



Where the Harm Comes From: Ethics of Mediating Collectives

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WHERE THE HARM COMES FROM:
ETHICS OF MEDIATING COLLECTIVES

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Abstract. This article defines the intermediate level between personal agency and global issues of injustice as a complex system of *mediating collectives*, the agency of which must be addressed specifically in organizational and ontological but also in ethical and political terms. We target three domains of global injustice: economic, environmental, and gender-related, following the threads of briefly stated cases in these domains. Our conclusion suggests recommendations for dealing more realistically and more efficiently with global injustice that obstinately thrives from somewhere deep into the structures of the contemporary world. Our recommendations will bear on (a) individual responsibility in a collective, (b) virtuous direct and indirect action, (c) awareness of and communication with interdependent collectives, (d) optimal communication within every collective, (e) readiness for joint-action as an authentic group-agent.

Keywords: harm, injustice, agency, ethics, mediation, collectives

1. QUESTIONS AND METHODS

This article stems from the collaborative intersection of diverse research fields: A. de Lastic works on collective agency and the philosophy of the firm as a collective agent, F. Verrax teaches and

publishes on sustainability, engineering ethics, global injustice (environmental, economic), and new medias, and M. Puech investigates contemporary value systems (technology, sustainability, ordinary wisdom). We suppose the reader to be unfamiliar with at least some of the disciplinary fields we are referring to, therefore we briefly remind basic definitions and contexts for each of them.

Our topic is global structural injustice construed in terms of wealth inequalities, environmental degradation and basic human rights violations. We proceed from the hypothesis that this question is a moral one because these wrongful facts and actions qualify as morally bad, *evil*, but we use the more neutral notion of *harm* in order to avoid religious prejudices and even a theory of natural evil that would impair our pragmatically oriented approach. We adopt an open-minded framework of virtue ethics (Besser and Slote 2015; Sandler and Cafaro 2005) to tackle this harm and to formulate applied ethics recommendations for midsize collectives. Our path will be marked out by a series of transverse real-world cases of global injustice: (a) *the 1% vs the 99%* in the distribution of world's wealth (Stiglitz 2012), (b) *climate change* and its wrongful outcomes on the poor and on the global ecosystem (Martínez Alier 2003; Jamieson 2014), (c) *femicide*: the intentional killing of female humans, directly or indirectly, even before birth, only because they are females (Radford and Russell 1992; Dayan 2018; Weil, Corradi, and Naudi 2018).

There certainly is global structural harm beyond economy, environment, and human rights, but we believe we are yet taking into account a representative share of what goes wrong in the non-ideal world.

Whose agency lies behind the global harm? Let us consider two of its main dimensions, the global structural economic injustice and the global structural ecosystems devastation. From a moral point of view, this harm would indeed deserve to be called "evil", and not only sad, regrettable, unacceptable, etc., because it is human-made and it remains modifiable by humans: we are in the moral domain. Theories of conspiracy come to quick conclusions by incriminating

a hidden malevolent collective human agency and thus reviving in different versions the age-old symbolism of the scapegoat. Handy scapegoats are easily found, from sorcerers and unbelievers to males and capitalists, extremists and terrorists. One of the numerous weaknesses of any conspiracy theory is that it relies on a theory of personal evil agency that fits perfectly with the Abrahamic religious notion of "sin" but not with the contemporary ethics of collective agency. If there is something rotten in the Kingdom, it must come from a finite number of individuals who can be identified and eradicated, so they say. But if the global harm is *not* due to the actions of an assignable number of persons, it is a conspiracy with no conspirator, and this drives us right back into the notion we are examining in this article: an undefined global agency which by no means is the common secret plan of some wicked individuals.

This article defines a mediating level between personal agency and global issues in order to avoid two easy but objectionable explanations for global injustice: neither *personal agency*, which would justify intense moral pressure put on human persons, nor *global agency*, which leads to devising "just" global institutions or to debunking global conspiracies. Our proposal is to focus on an intermediate and inter-mediating level of largely unstructured collectives, myriads of them, constituting a collective agency that prospers as evil always does: remaining unnoticed, even to the perpetrators themselves. We have in mind a variety of contexts: what happens, or does not happen, in family circles, cohabitants or domestic communities of any kind, neighbourhood, local associations (civic, cultural, religious, jogging or swimming partners), small business units and mid-level management teams, etc., what is discussed and shared and what is not, how collective decisions are made and how personal decisions (buying a new phone, eating organic, refusing to move the office to another part of the town, confronting the new slightly macho employee, etc.) are influenced by and influence (more important!) other personal and group actions. In the most optimistic view of *active intermediating collectives*, the local political and administrative institutions, where

they function to accomplish their duty and not to mainly sustain themselves, can be generously counted in.

2. INJUSTICE: GLOBAL, STRUCTURAL, AND BAD

Let us recognize and characterize global harm through a certain number of facts and thereby define what we will take as global injustice whilst searching also a common structural cause behind the diversity of its instantiations.

a) Global Economic Injustice

It has become rather mundane to talk about economic injustice. What we mean by global economic injustice has been measured in various ways, the most convincing one probably being the 99%/1% ratio: the richest 1% owns more wealth than the whole of the rest of humanity (Crédit Suisse 2017).

We assimilate extreme poverty with global injustice in two ways: first, extreme poverty does not allow people and communities to fulfil their basic needs nor human rights. Following the seminal work by Amartya Sen, we can also argue that extreme poverty does not allow for equal capabilities, hence for individuals' opportunity to fulfilment (Sen 2009). This stand is rather consensual among philosophers, including utilitarians. Second, we believe that extreme economic inequalities are bad per se and, in this perspective, we do not agree with a utilitarian view that considers it harmless, if not positive, to increase the wealth of the richest while the poorest remain as poor.

Many economists and policymakers believe however that this situation is morally acceptable insofar as it is continuously getting better. Without entering the necessarily technical debate, we can at least acknowledge the existing controversies among economists - for instance, Crédit Suisse estimated that 82% of all growth in global wealth in 2017 went to the top 1%, while the bottom half of humanity saw no increase at all (Crédit Suisse 2017, 10).. As

philosophers, we wonder whether the fact that some indicators may show a betterment of one aspect in an otherwise deeply iniquitous situation makes it more morally acceptable. At the very least, it seems to us that we can assess the phenomenon of irreducible extreme poverty as a piece of significant evidence for the existence of apparently irreducible harm in the contemporary non-ideal world.

b) Environmental Injustice

If climate change, as well as resources depletion and biodiversity loss, are global phenomena that are and will be affecting everyone on Earth, we follow the analysis by Martínez-Alier (2003) and others, who argue that the poorest humans, both at the individual and collective level, are the most vulnerable to climate change and to other environmental degradations. In this perspective, climate change appears to bring about a twofold global injustice: those who have the least will lose the most; those who are the most responsible (individually and collectively) will be impacted the least. This is a paradigmatic global *structural* injustice.

Concretely, this injustice arises:

- At the national level: The three most affected countries by extreme weather events between 1994 and 2013 were Honduras, Myanmar and Haiti. Of the ten most affected countries by climate change in the period 1994–2013, nine were developing countries in the low income or lower-middle-income country group (Kreft et al. 2014).
- Within the same country, between the haves and the have-nots: the very likely price increase in electricity and basic commodities, including food, without even mentioning the issue of environmental taxation, will affect in priority the poorest.
- Between men and women: Women being, still, mostly in charge with house chores such as gathering firewood or water in many parts of the world, the increasing scarcity of such resources will impose an uneven burden on men and women.

- Between humans and non-humans: the unprecedented loss of biodiversity, in terms of both number of species and of organisms, the so-called “sixth extinction,” (Barnosky et al. 2011; Leakey and Lewin 1996) has been proven a direct result of human activity.

c) Gender Injustice

Even though there are many different indicators of gender-based injustice (unequal access to education worldwide, unequal pay, unequal share of household chores, percentage of women being victims of rape and prostitution, etc.) we have decided to focus on the phenomenon of femicide as a particularly tragic proxy for gender-based injustice and as an indisputable case of moral harm. We take the definition of “femicide” coined by Radford and Russell (1992): “situations in which women are permitted to die as a result of misogynous attitude or social practices.” (Weil et al. 2018, 80) A more provocative, yet insightful definition, by the same authors, suggests that “Femicide is the killing of women *qua* women, often condoned by, if not sponsored, by the state and/or by religious institutions” (Radford and Russell 1992, 1).

Concretely, femicide covers two distinct phenomena:

- The killing of women by men: 87 000 women were killed intentionally in 2017. 58% of these homicides were perpetrated by their male partners, ex-partners or family members (sometimes female), including dowry quarrels or so-called “crimes of honour” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2018). Another statistic reflects the gender imbalance of domestic violence: of all the persons who were killed by their domestic partner in 2017, 82% were women. Outside domestic violence, some have argued that the killing of women in the context of sexual violence, typically after a rape, can also be called a femicide or feminicide (Jablonka 2016). Finally, there is a rich documentation of femicides within very diverse geographical and cultural contexts: in San Juarez, Mexico, close to the American

border, hundreds of young indigenous women are killed - they are referred to as “las inditas del sur” (Gaspar de Alba and Guzmán 2014).

- Sex-selective abortion: Gender-based abortion, the practice of killing female fetuses, because a family prefers to welcome a baby boy, is most common in Africa and Asia, where there has been an estimation of 100 million women “missing”, according to a well-known article by Amartya Sen (1990). In India, the program “Beti Bachao, Beti Pado” (Save the Girl, Educate the Girl) was launched in 2015 as an attempt to address this issue, but with little results so far.

Altogether, these factual harms raise the question: who is responsible? The couple who decides to get an abortion, hoping for a boy next time? The family that may be encouraging them as a way to save the dowry’s money? The community that endorses unreasonable dowry’s customs and more generally the unjust treatment of women? The government who shows little dedication in efficiently tackling the issue? The local authorities who officially enforce the law but in the field deals with persistent traditions, corruption and even threats? We suggest: the intricate and systemic whole, in which levels can be defined and addressed in a typically non-global and non-ideal manner (individuals according to their gender, families, local communities, authorities level by level, etc.).

Finally, it is noteworthy that these three types of injustice are not separated but can stack: in this perspective, being a poor woman living in a country that is particularly vulnerable to climate change is being prone to a triple injustice and triple harm. Should being a relatively well-off male and/or living in a country where climate change is lenient count as a *passive* evil agency of a new sort? This is the kind of absurd shortcut that we want to prevent in drawing attention to intermediate collectives and their non-neutral agency.

An inconvenient basic fact concerning global injustice raises the stakes: it is still there to stay as a global structure, in spite of resisting intellectual, institutional and personal endeavours to mitigate,

compensate or by any means get rid of it. Global economic injustice (a) is described by Stiglitz as endangering our future (Stiglitz 2012) in an atmosphere of discontents after decades of unfulfilled promises (W.T.O., I.F.M. and U.N.'s agencies) (Stiglitz 2002). Environmental crisis in general (b) features in “serious fictions” like Oreskes and Conway’s (Oreskes and Conway 2014) as the coming inevitable collapse of our civilization and it leads well-intended philosophers like Jamieson (2014) to evoking a “dark time” due to the failure of human reason and institutions. Gender injustice (c) fares as badly as the other human rights, even worse perhaps because the issue is denied as being already solved in “enlightened” countries and as being a non-issue in the rest of the world.

Watching how campaigns to raise consciousness and institutions devised to bring justice are often rapidly neutralized, countered or in the worst case massively counter-productive, one is reminded of Ivan Illich’s theory of counter-productive institutions (let us recall how broad his vision of injustice was, which included for instance “shadow work”, prefiguring women or undocumented immigrants abuses), reinforced by recent critiques of our obsession with bureaucracy (Graeber 2015).

Neither global institutions nor virtue preaching discourses seems to work quick enough or efficiently enough. We even suspect a systemic counter-productivity of patronizing institutions and of the guilt-ridden individuals they produce - while inducing in the other individuals the typical self-satisfactory feeling that all these complicated bad affairs are delegated to the good (institutional) hands.

A reasonable answer to the question “why can’t we fix it?” could be: because we still don’t understand what is broken, what doesn’t work as it should. Hence, the efforts of people, governments, lobbies of any kind to set up largely useless institutional initiatives. Is there some sort of *category mistake* (an ontological misunderstanding that sabotages action from the inside) in the efforts to identify the source of global structural injustice as an evil collective agency? According to the two main interpretations of

agency, this harmful agency is situated in individuals (and then it should be treated by voluntary or forced personal moralization) or in a group agency, a conspiracy (and then it should be treated by the force of law, national and supranational). The practical results of both these approaches are currently considered disheartening and this is the stimulus to step back to an initial category mistake. But it might not be the notion of group-agency or collective agency in itself, rather the oversimplified qualification of this agency as "bad" in the perspective of a punitive backwards-looking responsibility. Let us take global structural issues as due to a cloud of collective interacting agencies, and consider this system in a constructive outlook of forward-looking responsibility. The focus remains on the agency, but neither the traditional personal one nor a global group-agent.

3. COLLECTIVES, ORGANIZATIONS, NETWORKS

The existing, emerging and future kinds of collectives, some of them organizations in the traditional sense and the others networks in many innovative ways, can be subjects of a global ethics based on virtue ethics in its currently burgeoning varieties (Sandler 2007, chap. 5). Building upwards from personal ethics and towards justice can be done with a program (Slote 2007) of care, empathy, and moral virtues (revisited). The decisive step in our view is to identify the intermediating collectives, whatever their organizational nature, and to suggest for them specific virtues.

The three transverse themes as we are following them originating from a more global entity that cannot simply be taken as a group-agent. They come from a systemic entity comprising culture, social values, incumbent economic structures, existing political systems. The transverse question, it appears, ought then to be: how are the new kinds of intermediating agency actually mingling with these systemic issues and from there on how can they rearrange the whole systemic mess with some likelihood to improve it?

A little bit of ontology is required here to clarify the nature and identity of a group-agent. From the vast and controversial literature on the subject, a consensus emerges: *collective organizations* like enterprises (business firms), governments, NGOs, and so many other forms are things and, more precisely, they are “social objects” that can be seen like “corporate agents”. These organizations essentially act in the world. Amazon launches delivery by drones, Greenpeace saves whales, the Spanish government allows a vote for the independence of a province. But in these expressions do we mean that Greenpeace actually acts as a group-agent, as a whole? Or do we use this image but we actually mean that some individuals, some parts or members of Greenpeace once save whales? Does the group embody a specific identity or does it just possess the cumulative identity of its parts? The answer to this question justifies understanding the behaviour of firms and national states as “corporate agents.” This is still a moot point in legal and philosophical theories.

Two main options are explored.

(1) *The individual or a definite part takes precedence over the whole.* This prevailing of the individual over the collective entity is known as “methodological individualism” in the sociological tradition. It is a paradigm of social sciences according to which collective phenomena can (and must) be described and explained from the properties and actions of individuals and their mutual interactions (bottom-up approach). Coleman dubbed these groups “multi-agents” systems. This interpretation leads to the tenet that any decision or action of the collective reflects (more or less clearly) the overall decisions and actions of individuals (Coleman 1990).

Thus considered, the group can always be reduced to its parts. Peter French affirms that the intentions of the company are always reducible to human intentions (French 1979). From an ethical point of view, this position suggests that collective responsibility can be reduced to individual responsibility. This position amounts to consider that there is no responsibility of the group as such; this is only a manner of speaking.

(2) *It exists a singular identity of the group.* This second position considers that there is a singular identity of the group, which is a reality distinct from the individuals making up the group. This position leads to recognizing that group-agent responsibility and individual responsibilities are distinct.

We are more sympathetic to this second option, which gives a singular and autonomous place to the existence, responsibility, and agency of diverse levels of collectives and basically opens the question: which collective to deal with which issue?

To go further, after assuming the singular existence of a group or an organization we need to fully understand it as a social object, namely an object that is not defined only by its physical instantiation but also by a *collective intention*, that is to say by the projections the agents make on it. The social object, like a firm or a bank note, is a whole composed of physical and mental elements. Without collective intentions, the firm is just a building and the bank note just a paper sheet. But social objects like firms, governments, hospitals, schools and so on have something essential in common: their principal intrinsic property is constituted by individuals. The unity and independence of the collective intention and collective agency make sense out of this intrinsic property, under complex conditions that we need to put forward now.

There are four conditions to qualify a group, whereas the intention is common to all its members: a shared goal, individual contributions to achieve the goal, interdependence (each one formulates one's intentions partly because they believe that others share these intentions), and common consciousness. The common intention allows joint action. But how can a multi-member group evolve from a multiplicity of dispositions (or "attitudes") to a unique goal approved by all the group members? To answer this question, List and Pettit introduce the concept of "aggregative function", which is a vector starting from individual dispositions towards the emergence of an autonomous group aim (List and Pettit 2011). The joint commitments required for the emergence of the group is easy to be described, according to Margaret Gilbert: "How are joint

commitments formed? To put it very generally, in a situation where there are no special background understandings, each person must express to the others that he is in a certain broadly speaking mental state, such that common knowledge among them that all have made, the appropriate expressions suffices to create a joint commitment of them all. I refer to this state as “readiness” for joint commitment. As to common knowledge, suffice it to say that the expressions in question must be “out in the open” as far as the parties-to-be are concerned.” (Gilbert 2015, 80).

