106; 109; 151; 218; 221-245; 247; 251; 256)

performing arts (217; 222; 233)

perversions (24; 169; 259)

pity and fear (XII; XIII; 38)

psychological (violence) (35; 38; 110; 142; 143; 159; 170; 178; 181; 229; 236; 246)

photography (XIII; XV; XVI; 79; 86-90; 94; 96; 224; 252; 254)

pleasure (24; 28; 36; 71; 144; 191; 192; 193; 227; 233; 236; 237)

poetics (X; XIII; XV-XVIII; 39; 100; 105; 108; 110-114)

political violence (XVII; 23; 32; 35; 147; 181; 182; 184; 188; 189; 229; 257)

politics, political (XIV; 23-26; 28-32; 35-38; 44; 47; 53; 54; 56; 59-63; 74; 75; 86; 88; 89; 91; 94; 95; 104-106; 109; 110; 113; 114; 137; 141-143; 147; 148; 155; 159; 161; 163; 166; 167; 170-172; 181-189; 194; 196; 228; 229; 233; 237; 242; 247; 251-258)

power (XIV; XVI; 23; 24; 28-37; 44; 70; 73; 100; 138; 139; 142; 145; 152; 156; 166; 172; 184; 192; 193; 224; 228; 229; 238; 242; 244; 245; 247; 254; 259)

predisposition (24; 43; 44; 259)

primitive (XIV; 25; 28; 29; 73; 140)

prison (32; 59; 113; 175)

Prometheus (23; 33-38; 42)

prototype (25; 33-35)

provocation (209; 229)

punishment (XV; XVI; 24; 26-33; 35; 36; 142; 198; 233)

R

reality (XI-XVI; 25; 26; 38; 39; 44; 59; 74; 75; 86-88; 91; 112; 113; 135; 140; 144; 151; 168; 189-198; 205; 210-212; 220; 227; 228; 233; 236-240; 242; 251; 253; 255; 256)

reinterpretation, reinterpreting (26; 111)

religious (24-26; 32; 37; 82; 101; 143; 149; 150; 164; 171; 172; 182; 205; 217; 229)

representation (of violence) (66; 210; 242; 254)

repression (30; 181; 258)

response (25; 29; 30; 36; 51; 86; 102; 105; 106; 108; 147; 168; 181; 182; 185; 189; 205; 250)

responsibility (XII; 137-140; 144-146; 155; 239; 240; 255)

revolution (33; 37; 69; 106; 110; 183; 237)

ritual, ritualization (XIV; 24; 29; 37; 39; 74; 103; 109; 135; 151; 205; 207; 208; 215; 217; 242; 257)

S

sadism, sadistic (XVII; 24; 29; 31; 33; 36; 181; 196; 255; 259)

sanction (23; 37)

seduction, seductive (192; 199)

sexual (24; 25; 35; 169; 225; 237; 259)

severe (25; 26; 81; 96; 102; 107; 112)

slaughter (223)

society, social (24; 25; 28; 32; 34; 54; 63; 71; 72; 100; 101; 104; 106; 139;

144; 145; 149; 169; 181-184; 188; 191; 192; 205; 207; 210; 211; 214; 215; 226; 233; 234; 236; 242-247; 257)

stereotype (XIV)

strategy, interpretative strategy (XII; 43; 91; 162; 171; 209)

T

taboo (205; 209-212; 215)

terror (27; 30; 32; 37; 39; 43; 44; 47-49; 106; 147; 193; 199; 253; 258; 259)

terrorism, state terrorism (XVII; 23; 28; 30; 32; 35; 137; 147; 258)

theatre (XIII; XV; XVI; 38; 39; 93; 114; 149-153; 159-166; 170; 173; 176; 217; 218; 223; 228; 229; 238; 239; 256)

tone (105; 196; 203; 205; 209; 212-215)

torture (XI; XV; XVII; 23; 24; 27-30; 34-38; 44; 137; 142; 143; 150; 181; 255; 258; 259)

tradition (25; 28; 31; 63; 72; 90; 105; 111-113; 138; 145; 147; 151; 155; 191; 200; 235; 236)

TV, TV story (XV; 47; 51; 160; 161; 164-166; 176; 208; 209; 217; 2280)

trivial, trivialization (XIII; 23; 39)

V

victim (29; 31; 36; 37; 85; 142; 175; 226; 238; 243)

violation (26; 27; 36; 37; 233; 238-242; 256)

violence, pure violence (33; 198)

violent (XI; XIII; XIV; XVIII; 23-36; 39; 43; 44; 72-76; 89; 93; 121; 128; 138-154; 168; 181; 185; 196-199; 203; 214; 215; 224-226; 233; 236-244; 247; 255; 257; 259)

violent images (image of violence) (XIV; 33; 38; 39; 40; 44; 254)

violentness (23-25; 29; 43; 255; 259)

visual (XI; XV; 29; 39; 53; 59; 61-65; 82; 88; 91; 164; 238; 241; 253; 256)

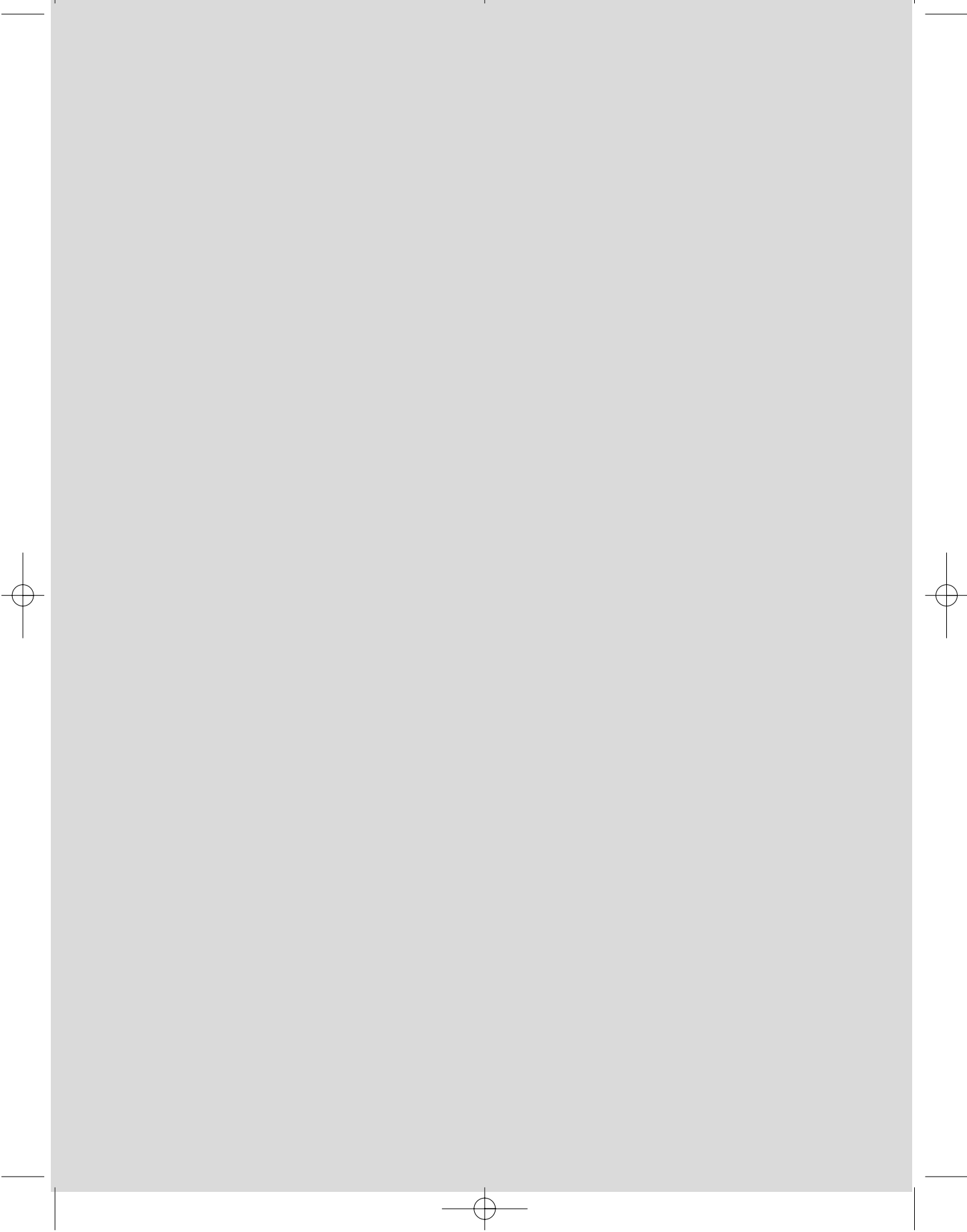
vulgarization (XIV; 108)