The autonomous group aims and the resulting joint commitment are the base of collective agency. Furthermore, an organization can access superior agentive properties that are: having representational states of the environment, building a motivational state that specifies the things needed by the environment, being able to rely on these two previous “intentional” states to intervene properly in the environment (List and Pettit 2011).

The reality of the group-agent, based on the intrinsic conditions of agency and on the possibility of a single group’s aim cannot be cogently contested. Therefore, the entity as group-agent can be subject to criticism, accusation etc. For example, when BP is held responsible for an oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, it is considered as an agent that can be prosecuted as such. This position does not prevent recognizing individual responsibilities. Each member of the group is in a sense individually morally responsible for the outcome of the joint action but each is individually responsible jointly with the others (Miller and Makela 2005, 234). There is no paradox in group agency but the superposition of collective and individual responsibility. They are linked but they are different. From this perspective, the individual agent, belonging to numerous formal and informal collectives, carries a multiply folded responsibility and agency. It is not advisable to manage this kind of complex interdependence with a mechanical engineering logic, typical Western-style rationalizing. It is worth trying to implement in one’s mind a Daoist, Buddhist or ecological sense of harmony in systemic interdependence (Hershock 2012, 2006; Naess 1989)

There is another form of the collective agent: the networks and new collectives (especially political collectives). For example, a consumer's or a brand community, the "Yellow Vests" movement in France (2018-2019), the Anonymous on the Internet, a local collective for welcoming refugees, etc. Since the 2000s, this kind of collective is more and more important in public life and in the media, it gathers all types of population and gains public support up to the point of becoming the only remaining collective deserving trust, confronted to companies, state governments or other "stable" major institutions. A comprehensive study of this new logic in social movements is due to Manuel Castells (Castells 2012) and the phenomenon as a whole, supported by the Internet, Facebook, and other iconic medias of the 21st century, is a literal deployment of what was announced as the "wisdom of crowds" (Surowiecki 2004) or "organizing without organizations" (Shirky 2008). These groups possess the same nature, identity, and type of collective agency than the standard group-agents mentioned before, in the sense that they have a real group identity and an autonomous collective agency, most of the times a very visible and communicative one. But their operational inner working is not the same and that makes a real difference for the global collective injustice issue.

These types of collectives are informal. For them, the individual is as important as the whole, and they have a network organization. Some midsize organizations or even informal networks inside large organizations can have the same characteristics – and so they can be mediating collectives for global change, from the inside of large existing structures. We propose this Table for identifying the main differences:

Group agents: firms, governments, NGOs	New collectives and some midsize informal organizations
Formal	Informal
Vertical/Pyramidal	Horizontal organization

The whole is more important	The individual is as important as the group
Contractual adhesion	Adhesion by acting
Orderly constitution	Viral constitution
Top-down	Bottom-up
Process	Emergence

The value of these new collectives is based on the non-dissolution of the person in the group, and this comes from: 1) Actions. Participation in the group is only made by individual voluntary acts and not by formal, contractual, or theoretical adhesion; 2) The fact that they are uncontrollable. These types of collectives are very difficult to be controlled by other organizations because they are elusive. There is no one or no whole to seize. The movement emerges from below and it is not governed by a board. To deconstruct it, it is not possible to remove the head of the group, it is necessary to treat each individuality, one by one. This is obviously complicated especially when the collective is very widespread; Precisely, 3) thanks to the previously mentioned features and thanks to the Internet, the new collectives can grow at a very high speed, they can spread very quickly: it is "viral."

Finally, new collectives appear as very powerful in a time of public inertness and they are sometimes the only remaining option for solving social problems. The governance of the common resources could, according to Ostrom, be assured by voluntary organizations, by collectives able to take charge of the common goods in a mature collaborative way:

"Success in starting small-scale initial institutions enables a group of individuals to build on the social capital thus created to solve larger problems with larger and more complex institutional arrangements. Current theories of collective action do not stress the process of accretion of institutional capital. Thus, one problem in using them as foundations for policy analysis is that they do not focus on the incremental self-transformations that frequently are

involved in the process of supplying institutions. Learning is an incremental, self-transforming process.” (Ostrom 2011, 190).

Defending the commons depends on companies and institutions as group-agents but also on individuals belonging to these groups and, maybe, we can hope for more efficiency from there than from classical organizations. In this process, learning is central, as stressed by Ostrom. For the agent-groups this learning amounts to a duty to know, legally called "duty of vigilance". Its correspondence to the virtue of awareness is obvious.

For addressing problems as big and systemic as inequality, climate change and femicide, we have to consider organizations and new collectives in their possible counter-productive outcomes, as well as in their potential game-changer action. To begin with, a robust theory of personal bonds in informal collectives can be drawn from the famous article on the strength of weak ties by Granovetter (Granovetter 1973). We are advocating here for the strength of weak-ties collectives and affirming they are an indispensable mediation agency for global issues (they address the global bottom-up from individual ethics). The weakness and dangers of informal collectives, large mobs or small occasional crowds, is a well-attested phenomenon in history as in personal experience, but the new kind of collectives in the 21st century is aware of that and consciously insists on the need to subvert the traditional model of a governance by the “knowing few.”

How can the agency of a collective, even an informal one, take over individual responsibility or, better, transpose it to a higher level? We have argued that an organization is a full-agent in its own right, that it can be held responsible for its actions because it has all the characteristics of agency: 1) It has a normative capacity that allows significant normative choices involving the possibility of doing something good or bad, correct or false. 2) It has a judgmental capacity. 3) It is able to organize itself for acting according to pursued collective desires and it is able to choose between several proposals. A collective agent is able to self-regulate.

The term "legal person" states that a corporation or a group may be considered responsible as a person would, a fictitious or artificial person, but nevertheless a person, able to assume responsibility, and who has duties and rights. However, it is one thing to posit the legal existence of the legal person from a performative point of view, in the restricted arena of jurisdiction; it is another to imagine this personification as intrinsic, considering that the person must have a material consistency. But we have previously recognized that the agent-group may perform judgments and moral acts, it may enter into engagements with other agents, and it may be a source or target of requests. It acts, then it is.

In terms of nature and degrees of responsibility, there is then no difference between a "classical organization" and new collectives: they have the same duty to assume their responsibility.

For an organization, responsibility is multiple. If we talk about corporate responsibility, we talk about the responsibility of the group, therefore collective responsibility. The organization's responsibility is named "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) and it contains responsibility for the stakeholders affected by its actions. To better understand the limits of its responsibility and how it is distributed, let us analyse its stakeholders. Global issues, after all, are nothing but unlimited stakeholders issues.

Against Milton Friedman, well known for defending the idea that the sole responsibility of the company is to maximize its profit and consequently the benefit for its shareholders (Friedman 1970), more and more people and organizations now consider that companies have to compensate their outsourced costs for the community (pollution, accidents, unemployment...) (Carroll 1979, 500). It is now admitted that a company has to assume its social and environmental impact. In theory, we should be in a fairer world.

But applying this theory meets some difficulties. How is the responsibility chain organized within a group-agent? To answer this question, we have to differentiate between the "classical organization" and these new collectives. They have the same duty

towards society and the environment, but not the same organization for implementing it.

(1) When the organization is constituted like a firm, a hospital, a school, it is rather easy to attribute its responsibility as a group because the entity is well identified. It can be governed as an autonomous entity. In case of a problem, there is a person, a legal person to bring legal action against. It is always possible to ask for a report on wage levels, carbon impact, gender equality and so on.

But in the case of other organizations, below the radar of business, social or environmental law, it could be complicated to attribute individual responsibility. In fact, the level of responsibility of members in relation to the group is not the same depending on whether they work for the group or they otherwise participate in the achievement of the group's objectives - and depending on their precise level of participation. The problem happens when a task is divided between too many people because this prevents people from seeing the purpose of the task, including its moral purpose. In this way, it can be said that there is a significant risk of dilution of individual responsibility. And this is a preoccupying ethical flaw in an organization.

This issue of collective responsibility and group agent has been addressed by social psychology in a seminal work (Latané and Darley 1970) that analyses the phenomenon of dilution of responsibility as playing a key part in collective agency's fault. Following several sensational stories from the 1960s and 1970s in which victims of rape and/or murder were not helped, nor the police called, despite the presence of numerous witnesses, the concept of dilution of responsibility emerged, consisting of three components:

Social influence: what are the others doing? Peer pressure here means that in a situation of potential danger, an individual first spends some time observing the action, or inaction, of others. This behaviour tends to result in strong inertia: if nobody is doing anything, perhaps it is not that serious.

- *Evaluation apprehension: what if I'm wrong in my perception or interpretation of the situation?* Following the first aspect, this propensity enhances the need for making situations of injustice as clear and explicit as possible, and it explains why modern evil prospers in ambiguity.
- *Diffusion of responsibility: why should I do something if nobody else does?* It is noteworthy that this type of reasoning seldom plays a role when one is confronted with actions affecting one's own well-being - apart perhaps in early childhood. Thus, a smoker may invoke many reasons why he is not quitting (it is not a good time right now, I don't smoke that much, etc.) but it would be highly unusual to hear: "others are smoking as much, or even more than I do." Yet this is exactly the type of reasoning commonly used to justify a lack of concern or action regarding global injustice.

(2) When the organization is a network or non-formalized midsize organization, it is more complicated to hold it responsible. We can hold it symbolically responsible but not legally: we have no hold. For example, when the Occupy Wall Street movement acts, it is almost impossible to prevent them, even though individuals can be arrested on the spot or afterwards and prosecuted as responsible.

On the other hand, each member of this kind of group assumes its responsibility. We have seen that in the new kind of networks individuals are as important as the whole. This is the key factor. They, individuals, belong to the group by their acts. This is the rampart against the dilution of responsibility. This is why people being judged and imprisoned is very important in this kind of collective. The judgment is personalized because precisely individual responsibility takes precedence over collective responsibility.

Ironically, then, the existence of formal organizations, deserving the status of "moral persons" and the emergence of all sorts of informal and coalescent collectives do not wipe off individual agency but, on the contrary, they give birth to new forms of individual engagement in collective agency, particularly the inter-mediating ones we are focusing on.

4. ETHICS OF INTERMEDIATE COLLECTIVES

There is a partially transitive agency through multi-layered inter-mediating collectives, whose ethics is still weak, blurred, bloated, or non-existent. An ethics of intermediate collectives suggests a number of reasons for explaining the disappointing bad results of our best efforts against injustice.

When the *organization is conceived and shaped for maintaining personal unawareness* instead of raising personal awareness, its mediation between personal moral sense or values and the practical outcomes of the activity is a built-in feature of this organization. In some cases (slaughterhouse or the entire sector of industrial food), is there any reason to believe that this organized unawareness is not intentional? Since the most ancient empires on Earth, it seems, pyramidal organization is an excellent framework for personal unawareness and irresponsibility. “I was just obeying orders” is a frequent argument when war atrocities are prosecuted. The recent scandal dubbed “Dieselgate” in the automobile industry can be connected to the still “Taylorian” and patriarchal management style in this high-engineered commodity industry. No inter-mediating collective was able to blow the whistle, even though some of the guilty companies have been advertising for years their internal process for engineering ethics and transparency.

The timescale issue, when short-term is everything and long-term has no weight, is terribly damaging, especially for climate change and global injustice. “In the long run we are all dead”, said one of the most humanist economists (Keynes) and everyone in politics know that the number one concern for politicians is the short-term of their re-election.

Cognitive biases can be listed as five barriers blocking the climate message and many comparable subjects, the “5 Ds”: Distance, Doom, Dissonance, Denial, iDentity (Stoknes 2015).

The *crisis of institutions* and classical organizations in the early 21st century gives a final touch: if no existing institution is acceptable as representing the collective agency of citizens while individual agency

is obviously at the wrong scale for global issues, the predicament is as ominous as can be. The classic organization was representative by definition in our liberal culture: a chosen leader decides and represents the individuals. Based on the social contract theories due to Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau, this type of organization begins with a deal, either explicitly or tacitly, between individuals and the group, where individuals voluntarily give up their own power of decision against a power of representation. This type of organization, pyramidal, vertical, is still the paradigm, not only in the official political organizations like governments but also in economic organizations like companies. Organizations representing individuals are the condition of possibility for an autonomous group identity that does not boil down to a simple aggregation of individuals. But when individuals believe that organizations no longer represent them, no common agency can make sense.

In the moment of individual empowerment, supported by the Internet (Himanen 2001), the classical organization, which maintains personal unconsciousness and irresponsibility instead of raising awareness, is no longer adapted to the change in social values. But, at the same time, we need to identify group-agents because we need them to assume their social responsibility. How can we have both representative groups *and* responsible individuals?

This question belongs to the formidable task of reinventing democracy. The ethic of mediating collectives resulting from this article leads to some suggestions.

For personal responsibility, we suggest highlighting and assuming *individualities* in the group and the responsibility related to each of them. Individuals can question themselves, question the finality of their actions (is it good for me, for the group, for the environment?) and they assume the responsibility for it.

For virtuous enduring action, we suggest to act daily, oneself or as a collective, directly or indirectly, avoiding gluttony, arrogance, greed, and apathy towards humans on the non-human environment, and consider these *micro-actions* as the wanted form of virtue (Sandler and Cafaro 2005; Puech 2016).

For external communication, one may implement in the routine process or habits of every intermediate collective *an awareness and updating of all other significantly interdependent collectives* (same level, higher level, lower level).

For internal communication, what works according to our consultancy experience is a routine of horizontal discussions on applied ethical issues within relevant internal collectives, so that when a dilemma or delicate decision-making situation occurs, the *space for discussion* is already in place (Davis 2005). Better internal communication and a different storytelling (Stoknes 2015) can help to arrange this.

For group-agency, we advise validating, by open and clear constant communication within the group, the “readiness” for one or several definite *joint actions* so that they are understood and felt as actions of the collective.

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“SUMMER OF ’42” OUT HOAXES “THE WAR OF THE WORLDS”:
A MULTIMEDIA FAIRY-TALE OUT-BARNUM ORSON WELLES

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Abstract. The film *Summer of ’42*, produced from Herman Raucher’s screenplay, and his novel created from it both won wild popularity. The debate arose about their Raucher-alleged autobiographical content. Elements such as (1) imaginable vulnerability of principals to pay civil damages to an actual widow portrayed as fornicatrix-statutory rapist; (2) misrepresenting World War II battleground Kiska, Alaska; (3) numerous, conspicuous anachronisms; plus (4) delivery following profitable filming of adult-on-minor sexual plots of Robert Anderson’s play *Tea and Sympathy* and Vladimir Nabokov’s novel *Lolita*, combine to suggest the 1971 pure fiction followed by authorial “autobiography-hoax”. Elizabeth Kolbert invokes Robert Wilson’s August 2019 biography *Barnum: An American Life* to recall Americans traditionally welcome hoaxer-entertainers, e.g., nineteenth-century *empresario*-legend Phineas T. Barnum.

Keywords: “Summer of 42”, *Tea and Sympathy*, Herman Raucher

I. INTRODUCTION

The publication of *The American Scholar* (August 6, 2019) - Robert Wilson’s biography of Phineas T. Barnum (nineteenth-century America’s master *empresario* and wizard of hoaxes entertaining the public) - drew the instructive response from 2015’s Pulitzer Prize-winner for general nonfiction Elizabeth Kolbert. It is in light thereof that the following pages probe the 1971 bestselling novel by Herman Raucher, *Summer of ’42*¹ and the hit 1971 film of the same name from a screenplay by Mr Raucher. His novel derived from his screenplay. In 2001, an off-Broadway musical, *Summer of ’42*, revitalized his story for a fresh generation musical. Every variation

suggests, or delivers, a summer of 1942 virginal adolescent’s sexual intercourse with a war-widowed woman.

Into the twenty-first century, Raucher time and again avowed this trio of *Summer of ’42* elements true:

- (1) Its war-widow named Dorothy;
- (2) Its virginal lad named Hermie (Raucher himself), who is sexually initiated by Dorothy;
- (3) Hermie’s young friend, Oscy - Raucher’s true-life, teen-years pal: Oscar Seltzer. Were his avowal accurate, then Raucher and/or his movie studio (Warner Brothers) and/or his publisher seemed to expose themselves to potentially expensive litigations. Evidence suggests Raucher wrote a gentle hoax with a twinkle in his eye.

II. “SUMMER OF ’42”: HISTORICITY

A. *Argument for Factuality*

Raucher says, in a 2002 interview, that the Dorothy affair developed “Just as I wrote it”². The story took place on Nantucket³. Dorothy “(...) would tell me a little bit about herself (...). And I felt like a friend. I won’t say I felt like a (member of the family), but I felt like a friend. We became friends”⁴. Too, “I was in love with her before the incident ever happened. I couldn’t wait to see her. She was the only one who paid any attention to me (...) [But Dorothy] treated me like an adult”⁵. In 2002 he added, “I hope she’s still out there”⁶.