W

war (XI; XV; 23-32; 37; 43; 54; 55; 72; 74; 75; 137-140; 143-148; 155; 159-178; 182; 214; 217; 219; 220; 227; 228; 251; 255; 257)

witness (29; 219; 226; 240; 243; 254)

wound (69; 76)



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS:

ALPHEN Ernst van, (1958) is Professor of Literary Studies at Leiden University. His publications include *Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self* (Reaktion Books 1994), *Caught By History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory* (Stanford University Press 1997), *Armando: Shaping Memory* (NAi Press 2000), and *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (University of Chicago Press 2005).

BAL Mieke (Maria Gertrudis), (1946) is a well-known cultural critic and theorist and Professor of Theory of Literature and a founding director of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, Theory and Interpretation (ASCA) at the University of Amsterdam. Her book, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* was published in July 1999 by the University of Chicago Press. Among her many other books are *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (2nd, thoroughly revised and expanded edition, University of Toronto Press, 1997), *The Mottled Screen: Reading Proust Visually* (Stanford University Press, 1997), *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (Routledge, 1996) and *Reading 'Rembrandt': Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge University Press, 1991 [1994]). She also edited a programmatic volume *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*, published by Stanford University Press in May 1999, which gives a good idea of the nature and practice of cultural analysis. The breadth of Mieke Bal's research contributions is also acknowledged by the forthcoming publication *Looking In: the Art of Viewing*, essay and afterword by Mieke Bal, with a commentary by Norman Bryson, to be published by G&B Arts International as part of their 'Critical Voices in Art Theory and Culture' series.

DAROS Philippe, (1948) is a professor of Theory of Literature in the Department of General and Comparative Literature of the University of Paris (Sorbonne Nouvelle III). Co-editor of the hermeneutic reader *Dialogue of Interpretations* (with Jean Bessiere and Kata Kulavkova, Skopje 2003). His PhD thesis is published under the title *Italo Calvino* by Hachette, Paris 1994 (Hachette supérieur). Areas of interest: the relations among literary discourses, anthropology, philosophy and humanities, literary theory, Italian Novel and Short Story, the ethical function of literature.

EPSTEIN (EPSHTEIN) Mikhail N., (1950) is an American literary theorist and critical thinker of Russian-Jewish origin. He is the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Cultural Theory and Russian Literature at Emory University (Atlanta, USA). He is a faculty member at the Department of Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures at Emory, with a joint appointment to the Department of Comparative Literature. He has authored 20 books and approximately 500 essays and articles, translated into 14 languages (in library catalogs they are listed under his Russian surname Epshtein). His areas of specialization include post-modernism, cultural theory, Russian literature and intellectual history, contemporary philosophical and religious thought, ideas and electronic media, and interdisciplinary approaches in the humanities.

He has authored *intelNet* (<http://www.emory.edu/INTELNET/Index.html>) and a number of other interdisciplinary web sites in the humanities. Some of his books in English include: *Cries in the New Wilderness: from the Files of the Moscow Institute of Atheism* (Trans. and intr. by Eve Adler); *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (with Ellen Berry); *Russian Postmodernism: New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture* (with Alexander Genis and Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover) in the series *Studies in Slavic Literature, Culture, and Society*, vol. 3; *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Post-modernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (a volume in the series *Critical Perspectives on Modern Culture*, introd. and transl. by Anesa Miller-Pogacar); *Relativistic Patterns in Totalitarian Thinking: An Inquiry into the Language of Soviet Ideology*. Some of his works in Russian include: *Slovo i molchanie: Metafizika Russkoi Literatury* (Word and Silence: The Metaphysics of Russian Literature); *Postmodern v Russkoi Literatury* (The Postmodern in Russian Literature); *Znak Probela: O budushchem gumanitarnykh nauk* (Mapping Blank Spaces: On the Future of the Humanities).

KULAVKOVA Kata (Katica), (1951) is a poet, a theoretician of literature, a literary essayist, and Professor of the Theory of Literature and Literary Hermeneutics at the Department of General and Comparative Literature in the Faculty of Philology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje. Her poetry has been translated into many languages and represented in books, anthologies and selections of contemporary Macedonian poetry. She is a member of the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the international multi-lingual P.E.N. E-Collection Diversity (www.diversity.org.mk). Areas of interest include: theory of intertextuality, literary hermeneutics, cultural theory, Balkan identities.

Publications include: Poetry: *Annunciation*, 1975; *The Act*, 1978; *Our Consonant*, 1981; *New Sweat*, 1984; *Neuralgic Spots* (bilingual edition, Serbian/Macedonian) 1986; *Thirst*, 1989; 1989; *Wild Thought* (selection), 1989; *Domino*, 1993; *Exorcising Evil*, 1997; *Via Lasciva* (into French), 1998; *Time Difference* (into English), 1998; *Preludium*, 1998, *World-In-Between*, 2000, *Expulsion du mal* (into French, Ecrits des Forges), 2002, *Dead Angle*, 2004, *Dorinte* (into Romanian, 2004); *Short stories/Poetic fiction: Another Time*, and several books of literary theory and hermeneutics: *Figurative Speech and Macedonian Poetry*, *Pact and Impact*, *Stone of Temptation*, *Cahiers*, *Small Literary Theory*, *Theory of Literature*, introduction (2004, into English), *Hermeneutics of Identities*. She has also been the editor of several anthologies of Macedonian short stories and Essays, and several readers (*Dialogue of Interpretations*, *Theory of Intertextuality*, *Poetics and Hermeneutics*, *Balkan Image of the World*).