Raucher says his “mostly autobiographical” script “moved events around, as far as who my friends were and who was with me at the time.”⁷ His 1942 friend Oscy Seltzer, allegedly like Dorothy, bore a nonfictional name⁸. In the novel, Dorothy’s husband’s name is Pete⁹. Raucher, in 2002, revealed of denuded, freshly-widowed Dorothy: “Yes, we had no clothes on, but she thought I was her husband (...) She kept calling me ‘Pete’”¹⁰. In Raucher’s 1970

screenplay, the “soldier”¹¹-husband appears “in an Army uniform”¹². He is dubbed “Pete”¹³. Likewise, in the 1971 novel is Pete in “The Army”¹⁴.

In this 2002 interview, Mr Raucher reveals of Pete and Dorothy: “I think they were married about seven months”, although Dorothy’s destiny was to become widowed and “alone on the island”¹⁵. Pete was on the island that summer, but his widow would be left solitary at an age that “could have been 20”¹⁶ or “could have been 10 years older”¹⁷ than was the 14-year-old Hermie. And Raucher “knew not to talk about” the Dorothy affair¹⁸. “I never told anyone until I wrote the book. But Oscy knew without ever asking me”¹⁹. Raucher cited no witnesses.

B. *Argument for Fantasy*

In 2019, Elizabeth Kolbert summoned attention to the August release of Robert Wilson’s *Barnum: An American Life*²⁰. For Kolbert interpreted it to evidence Phineas T. Barnum’s nineteenth-century U.S. populace was eager to be conned by that Prince of Humbugs if his package provided sufficient entertainment: Americans being so much attracted to his hoax-nonsense, Barnum more delighted his public than traduced it, and what proved the puzzlement was that Americans of 2019 remained attracted to Barnumlike pretense²¹. In this Wilson-Kolbert light, learn that Raucher recalls one among letters sent him in the aftermath of the movie: “I recognized her [Dorothy’s] handwriting (...) but we were talking about 1971, which was almost 30 years after the incident, and I get this letter--and I never knew her last name--and the postmark was Canton, Ohio, and she had remarried”²². *Never knew her last name.*

Quaere, whether during 1971 mass-media professionals dared create a movie about Dorothy’s characterizable statutory rape/child-abuse of Hermie, using not only Herman’s but her own name. Raucher knew how to disguise identities (or, at least, names) when he needed to. A 1980 Raucher book recalling his marriage’s early years, his wife’s time on Broadway, and Raucher’s own early years

in the film business he maintained to be 90 per cent accurate. But he changed the names of certain real-life persons. Even the names of Mr and Mrs Raucher mutated²³. Would Raucher as interviewee affirm Pete and Dorothy’s real names, broadcast their wedding-year as 1941 or 1942, and advertise the actual summer 1942 island-locale of both Pete and Dorothy as Nantucket in 2002, if he believed such a real woman might still live?

This story of ’42 was preceded by Vladimir Nabokov’s 1955 novel, *Lolita*²⁴. The novel’s great popularity proved public acceptance of entertainment derivative from an adult’s sex with a pubescent virgin. It was transformed into a well-received James Mason, Peter Sellers, and Shelley Winters movie (*i.e.*, a serious-budget production) in 1962. But what might hint acceptability of a reverse-*Lolita* plot by Raucher with a *woman* (recently widowed in France) as sex-initiator?

Answer: A cinema precedent already provided by Robert Anderson. Also, Raucher remembers: “My sister’s fiancée was killed on D Day”²⁵. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, Yank troops died on Normandy beaches, in France. His family tragedy embraced a sister left loverless by the war in France as if precedent for a wholly-fictional woman left husbandless by a *Summer of ’42* war death over France.

III. LEGAL LIABILITIES CIRCA 1971

During 1971, portrayal onscreen or in print of a lady as fornicatrix (let alone a statutory rapist) proved defamatory. That an accused-fornicatrix plaintiff, like Dorothy underwent depiction, by demonstrably deep-pocketed defendants, as statutory rapist only might worsen their courtroom plight. Said defamation defendants would look legally vulnerable²⁶.

In a singularly-influential law review article²⁷, Samuel Dennis Warren and future Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis in 1890 recognized for a civil tort respecting invasion of privacy. Warren and

Brandeis wrote after news reports of a high-society wedding party for Warren's cousin hosted in their home by Samuel and his wife²⁸. These coauthors chose language already suggestive of *Summer of '42*: "Instantaneous photographs and newspaper enterprise have invaded the sacred precincts of private and domestic life; and numerous mechanical devices threaten to make good the prediction that 'what is whispered in the closet shall be proclaimed from the roof-tops'"²⁹.

In England and Wales, there even was an undefined range of publicly-transpiring but private conduct from which photographing could be proscribed³⁰. And the Human Rights Act 1998³¹ obliges the judiciary to consider³² Article 8 of the European Convention on Rights³³ and to heed European Court of Human Rights³⁴ jurisprudence³⁵. The 2004 judgment in the Princess Caroline case established the Monaco-Princess's security under Article 8 from being photographed while shopping in public (absent a demonstrable public interest to the contrary)³⁶. Brandeis and Warren dismissed the defense that sexual prurience is innocuous:

Of the desirability — indeed of the necessity — of some such [privacy] protection, there can, it is believed, be no doubt. The press is overstepping in every direction the obvious bounds of propriety and of *decency*. Gossip is no longer the resource of the idle and of the vicious but has become a trade, which is pursued with industry as well as effrontery. To satisfy a *prurient* taste the details of *sexual relations* are spread broadcast in the columns of the daily papers. To occupy the indolent, column upon column is filled with idle gossip, which can only be procured by *intrusion upon the domestic circle*. The intensity and complexity of life, attendant upon advancing civilization, have rendered necessary some retreat from the world, and man, under the refining influence of culture, has become more sensitive to publicity, so that solitude and privacy have become more essential to the individual; but modern enterprise and invention have, through invasions upon his privacy, subjected him to mental *pain and distress*, far greater than could be inflicted by mere bodily injury. Nor is the harm wrought by such invasions confined to the suffering of those who may be the subjects of journalistic or another enterprise. In this, as in other branches of commerce, the supply creates the demand. Each drop of unseemly gossip, thus harvested, becomes the seed of more, and, in direct proportion to its circulation, results in the lowering of social standards and of

morality. Even gossip apparently harmless, when widely and persistently circulated, is potent for evil. It both belittles and perverts³⁷.

IV. MASSACHUSETTS CRIMINAL LAW IN 1942 AND 2010

A. What Any Dorothy on Nantucket Knew in 1942

In the summer of 1942, Section 4 of Chapter 272 of the *General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* provided: “Whoever induces any person under eighteen of chaste of life to have unlawful sexual intercourse shall be punished”³⁸. What might be unlawful sexual intercourse? At that time, section 18 of Chapter 272 provided: “Whoever commits fornication shall be punished by imprisonment for not more than three months or by a fine of not more than thirty dollars”³⁹. At that juncture, section 39 of Chapter 272 provided in relevant part: “The following words, when used in an indictment, shall be sufficient to convey the meaning herein attached to them (...) *Fornication* – Sexual intercourse between a man and an unmarried woman.”⁴⁰

Before 1942, one could learn: “The contention that the word ‘man’ in a statute providing indictment for fornication is confined to male adults is, of course, untenable, and a minor may be guilty of the offense.”⁴¹ Too, “The word ‘man’ as used in statutes punishing fornication means any person of the age of puberty and capable of committing the offense, and is not limited to male persons over twenty-one years of age”⁴². Warner Brothers’ lawyers would have checked the 1968 edition of Black’s Law Dictionary to read, in relevant part: “Man. A human being. A person of the male sex. A male of the human species above the age of puberty”⁴³. Fornication and the law remained a live topic in 1971⁴⁴.

And statutory rape by a woman in her twenties of a 15-year-old boy drew prosecutors in Massachusetts. Former Holyoke elementary school teacher Lisa Lavoie, aged 26, on December 14, 2010, pleaded guilty in Hampden County Superior Court to

statutory rape, also termed illegal (sexual) intercourse with a child under 16, and to entice a child. She had been charged in 2009 after a boy age 15 and Lavoie were reported missing, being discovered in a motel a week later⁴⁵.

As an element of the plea hearing, Assistant District Attorney Patrick S. Sabbs read to the judge a victim-impact statement. Therein the youth styled Lavoie “an amazing person”⁴⁶. The victim wrote: “I miss her, and I think about her a lot. So please don’t send her away. She means everything to me. She suffered enough in the past two years”⁴⁷. This is reminiscent of Hermie’s, announced recall of Dorothy.

B. *What Herman Had to Heed in 2002*

As a novelist and a television and motion picture professional, Raucher in 2002 undoubtedly was aware of the 1997 case of Mary Kay Letourneau. She met Vili Fualaau when he was a student in his second-grade class. He again became her student in the sixth grade. She became intimate with that lad of no more than 13 years of age, and she at 35 was impregnated by him. Ms Letourneau was convicted on two counts of child rape. Their tale was told by the lovers in *Un Seul Crime, L’Amou*⁴⁸ (*Only One Crime, Love*), boasting a prologue by Vili’s mother⁴⁹. It was retold during 1999 by Gregg Olsen in Olsen’s *If Loving You Wrong: The Shocking True Story of Mary Kay Letourneau*⁵⁰. Then was it re-retold during 2001 by James Robinson in Robinson’s *The Mary Kay Letourneau Affair: And the Crisis Caused by the Case*⁵¹.

Meanwhile, the A & E Special Presentations, American Justice Investigation Report Documentary, *Boy Crazy: The Mary Kay Letourneau Story*, arrived on July 7, 1999⁵². Thereafter, Penelope Ann Miller portrayed Mary Kay Letourneau in *Mary Kay Letourneau: All American Girl*⁵³ of 2000. Thereupon appeared a television documentary in the *Mugshots* series entitled *Mary Kay Letourneau: Forbidden Desire*⁵⁴, originally airing on September 23, 2001. And then emerged Courtv.com’s live from prison, exclusive interview with

Letourneau. It was conducted on November 13, 2001⁵⁵. By his May 2002 Louis Hillary Parks interview, Herman Raucher inevitably was cognizant that an adult female’s sexual molestation of an early-teenaged boy was a recent-years, national near-obsession.

V. PLANTING ANACHRONISM CLUES

A. *An Anachronism Smorgasbord*

In Raucher’s screenplay, Hermie’s pals debate enlistment in the US Army Rangers⁵⁶. However, the 1st Ranger Battalion was formally activated only on June 19, 1942. While 50 Rangers did join the Dieppe Raid on August 19, the Battalion’s official entry into the war transpired only on November 8⁵⁷. Raucher’s novel screams anachronisms.

A central event in both that novel and in the 1971 film is a moviehouse visit to see *Now, Voyager*⁵⁸. The visit stretches across 19 pages of a 244 page-long book⁵⁹, only to recur on later pages⁶⁰. However, *Now, Voyager* was released on October 22, 1942⁶¹. Hermie draws upon *Casablanca*⁶². However, the premiere of *Casablanca*, on November 26, 1942, preceded its 1943 general release⁶³. Hermie purchases his father a copy of *Time* magazine with Jimmy Doolittle on its cover⁶⁴. However, “James H. Doolittle” graced the cover for the issue dated November 23.

B. *The Kiska Main Course*

i. Kiska in *Summer of ’42*

The narrator recalls Hermie’s bedroom in his family’s island-summerhouse:

On the small piece of wall available for hanging, he had hung a picture of his cousin, aged twenty-two, who was on the island of Kiska, in the Aleutians, just off the coast of Alaska. There wasn’t much action up in Kiska except

when maybe the Eskimos got attacked by polar bears, but Hermie kept his cousin's picture there anyway because he was the nearest thing in the family to a hero, in spite of the fact he had asthma and actually faked an attack right in the draft board office but to no avail except that they made him a corporal. If his cousin had been epileptic, he could've made sergeant. Hermie autographed that picture, too. "To Hermie, bravely, his cousin in combat, Ronald."⁶⁵

Later, Hermie emphatically insists to Oscy: "I got a *cousin* in danger. My cousin Ronald. He's a major in the Aleutian Islands. In Kiska, for your information"⁶⁶. Subsequently, Hermie reappears in his room: "His radio was offering the world *Fibber McGee and Molly* and then *Bob Hope*, who was up in Alaska freezing his nuts off for the soldiers. Maybe his cousin in combat, Ronald, was part of the audience. It was a thrilling thought"⁶⁷. Reiterated is the exclusion of Ronald from combat ("audience"). And later yet, Ronald is associated with John Loder, of *Non, Voyager*⁶⁸, in Hermie's fantasizing: "(...) Hedy Lamarr, Hermie had heard, though John Loder probably hadn't, was Austrian born and very likely a Nazi. And Hermie'd be goddamned if he'd screw a Nazi while his cousin Ronald was up in Kiska getting his nuts shot up"⁶⁹. Hammered home is the message that foolish fantasy alone associated Kiska with peril.

ii. Kiska in Summer 1942

Contrariwise, the Aleutian Islands Campaign opened on June 3, 1942⁷⁰. The Japanese occupied the islands of Kiska and Attu. It required a year for a large American force to eject them. This is dubbed the Forgotten Battle because overshadowed by the Guadalcanal Campaign waged simultaneously⁷¹. Kiska's initial U.S. military presence was a weather station of ten men. In-storming Japanese killed two and sent their eight survivors to Japan as prisoners of war⁷². Kiska's occupation ordeal extended to July 28, 1943⁷³.

C. *What Happened over France*

In the movie (but in neither Raucher’s 1970 screenplay nor 1971 novel), the fateful, yellow War Department telegram to “Dorothy Walker” of Bangor is shown to the audience. It evidences Dorothy’s loss “over France” of her U.S. Army Air Corps husband⁷⁴. The latter might be a clue to a hoax. The history of America’s 8th Air Force was inaugurated on January 2, 1942⁷⁵.

The VIII Bomber Command and VIII Fighter Command both were established on January 19, 1942⁷⁶. The VIII Air Support Command was established only on April 24, 1942⁷⁷. The first combat group of VIII Bomber Command reached the United Kingdom (the 97 Bombardment Group ground echelon) only on June 9, 1942⁷⁸. The 8th Air Force’s arrival proved so prominent a historical landmark that this arrival itself entered nonfictionally, filmic historization⁷⁹.

The pioneering American air mission from England was not until July 4, 1942. Then six aircrews joined six British aircrews attacking airfields in Holland⁸⁰. The pioneering all-Yank air raid transpired as late as August 17⁸¹. This first B-17 Flying Fortress strike of the war⁸² saw a dozen flying fortresses dropping bombs from 23,000 feet⁸³. Their raid on Rouen-Sotteville, France, railroad marshalling yards was completed sans losses⁸⁴. Only at that date had VIII Bomber Command regular combat operations started⁸⁵.

VI. MRS DOROTHY WALKER

A. *An Anachronism Smorgasbord*

Whence might Raucher circa 1970 derive the husband of Dorothy *Walker* as World War II airman lost to her? During 1969 The Who released its fourth album, the double-album rock opera *Tommy*⁸⁶. During World War II, Tommy’s father Captain *Walker* is reported about (in the words of songwriter Pete Townshend):

Captain Walker didn't come home
 His unborn child will never know him.
 We believe him missing with a number of men,
 Don't expect to see him again.
 He's believed to be missing with a number of men,
 Don't expect to see him again.⁸⁷

Tommy ranked number four among 1969 Billboard Pop albums⁸⁸. It went Gold in the United States on August 18, 1969⁸⁹.

B. Dorothy Walker

Whence might Raucher, fourteen-years-old in 1942, derive *Dorothy*? Judy Garland played Dorothy Gale in a motion picture of latter 1939. Sixteen-year-old Garland of *The Wizard of Oz* was well beyond menarche but played a character clearly much less mature. Hermie Raucher that autumn broke the age of eleven and a half. To be sure, fetching Dorothy Gale was an inaccessible fairytale character.

Earlier, however, Garland played the (visiting) girl-next-door to Mickey Rooney's Andy Hardy in *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (1938). Its Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie poster blurbed: "Mickey's in love and Judy's the girl!"⁹⁰. Her second appearance witnessed this accessible, girl-next-door Garland kissed by youthful Everyman Andy in *Andy Hardy Meets Debutante* (1940): "As was so often the case, she played a part much younger than herself. Judy was 17 during filming and turned 18 before the film was released, but her character – Betsy Booth – was only 15 years old"⁹¹. In July, *Time* magazine attested "17-year-old Judy Garland growing prettier by the picture."⁹² In July 1940, Hermie Raucher watching 15-year-old Betsy Booth (accessible even to Mickey Rooney) would have been age twelve years and three months.

Andy aimed his big-screen notice at Judy-Betsy the most during this movie series in *Life Begins for Andy Hardy* (1941)⁹³. This marked the sole instance in the series that a guest star (Dorothy, er, Judy) was billed above the title⁹⁴. In 2002, Raucher asserted of his summer of 1942 as a 14-year-old: "And the aftermath of that was, I dated

every girl I could find whose name was Dorothy”⁹⁵. Again: “Yes, any girl named Dorothy I would try to take out”⁹⁶. These admissions are credible.

Nevertheless, why decades thereafter might a middle-aged screenwriter attach the misty image of a young adult Dorothy/Garland to grim, wartime-homefront days of the summer of 1942? In *For Me and My Gal*, the twenty-year-old Garland stars as a World War I vaudevillian whose love interest (Gene Kelly) bitterly anticipates a predatory draft. He proves heroic in France⁹⁷. *For Me and My Gal*, Garland’s biggest hit to date⁹⁸, was released on October 1942⁹⁹.

VII. ROBERT ANDERSON’S “TEA AND SYMPATHY”

Robert “Bob” Anderson’s play *Tea and Sympathy*¹⁰⁰ premiered on Broadway on September 30, 1953¹⁰¹. Therein, a prep-schoolboy played by John Kerr was hazed with accusations of homosexuality. The schoolmaster’s compassionate wife played by Deborah Kerr (no relation) had a first husband killed in World War II. She rescues the lad (quite heterosexually is drawn to her) from his deepening insecurities via successful seduction. The play closes with her starting to guide him into her adultery.

The wife recites one of the American theatre’s most renowned closing lines: “Years from now, when you talk about this – and you will – be kind”¹⁰². The cover of Random House’s first edition of the play shows a woman unbuttoning her blouse¹⁰³. A decade and more after the summer of 1942 - a third of the way to 1971 - the North American *female* solicits kindness to protect her from being tarnished by the male. How potent a punch carried Anderson’s Deborah Kerr-closing line into the twenty-first century? Near the conclusion of the 2009 movie *Angels and Demons*, a Harvard professor (played by Tom Hanks) is gifted by a Vatican Cardinal (played by Armin Mueller-Stahl) with a treasured codex by Galileo. The Cardinal says to the irreligious professor who will use the codex to complete a

history: “And when you write of us - and you will write of us - may I ask one thing? Do so gently”.

The 1956 film of the same name also starred the Kerrs. Anderson adapted his own play for the screen¹⁰⁴. To placate the Production Code Office over the screenplay’s implication of adultery with a high school boy, Anderson’s screenplay adds a flashback structure. It bookends the tale with a much-later visit to his old school by John Kerr’s character and his family. Therein is evidence of the penance assigned the adulteress, who lived no happy life¹⁰⁵.

A voice-over reading of the penitent-adulteress’s letter to the now-adult boy closes the movie:

Dear Tom,

I shall probably never send this letter. I probably shouldn’t even write it. But I am impulsive. That you know. And my impulse *is* to write it. Perhaps in the cold light of morning I would tear it up. I don’t know.

Tom dear, I have just read your book – a novel about your days in school, about us. It is a lovely book, tender and romantic and touching, and in it I come out rather like a saint. But Tom, that isn’t the whole picture, or even the true picture. You have romanticized the wrong we did, and not looked at it clearly. At the end of the story, you say that the husband was far better off without his wife, and the wife went on to her own happy life. You’re quite wrong, Tom. As you know, I couldn’t go back to Bill after that afternoon with you and pretend that nothing had happened. And my not going back ruined his life.

I find that I sacrificed Bill and our marriage. He thought he knew what he wanted (to be left alone) just as you thought you knew what you wanted (to kill yourself). Both of you in a sense were crying out to be saved from what you thought you wanted. I answered your cry. It was the easier one to answer. These are terrible things to write to you, Tom, about guilt and right and wrong. But you are old enough now to know that when you drop a pebble in the water there are ever-widening circles of ripples. There are always consequences.

Anyway, Tom, I’ve often wondered if I didn’t show a lack of faith in you, in your ability to meet a crisis by yourself, come through it alone. They say about dreadful experiences, if they don’t kill us, they make us strong. I was just afraid that that one would kill you.

Dear Tom, I was so pleased to read that you’re married. Have a good life, a full life, an understanding life. Write good stories, true stories.

About one thing you were correct. The wife did always keep her affection for the boy, somewhere in her heart.

The film of *Summer of ’42*, like that of *Tea and Sympathy*, exploits intercourse between a woman whose husband died in World War II, and a high-school boy. It likewise has the wraparound-format with the older man’s return to the scene. It likewise utilizes the after the fact-missive from the departed woman to her erstwhile junior bedfellow. Or as Dorothy’s emphatic letter reads in Raucher’s 1971 novel:

Dear Hermie,

I must go home now. I’m sure you’ll understand. There’s much that I have to do. I will not try to explain what happened last night because I know that, in time, you will find a proper way in which to remember it (...) ¹⁰⁶.

What I *will* do is remember *you*, and I will pray that you be spared all senseless tragedies. I wish you good things, Hermie, only good things

Always,

Dorothy⁰⁷

Do these *Tea and Sympathy* and *Summer of ’42* filmic overlaps imply Herman’s own Canton, Ohio, letter an ageing yarn-spinner’s nonsense?

Nowhere does either *Summer of ’42* film or novel’s letter from Dorothy reveal repentance for her statutory rapist-fornication with a minor. However, even during 1971, another movie did present an adult woman’s indulgence long pre-1971 with an adolescent lad and *she*, like Anderson’s own big-screen, unhappy adulteress, lived no happy life. In 2011, the novelist¹⁰⁸ and cinema¹⁰⁹ historian Nathaniel Rich mulled Peter Bogdanovich’s *The Last Picture Show*¹¹⁰:

Set during the Korean War, and shot in black and white with plenty of pictorial long shots, the film is a quiet rumination on loss and despair in Anarene, a small, isolated Texas town. Cloris Leachman’s portrayal of a middle-aged woman whose loneliness leads her to seduce a high school boy is haunting and at times painful to watch (...).¹¹¹

Fallen woman. Terrible things. Guilt and right and wrong. Despair. Loneliness. Painful. Statutory rape. Yet Raucher smoothly unrolls his *Summer of '42*.

VIII. THE CONCEPTION OF A RAUCHER-SEDUCING DOROTHY

Assume, *arguendo*, the story of Dorothy as a three-dimensional woman is a gentle hoax. The release of Raucher's novelization of his screenplay in paperback preceded the release of the movie¹¹² on April 9, 1971¹¹³. But his hardcover first edition apparently saw the light around June 1, 1971¹¹⁴. What had transpired in the mutually-reinforcing realms of news mass media, the Hollywood cinema, and popular publishing between May 25, 1970, and June 1, 1971, to reassure Raucher his adult female-minor male fornication could titillate not repulse the public, even if real-life *personalized*? Would Raucher notice his screenplay's gestation or filming thereof coinciding with the gestation of Sean Astin (born to be Notre Dame football's filmic *Rudy*)¹¹⁵?

Unavoidable news concerning 1970 America's screen entertainment¹¹⁶ was the announcement by the unmarried 17-year-old Desi Arnez, Junior, and the divorcing Patty Duke (five years Desi's elder) that Patty was pregnant with Desi's baby¹¹⁷. This marked the sexual intercourse of a wife in her twenties with a teenaged boy. Perhaps coincidentally, real-life Patty Duke at 23 was the same age in 1970 (when Herman would have heard the Patty-Arnez news) as the film-star Dorothy of 1971 (very vital Jennifer O'Neill). Desi's mother, Lucille Ball, threatened to have Patty charged with statutory rape¹¹⁸. The public continued to revere Lucy¹¹⁹. And Desi, Junior, eclipsed Jacqueline Onassis as the fan magazines' top-selling personality¹²⁰. The baby Sean Astin (named Sean Duke by Patty) was born on February 25, 1971¹²¹. *Quaere*, whether Raucher noticed popular acceptance and enjoyment of the sexual engagement of a real woman (made a wife years-prior) sexually engaging with an underaged teenaged boy. *Quaere*, whether

Raucher proved sufficiently savvy to sense one might exploit that popular psychology.

IX. CONCLUSION

Given the August 6, 2019, advent of Robert Wilson's biography, *Barnum: A Life*, the preceding pages hearken to Elizabeth's Klobert's response thereto (noting Americans' propensity to enjoy hoaxes). They extend the examination of Herman Raucher's bestselling, screenplay-derived novel *Summer of '42*, and the hit movie of the same title shot from his screenplay¹²². The off-Broadway musical of 2001, *Summer of '42*, reworked his story for its own medium. This discussion evidences the implausibility of Raucher's claims (regarding several salient points) to the authenticity of his works. Being born on April 13, 1928, means Mr Raucher representing the generation aware of, *e.g.*, the notorious October 30, 1938, radio broadcast over the Columbia Broadcasting System network of Howard Koch's adaptation into a radio play of H.G. Wells's novel *War of the Worlds*, by Mercury Theatre on the Air directed and narrated by Orson Welles¹²³. Thus, future scriptwriter Raucher could grow-up alert to profitable spoofing.

NOTES

1. Herman Raucher. *Summer of '42*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971.
2. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), pp. 1,4 (<http://web.tcpalm.com/specialreports/summerof42/raucher.html>) (internet archive waybackmachine) (last visited December 20, 2018).
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 14.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
9. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, at pp. 621, 225, 227, 233, 235, 239.
10. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), *supra* note 2, p. 10.

11. Herman Raucher, *Summer of '42*, p. 31 (June 15, 1970, rev. July 20, 1970) (A Robert Mulligan – Richard Roth Production).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
14. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, p. 233.
15. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), *supra* note 2, p. 13.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
20. Robert Wilson, *Barnum: An American Life*, Simon & Schuster, 2019.
21. Elizabeth Kolbert, *The New Yorker*, August 5 & 12, 2019.
22. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), *supra* note 2, p. 8.
23. Herman Raucher, p. 1 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Raucher) (last visited July 22, 2019). The book with these autobiographical undertones was Herman Raucher, *There Should Have Been Castles*, Delacorte Press, 1979.
24. Vladimir Nabokov. *The Annotated Lolita*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1991) (rev. and updated) (preface, introduction and notes by Alfred Appel ed.).
25. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), *supra* note 2, p. 4.
26. This capsule-reference to defamation tracks discussion in the parallel example of William Styron and his *Sophie's Choice*. George Steven Swan, William Styron's Dubious Memoir: Sophie, and Styron's *Sophie's Choice, the quint: an interdisciplinary quarterly from the north*, 294, 313-314 (11.1) (December 2018). So strikingly do these cases parallel that one suspects Styron wrote while extremely conscious of Raucher's earlier, money-gushing twin-successes. *Ibid.*, pp. 325-326 and 333. The following discussion in the text of the right to privacy supplements that in George Steven Swan, *supra*, pp. 314-322.
27. Dean Andrew Mazzone, Book Rev., 93 Mass. L. R., p. 411 (April 2011) (No. 4).
28. Stewart Baker, *Skating on Stilts: Why We Aren't Stopping Tomorrow's Terrorism*, p. 310 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2010) (<http://www.skatingonstilts.com/files/chapter-13---skating-on-stilts-by-stewart-baker-3.pdf>).
29. Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis, *The Right to Privacy*, 4 Harv. L. R., pp. 193, 195 (1890).
30. According to Prof. Tim Crook of the University of London. Tim Crook, *Comparative Media Law and Ethics*, pp. 112-13, 277. Taylor & Francis, Inc., 2010.
31. Right to Respect for Private and Family Life

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Human Rights Act, 1998, II Eliz. 46, Ch. 42, sched.1, Part I, art. 8. (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/42/schedule/1>) (last visited July 22, 2019). These two sections derived verbatim from the Council of Europe’s 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.
32. Tim Crook, *supra* note 30, p. 128.
33. European Convention on Human Rights, Nov. 4, 1950, sec. I, art. 8 (<http://www.hir.org/docs/ECHR50.html>) (last visited July 22, 2019).
34. “The European Court of Human Rights is based in Strasbourg and applies the principles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. It was set up by the Council of Europe and is not an institution of the EU [European Union].” Tim Crook, *supra* note 30, p. 48.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
36. Case of Hannover v. Germany (Application no. 59320/00 (September 24, 2004).
37. Tim Crook, *supra* note 30, p. 117. 3
37. Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis, *The Right to Privacy*, 4 Harv. L. R., pp 193 (1890) (emphasis added).
38. Massachusetts General Laws, ch. 272, § 4.
39. Massachusetts General Laws, ch. 272, § 18.
40. Massachusetts General Laws, ch. 272, § 39.
41. Ruling Case Law: As Developed and Established by the Decisions and Annotations Contained in Lawyers Reports Annotated, American Decisions, American Reports, American State Reports, American and English Annotated Cases, American Annotated Cases, English Ruling Cases, British Ruling Cases, United States Supreme Court Reports, and Other Series of Selected Cases, p. 637 (Rochester, N.Y.: The Lawyers Co-Operative Publishing Company, 1914)(William Mark McKinney and Burdett Alberto-Rich eds.)(vol.1), citing at 637n.9 39 A.S.R. 366, 367n. (<http://books.google.com/books?id=a348AAAIAAJ&pg=PA637&dq=%22fornication%22>).
42. State v. Seiler, 106 Wis. 346, 351, 82 N.W. 167 (Supreme Court of Wisconsin) (<http://www.google.com/books?id=GdZbAAAAMAAJ>) (last visited July 22, 2019).
43. Henry Campbell Black, Black’s Law Dictionary, p. 1112 (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1968) (rev. 4th ed.).

44. Allan Roberts, *Fornication and the Law: An Attorney's Report* (San Diego: Academy Press, 1971).
45. Buffy Spencer, *Former Holyoke Teacher Lisa LaVoie Pleads Guilty to Statutory Rape Charge Involving Student*, pp. 1-2 (The Springfield Republican) (December 15, 2010) (https://www.masslive.com/news/2010/12/former_holyoke_teacher_lisa_la.html) (last visited July 22, 2019).
46. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Mary Kay Letourneau and Vili Fualaau, *Un Seul Crime, L'Amour* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1998).
49. Ethan Bordman, *'Son of Sam' Laws: How Much Does Crime Pay?*, Washington Lawyer, May 2011, at pp. 27, 30.
50. Gregg Olsen, *If Loving You Is Wrong. The Shocking True Story of Mary Kay Letourneau*. St. Martin's True Crime, 1999.
51. James Robinson, *The Mary Kay Letourneau Affair: And the Crisis Caused by the Case* (Overland Park, KS: Leathers Publishing Company, 2001). The old story is ever-new. See, e.g., Heather E. Ingram, *Risking It All: My Student, My Lover, My Story* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2003) (30-year-old teacher, 17-year-old student).
52. <http://tv.nytimes.com/show/422-47/Boy-Crazy-The-Mary-Kay-Letourneau-u-Story/overview>; Resource and Bibliography on Female Sexual Deviance and Sexually Abusive Behavior 14 (rev. May 2004) (compiled by Alan Listiak) (<https://www.atsa.com/pdfs?FemaleDevianceBiblio.pdf>) (last visited July 22, 2019) (Hereinafter Listiak).
53. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0232062/>; Listiak, *supra* note 52, p. 14.
54. <http://television.aol.com/episode/mary-kay-letourneau-forbidden-desire/mugshots/708476>; Listiak, *supra* note 52, p. 14.
55. http://www.courtstv.com/talk/chat_transcript/2001/1113letourneau.html; Listiak, *supra* note 52, at 14.
56. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 11, p. 9.
57. Lock, J.D., *World War II: European* (<http://armyranger.com/2019/05/12/world-war-ii-european/>) (last visited July 22, 2019).
58. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, p. 88.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-107.
60. *Ibid.*, pp. 112, 118, 121, 170.
61. *Now, Voyager* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Now,-Voyager>) (last visited July 22, 2019).
62. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, pp. 112-13.
63. *Casablanca* (film) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casablanca-\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casablanca-(film))).
64. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, pp. 57-58. Doolittle indeed is emphasized. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 37 (Raucher’s emphasis).
67. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
68. *Now, Voyager*, *supra* note 61.
69. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, p. 170.
70. Aleutian Islands Campaign http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleutian_Islands_campaign (last visited August 8, 2019).
71. *Ibid.*
72. Japanese Occupation of Kiska (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Occupation_of_Kiska) (last visited August 8, 2019).
73. *Ibid.*
74. Trivia: *Summer of ’42* (1971) (<http://www.imbd.com/title/tt0067803/trivia>) (last visited July 22, 2019).
75. Eighth Air Force (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eighth_Air_Force) (last visited July 22, 2019).
76. *Ibid.*
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
79. *The American Invasion: The Story of the Mighty 8th Air Force’s Arrival in Britain*. (2012). Public Broadcasting System (90min.).
80. Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress (<http://www.aviation-history.com/boeing/b17.html>); W.R. Chorley, Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War: Aircraft and Crew Losses, p. 147.
81. Russian Army Repels Hitler’s Forces August 1942-January 1943, pp.1, 11 (World War II Timeline) (<http://history.howstuffworks.com/world-war-ii/russian-army-repels-hitlers-forces.html/pri>).
82. Eighth Air Force (http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/en/Eighth_Air_Force).
83. *Ibid.*
84. Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, *supra* note 80.
85. Eighth Air Force (Wikipedia), *supra* note 75. "Though Germany still lay ahead, the first tentative essay by the 8th Bomber Command (which with its sister 8th Fighter Command formed an 8thUSAF) occurred on 17 August when twelve aircraft made a daylight attack on the marshaling yards at Rouen." Ronald Levin, *Ultra Goes to War: The First Account of World War II’s Greatest Secret Based on Official Documents*, p. 240 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1978).
86. *Tommy* (album) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tommy_\(album\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tommy_(album))) (last visited July 22, 2019).
87. Captain Walker/It’s a Boy Lyrics, page 1 (<https://flashlyricsw.com/lyrics/pete-townshend/captain-walker-its-a-boy-27>) (last visited July 22, 2019).