Personal website: www.kulavkova.org.mk

MANCHEVSKI Milcho, (1958) is a film director and a writer. Over 50 short forms (experimental films, documentaries, music videos, commercials), awards for best experimental film (for "1.72" at the Belgrade Alternative Festival), best MTV and Billboard video (for Arrested Development's "Tennessee", which also made Rolling Stone magazine's list of 100 best videos ever), screenplay and direction on "*Before The Rain*" (1994) and "*Dust*" (2001). "*Before The Rain*" won thirty awards at international festivals, including best film in Venice, Independent Spirit, an Oscar nomination, and a place in The New York Times' book "Best 1,000 Movies Ever Made." Author of a book of fiction "*The Ghost Of My Mother*" and a book of photographs "*Street*" (accompanying an exhibition); fiction and essays published in *New American Writing*, *La*

Repubblica, Corriere della Sera, Sineast, etc. Performance art with the group 1AM (founder) and by himself.

Lives in New York City. Teaches Directing at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Graduate Film & TV.

MARKOVSKA Jasminka, (1980) has completed her BA degree in General and Comparative Literature at Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia, and is currently a MA degree student at the Centre for Ibsen studies, University of Oslo. She has been working as an administrative coordinator of the Macedonian P.E.N. Centre (2004), administrative coordinator of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee of the International P.E.N. and administrative editor of the Diversity web project (2003 – 2005). She has been a co-translator of Theory of Literature by Katica Kulavkova (*Slovo* 2004), and has published translations in *Hermeneutics and Poetics* (Херменевтика и поезика, 2003), *Theory of Intertextuality* (Теорија на интертекстуалноста, 2003), the *Diversity web project* (www.diversity.org.mk), and *Mirage web project* (www.mirage.com.mk). She has participated in the projects of the Department for General and Comparative Literature at Ss Cyril and Methodius University and the Institute for National Literature in Skopje, Macedonia. She has also been an author in *Studentski Zbor*, the student magazine of Ss Cyril and Methodius University in the period 1999-2000.

MARTINS Manuel Frias, (1949) holds a Ph.D. in Literary Theory and teaches at the University of Lisbon (Faculty of Letters). He is a literary critic and the author of several books on Portuguese contemporary literature as well as on literary theory and criticism. His book *Dark Matter: A Theory of Literature and Literary Criticism* (1993, 1995, 2nd edition) received the Portuguese Pen Club Award for Essays. He is currently the Vice-President of the Portuguese Association of Literary Critics. His latest book, *In Theory (Literature)*, was published in 2003.

MINTEGI Laura, (1955) was born in Lizarra (Navarre) and currently lives in Algorta (Biscay), a village close to Bilbao where she works as

a lecturer of Basque Language and Literature in the University of the Basque Country (Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea). Ms. Mintegi took a degree in History and is a doctor of Psychology. She is the president of the Basque PEN (Euskal PEN). Her first work was *Ilusioaren ordaina*, 1983 (The payment of the illusion), seven short stories. Since then she has published five novels: *Bai ... baina ez*, 1986 (Yes... but not); *Legez kanpo*, 1991 (Law out); *Nerea eta biok*, 1994 (Nerea and I); *Sisifo maite minez*, 2001 (Sisifo in love); *Ecce homo*, 2006 (Ecce homo).

One of these has been translated into Spanish (Sisifo enamorado, 2003) and another into English (Nerea and I, 2005). She usually writes for newspapers and broadcasts on the radio.

PEROSKI Aco, (1982) is a post-graduate student at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, at the Institute of Philosophy. He graduated in 2005 from the Faculty of Philology "Blaze Koneski" in Skopje, from the Department of General and Comparative Literature. He is currently attending Master's studies in the history of contemporary philosophy, postmodernism and multiculturalism. He translates from English (Woody Allen, Salman Rushdie) and has participated in several projects of MASA.

PETLEVSKI Sibila, (1964) is a novelist, poet, playwright, theatre scholar and literary critic, editor and translator born in Zagreb, Croatia. Former president of the Croatian PEN Centre (2000-2004), currently its vice-president. Member of the International Board of PEN International (2002-2007). Professor at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb and Head of Drama Department. Translated, awarded and internationally anthologized author of 15 books, including three books on European theatre and the theory of drama. Petlevski received the Croatian award for theoretical dramaturgy in the year 2001, the "Nazor" State Prize for Arts and Literature and the International "Poeteka" Prize for poetry. Her play entitled "*Ice General*" has been chosen for Berliner Festspiele selection of contemporary European drama - Stückemarkt 2005. Correspondent member of L'Académie Mallarmé.

Books on theatre: *Symptoms of Modernity. Simptomi moderniteta* (2000); *Theatre of Interplay. Kazalište suigre* (2001); «*Space of Exchange; A Study on Gavello's Methodology of Cultural History*». «*Prostor razmjene, Studija o Gavelloj potrazi za metodologijom*

kulturalne povijesti. In: Branko Gavella (2005) *Double Face of Speech. Dvostruko lice govora*. Ed. Sibila Petlevski; *Drama Plus Time. Drama Plus Vrijeme*. (work in progress).