88. *Tommy* (album), *supra* note 86, citing “Artist Chart History – The Who” (http://www.allmusic.com/artist/p.5822/charts_awards). (http://www.allmusic.com/artist/p.5822/charts_awards). Retrieved 25 Nov. 2009.
89. *Ibid.*, citing abcRIAA (<http://www.riaa.com/goldandplatinumdata.php?table=search>).
90. Judy Garland Database DVD Review: *Love Finds Andy Hardy* (<http://www.jgdb.com/lovedvd1.htm>).
91. Judy Garland Database Film Review: *Andy Hardy Meets Debutante*.
92. *Ibid.*, citing *Time*, June 22, 1940.
93. The Judy Room: *The Andy Hardy Series* (<http://www.thejudyroom.com/>).
94. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
95. Herman Raucher Interview (extended), *supra* note 2, p. 10.
96. *Ibid.*
97. Judy Garland Database Film Review: *For Me and My Gal* (<http://www.jgdb.com/gal.htm>).
98. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
100. Robert Anderson, *Tea and Sympathy: A Drama in Three Acts* (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1983).
101. *Tea and Sympathy* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea_and_Sympathy_\(play\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea_and_Sympathy_(play))) (last visited August 7, 2019).
102. *Ibid.*
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Tea and Sympathy* (film) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea_and_Sympathy_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea_and_Sympathy_(film))) (last visited August 7, 2019).
105. *Ibid.*
106. Herman Raucher, *supra* note 1, p. 241.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 242 (emphasis in original).
108. See, e.g., Nathaniel Rich, *The Mayor’s Tongue*. Riverhead Trade, 2009.
109. See, e.g., Nathaniel Rich, *San Francisco: The City in Film Noir From 1940 to the Present*: Little Bookroom, 2005).
110. Nathaniel Rich, *The Insane Boys Blew It*, N.Y. Rev. Bks., pp. 30, 30-31, May 26, 2011.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
112. Herman Raucher, *Summer of ’42*. Dell, 1970 (paperback); (http://www.Amazon.com/Summer-42-Herman-Raucher/dp/1300450PIL_O/ref=wikipedia/sr_/_/6?s=bo).
113. *Summer of ’42* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_of_’42).
114. Herman Raucher, *Summer of ’42* (New York: Putnam Pub. Group (T), 1971) (1st ed.) ISBN 039910770) (hardcover); (<http://www.infibeam.com/Books/summer-42-herman-raucher/978039910.7771.html>).

115. See, e.g., Sean Astin, *There and Back Again: An Actor's Tale*: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005).
116. Coyne Steven Sanders and Tom Gilbert, *Desilu: The Story of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez*, p. 356: It Books, 2011) (“brief but widely-publicized affair, culminating with the birth of a son”).
117. Kathleen Brady, *Lucille: The Life of Lucille Ball*, p. 315: Billboard Books, 2001). “(...) I was going to divorce him if I couldn’t get an annulment (which I did receive about a year later) (...)” Patty Duke, *Call Me Anna: The Autobiography of Patty Duke*, p. 232 (New York: Bantam Books, 1988).
118. Kathleen Brady, *supra* note 117, p. 314; Patty Duke, *supra* note 117, p. 220 (“I was screwing around with jailbait”).
119. Coyne Steven Sanders and Tom Gilbert, *supra* note 116, p. 315.
120. *Ibid.*
121. *Ibid.*
122. As William Styron appears somewhat to track Raucher's *Summer of '42*, so Raucher's 1971 dual screenplay-novelization appears to have tracked not only Robert Anderson's *Tea and Sympathy* play and filmization, but Eric Segal's 1970 *Love Story* dual screenplay- novelization. This is evidenced in the Styron study which this investigation tracks. George Steven Swan, *supra* note 26, pp. 323-331.
123. See, e.g., *The War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth, Inciting Panic and Inspiring Terror from H.G. Wells to Orson Welles and Beyond*: Sourcebooks; Kathleen Krull and Christopher Santoro, *The Night the Martians Landed: Just the Facts (Plus the Rumors) about Invaders from Mars*: Harper Collins, 2003); Hadley Cantril and Albert Cantril, *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic*: Transaction Publishers, 2005); *Complete War of the Worlds: Mars' Invasion of Earth from H. G. Wells to Orson Welles*: Diane Publishing Company, 2001) (Brian Holmsten and Alex Lubeertozzi eds.).

BECOMING TRAITOR AT THE MARGINS OF “EMPIRE”:
RADICAL AGENCY AND THE SEARCH FOR COMMUNITY IN J.M.
COETZEE’S “WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS”

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Abstract. This paper advocates for a nuanced understanding of treason and encounter in Coetzee’s “Waiting for the Barbarians” (1980) (hereafter WB). Although treason and encounter constitute critical sites for Coetzee’s interrogation of imperial or dogmatic thought and emphasis on the epistemic and agential value of becoming, their interpretive utility to the desire for community has remained largely underexplored. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Walter Benjamin, this paper contends that encounter and becoming-traitor function as sites of critique and the genesis of a new thought on the alternative community. The paper shows that beneath the dystopian atmosphere that pervades WB, Coetzee is a thinker of new thought as the precondition for the emergence of a new community. By focusing on encounter and becoming-traitor, it draws attention to Coetzee’s ethic of what the body can do and interrogates Colonel Joll’s narrow understanding of treason. The analysis focuses specifically on Magistrate’s encounter with Joll of the Third Bureau and the barbarian girl - as central to Magistrate’s becoming-traitor or betrayal of the dehumanising apparatus and temporality of “Empire”.

Keywords: J.M Coetzee, Gilles Deleuze, encounter, treason, community, Walter Benjamin, futurity, thought

What has made it impossible to for us to live in time like fish in water, like birds in the air, like children? ... Is there any better way to pass these last days than in *dreaming of a saviour* with a sword who will scatter the enemy hosts and forgive us the errors that have been committed by others in our name and grant us a second chance to build our earthly paradise?

Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) remains one of Coetzee’s most critically acclaimed and explored works of fiction. Its exploration of the shame of being human, the degradation of the body, the crisis of liberal ideology, the fragility of moral universals or Manichaeian thought, and the philosophical and ethical problematics of war on terror defines its untimeliness. Which is why in reading WB one is confronted with the question of how it thinks redemption and community. This is especially important in light of Coetzee’s assertion, in an interview with David Attwell, that:

I am not a herald of community or anything else ... I am someone who has intimations of freedom (as every chained prisoner has) and constructs representations — which are shadows themselves — of people slipping their chains and turning their faces to the light. I do not imagine freedom...I do not represent it. Freedom is another name for the unimaginable (Attwell 2003, 6).

Rather than characterise this as a disavowal of community, I will argue that it is a call for criticality thinking towards the aura of certainty or faith that usually animates discussions on community. As Coetzee goes on to point out, “Community has its basis in an awareness and an acceptance of a common justice. You [Attwell] use the word faith. Let me be more cautious and stay with the word awareness: awareness of an idea of justice, somewhere, that transcends laws and law-making. Such an awareness is not absent from our lives” (*ibid.* 6). Put differently, redemption and community are impossible without a consciousness and recognition of a common justice. This search for a *common justice* constitutes the ethical-political axis and epiphany in Coetzee’s fiction. For Coetzee’s fictional protagonists, the awareness and acceptance of a common justice is the outcome of a radical encounter that calls into question habitual thoughts and practices.

Written during the period when the Apartheid regime in South Africa had intensified its terroristic campaign of incarceration and torture of critics, WB is first and foremost about torture and the crisis of colonial ideology. Coetzee himself has argued that the novel

is “about the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of conscience” (72). The novel is set in an unnamed colonial time-space and traces the ethical-political awakening of Magistrate, the colonial administrator and narrator, at the margins of Empire, as a consequence of his encounter with bodies that challenge his most cherished convictions. More broadly, WB attacks not only the ideology and practices of colonialism/imperialism but all forms of coercive socio-political organisation.

The novel has generated a rich corpus of critical literature on issues as diverse as history, torture, barbarism, otherness, the crisis of liberal notions of freedom and justice, war on terror, human rights, agency and responsibility, disability, and time (Gallagher 1988; Moses 1993; Detels 2004; Spencer 2008; Hall 2012; Asempasah 2013; Winter 2014; Kelly 2015; Lochner 2016). Other scholars have focused on the type of future WB summons. Opinions are, however, divided on this. On the one hand, some critics argue that WB presents us with the possibility of a new world or community (Crary 2017, 131; Jolly 1989, 78; Durrant 2004, 1). On the other hand, drawing on the “apocalyptic figure of the marked or mutilated body”, Russell Samolsky contends that WB should be read “as proleptic of future catastrophe” (Samolsky 2011, 31). For Samolsky, the “apocalyptic legibility” undercuts any weak messianic or redemptive vision in WB (Samolsky 2011, 177). Furthermore, encounter and its destabilizing power in WB have also been examined by a number of scholars. Kamel Abdaoui asserts that in Coetzee’s fiction “encountering the Other (...) is a convulsive and dislocating event that forces the Self to undertake a decisive and critical journey across identities” (Abdaoui 2018, 7-8). While Abdaoui is broadly right, his claim that hybridization is the end result of the Self/Other encounter in Coetzee’s fiction is problematic. As Coetzee’s idea of common justice suggests, far from a quest for hybridization Coetzee is interested in a shared ethical-political ethos that permits the coexistence of different identities.

Drawing on Deleuze’s notion of encounter and Benjamin’s idea of becoming-traitor, this paper argues for a nuanced reading of

encounter and treason in WB as modalities for the genesis of thought on redemption and community. Contrary to Abdaoui, I will argue that in WB, in particular, encounter unleashes treason, betrayal or becoming-traitor as preconditions for a future community. Encounter has become, in the last few years, a topical idea in discussions across many disciplines (See Helen F. Wilson’s “On geography and encounter: Bodies, borders and difference” (2014) for detailed discussion on the cross-disciplinary deployment of the notion of *Encounter*). One of the most influential has been Pratt’s notion of “contact zones” (1991; 1992). For Pratt, the “contact zone” is the space of colonial encounter where “cultures met, clashed and grappled with each other” in highly asymmetrical relations of power. According to Pratt, “the contact zone” was marked by two broad forms of affects: “rage, incomprehension, and pain” and “exhilarating moments of wonder and revelation, mutual understanding, and new wisdom” (Pratt 1991, 39). However, it is to Deleuze rather than Pratt that we turn. This may appear surprising considering that Deleuze develops his idea of encounter in relation to his critique of representation “as the constitutive mode of knowledge-formation” (Hamilton 2011, xi). Nonetheless, the Deleuzian encounter has implications for reading WB, especially when placed within the context of Deleuze-Spinoza ethological ethics on “the materiality of existence or physics of the body” (Gatens 2002, 100). Deleuze’s articulates his conception of the productive role of encounter in the following words:

The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought, which presupposes itself, and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself. Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter (Deleuze 1994, 139).

It is important to note that there is precedent for the application of Deleuzian concepts and ideas to read WB. Hamilton (2010; 2011; 2018) and Nashef (2010) have discussed Magistrate’s transformation in terms of becoming-nomad, becoming-woman, and becoming-

animal. However, by drawing mainly on Deleuzian becoming, these scholars have missed Magistrate's becoming-traitor, which Coetzee foregrounds as a radical agency and critique of Doxa. It is here that Benjamin becomes pertinent.

In "The Author as Producer" Benjamin proposed becoming-traitor as a radical strategy of ideological and ethical repositioning that dismantles dominant power structures and summons a people to come. Writing at the time of controversy over the role of the intellectual/writer in the proletarian revolution, Benjamin argued that the role of the intellectual was to transform the existing structure. Consequently, mere ideological solidarity with the proletariat was undesirable since it left the oppressive ideological structure intact. Framing the issue at stake in terms of the opposition between transmission and transformation, Benjamin argued that the intellectual's role was to transform the capitalist apparatus of production and not to transmit it. But how does the intellectual become the transmitter of new realities when he owns his means of production to the bourgeois class and, therefore, is "on the basis of the privilege of culture solidary with it, even more so it with him" (Benjamin 1970: 228). Benjamin's solution was that "the revolutionary intellectual" must become "a traitor to his class of origin" (1970: 237). To become a traitor meant "betrayal [that] consists, in the case of the writer, in behaviour which changes him from a reproducer of the apparatus of production into an engineer who sees his task as the effort of adapting that apparatus to the aims of the proletarian revolution" (237-238).

It is clear that Benjamin's viewed becoming-traitor as a key tactic in the realisation of a communist community. In this paper, we abandon Benjamin's Marxist idioms of "class" and "bourgeois" and redefine becoming-traitor not just as ideological repositioning but also as an ethic of leaping out of apparatus of capture. Leaping out should be understood within the specific context of exile as *ex salire*. Contrary to the dominant understanding of exile as *exsul* (banished, living abroad, homeless), Nico Israel argues that exile has another etymology, *ex salire*, which "expresses a sense of 'leaping out' toward

something or somewhere, implying a matter of will’ (Israel 2000: 1). Embedded in *ex salire* as leaping out is the notion of agency and the production of the new. To become a traitor, as we use in connection with Magistrate, is to become an exile. As will become clear, by becoming-traitor to Empire Magistrate positions himself as a traitor and an exilic figure. This sheds new light on Magistrate’s interpretation of the barbarian slips. Although critics have dwelt on Colonel Joll’s accusation of Magistrate of treason, they have rarely paid attention to the subtle differentiated ways treason operates in *WB* as becoming-traitor or leaping out and to the desire for people to come.

Having clarified the conceptual framework for our analysis, the rest of the paper examines becoming-traitor in *WB* from the following perspectives: encounter as the genesis of thought and a break with Empire or the State thought, and what the body can do. Together, these constitute true betrayal that summons the people to come since they function as ethical responses to the shame of being human. The critical turning point in *WB* is Magistrate’s betrayal or repudiation of Empire. By that act, Coetzee suggests that the quest for an awareness and acceptance of a common justice is contingent on a treasonable act or betrayal of that which imprisons the individual and prevents the emergence of alternative ways of being. Hence Joll’s accusation of Magistrate for “treasonously consorting with the enemy” (Coetzee 1980, 85) represents a fragment of a more profound meaning of treason or betrayal in *WB*. The challenge for the reader then is to understand how “treason” functions as an apparatus of capture by the State and, at a deeper level, as the precondition for a genuine community.

We can now examine how *WB* instantiates Empire’s dogmatism and the genesis of thought in the context of encounter. *WB* begins with the arrival of Colonel Joll at the colonial outpost to quell a rumoured barbarian invasion. Prior to the arrival of Joll and his force from the capital, the colonial outpost had been administered by Magistrate. As the administrative officer of the district, he believed that he represented the civilising power of Empire. He did

not only collect tithes and taxes, protect trade routes, administer the communal lands, and supervise the settler garrison; he also administered justice by presiding over the law-court. Magistrate had succeeded in managing the walled settler town of three thousand inhabitants as the bastion of civilisation in a desert of ruins and barbarians. He derived satisfaction as “a responsible official in the service of Empire” and as he waited for his retirement he indulged himself by reading the classics and excavating the ruins (41). There is a certain delusion and taken-for-grantedness on Magistrate’s part on the nobility of his stewardship at the colonial outpost. His conviction did not raise any ethical issues for him about his role as the agent of Empire since he had not been confronted with any crisis that problematises what he represents. At this point in his career, the image that Magistrate crafts for himself can be described as a colonial father who, to borrow from Fanon, “unceasingly restrains [his] fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts” (Fanon 1968, 170).

However, the military operation to flush out the barbarian threat results in the imposition of emergency powers and unleashes a year-long violent regime of imperial “spectacles of debasement and suffering and death” (Coetzee 1980, 131) that puts into question the epistemological authority of Empire as the bulwark of civilisation. Magistrate is removed as the administrator. He comes to realise that Empire is not defined by principles of autonomy, justice, progress and freedom as he had assumed but, to borrow from Deleuze, by the “perpetuation or conservation of organs of power” (Deleuze 1987, 394) that require from its servants not love but “merely that they perform their duty” (Coetzee 1980, 6). The duplicity and dogmatism of Empire is represented by Joll’s terroristic invasion of the frontier town. Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel’s actions are motivated by the conviction that the survival of Empire depends on the containment and liquidation of barbarians. The irony, which WB points out, is that Empire’s project of normality or imperial control over Others is impossible without dehumanising

and characterising them as barbarians. As Magistrate is quick to inform the young officer “The people we call barbarians are nomads, they migrate between the lowlands and the uplands every year, that is their way of life” (Coetzee 1980, 54). In other words, the category “barbarians” in so far as it designates the Other is an imposition by the colonial power as a result of its contempt for and fear of the Other. It is here that Coetzee gets to the horror at the heart of Empire’s civilisatrice mission and normality: Empire is inherently the denigration of being; the manufacture of bestial life, shame and humiliation through spectacles of torture. Coetzee’s strategic move is to expose the complicity of Magistrate’s liberalism in Empire’s dehumanisation of being by unsettling his illusion of colonial beneficence through a radical encounter with Colonel Joll and Warrant Officer Mandel on the one hand, and the barbarian girl on the other. It is in staging these encounters that Coetzee succeeds in revealing the hidden shame, humiliation and cruelty in the rhetoric of Empire as civilisation and engendering thought on what it means to be human.