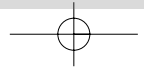
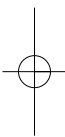
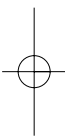
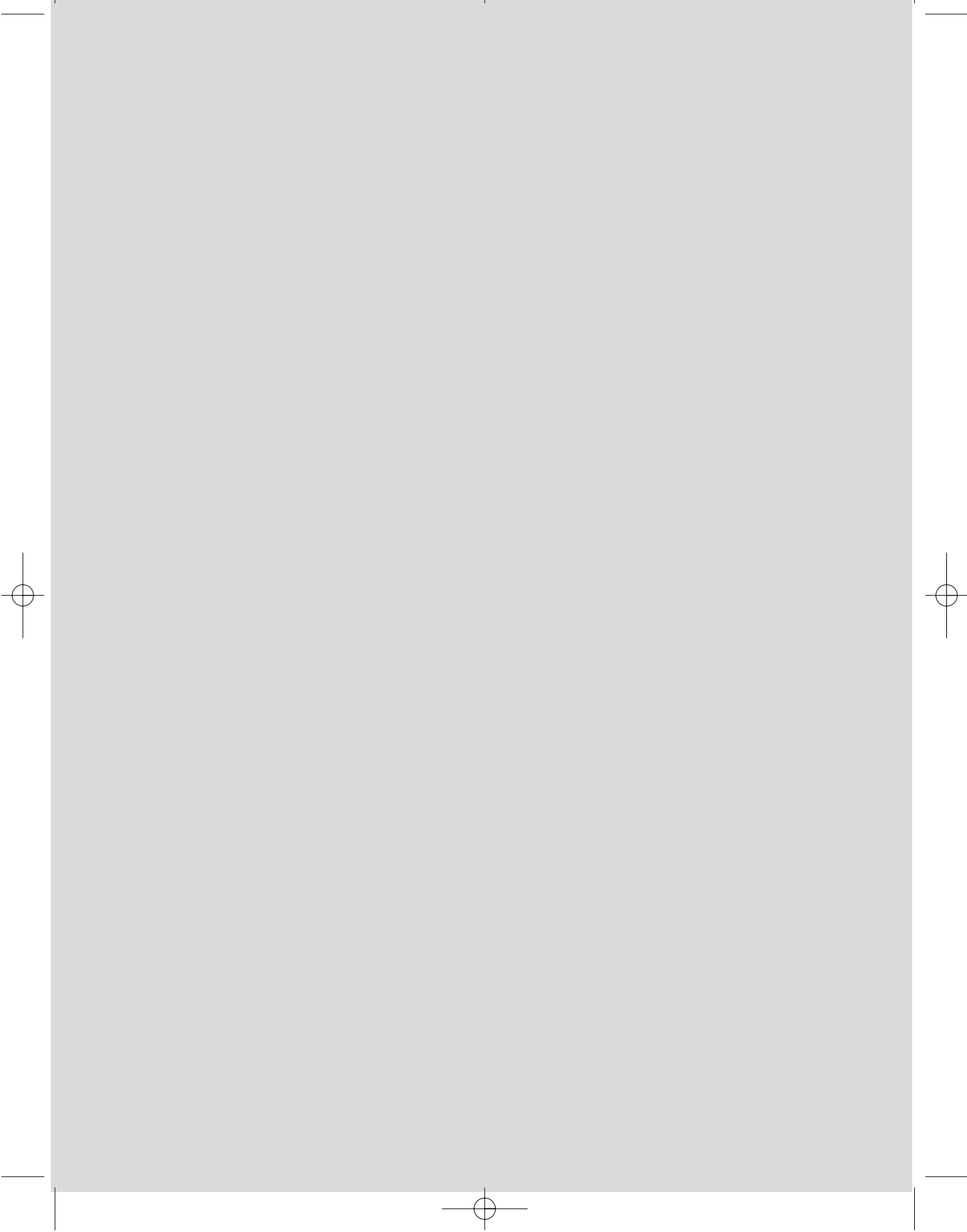
ROSSI Umberto, (1960) earned his degree in Modern languages and literatures (English) at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" in 1989. He has been a member of AISNA (Italian association of North-American studies) since 1993. Earned his Dottorato di ricerca (PhD) in Scienze letterarie (Letterature comparate) at the Terza Università di Roma (1991-94). Worked at an international social science research institute, CENSIS, in Rome (Italy), 1995-1999. Currently teaching English language and literature in a secondary school (Istituto superiore "Pascal", Pomezia) and working as a literary journalist and reviewer for the Italian book magazine Pulp Libri. He has translated several works of fiction by US and UK authors (Harlan Ellison, Thomas M. Disch, James Waddington, Joe R. Lansdale, Philip K. Dick, Todd Komarnicki, Boston Teran). He has published numerous essays/articles.

SALEMA Teresa, (1947) (Literary name for: Teresa Maria Loureiro Rodrigues Cadete, b. 1947) has been a Professor at the Faculty of Letters (Classical University of Lisbon) since 1989 (former Assistant at the same Faculty). Doctoral Dissertation: *The Arch and the Snake. Anthropological perspective and civilizational analysis in the theoretical works of Friedrich Schiller* (1988). Teaching and researching in the areas of Culture Theory, Interdisciplinary Studies, German Culture. Member of the Portuguese PEN Centre since 198, member of the Board between 1988 and 1991 and since 2003 (Vice-President since 2006). As a novelist (under her real name of Teresa Rodrigues Cadete and under the pseudonym Teresa Salema), has published several short stories and 5 novels: *Between two countries*, 1978; *We, Others* (together with Casimiro de Brito), 1980; *Education and memory of André Maria S.*, 1982 (Award of the Portuguese Writers' Association); *The Absent Place*, 1991; *Benamonte*, 1997 (Award of the Portuguese Pen Club). Other publications: *Edition of Friedrich Schiller's theoretical works* (3 volumes: *Letters about Aesthetical Education, Texts on the Beautiful, the Sublime and the Tragical, About Naive and Sentimental Poetry*), numerous studies and articles about Culture Theory, German Culture, Portuguese Culture, Comparative Culture, many of them as a

result of participation in international conferences (New Delhi, Dublin, Guadalajara, Bled) in several languages.

ULICKA Danuta, (1956) is a Professor at Warsaw University, Polish Philology Department, Institute of Polish Literature, Section of Theory of Literature and Poetics. Some of her duties and posts have included: Presidency of the Section of Theory of Literature and Poetics, Polish Philology Department, Institute of Polish Literature (2005); Member of the Scientific Board at the Institute of Polish Literature (from 1999); Member of the Scientific Board at the Polish Philology Department (from 2000); Member of the International Research Group 'Forschergroupe Narratologie', projekt 2: 'Der Beitrag des slavischen Funktionalismus zur internationalen Narratologie'; constant co-operation with a number of publishing houses as a reviewing expert (Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw; Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw; "Nasza Księgarnia", Warsaw Univeristy Press, 'Universitas', Cracow).

Publications have included: *Ingarden's Philosophy of Literature and its Contexts*, 1992; *Loneliness. Five Essays on Existentialism*, 1996; *The Limits of Literature and the Borders of Literary Studies*, 1999; *Scientific editorship of Literature. Theory. Methodology* (1998, the 2nd edition: 2001); *The Faces of Polish Feminism* (2000); *Dialog, Comparative Studies, Literature* (2002); *Scientific editorship of anthologies: Poetics: Genre Studies and Interpretations* (1997); *Poetics*, vol. 1-2 (1999, the 2nd edition: 2000); *Theory and Methodology of Literary Studies* (1998, the 3rd edition: 2005). Translations from Russian and English (M.M. Bakhtin, S. S. Averintsev, V. Jerofeev, V. Propp, O. M. Freudenberg).



SUMMARIES (into Macedonian)

Резимеа: *

ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ Том 1 НАСИЛСТВОТО И УМЕТНОСТА

I дел
Нова теорија на насилството

КАТА ЌУЛАВКОВА

(Македонска академија на науките и уметностите, Скопје, Македонија)

Насилството и цивилизацијата

Огледот ја проблематизира апоријата на поимот цивилизација која произлегува од фактот дека т.н. еволуција на цивилизацијата не само што не го укинува насилството, туку го поттикнува до степен на негово ентропично присуство на историската сцена. Насилственоста, сфатена како човечка и цивилизациска предиспозиција, и насилството, како конкретен праксис на *страшни и жални собитија*, се вградени во човечката цивилизација од самите нејзини почетоци до денес (протокултура на насилството). Насилството е социокултурно кодирана девијација претворена во конститутивно начело на цивилизацијата. Во овој оглед насилството не се посматра како анимален импут кај човекот, туку како негова инхерентна предиспозиција. Направена е дистинкција меѓу анимализмот и монструозноста кај човекот. Свеста за историската улога на насилството е иницијално манифестирана при креацијата на државата и нејзините институции, како иманентно цивилизациски придобивки. Тогаш е извршена првата редистрибуција на насилството на одбранбено и агресорско, на прогресивно (револуционерно) и конзервативно (државно). Тогаш се воведува дуализмот во поимањето на насилството како остаток од предцивилациските варварски