It is therefore impossible to appreciate the criticality of the thematic of redemption, becoming-traitor, and community in *WB* without reflecting on the critical place of the encounter. A genuine encounter challenges preconceived ideas or categories and confronts thought with its breakdown that forces it to think. As O’Sullivan observes, a genuine encounter functions as “a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus our habitual subjectivities. It produces a cut, a crack...for the rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world...a way of seeing and thinking this world differently” (O’Sullivan 2006, 1). This is why a radical encounter takes on the character of original violence inflicted on thought and awakens thought from its natural stupor and conformism, which *Doxa* imposes (Deleuze 1994, 139).

The first and originary encounter in *WB*, then, is Magistrate’s encounter with Joll. Magistrate’s becoming-traitor can be understood in the context of this encounter, its ramifications and his subsequent encounter with the partially blind and crippled

barbarian girl. Magistrate's initial attitude to the activities of Joll is indifference to annihilation. However, once he, the advocate of law and justice, is imprisoned and tortured in the same room where the barbarians had been tortured and some killed, Magistrate comes face to face with the dark side of Empire. The violence of this encounter to Magistrate's thought is the subject matter of the novel.

It is important to focus on the consequences of Empire's fixation on *recognition* or *representation* that Magistrate's encounter with Joll makes visible. Joll arrives at the obscure frontier town with a single mission: to find the truth and to exterminate it. The truth Joll and the Third Bureau are seeking is first and foremost a confirmation of their definition of the barbarians as a threat to Empire. For Joll, to *recognise* a barbarian is to ratify the rumour that the barbarians are planning an invasion on Empire. Where this implicit claim becomes impossible to sustain, Joll and Mandel use force to extort confessions. Joll's obsession with the truth of the barbarian as the enemy of Empire/State could be understood in terms of Deleuze's observation that underlying the dogmatic Image of thought is the presupposition that "thought has an affinity with the true; it formally possesses the true and materially wants the true" (Deleuze 1994, 131). Like Deleuze, Coetzee suggests that this attitude breeds "life-giving illusions", barbarism and acts of terror. The enduring value of *WB* then is that it explores with the poignant economy of reflexivity the consequences of Empires' preoccupation with its truth of the Other as a barbarian; the shame of complicity and compromise, and the place of conscience and responsibility under a draconian regime. Hence the importance of Magistrate's intense grappling with the meaning of *justice, law and order, freedom* and *being*. Early in the novel, in a conversation with Joll after overhearing the latter's torture of the barbarian old man who had been falsely arrested and accused, Magistrate interrogates Joll on truth and the responsibility of the interrogator. Joll's response is revealing: "There is a certain tone. A certain tone enters the voice of a man who is telling the truth. Training and experience teach us to recognize the tone" (Coetzee 1980, 5). This is the first revelation that Magistrate's

encounter with Joll brings up. The novel explores the implications of this dogmatic attitude which Magistrate aptly summarised as “Pain is truth: all else is subject to doubt” (Coetzee 1980, 5). Joll’s philosophy contradicts Magistrate’s insistence on law and justice as the truth of our humanity.

Another instance of Magistrate’s encounter with the shame of Empire is the “exemplary spectacle” of the writing scene at the square. The first expeditionary force into the hinterland led by Colonel Joll returns to the settler town square with twelve miserable barbarian captives to prove to the people that the barbarians are real (Coetzee 1980, 113). They are brought in “stark naked” with “a loop of wire running through the flesh of each man’s hands and through holes pierced in his cheeks” (*Ibid*). After failing to escape the contamination of the atrocity to be committed on the barbarians, Magistrate is forced to join the crowd of thousands that have gathered to observe the undignified spectacle. Using a stick of charcoal, Colonel Joll first writes on each barbarian “ENEMY... ENEMY... ENEMY” (Coetzee 1980, 115). We see here the convergence of or complicity between writing and colonial violence and cruelty. Ironically, this cruel colonial calligraphy unsettles Empire’s moral and epistemological authority in that it demonstrates that barbarians are not Others that Empire’s civilizes; they are constructions. After Joll’s inscription, the barbarians are flogged to the pleasure of the “civilised” crowd until the black charcoal, the dust, the sweat and blood become indistinguishable. The height of this depravity occurs when Joll takes a four-pound hammer to beat them. It is at this point that Magistrate is forced to yell: ‘No! No! No! You are depraving the people! (...) You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast...Look! We are the great miracle of creation!’ (Coetzee 1980, 116-17). For this rude interruption of Empire’s cruel game of definition, inscription and exhibition, Magistrate is clubbed down by Colonel Joll’s men. This encounter with the violence of Empire makes him think about what it means to describe barbarians as miracles of creation, as “*Men*” and to demand justice for them. Magistrate is for the first time

confronted with the contradiction of the heart of Empire: the gap between the aspiration to universalise autonomy and justice, and the impossibility of demanding the same for the Other. How can one demand justice and equality for the Other who, by Empire's rationalisation, are not "Men"?

This is why Justice is Empire's arch-enemy since it can only become meaningful when the ideology of domination of other peoples and their lands and resources is abandoned and a new sociability or community becomes thinkable. This is the new trajectory Magistrate's thought begins to take. Prior to his encounter with Joll, his philosophy was based on the primacy of law and justice. He saw his duty as ensuring that "memory of justice does not fail" (Coetzee 1980, 152). However, confronted with the "new science of degradation that kills people on their knees," Magistrate realises that if there is to be the possibility of a people to come, it will require a redefinition of law and justice. Towards the end of the novel, when Joll and the Third Bureau destroy the settlers' "world of tranquil certainties", Magistrate rightly begins to think of the "task of rebuilding" (Coetzee 1980, 156). This task is contingent on a becoming-traitor and new thought.

An important aspect of Magistrate's encounter with Joll Bureau occurs when he is arrested and interrogated after returning from leading the barbarian girl back to her people. Magistrate had found the barbarian girl begging at the gates of the barracks. To relieve her of the shame of begging, he installed her in the barracks kitchen as a "scullery-maid. The journey to the limits of Empire brings Magistrate face-to-face with "the brown-faced, weather-beaten, narrow-eyed barbarians on native soil" (Coetzee 1980, 76). It is at once an anxious and revealing encounter. First, with no means of communication, the encounter between the coloniser and the barbarians is reduced to silence and gazing at each other. We can surmise that this gaze engenders disturbing questions for Magistrate: what did the barbarians see in him? What does he represent? Did they see him, as the Namaqua Hottentots in *Dusklands* (1974) saw Jacobus Coetzee as "an irrelevance" or "another accident" (Coetzee

1974, 98) unworthy of their most serious attention? Secondly, the barbarian girl's rejection of Magistrate's request to return to the town on her “own choice” constitutes a potent indictment and rejection of Empire's civilising pretensions. Being-together is possible only when the axiomatics of Empire is abandoned and a new ethics of being is founded.

For making contact with the barbarians and “contracting a liaison” (Coetzee 1980, 91) with the girl, Magistrate is charged with “treasonously consorting with the enemy” (Coetzee 1980, 85) and confined by Joll. The interrogation presents to him, for the first time, the rare opportunity to challenge Joll's notions of what Empire represents. To Joll's claim that “the natives are at war with us,” Magistrate counters “Unless we are the enemy” (85). He shifts the definition of “barbarians” to refer specifically to Empire. He describes Joll and his men as “the new barbarians” (Coetzee 1980, 85). We see here Magistrate's redefinition of treason or betrayal as liberation. Once he has been charged with treason, he concludes, “my alliance with the guardians of Empire is over. I have set myself in opposition, the bond is broken, I am a free man (Coetzee 1980, 85). In other words, he becomes a traitor and an exile. But as Magistrate realises this freedom that his *becoming-traitor* to Empire inaugurates is a dangerous one. Not only will he suffer pain, loneliness and hunger as a result of his confinement, he will also be hung upside down at the square floating back and forth in “an arc a foot above the ground like a great old moth with its wings pinched together, roaring, shouting” (Coetzee 1980, 133). The people enjoying the spectacle interpret Magistrate's roars and shouts of agony and humiliation as “the barbarian language”.

An indication of how Magistrate's encounter with the violence of Empire and the barbarian girl produces new thought can be seen in the interview session when he is brought before Joll and asked to decipher the slips he had excavated. Joll and his men had found the chest of wooden slips in Magistrate's apartment and assumed that it represented communication between him and the barbarians. Joll cannot read the barbarian scripts. His ingenious interpretation of

the slips constitutes a powerful critique of Empire. This encounter reveals the limits of its power to define and the extent to which he has leapt out of the semiotics of Empire. Attwell has described Magistrate's performance in this episode as directed at "undermining Joll's terroristic drive for certainty, for truth" (Attwell 1993, 78). What is more, it signals Magistrate's transformation into a traitor to Empire as a particular structure of thought, feeling and practice.

To grasp the radicalism of his interpretive performance, it is significant to remember that before the arrival of Joll and his men, Magistrate had been unsuccessful at deciphering the barbarian slips. What has changed between then and this translation that he is forced to present to Joll is that his encounters with the barbarian girl and the debasing activities of the Third Bureau have engendered a new mode of thought that operates outside the hermeneutics of Empire. By giving voice to the barbarian slips and in the process staging a new regime of meaning that is antithetical to Empire's conception of the barbarians as a people without history and writing, Magistrate radically reorients his relation as a traitor and an exile and in the process becomes a producer of new realities rather than a transmitter of Doxa. Magistrate's reading deliberately privileges *war*, *vengeance*, *justice* and *history* in order to problematize Empire's deployment of these foundational concepts and to raise the issues of ethics and responsibility. His betrayal or exile alienates him and transforms him into an object of scorn and ridicule. As Joll tells him, far from becoming "the One Just Man" and a "martyr" who sacrifices his "freedom to his principles", he is merely "a clown," a dirty "madman...an old beggar-man...a refuse-scavenger" with no future (Coetzee 1980, 125). In Empire's grammar of disgust and profane, Magistrate has become a "traitor" for his refusal to "affirm allegiance to Empire" (Coetzee 1980, 143). However, contrary to Joll's claim, Magistrate's treason or exile signifies the obsolescence of Empire's logic of community and looks forward to a radically different community.

The last defining encounter in WB is Magistrate's encounter with

the partially blind and crippled barbarian girl. She was part of a group of barbarians prisoners rounded up from their village by Joll and brought to the settler town in his quest for the truth about the barbarian invasion. Her father died at the hands of Joll. Joll’s cruel methods of extracting confessions have left her partially blind and crippled. Disfigured, abandoned and a beggar, she is a living symbol of imperial disfiguration and disposability. Although Magistrate rescues and installs her in the kitchen, he also regularly invites her to his apartment. His encounter and relationship with the barbarian girl is at the centre of Coetzee’s indictment of the duplicity of Empire and the quest for a new sociality. Magistrate’s relations with the girl is dominated by an intense desire to decipher her body in order to get to the truth of what actually happened to her in the torture room. However, it is this inordinate desire that exposes Magistrate’s complicity in the dehumanisation of the barbarians and makes him realise that he is no different from Joll, as he had assumed. Magistrate’s encounter with Joll and the barbarian girl complicates Empire’s conception of Otherness. Joll represents the intimate Other, the always already dark side of Empire.

The analysis has shown that Magistrate’s encounters with Joll and the blind barbarian girl are traumatic and enabling sites. But we have yet to explore encounter in terms of the ethics of *what the body can do* or ethology. Simply put, what a body can do “corresponds to the nature and limits of its capacity to be affected” (Deleuze 1990, 218). Although our aim is not an ethological analysis, ethology, in so far as it emphasises the affective implications of bodily encounter, is essential to further clarifying Magistrate’s becoming-traitor. It must be admitted that Deleuze does not draw an explicit connection between encounter as the genesis of thought and encounter in terms of Spinoza’s “physics of bodies.” Nonetheless, as the following analysis reveals, the circumstances of Magistrate’s becoming-traitor makes such a synthesis possible and allows us to describe the quest for community or a common justice in terms of “the composition of relations between existing bodies” that yield joy (Deleuze 1988, 115). Our analysis draws on Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza’s *Ethics*.

According to Deleuze, Spinoza's singular contribution to the modern conceptions of individuality is his recognition that "a body affects other bodies or is affected by other bodies" (Deleuze 1988, 123). This has radical implications since a body's individuality is now defined by its capacity for affecting or being affected.

Ethology is the study of animal and human behaviour from the perspective of "their powers and their capacities for affecting and being affected" (Gatens and Lloyd 100). Ethological analysis makes a crucial distinction between active affections or *actions* and passive affections or *passions*. *Actions* and *Passions* describe two conceptualisations of the possible outcomes of a body's encounter with another body. When a body encounters another one, such as Magistrate encounters Joll and the barbarian girl, and the two bodies are incompatible, the result is *sadness*. We have already seen how Magistrate's encounter with Joll and his men occasions the degradation of the barbarian body, the production of shame and humiliation. The barbarians and Magistrate are therefore affected or acted upon by Joll and his cohorts. The result is sad passions. *Passions*, it is important to note, have their origin outside the individual and diminish the power of acting. As Deleuze argues "sad passions represent the lowest degree of our power, the moment when we are most separated from our power of acting, when we are most alienated, delivered over to the phantoms of superstition, to the mystifications of the tyrant" (Deleuze 1988, 123). Conversely, when we encounter another body that agrees with us, the encounter produces *joy* and increases our power to act. A joyful encounter is the result of a common notion, which refers to agreement, or understanding, that makes it possible for bodies to co-exist joyfully. Coetzee's assertion that an awareness and acceptance of a common justice is the basis of community is uncannily similar to Deleuzo-Spinoza's notion of common notions as that which makes the coming-into-being of community possible.

The distinction between encounters that increase our power to act and those that diminish or decompose has two implications for our reading of *WB*. Firstly, it enables us to redefine Evil. From Joll's

imperial perspective, barbarians are evil or enemies of Empire. From an ethological emphasis on *passions* and *actions*, however, evil is defined in terms of any power that threatens or decomposes the composition of convivial relations. As Deleuze asserts, in ethological analysis “*evil is always a bad encounter*” (Deleuze 1990, 247; emphasis included). This illuminates Coetzee’s shift in emphasis from the Other as evil to evil, as a bad encounter which degrades life. If evil is not located in specific groups but bodies that produce sadness, then the ethical responsibility lies in producing encounters that generate shared values. If the dominant ethological encounter in *WB* is the one that decomposes bodies, diminishes their power to act and therefore imposes suffering, then the quest for a new community is paramount. What this reveals is that encounter, understood in terms of affections, supplements our initial analysis of encounter as violence that provokes the genesis of thought. These two conceptualisations have a profound bearing on reading *WB* not only as an exploration of colonial torture or violence but, more importantly, as the search for an alternative composition of relations or affective compatibilities.

We can now examine the meaning of Magistrate’s becoming-traitor to Empire. His becoming-traitor is first and foremost an awakening of consciousness that allows him to see his true place in Empire. As he acknowledges, “I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, he [Colonel Joll] the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow. Two sides of Imperial rule, no more, no less” (Coetzee 1980, 149). This epiphany signifies a fundamental ethical shift from his initial position that he was the good servant of Empire dispensing Law and Justice at its margins. Reflecting on why it was impossible to inaugurate positive encounters, Magistrate makes his most insightful statement:

It is the fault of Empire! Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and to plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to

end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies ...By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. A mad vision yet a virulent one (Coetzee 1980, 146).

This is not just a diagnosis of what Empire represents; it is Magistrate's valediction to Empire as a form of history and community. Although at the end of the novel Magistrate is reinstated as the administrator, it is clear that he is a transformed character no longer under the illusions of imperial superiority. He realises that to live outside the history of Empire means organising encounters that will produce joy.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis has shown that a nuanced reading of encounter and treason in WB yields significant insights rarely articulated in the existing literature. One important implication of our approach is that it redefines Magistrate's agency and signification. Far from being a victim, Magistrate is a herald of a coming community. His ethical transformation calls for a re-examination of his claim, towards the end of the novel, that "When some men suffer unjustly it is the fate of those who witness their suffering to suffer the shame of it" (152). Magistrate is more than just a witness; he is an exilic figure who resists Empire through his betrayal.

In a profound way, Magistrate's becoming-traitor implies that he is the last man at the end of history. This recalls Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). For Fukuyama, the end of history means the triumph of liberal democratic capitalism over its ideological competitors. The universalisation of capitalism, Fukuyama argues, means that 'there would be no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all the really big questions had been settled' (Fukuyama 1992, xii). It is important to stress that the end of History is not to

be taken literally. In fact, for Fukuyama, it refers to “the endpoint of mankind’s ideological evolutions” (ix).

In *WB*, the end of history refers to the dissolution or collapse of the moral and political legitimacy of Empire and the termination of its arborescent image of thought, which breeds violence and shame. History, in *WB*, refers to Empire as a type of cruel historical encounter or socio-political organisation. As Colonel Joll tells Magistrate, this history is indifferent to the martyrs of freedom and equality and the dehumanisation or spectacles of cruelty that Empire stages in the colony. History, for Empire, is about its victories; its domination of territories and practices condensed in the idiom of normality. Hence, the post-historical man in *WB* is one who has escaped the duplicity of Empire and summons a new community and historical configuration; the post-historical man bears witness to the irrationality of Empire’s normality. In this sense, Magistrate is the last man of a specific history. As the last man of the end of Empire’s history, therefore, Magistrate acknowledges that “a paradise on earth” will not only be a community beyond Good and Evil but one that will be based on the art of making “concessions” (Coetzee 1980, 169). It is therefore significant that Magistrate regards himself as the “last magistrate” (Coetzee 1980, 168); an acceptance that Empire and its time of history are dead.

Unlike Fukuyama, Coetzee’s last man of history is one who speaks the truth of a new man and a new way of organising encounters between and among people in order to produce an oasis of mutual coexistence. The end of history in *WB* then is not about the triumph of liberal democratic capitalism but the realisation that the “history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects” is “cause for shame” (Coetzee 1980, 169). To become a traitor to Empire is to become a *lost subject*, an exile and a post-historical man.

I began with the epigram from *WB* in which Magistrate ruminates on forgiveness and the possibility of a “second chance to build our earthly paradise” (Coetzee 1980, 173). The choice of this epigram was not only intended to emphasise the centrality of the

quest for a different community but also to register the ethical gap that separates Jacobus Coetzee in *Dusklands* and Magistrate in *WB*. After having killed the Hottentots for no apparent reason other than to assert his reality and mastery, Jacobus rationalises his violent acts as:

No more than any other man do I enjoy killing; but I have taken it upon myself to be the one to pull the trigger, performing this sacrifice for myself and my countrymen, who exist, and committing upon the dark folk the murders we have all wished. All are guilty, without exception. I include the Hottentots. Who knows for what unimaginable crimes of the spirit they died, through me? God's judgment is just, irreprehensible and incomprehensible. His mercy pays no heed to merit. I am a tool in the hands of history (Coetzee 1974, 106).

However, as the epigram shows, it is precisely this history that must be rejected. What does it mean to position oneself as a tool in the hands of history for one's people or race? The difference between Magistrate and Jacobus is that the former recognises that the "errors that have been committed by others in our name" are bad betrayals and therefore require forgiveness that will inaugurate the difficult task of building a paradise. Magistrate's becoming-traitor is, therefore, a refutation of Jacobus Coetzee's sacrificial act on behalf of his race.

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THE MACHIAVELLIAN CONCEPTION OF FREEDOM AND THE BEGINNING OF A REPUBLICAN ORDER

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Abstract. In the essay “What is Freedom?”, Hannah Arendt argues that freedom is the meaning, the “raison d’être” of politics and that political life from which it is absent is meaningless (Arendt 1977, 161). Hardly anyone denies the importance of freedom for any human or political society. It is no novelty either that freedom is a highly contested conception, the meaning of which is bound up with numerous controversies and disagreements. Yet, it is customary to distinguish between the “negative” and “positive” concepts of liberty in accordance with the dualistic framework presented by Isaiah Berlin in 1969. Notwithstanding its popularity, this categorization is at very least problematic. This paper elaborates on the Machiavellian understanding of freedom, which arguably cannot fit in Berlin’s categorization. Besides, it draws parallels with Hanna Arendt’s understanding of political freedom and argues that the complexity of her conception challenges the validity of Berlin’s framework.

Keywords: freedom, liberty, positive and negative conceptions of freedom

INTRODUCTION

Needless to say, the definition of freedom has served a topic for a hefty debates in political thought¹. The aim of the following essay is twofold. The first section examines the Machiavellian conception of liberty while resting its focus on his influential work *The Discourses on Livy*. The second section elaborates on the relevance of Machiavelli’s conception of liberty in contemporary political philosophy and examines it through the prism of Isaiah Berlin’s dualistic framework. Furthermore, the paper draws a comparison between Machiavelli’s and Arendt’s viewpoints. It elaborates on the main similarities and

differences between Arendt's conception of republican freedom and Machiavelli's *libertà*. By referring to Quentin Skinner, I will argue that Machiavelli's conception, albeit arguably in political terms, still is not straightforwardly positive and suggest that this constitutes one of the main differences between Arendt's and Machiavelli's understandings.

To begin with, significant controversies lurk behind Machiavelli's notion. Marcia L. Colish distinguishes between three main understandings of liberty (*libertà*): first, it is the understanding of liberty in a commonplace, which may entail freedom from physical capacity as freedom from political action enjoyed by the ruling force (Colish 1971, 324). Colish argues that liberty, in common sense, can also denote a person's financial position. Hence, in the reading of Colish, this understanding of Machiavellian freedom does not necessarily have to be political. As Colish maintains, free men are defined as the ones who act "on their own initiative, as opposed to those who act as other people's agents" and, therefore, "free-from" may constitute a synonym for "lacking in" or "enjoying the absence of" (Colish 1971, 325).

According to Colish, another understanding of freedom in Machiavelli is *free will*, which is conceived as an "attribute of human nature" (Colish 1971, 325). Colish argues that the notion of *free* refers to human independence. Machiavelli "upholds the dignity of man's free will" and suggests that a human being is capable to express his free will "in the face of *fortuna*" and "by the "exercise of Virtù" (Colish 1971, 326)².

Finally, a purely political conception of liberty is referred as *Corporate Libertà*. According to this concept, cities are free when they are in possession of autonomy and are governed by their own laws instead of being subject to the rule of foreigners (Colish 1971 327). On the other hand, one should consider that in Machiavelli's political thought the distinction between political and individual freedoms might not be straightforward, but these two are intrinsically linked.

According to Samuel Salzborn, the main end of establishing a stable state, according to Machiavelli, is to secure individual freedom, which is not compatible with autocracy (Salzborn 2015, 29): “In Machiavelli’s conception, ‘the voice of the people’ is likened to ‘the voice of God’, because he considers the people to be smarter, more reliable and of better judgment than its rulers” (Salzborn 2015, 29). Therefore, in Salzborn’s reading, Machiavelli praises the people who founded republics for their virtue and their love of liberty.

Regarding the role of a people and its willingness to be free, the 16th chapter of *The Discourses on Livy* is particularly interesting. Machiavelli draws attention to the difficulty to maintain freedom for those people who have not acquired it by themselves. He further maintains that for a people who lived under the governance of a prince, the maintenance of freedom can present an insurmountable, yet a “reasonable difficulty” (Discourses 1.16, 44). He compares people who did not put any effort in the acquisition of freedom to a wild animal, which “although ferocious and feral nature has always been nourished in prison and in servitude” (Discourses 1.16, 44). One can argue that, for Machiavelli, it is the people who acquires and establishes its own freedom; however, for obtaining freedom, the joint action is required. In the same chapter, Machiavelli says:

(...) the common utility that is drawn from a free way of life is not recognized by anyone while it is possessed: this is being able to enjoy one's things freely, without any suspicion, not fearing for the honour of wives and that of children, not to be afraid for oneself (Discourses 1.16, 45).

Skinner interprets this passage as freedom has the meaning of being unobscured in terms of whatever ends they choose to pursue themselves (Skinner 1984, 205). Upon this reasoning, freedom seems to be conceived in an individualist rather than in communal sense.

On the other hand, Machiavelli maintains that if corruption is ubiquitous in people’s affairs, they will not be able to exercise freedom. In this regard, his understanding of freedom is public, communal. There are two main desires that move people: “one, to

be avenged against those who are the cause that it is servile; the other, to recover its freedom” (Discourses 1.16, 46). As for to why people are willing to be free, the philosopher suggests that only a small part want freedom to command, whereas most of them desire to be free in order to lead secure lives (Discourses 1.16, 46).

Besides, in the Machiavellian thought, one of the meanings of freedom is political independence and self-governance³. Rome, according to him, had a free beginning, “without depending on anyone” (Discourses, 1.49.1, 100). It is abundantly clear that this understanding relates itself to the conception of sovereignty. As Maurizio Viroli rightly observes, Machiavelli’s conception of liberty, which, in its sense, is republican, is beyond the scope of the rule of law and touches upon participation in a “sovereign deliberation”, appointment of the magistrates, free expression in deliberative bodies and councils (Viroli 1998, 6). Viroli points out that a political man, for Machiavelli, commits himself to a political community, to a republic (Viroli 1998, 7). It can be argued, therefore, that the political conception of liberty is bound up with the notion of patriotism, love of the country, “which unites the citizens of a free republic” and “presupposes a sense of belonging and common-sense which only equal and free citizens can experience and cherish” (Viroli 1998, 150).

Furthermore, Machiavelli states that the foundation of freedom and the beginning of a new order requires extraordinary action. One needs to go for the extraordinary means, “such as violence and arms” in order to acquire or maintain freedom (Discourses, 1.18, 4). One example is the murder of Romulus by Remus, which, in the case of Rome, would be a precondition for the acquisition of freedom (Discourses, 1.8).

However, this example generates controversy. As the title of Machiavelli’s *Ninth Discourse* goes, “it is necessary to be alone if one wishes to order a republic anew or to perform it altogether outside its ancient orders”. This line of thought seems to be controversial, given the importance of Machiavelli bestows upon people’s action to establish freedom. This argument challenges Viroli’s account,

too. Mansfield and Tarcov, interpret “being alone” as “the necessity of any ordering to depend on a single mind” (Mansfield and Tarcov 1996, 23). Therefore, ‘being alone’ can be translated into a ‘unanimity’, which people can jointly achieve.

For the acquisition of freedom, the notion of the beginning is crucial. In this regard, Machiavelli develops quite a deterministic approach. He holds that whereas drafting freedom-supporting laws is difficult for a state with free beginnings, the ones with servile beginnings will be unable to govern themselves with just and freedom sustaining law (1.49,100). Machiavelli provides the example of Rome, which had a free beginning but had difficulties to maintain it, whereas Florence and Venice, the beginnings of which were servile, “were never able to reorder themselves” (Discourses, 1.49, 101). Machiavelli holds that, for Rome, whilst it was corrupt, making new laws was necessary in order to acquire freedom and establish new orders, which would be completely different from the former ones (Discourses, 1.18, 51). He conceives two options in terms of how the new order can be established: one envisages a sudden transition from one order to another; the other is a gradual transition that entails universal recognition of new laws.

Another important topic is addressed through the separation of plebs and the aristocracy. Machiavelli suggests that the disunion of plebs and the senate made the Republic of Rome free and powerful. He draws a sharp distinction between them and suggests that the laws “in favour of freedom “are set by the disunion of the two “(Discourses, 1.4, 16). He maintains that the republican constitution founded primarily on the power of the people did not last long (Gatti 2015, 15). Moreover, freedom calls for tumults and conflicts. In Machiavelli’s words: “every city ought to have its modes with which the people can vent its ambition” (Discourses, 1.5, 17).

MACHIAVELLI AND THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON THE CONCEPTION OF LIBERTY

Isaiah Berlin's dualistic framework

As Adam Swift rightly points out, Isaiah Berlin's essay on the two concepts of liberty in which the famous distinction between positive and negative conceptions is drawn is the most influential one in contemporary political philosophy (Swift 2014, 57). According to Berlin, "the positive sense of the word 'liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master", to be a "subject", instead of being an "object" (Berlin 2002, 178). The main question referring to the positive conception of freedom is: "What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?" (Berlin 2002, 169). In contrast, he suggests that freedom, in a negative sense, is all about "the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others. If I am prevented by others from doing what I could otherwise do, I am to that degree unfree" (Berlin 2002, 169). Respectively, the question that addresses negative freedom is: "what is the area within which the subject (...) is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?" (Berlin 2002, 169). To put it simply, negative freedom ("freedom from") requires an absence of certain types of constraints and interferences, whereas positive freedom ("freedom to") calls for action, thus for the fulfilment of certain activities.

Skinner questions the applicability of this distinction. In his eyes, people value freedom as long as they are free from the interferences, which would hamper their security⁴. In other words, people value freedom inasmuch as they value their secure lives (Skinner 1984, 205). Upon Machiavelli's reasoning, a free city is capable to govern itself and is not subject to any constraints. Considering these two accounts, Skinner concludes that, for Machiavelli, the enjoyment of personal freedom is a possibility that is given only to the members of self-governing communities. These are political communities in

which “the body politic determines its own actions, the actions of community as a whole” (Skinner 1984, 207). From this perspective, the positive and negative conceptions of freedom seem to be compatible and complementary.

Hanna Arendt and the Notions “Beginning” and “Freedom”

Another author whose works draw on this topic is Hannah Arendt. In her essay “What is freedom?”, she points out that raising the question about a definition of freedom represents a “hopeless enterprise”, given all the controversies and contradictions which are bound with this concept (Arendt 1977, 143). She acknowledges, however, that discussions on freedom are inevitable in political theory (Arendt 1977, 145). As previously stated, Arendt’s endorses the political conception of freedom. In her book “On Revolution”, freedom and power are conceived as inextricably interrelated concepts; they are almost applied as synonyms. People, upon Arendt’s reasoning, are capable to act, to establish a new order and the power cannot exist separately from them. It only exists when people get together and “bind themselves through ‘promises, covenants, and mutual pledges’ (Arendt 1990, 181). Needless to say that mutual pledges and promises are political categories.

For Arendt, as well as for Machiavelli, the concept of beginning is crucial. She endorses the idea that a human being is the beginning itself: “with the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before” (Arendt 1990, 177) Freedom, on its side, is all about action, it is “primarily experienced in action”(Arendt 1997, 151).

It should be clear now that Arendt dismisses the negative conception and the rise of negative liberties. She maintains that this idea, as well as that of limited government, were some of the most potent reasons because of which the American Revolution could not entirely fulfil its initial goals (Arendt 1990, 144). This is action,

through which “something new comes into the world” (Arendt, 1990, 166).

Both Machiavelli and Arendt seem to have a deterministic approach in this regards. Thus, Machiavelli holds that, for a corrupt people, reacquisition of freedom is almost impossible. In Arendt’s reading, the American people already constituted a politically and legally organized entity before the revolution, unlike the French one, which resulted in the success of the American Revolution and the failure of its French counterpart. Whereas the inheritance of the French one was absolutism, the Americans, in Arendt’s words, “had widespread experience in self-government” (Arendt 1990, 157).

Another obvious similarity is the importance that both philosophers bestow upon the beginning and “going extraordinary”. However, in sharp contrast with Machiavelli, who justifies the usage of violent means, one can see the total negation of violence in Arendt’s work. She perceives violence as a “marginal phenomenon in the political realm”, which is unable to create the order of political freedom (Arendt 1990, 19).

The seat of power is another important topic. Machiavelli, as we already saw, holds that the republican constitution founded only on the power of people could not last long. In a similar vein, Arendt states that the Americans distinguished the source of power, on the one hand, and the source of law, on the other. This was another reason for American success. In the case of the French Revolution, power and law were believed to have the selfsame source, *i.e.* the people (Arendt 1990, 183). She contends that this understanding was fatal to the French Revolution (Arendt 1990, 156).

I assume, notwithstanding, that the biggest difference between Arendt and Machiavelli is that the first dismisses negative liberties and the negative conception of freedom as such.

On the other hand, one cannot place Machiavelli’s understanding within Berlin’s categorization of negative and positive liberties. As Skinner rightly argues, the negative and positive conceptions of freedom are complementary in Machiavelli’s political thought. Arendt, on the other hand, explicitly endorses republican, “safely

buried” concept of freedom, (Arendt, 1990, 11) which calls for joint action. Besides, she dismisses the rise of negative liberties and liberal reading of freedom as forbearance and absence of constraints. She maintains that the “negative safeguards”, which are intended to limit the government’s encroachment, can by no means open “the political realm” (Arendt 1990, 69).

Nevertheless, Arendt herself acknowledges that the founding fathers bestowed great importance upon the negative liberties and agrees with the necessity of a limited government (Arendt 1990, 147)⁵. Although for her, this undoubtedly was a mistake from the side of Americans revolutionaries, one can argue that, in the American case, positive and negative freedoms were complementary and not sharply distinguished. On the one hand, the new political realm was created through the action and the exercise of power. On the other one, this, to a large extent, served the possibility of particular individuals to live in freedom and lead “secure” lives in the newly established Body Politic.

The purpose of this paper was to discuss the Machiavellian conception of freedom and its relevance for contemporary debates in political philosophy by emphasising Berlin’s famous distinction and Arendt’s particular idea of political freedom. This essay can by no means be held as exhaustive. However, the Machiavellian conception shows that a radical distinction between the positive and negative conceptions of freedom does not seem to be *prima facie* evident. Even if one accepts it, their incompatibility and rivalry in political communities are questionable.

NOTES

1. The difference between the notions of freedom and liberty is a vast subject. However, it is beyond the scope of this essay, therefore, these terms are used interchangeably in the paper.
2. *Virtu* and *Fortuna* are two key words in Machiavelli’s philosophy. *Virtù*, even though often translated in English as *virtue*, actually refers to the range of personal qualities that the prince will find it necessary to acquire in order to “maintain his state” and to “achieve great things”. *Fortuna* links *virtù* with the

effective exercise of power. *Fortuna*, in the sense used by Machiavelli, is a malevolent force, the “operational principles” of which the success of political processes depends (Nederman 2015). According to Skinner, in the fifteenth century political thought, this was exactly the idea *fortune*, as “an inexorable force”, which threatened one’s freedom (Skinner 1981, 27).