* редоследот на резимеата е според содржината

епохи и како инструмент и стратегија на цивилизацијата. Овој дуализам е извор на манипулација со насилството. Благодарение на тој дуализам, насилството може да се прекодира од примарно во секундарно, од инструмент во цел, од легитимно во нелегитимно. Благодарение на тој дуализам, ист тип насилство може да се толкува еднаш како државотворно/миротворно, друг пат како деструктивно/анархистичко. Значи, поимот цивилизација не подразбира нужно доминација на хуманизираните вредности на човештвото. Тој упатува на практиката на нивното превреднување во текот на историјата, кога доаѓа до деформација на темелните концепти на хуманоста, на праведноста и на мирот. Еклатантните облици на насилство, на индивидуален, колективен, државен и глобален план (војната како злосторство против мирот, геноцидот како злосторство против човештвото), не се инсталираат само како антицивилизациски категории туку и како прогресивни, движечки фактори на цивилизацијата (јупитеровски синдром). Теориски гледано, тоталното отсуство на движечкото насилство би предизвикало апсолутно присуство на државен терор (апсолутна власт, диктатура, тоталитаризам и сл.).

Сознанието дека истите насилствени појави можат, во различни констелации, да се интерпретираат на дијаметрално различен начин и дека насилството, во основа, е реплика на друго насилство во светот структуриран како непомирлив конфликт меѓу варварската и цивилизацијата матрица, укажува на потребата да се ревидираат стереотипизираните утописки концепти на хуманитетот. Тоа сознание ја актуализира потребата од ново читање на цивилизацијата низ призма на насилствата што ги генерира таа или, обратно, ја нагласува потребата од ново читање на насилството низ призма на де-хуманизираноста на цивилизацијата. Тоа е повод за создавање специјализирана херменевтика на насилството. Тоа е повод за интерпретација на уметноста и на стварноста од аспект на насилството. Тоа е повод да се истакне политичката структура на насилството како структура на моќ/власт со интенција да се апсолутизира и да се варваризира. Тоа е повод да се преиспита постоењето на феноменот насилство-заради-насилство (тортура, терор, *reine dure et forte*) и да се пледира дека безусловната граница на казненото насилство не се исцрпува со укинувањето на смртната казна, туку дури со укинувањето на бруталната тортура. Тоа е повод да се актуализираат веќе традиционалните категории од миметичка провениенција (референцијалност, реалистичност, веројатност). Во овој контекст, посебно внимание привлекуваат екстремните ситуации во коишто интронизираниите структури

на власта и центрите на моќ ги идентификуваат облиците на *политичката другост*, па и оние аватарските и хуманистичките, реформаторските, научните и уметничките, како насилство над востановениот ред/кодекс, така што ги санкционираат со сурови и радикални казни (прометејски тип насилство). Поради посебниот интерес кон ваквите ситуации на погрешно и виолентно читање на хуманистичките проекти во историјата на човештвото, интерпретацијата на насилството е направена врз мито-драмската слика на насилството во Ајсхиловата трагедија *Окованиот Прометеј*.

МИХАИЛ ЕПШТЕЈН (Универзитет Емори, Атланта, САД)

Хорорологијата како негативна наука за цивилизацијата

Хорорологијата е нова дисциплина која може да се вброи во хуманитарните науки како одговор на новите општествени состојби во третиот милениум. На врвот на својата еволуција, цивилизацијата создава застрашувачка опасност за себеси. И самото име на предложената дисциплина не е помалку застрашувачко од неговото интендирано значење. Една од очигледните опасности за цивилизацијата е илустрирана преку ширењето на вирусите низ компјутерските мрежи. Единствено преку развитокот на еден толку совршен орган на комуникација, каква што е Интернет мрежата, дојдовме во позиција да разбереме како овие вештачки органи се ранливи на болести кои самите ги произведуваат. Вирусите не се шират низ телефонски или телевизиски мрежи, туку многу помоќните електронски врски се лесен плен за овие вештачки *микроорганизми*. Според некои скорешни прогнози, за пет години, секое второ сандаче за електронска пошта ќе биде инфицирано со вирус кој ќе има способност да го уништи целиот систем на електронски комуникации. По 11 септември, во матичната имагинација на многу напредни општества низ целиот свет, стравот стана доминантна состојба на цивилизацијата која сè повеќе се гледа себеси како домен на самоуништувачки достигнувања. Секој од термините - поштенска служба, медицина, компјутерско општество, авијација, облакодери, резервоари за вода, мостови - може да се претвори во оружје за уништување на цивилизацијата. Самоуништувачкиот потенцијал на хиперактивната западна цивилизација беше јасно предвиден од страна на Гете, во вториот дел на *Фауст*. Символично, терористите како оружје не користат ништо друго, освен самите цели. Математиката на уништувањето покажува дека *собирањето* на различни цивилизациски елементи - авиони и

облакодери - резултира со нивно заемно *одземање*. Слично како што компјутерската мрежа ја создаде вирусната епидемија која се заканува да го парализира својот извор, така и нашата цивилизација произведува една огромна сенка која се заканува да ја помрачи.

Во втората половина на XX век, цивилизацијата беше прогонувана од заканите кои самата ги наметна врз сопствената животна средина; така што XXI век, уште од својот почеток, ја нагласи заканата што цивилизацијата си ја упатува самата себеси. *Екологијата*, како примарна грижа на човештвото, наоѓа свој наследник во *хорорологијата*, која ги истражува (а) цивилизацијата како систем на напади и автоексплодирачки напади, и (б) човештвото, како заложник на цивилизацијата: негативна историја, негативна социологија, негативна естетика. Сè што беше изучувано досега од другите дисциплини како позитивен атрибут или како структурален просперитет на цивилизацијата, хорорологијата денес го посматра како можност за самоуништување на цивилизацијата.

МИКЕ БАЛ

(Холандска кралска академија на уметностите и науките, Амстердам, Холандија)

Загубени во вселената: насилството на јазикот

Прашањето за кодирањето и декодирањето на насилството во *медиумската* трансформација е мошне сложено. Но она на што *не* се однесува, според мое мислење, е „репрезентацијата на насилството во медиумите“, иако и тој проблем останува релевантен во поширока смисла. Јас ќе ја интерпретирам фразата што ја именува оваа програма како: медиумите, јазикот и сликата - како симултана претстава на насилството и како можност за дејствување против него; вкрстување на погледи и гласови, на звуци и слики, како место на кое насилството може, како што често се случува, да се појави многу лесно. Но, исто така, тоа на медиумите, како и на луѓето кои манипулираат со нив во јавната култура, им дава оружје за отпор. Бидејќи, ако медиумскиот склоп дозволува, преку него, да биде остварено едно специфично културно насилство, тогаш оваа можност, исто така, може да се пренасочи кон борба против насилството. Овие ставови ќе ги изложам преку дискусија за тема која е очигледно релевантна за современата култура - тема која, поради неколку причини што пошироко ќе ги образложам, јас ја нарекувам *миграциска естетика*.

ТЕРЕЗА САЛЕМА (Универзитет во Лисабон, Португалија)

Лава, рана, лузна: насилство – начини на употреба

Насилството отсекогаш било и засекогаш ќе остане нерешен проблем сè додека не почнеме на него да гледаме како на нешто вознемирувачко, но и како предизвик со кој може да се манипулира небаре е неисцрпен извор на енергија. Од оваа перспектива се добиваме со натамошни можни начини на повторно читање на европските цивилизациски процеси и на наративите кои се однесуваат на тнр. насилна природа на човечките суштества.

II дел

Насилството во мемориските практики

ЕРНСТ ФОН АЛФЕН (Универзитет на Лајден, Холандија)

Уништувањето на меморијата:

Петер Форгакс и естетиката на темпоралноста

Уште од деведесеттите години на минатиот век, ширењето на *мемориските практики* во уметноста и во книжевноста е огромно. Овие мемориски практики се манифестираат себеси околу проблеми какви што се траумата, холокаустот и другите геноциди, миграциите, како и околу зголемената употреба на медиумите какви што се фотографијата, документарниот филм, видео-инсталациите, архивите и семејните албуми. Овие мемориски практики сочинуваат една специфична естетика. Главното прашање кое се наметнува со фокусирањето на мемориските практики е - дали нив треба да ги сфатиме како апотеоза на меморијата или, напротив, како симптом на една силна мемориска криза поради страв од заборавање? Преку осврт кон два филма од унгарскиот режисер Петер Форгакс, авторот на овој текст нагласува дека овие мемориски практики водат многу повеќе кон уништување на меморијата, одошто кон нејзина презервација. Меѓутоа, филмовите на Форгакс се обидуваат да му се спротивстават на таквото уништување преку преиспитување на мемориските практики како концепт.

ДАНУТА УЛИЦКА (Варшавски Универзитет, Полска)

Шостакович - Непријател на народот, Формалистичко ѓубре, Предачник

Текстот е фокусиран врз малку познатата композиција на Дмитриј Шостакович, насловена како *Антиформалистичка кантата*. Анализата на оваа кантата, поставена наспроти официјалната рецепција на опусот на овој композитор, овозможува, во исто време, да се нагласи добро познатиот политички и идеолошки критериум за вреднување на уметноста во СССР за време на периодот помеѓу 1920 и 1970 година, како и да се реконструираат најистакнатите карактеристики на источноевропските и на централноевропските модернистички поетики. Нападите насочени кон овој композитор, како и кон многу други уметници од областа на музиката, книжевноста, филмот, театарот, сликарството и скулптурата, заедно со осудата на нивните дела и на теориските рефлексии, генерално означени како *формализам* и *модернизам*, всушност, биле насочени против интертекстуалните и полифоничните правила на текстуалната конструкција (пародијата, гротеската, повеќеслојните алузии и стилизации), разработени од страна на овие уметници. Сатиричната кантата на Шостакович, специфична поради својот двојно кодиран, ироничен и автоироничен модалитет, е еклатантен документ за своето време кој дополнително покажува *како биографското искуство се трансформира во историски настан*.

III дел Насилството во литературата

ФИЛИП ДАРОС (Универзитет на Париз, Сорбона 3, Франција)

Слики, насилства, историја

Текстот „Слики, насилства, историја“ ја проблематизира антропогенезата на хуманизмот промислувајќи ја уметноста како можно сведоштво за насилствата на нашето време. Тој го актуализира прашањето на репрезентацијата и презентацијата (имајќи ги предвид различните видови слики - пиктуралната/ликовната, подвижната/филмската, фотографската, романескната) од гледна точка на насилствата во историјата на 20 век, како век на *апсолутно насилство*, и нивното претставување во неколку романи и неколку

теориски дела од понов датум (2000 - 2006). Есејот ги бара заедничките точки меѓу гледањето и читањето, односно меѓу сликата и текстот, со оглед дека книжевните текстови се „полни со слики, а сликите се текстуализираат“, така што сликата е претставена како специфично *место на насилството* во литературата. Литературата го претставува времето/историјата во форма на текстуализирани слики. Преку интересот за насилството во последните дваесетина години, уметноста се отвора за едно специјално враќање на историјата („враќање без враќање“). Насилството во современата уметност се појавува како чинител на историјата, односно на монтажата на трагичниот спектакл на историјата, а играта се јавува како профана варијанта на ритуалот, како чинител на историската монтажа. Авторот укажува на некои епистемолошки последици по однос на поимот хуманост кој може да се реституира со обновата на единството меѓу реалноста и формата, наспроти бенјаминско-адорнијанската вознемиреност поради неможности литературата да влезе во каква било интеракција со реалноста (самопрокламираната отуѓеност на литературата од светот). Есејот го поставува прашањето на дисконтинуитетот по однос на 18 век, промислувајќи ја потребата од ново промислување на антропогенезата на хуманизмот и потребата од дистанцирање од пасивноста/индиферентноста пред апсолутното насилство, како неодминлива должност на уметноста.

МАНУЕЛ ФРИАС МАРТИНС (Универзитет на Лисабон, Португалија)

Насилството, книжевноста и канонот

Во последниве две декади, книжевната теорија и книжевната критика се оддалечија од формалистичката атмосфера која доминираше во нивната практика, особено во академските средини, уште од периодот на т.н. лингвистички пресврт. Тие се сè повеќе и повеќе мотивирани од човечкиот фактор што го претставува книжевноста. Оваа општа тенденција открива нов пресврт во интелектуалните интереси кој се должи на две заемно испреплетени причини. Првата причина може да се лоцира во изумирањето на *техничката неточност* во проучувањето на книжевноста, која за време на еден подолг период, погрешно се поврзуваше со научниот пристап - иако, всушност, имаше многу мали релации со него. Втората причина е поврзана со повторното враќање кон интерпретацијата која е стимулирана од притисокот на најсофистицираните варијанти на современите културни студии.

Враќањето на човекот во книжевната теорија и критика не треба да се оддели ниту од современата свест за состојбата која сите нас не поврзува како *глобални граѓани*. Тоа е несомнена интелектуална мамка, која не насочува нас, критичарите и теоретичарите, кон политичките, социјалните и етичките проблеми. Впрочем, тоа е причинето од фактот што (и) јас, иако не сум ниту филозоф ниту истражувач на политиката, се чувствувам обврзан да мислам и да пишувам како *глобален граѓанин*, надвор од ограничувањата на традиционалните дисциплинарни граници на проучувањето на книжевноста. Искажано со зборовите на Едвард Саид, ова искуство може да се нарече „пракса на граѓанска партиципација“, во однос на она што Саид го означува како „хуманистичка пракса“ и чијашто цел е „да воведи едно достапно културно преиспитување на колку што е можно повеќе проблеми, кое ќе биде продукт на човековиот труд и на човековите напори за еманципација и за просветлување“ (Саид, 2004: 22).

Токму во тој дух, уште на почетокот од овој есеј, би сакал да укажам на германскиот научник Вернер Краус и на неговата одлука да пишува за Корнеј, додека ја исчекувал сопствената егзекуција во нацистичкиот Берлин. Прво, ова не е само еден од многуте возвишени примери на интелектуална надмоќ и рамнодушност, туку и едно моќно признание дека *толку на книжевноста можеме да и веруваме дека ќе ни помогне да ги замислиме најтрајните човечки вистини за вкрстувањата на животот и смртта*. Второ, особено по трагичното искуство со нацизмот, примерот на Вернер Краус, исто така, не обврзува да признаеме дека сите ние сме граѓани на светот кои имаат *морална одговорност* во однос на глобалните настани на човештвото. Критичката тематизација на насилството во овој есеј, како и на некои од стравовите кои ги поттикнува или ги предизвикува насилството, исто така, ми дозволува да ја испитам и моралната одговорност при соочувањето со екстремната, колективизирана форма на насилство, отелотворена во војната - која го засилува, како што не смееме да заборавиме, првиот текст на нашата Западна книжевна традиција (види Ханс ван Вес, 1992: 61-166).

Конечно, како есеист, јас сум убеден дека разбирањето на насилството е од најголемо значење за расветлувањето на некои наши лични насоки на интерпретацијата на книжевноста. Насоките кои ќе бидат разработени во овој есеј се цврсто потпрени врз верувањето дека насилството во никој случај не е ирелевантно за книжевноста бидејќи сите *морални дилеми*, кои ги хранат насилните дејства, не само што завршуваат разработени во многу песни,

романи, раскази и драми, туку се и сржта на главните канонски книжевни текстови на нашето западно културно наследство. Сепак, треба да се напомене дека мојата забелешка за канонството има сосема мала врска со моралните проблеми, поради тоа што, од една страна, и покрај мошне спорната забелешка (и напад) на Харолд Блум кон она што тој го смета за школа на навредувањето, јас го поддржувам тој негов *амалгам* за упад во канонот: „мајсторството на фигуративниот говор, оригиналноста, когнитивната моќ, знаењето, бујноста на дикцијата“ (Блум, 1994: 29), а од друга страна, затоа што верувам дека моралните ограничувања или стандарди немаат ништо заедничко со канонската сила. Според мое мислење, насилствените дејства впишани во канонските книжевни текстови се хранат со моралните дилеми како последица на еден вид *пре-свртено спознание на човечкото искуство* од страна на авторот, слично на она што Харолд Блум го нарекува „когнитивни негации“ (Блум, 35).

УМБЕРТО РОСИ (Институт 'Паскал', Помеција, Италија)

**Дали војната е само во нашите глави?
(Војната и масовните медиуми во расказите
Театарот на војната и Воена треска од Џ. Г. Балард)**

Војната, во никој случај, не е првото нешто на што би се сетиле кога ќе се спомне името на британскиот писател Џејмс Греам Балард кој е роден во Шангај во 1930 година, а во моментот живее во Лондон. Сепак, не може да се негира дека првата филмска адаптација на еден од романите на Балард, *Империја на сонцето* (1987), режирана од медиумскиот гигант Стивен Спилберг, беше базирана врз неговите лирски и визионерски секавања на војната од 1984 година. Претходно, Балард веќе се имаше занимавано со проблемот на војната и на военото насилство во неговите раскази како, на пример, во *Убиствена земја* (1969) и оригиналната квази-приказна *Театарот на војната* (1977). Овој есеј се обидува да го протолкува мошне неконвенционалниот расказ од 1977 година, поврзувајќи го со останатите текстови на Балард, како на пример расказот *Воена треска* (1989) и квази-романот *Изложба на свирепоста* (1970). Исто така, овој есеј се обидува да ја постави воената фикција на Балард наспроти позадината на добро познатите примери на *воена литература* и нејзините критички дилеми. Конечно, се поставува и клучното прашање во критицизмот на Балард, кое се однесува на сложениот проблем на *одумирањето на сочувството*. Предложената интерпретација истакнува дека

изложеноста на Балард, уште во неговите млади години, на ужасот и на психофизичкото насилство на војната, го направила особено чувствителен на проблемите на насилството (и во време на војна и во време на мир) и ги поттикнала неговите неконвенционални и фасцинантни рефлексии за (пост)модерното војување, кои можат да се најдат во наведените раскази, како и во некои од неговите поголеми дела (*Изложба на свирепоста* и *Империја на сонцето*). Според тоа, фикцијата на Балард ни нуди мошне оригинална и вознемирувачка перспектива на проблемите на војната и на насилството во епохата на доцната модерна, наспроти контекстот на бројните историски конфликти, од Втората светска војна, преку Виетнам, сè до граѓанската војна во Либан.

ЛАУРА МИНТЕГИ (Универзитет на Баскија, Билбао, Шпанија)

Ефектот на политичкото насилство врз книжевноста

Целта на овој текст е да го испита ефектот што политичкото насилство го врши врз книжевноста, особено врз романот на баскиски јазик. Најпрво, ќе биде истакнато дека присуството на политичкото насилство во романот напишан на баскиски јазик беше особено ограничени, се до пред неколку години; повеќе децении оваа тема беше практично невидлива во баскиската книжевност, иако повеќето автори ја чувствуваа загушувачката политичка атмосфера.

Второ, ќе се разгледаат техниките што писателите ги усовершиле со цел да ја отфрлат политичката и социјалната реалност: приказните се од периодот на детството, се измислуваат имагинарни места, се прибегнува кон минатото и се создава научната фантастика.

Целта е да се насочи вниманието кон една тема којашто беше сметана за потполно непостоечка, а која, всушност, беше мошне присутна во баскиската книжевност, така што ќе се укаже и на напорите што се прават за да му се сври грб на страдањето. Од друга страна, со отфрлањето на логиката на структурализмот, некои автори прибегнале кон произведување на n-та верзија на она што навистина историски се случувало, но повторно се соочиле со репресија само заради повикувањето на самата иновација.

Конечно, низ целиот текст се истакнува страдањето на писателите. Со помош на презентацијата на политичкото насилство како спектакл, системот ги претвора писателите во пасивни набљудувачи. Тие страдаат секогаш кога нивната совест ќе се соочи со полициското насилство и само малкумина можат да соберат доволно храброст за да произведат оригинален книжевен одговор на реалноста со која се соочуваат.

АЦО ПЕРОСКИ

(Универзитет Св. Кирил и Методиј, Скопје, Македонија)

ПерФетно насилство

Уметноста и насилството, во онтолошка смисла, ги поврзува артикулацијата. Насилството е иманентно врежано во можноста за дискурс, додека целиот онтолошки концепт на уметноста се потпира врз артикулацијата на светот низ (некој) нов метаговор. Правото на страдање е вистинскиот бедем на уметноста затоа што во неговата основа лежи правото на јазик и на артикулација. Можноста за реферирање подразбира можност за насилство, кое се легитимира преку парадоксологичките механизми на цивилизацијата. Насилството на уметничката артикулација, наспроти тоа, е интрасубјективно, насочено кон самиот субјект на артикулацијата и содржано во неговиот копнеж за самоуништување и за станување едно/исто со предметот на својата артикулација.

IV дел

Толкување на насилството во перформативните уметности

МИЛЧО МАНЧЕВСКИ (Факултет за уметности на Тиш, Институт за филм и телевизија на Канбар, Њујорк, САД)

Уметност, насилство + општество: неколку забелешки, тон и функција: уметност и ритуалот

Гледањето на филмот споделува неколку значајни аспекти со ритуалот, во рамките на кои насилството и насилните чувства може да бидат одиграни и објаснети, најчесто колективно, без при тоа да се предизвикаат насилни последици - што ја обезбедува можноста публиката да стекне одредено знаење со истражување-то на ваквите насилни наративи и со реакцијата на истите. Со оглед на ваквата потенцијална "педагошка" функција, се чини дека е поопасно гледачите да се депривираат од насилството или пак секој пристап кон насилството да биде ограничен, одошто тоа да се портретира во сета своја грда убавина.

Општествените одговори на насилството во уметноста - и особено на насилството во филмот, како "најреалистичен" медиум - всушност ја отсликуваат општествената тежобност и лицемерниот табуизиран третман на прикажувањето на насилството; токму како што сите наши индивидуални рекации на филмот многу помалку се однесуваат на самиот филм или на режисерот, одошто се однесуваат на нас самите. Она што е најзначајно, значи, не е тоа што се прикажува во филмот - во текстот - туку интенцијата на делото и тонот во којшто истото е прикажано.

СИБИЛА ПЕТЛЕВСКИ

(Академија за драмски уметности, Универзитет во Загреб, Хрватска)

Насилството во уметноста: изведби и сведочења

Големата тематска област на насилството во уметноста му отвора на современиот истражувач широк простор на теориски можности во третманот на избраната тема. Промената на главните естетски концепти во периодот на модерната, постмодерниот естетски егзистенционализам кој ги изедначува традиционално високите и традиционално ниските жанрови, новите третмани на проблемите на идентитетот, културниот релативизам, како и останатите симптоми на постмодерната, доведоа до создавање нови наративни стратегии, предизвикувајќи драматични промени во сите естетски концепти и нудејќи нови перспективи на старите идеи, каква што е и идејата на *емпатијата*. Главната амбиција на овој текст е анализа на некои неодамна објавени дела кои се наоѓаат на крсто- патот помеѓу уметничката интервенција и перформансот, како и истакнување на разликата помеѓу *идејно* заснованите концептуални субверзии и *телесно* заснованите трансгресии во перформансите кои вклучуваат физичка болка.

ЈАСМИНКА МАРКОВСКА

(постдипломец, Истражувачки центар за Ибзен, Осло, Норвешка)

Живите перформанси на насилство

(есеј за насилството и за перформативната уметност)

Перформансите во живо се развија и беа употребувани од страна на свесни уметници кои протестираа во периодот помеѓу 60-ите и 80-ите години. Уметниците започнаа да развиваат живи, моментални и критични реакции на она што се одвиваше во светот

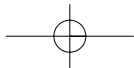
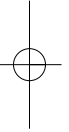
Naslov

во истото време додека тоа се одвиваше. Политичкиот и културниот вител од втората половина на дваесеттиот век се огледуваше во нивната посебна и нова уметничка форма на многу нивоа, а тие ја употребуваа за екстремни политички акции и за воведување лични трауматични теми во јавниот живот. Радикалните политички пораки и феминистичкото ослободување беа постојани теми на листата на живите перформанси, исто како и психичката траума што ја предизвика општеството со неговите вештачки конструирани конвенции. Насилството стана широка тема, но и алатка во нивните деконструктивни настапи.

Овој есеј е анализа на некои од аспектите на себе-насилството кое артистите си ги нанесуваат во живите перформанси. Следејќи го сфаќањето на уметноста како избивање на природното насилство во безбедните конструкти на општеството и на културата на Камил Паглија, и поврзувајќи го со некои од проблемите на приватно-јавните односи и поместувањето на овие односи во смисла на теорите за моќ и за субјективизација според Батлер, овој есеј се обидува да го расветли влијанието на насилните дела врз публиката и пораката која перформативните уметници ни ја праќаат преку овие насилни дела.

Есејот, исто така, отвора прашања и проблеми во врска со природата на перформансите и со последиците од делата кои се *создадени* во живо, на сцена, врз моралот, врз етиката и врз психата на уметниците и на публиката; механизмот познат како *повикување вина*, како и позицијата и функцијата на уметноста која се наметнува од нив.

Есејот не е одговор на овие проблеми, туку анализа која ги отвора проблемите. Радикални и насилни перформанси се изведуваа сè уште, иако се помалку во последните 15 години. Живата перформативна уметност се претвора во најразлични артефакти - книги, видео записи, фотографии и други снимени материјали - додека перформативните уметници предаваат во академски институции и ги објаснуваат своите дела, наместо да ги изведуваат. Она што е останато да се истражува се последиците (доколку ги има) на пораките што тие се обидуваат да ги пратат.



LIST of ILLUSTRATIONS

- Front & back cover page - *Bar relief* - Ohrid, Macedonia
 20; 78; 116; 200; 246 - *Himera* - Parot Sumer 291-358
 22 - *Atlant and Prometheus* - VI century BC, Vatikan Museum
 45 - *Mask*: Petrich Karnival, 2007 (Photo by K. Kulavkova)
 46 - *Angelus Novus* - Paul Klee
 52 - Relief: *Palette of king Narmer*, Egipt, ~ 3000 b.c.
 67 - Gligor Chemerski: *The Ritter and the snake*, oil on canvas, 2003
 68 - Petrich Karnival, 2007 (Photo by K. Kulavkova)
 77 - A scene from the film: *Un chien andalou*, Luis Bunuel
 80 - Photo Magazine: *Irak*
 97 - Frida Kahlo: *Broken Spinal Column*, 1944, Mexico City
 98 - Wallpaper: *Warcraft3, frozen throne*
 115 - *Mask*: Petrich Karnival, 2007 (Photo by K. Kulavkova)
 118 - *Sebastian*
 136 - *Instruments of torture*
 156 - Photo: National geographic
 177 - Scenes from the S. Spilberg film: *Empire of the Sun*
 178 - *stelarc_suspension*
 188 - A scene from Tarkovski film: *Andrej Rubljov*
 199 - A scene from the film of Milcho Manchevski: *Before the Rain*
 202 - *Murder*, Vietcong, Saigon police-chief Eddie Adams
 213 - Detail from *Guernica* - Pablo Picasso
 214 - *Metajoy 2_1*
 229 - René Magritte - *La Mémoire*
 230 - *Metajoy 3_1*
 245 - M. Abramovic - *1Rituale*

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Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Blvd. Krste Misirkov 2, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia
Tel.: + 389 2 3235-400; Fax: + 389 2 3235-501
e-mail: manu@manu.edu.mk

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Other translators: Sarah Turtle, Paula Horta

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