3. The concept of *beginning*, which will be elaborated in the second section of the essay, is crucial in Hannah Arendt’s philosophy.
4. Skinner himself cites Machiavelli’s words: “Desiderano la libertà per vivere sicuri” (Skinner 1984, 205).
5. Arendt refers to Federalist 51, in which Madison argues that the government is a “reflection upon human nature”.
6. Atmosphere: In the fiction following the Romantic grotesque period, “atmosphere” is used in the sense of setting in order to get a particular effect similar to gothic fiction.

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FROM WORD TO IMAGE: DEPTH PERCEPTION, GRAPHIC
NARRATIVE, AND DOUBLE-EFFECT IN “COMA”

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Abstract. “Coma” has invited multiple criticisms regarding its affective qualities (Belling, Charpy and Crellin). However, these studies have simply evaded the mechanics that bring about this effect using the term “sensational”. Scholars on medical thrillers have pointed visceral and emotional responses, but the problem lies in the construction of an alternative medical world that is completely opposed to the normative presumption of a medical institution in our contemporary medical culture. How does fiction enable it? This study explores the mechanics of narrative by analysing “Coma” through a close reading, using Catherine Belling’s concept of “depth perception” and various theories of grotesque by Wolfgang Kayser, Connelly, Jennings, Anderson and McElroy. It aims thus to understand the characters and the techniques of narrative with a focus on settings and mood.

Keywords: depth perception, double-effect, grotesque, graphic narrative, Coma

1. INTRODUCTION

Coma delves into the malpractices at the Boston Memorial Hospital, where a number of patients turn comatose. When a couple of cases occur, the protagonist, Susan Wheeler, tries to investigate the cause.

Scholars of Robin Cook focus on a few aspects, mainly the problematic way ethics has been dealt with in *Coma* and advantages of ‘endographic-omniscient narrative techniques’ (Belling 444, Belling 152 and Charpy 231). Although many of them have shown specific interests, it is Lorena Laura Stookey who takes up an entire study titled *Robin Cook: A Critical Companion*. Her work is a detailed analysis of all Cook’s works until 1996. She uses multiple critical approaches ranging from cultural criticism, reader-response, feminist criticism, structuralism, and new historicism with a brief summary of the plot and characters for each text. The chapter titled “Coma and Terminal” is an act of cultural criticism. Varying from Stookey, this study addresses it through the lens of the grotesque, which argues for the affective qualities through close reading. “Reader response theory” fails to explain the “graphicality of the narrative” as well as the “visceral and emotional response”.

Lee Byron Jennings, in *The Ludicrous Demon: Aspects of the Grotesque in German Post Romantic Prose* explains the double-effect as the co-presence of both opposing elements, which brings emotions of laughter and horror, pity and horror, and similar combinations that are on the two sides of a continuous spectrum. Jennings essentialises the combination of emotional with the physical attributes, which careen of imagination in ambiguity as double-effect. Taking the example of medieval gargoyles, he explains how the grotesque figure is able to bring commingling emotions of “terror and laughter” or “fear and anxiety.” For instance, he explores responses towards the “menacing display of beaks, horns and talons [...] often accompanied by a foolish, leering expression and scurrilous gestures” (Jennings 10) exhibited by gargoyles.

Similarly, the aspect of the double-effect in *Coma* is perceivable in the numerous contrasts brought in the narrative by means of the setting—the hospital, the mood—the atmosphere, and also the characterization. The double-effect functions here to destabilize the existing notions of reality either by prying open a gap of new possibilities or contesting existing ideologies that are often unsaid, but ever-present in culture. However, using such grotesque lens for

literary works has its own challenges because texts are non-visual. To bridge this gap, the concept of depth perception is useful.

Belling coins the term 'depth perception' to account for the 'imagistic' ability of representations beyond the visible (239-240). She further argues that representations and discursive tools can make invisible things perceivable through metaphor and narrative. By referring to these two vehicles of language, she explains how can one speaks about truth and reality. She discusses the visualizing process and its affect by using examples from X-Rays, to the film *Jaws* (especially the original cover image of Peter Benchley's book and the movie) and to a short story about white blood cells. Posing questions of how images provoke unexpected reactions, she arrives at the visual capability of the audience triggered by other subsidiary experiences. She argues for the viewer's ability to imagine from other cues (working like metaphor and narrative). For example, in the movie, the huge size, bloody water, and jaws provoke images of previous experiences of violence. These small clues intensify the visceral impact as well as the emotional response. The audience perceives in the narrative a bloody encounter that leads to disturbances, diagnosed by doctors in *New England Journal* as "Jaws neurosis" (quoted in Belling 240), a medical condition of shock. Belling imports this visual capability as depth perception.

In this sense, depth perception can be understood as a process that comprises "the effort to visualize actual events in a particular body and demands a kind of double vision, seeing both above and below the surface at once, oscillating across the boundary between the visible and the invisible, the concrete and the abstract, the figurative and the literal through a dialectic of figurative seeing" (Belling 240). Although Belling's aim was to understand scientific representations given by techniques like X-rays and others as imitations, the image produced espouses only false realities (imitations of imitations). This means the product of an X-ray, the image, is an unreliable paradox but it is accepted at the same time by scientists to validate science. In a similar fashion, depth perception, which allows visualization as a "dialectic of figurative

seeing” (240), can be applied to our narrative. As a result, visualization of imaginative experiences from prior first-hand or secondary experiences becomes possible.

This concept, when applied to *Coma*, creates a similar dialectic of seeing—an ability to see beyond the visible, which will be explored through the analysis below. It increases the complexity of *Coma* and genres of this category, challenging existing notions. At this point, another interesting aspect noted by Belling becomes handy for this study. In her essay “Endography”, Belling writes *Coma* has “graphic” narrative (155), which supports our standpoint of the grotesque.

Frances S. Connelly’s postulation that “the grotesque is the most imagistic of images” (ix), makes a case that image is crucial to be grotesque. Similarly, other scholars have insisted on the visual form of the grotesque¹. Geoffrey Galt Harpham and Wolfgang Kayser have been vocal about its imagistic feature. Harpham insists on this aspect when he says that the grotesque, as an aesthetic mode”, is predominantly visual and that it “remains primarily a pictorial form” (465). Kayser covertly notes this contrasting imagistic power in his illustration of Velazquez’ *Las Meninas*².

Combining depth perception and grotesque theories, this essay investigates *Coma* by shedding light on the combined effects of visual imagery that provokes the visceral impact. By extrapolating Belling’s understanding of *Coma* as “graphic narrative” (155), we suggest that the spine-chilling visceral impact is a result of depth perception that is enabled by contrasts (double-effect) both in the physical elements and mood of the narrative. Double-effect is the strategy of bringing different contrasting aspects together to invoke ambiguous responses. For example, African masks with their hybrid physical features that invoke ambiguous responses depend on the viewer. The visual limitation of fiction is thus compensated by the graphic narrative using the strategy of the double-effect.

Bakhtin, Goodwin, and Connelly note that the literary grotesque is a weakened form compared to its counterpart in the plastic arts³. This limitation is based on the less imagistic or non-imagistic nature

of fiction. Most literary texts fail to be imagistic throughout, that is, only restricted to instances or scenes of pictorial narration. Classic examples of literary grotesque are Victor Hugo's *Cromwell*, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.

In literature, grotesque is chiefly expressed with the help of metaphors and narratives. Metaphors work to build imagery by drawing likeness to some very unlikely object. Bloom calls it "objects of desire" (xi). Scholars such as Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby and Shun Liang Chao (2010) have explored grotesque as a metaphor⁴. Another means by which the grotesque is brought out in texts is through its narrative. The succession of events in a story forms the narrative (Rimmon-Kenan 2). From this perspective, texts that are visual should enable the developed image to be in a "visual flux compromising established realities" (Connelly 8) and "merging with alien realities" (8). It is through this means that the grotesque is fully developed in the narrative. This means the grotesque essence is built by "rupture [in] boundaries of what we know" (8).

However, the similarity of the grotesque in literature and in image tradition lies in the creative gap left for the reader (texts) or receiver (art). "The grotesque creates meaning by rupturing the boundaries of disparate realities" (Connelly 12). Though grotesque achieves its fullest expression only in art form, since this gap is fulfilled in the instances of metaphorical usage and narrative graphically, *Coma* can be interpreted through a grotesque lens. In this way, it makes the story visual and, at the same time, pricks at the emotions of the reader into a state of disparate reality.

This study finds the grotesque as the most appropriate viewpoint and argues for the impact of *Coma*, because it takes into account "the unresolved clash of incompatibles in both work and response" (Thomson 27), considering the "graphic narrative" (155). We argue by means of examples how, in the book, various events, settings and issues are powerfully brought out as visual imagery in the reader's imagination, which conflicts with and contradicts the author's perception resulting in a contradictory response of the grotesque. Since grotesque in the structural mode or "form" of hybridity, it

explicates only one part of its aesthetic appeal; it is compelling to analyse the narrative as well. Also, as the narrative of *Coma* uses some strategies of contradiction like “the unresolved clash of incompatibles in work and response” and “the ambivalently abnormal” (Thompson 27) through the ‘double-effect/co-presence’ of grotesque, these perspectives are used in discussions and analysis in the following sections, suitably.

2. DEPTH PERCEPTION, GRAPHIC NARRATIVE, AND GROTESQUE DOUBLE-EFFECT IN “COMA”

The striking feature of narrative grotesque in *Coma* is the imagistic quality revealed by depth perception, the contrasts induced by the double-effect or co-presence, besides the visceral impact as indicated by the prologue. *Coma* is ‘pictorial’. A reader is able to perceive a mental image of what is being narrated while reading it. Depth perception is the ability of the reader to see and know beyond the text. This ability enables him to build on meanings by associating them with previous primary or secondary experiences. This technique has been amply used in the narrative of *Coma* and it is the major reason for labelling it “graphic”. By exploring graphicality as a strategy of grotesque, this analysis helps in arguing for the complexity of medical thriller. It analyzes its functions in developing themes of ethical conflict, embodiment, anxiety of commercial interests and identity whilst the double-effect reinforces contrasts in themes and responses. Such a reading pulls the reader between opposite emotions that takes him away from his comfort zone and puts him into a state of uncertainty and confusion. The paper suggests the purposefulness of double-effect used to generate the intensity and thrill of the prevailing issue of organ theft.

Cook uses the episodic narrative style that carves out images of characters and events in terms of sharp contrasts, resulting in visceral response often conceptualized as “co-presence” (Thomson 3) or “doubling” (Kayser 18, Jennings 10), an essential characteristic

of the grotesque to make the style effective. For example, in *Coma*, Cook uses “Monday February 23, 7.30 am” (Cook 29) in order to transition from the prologue to the next chapter. The word becomes an image for the reader, it appears more like a movie—a story of moving images as meanings are produced contextually and vicariously. The significance of this narrative strategy is that it captures the reader’s attention right from the beginning.

The mood and setting are examples of sites where it is employed. It conveys the narrative with images suggesting its symbolic meaning as explored below. As Emanuele Tesauro argues in the chapter “The Wit of Nature” in *Il Cannonchiale Aristotelico*, a work of artistic imagination is telescopic, reducing the distance between things and “revealing their common truths” (quoted in Connelly 52), the graphic narrative collapses the distance between the reader and the work. The omniscient narrator guides the reader through hospital rooms, laboratories, and other areas as the story progresses through chase scenes and finally culminates in the discovery and retribution scene.

In *Coma*, the narrative invites readers to perceive events, situations, and characters through dialectics. In her book, *Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Susan Buck-Mors explicates the “dialectics of seeing”, a concept developed by Walter Benjamin through his unpublished *Passengen-Werk*. For Benjamin, an interpretative process lies in intertextuality, and mostly it is read in conjunction with the historical, political, and social context. Similarly, the narrative which an author gives is a hint that leads to multiple interpretations or truths that equally valuable. The dialectics of seeing enables the reader to interpret *Coma* differently. The picturesque narrative welcomes the reader to critically analyse several bioethical concepts and issues intertextually. The issues discussed ‘play’ within the imagination bringing ambiguous responses as the fiction critiques issues that are against ideological assumptions of medicine.

Importantly, *Coma* produces diametric responses because the characters, situations and events, are shown in contrast to the ideal

functioning *i.e.*, caring for patients. The narrative uses settings, mood and characters with contrastive characteristics to produce the double-effect of the grotesque. The dark sky outside the hospital, for instance, and the bright light inside the Operating Room (OR) indicate the death lurking and hope inside the room, which is in constant tension and on the verge of collapse until the next scene. Cook's meticulous choice of word-images imparts this effect. Readers are asked to think, feel, see, and experience what each of the characters experiences through various events of the narrative.

3. BOSTON MEMORIAL, JEFFERSON INSTITUTE, AND THE MOOD IN "COMA"

The settings Boston Memorial and Jefferson Institute are central to all events. The overall mood of the story gives the reader ideas about the events that disorient the characters. It shows the influence of both these hospitals on them. The mood gives cues to the characters' plight through its atmosphere. Boston Memorial Hospital arouses an anxious mood, which gives the impression of the forthcoming doom. The atmosphere of the hospital conveyed through darkness and light, alternating along the many passages and rooms within the setting, aids this. The subterranean aspect of the hospital enters the consciousness of the reader because of the mood, and a gradual shift from the atmosphere towards the characters becomes apparent. The central mood is developed through the interplay of darkness and light, indicating both symbolic and literal meanings. Light is the symbol of hope, echoes, ordered world, whilst darkness symbolises grief, forebodes death and disruption resonating with the topsy-turvy world or upturned-world, as used in the carnivalesque grotesque by Bakhtin⁵.

The reader encounters the hospital through a series of events circumscribing inmates and patients such as Nancy, Berman, Walters, Bellows, the nursing staff, med-students, Stark and other doctors. When they come across the hospital, they visualize Nancy Greenly admitted in room number 8 for a minor dilation and

curettage (D&C) surgery, also know her condition of excessive bleeding and vicariously imagine themselves in Nancy's place. Prior experiences in the hospital as a patient or/and a family member of the patient are awakened and the reader's imagination is stirred towards the anxiety and horrors of being hospitalized with memories of the smell, sights, etc. The hospital, in this way, has a profound effect on the reader.

Only after this brief reverie does the reader return to Nancy, as she "lay on the operating table on her back, staring up at the large kettledrum-shaped lights in the operating room number 8 trying to be calm" (Cook 1). This thought process and visual cognition are what we call depth perception. Besides this small visual impact, in the beginning, various other things become apparent in a similar manner. For example, the contrasts in the lighting used becomes easily perceptible: the room inside had lights showering on Nancy, while the outside sky is "chalky grey" (1), showing the rest of the room as blurred, including the road outside with occasional dim-lights of the car speeding. These enable the reader to see through Nancy's vulnerability bringing mixed responses – anxiety, sadness and empathy.

This particular lighting evokes the double-effect of grotesque, and also builds up the tension and suspense of the narrative using cues like "everything was fine, until the bleeding" (1). The mood in *Coma* further develops the double-effect of grotesque, pushing the reader to anxiety and fear. Light and darkness is not only a presence in Boston Memorial, but also present in Jefferson institute. The darkness outside Jefferson indicates the blindness of the public about its workings while the lights on the coma patients indicate the awareness of the staff inside the hospital about their work. The other function of light in the hospital is to keep the comatose bodies warm for harvest. The use of light and darkness is quite frequent in *Coma*, and it has been used both in the literal and symbolic sense as shown above. Light works as a crucial actor in the surgery, in the Jefferson institute as well, to bear witness to patients' pathology. By directing our attention to the large kettledrum light above Nancy's

head, the narrative draws on the metaphor of the sinister while also pinpointing the object of that problem – Nancy.

The interplay of darkness and light evokes the feeling of entering a grotto even though they are in the hospital. Through this lens, we can say Boston Memorial evokes the grotesque of the underground passages or ‘grotto’ with a tiny ray of light streaming through, but it also serves a reminder about Cook’s usage of the double-effect. The technique emphasizes the importance of the atmosphere⁶ of the hospital. Therefore, unlike the direct connotation of the grotto, here the light falling on Nancy is a signal of the coming doom. Cook’s preparation of Nancy for her death has an impact similar to the one aroused by the cinematic technique of light and shadow.

Soon after the reflex of these memories and experiences, the reader’s attention reverts to Nancy. Her experiences become apparent as “narrative endography”—a term used by Belling to make the narrator enter the mind and body of its characters, and reveal his thoughts and feelings. This way, the reader gets to know and also experiences, along with Nancy, when the narrator reads “the fear of her mortality” (Cook 1). Every minute thing like the tear on the edge of the sheet (1), the bloodstain on the pan below (1), the falling down of sheets (1), is shown as affecting her.

These disturbances are the external manifestation of Nancy’s thoughts to escape from the reality of death. The repeated use of women as subjects for purposes like medical research, and in this case organ donation, is not surprising. Nancy’s and Susan’s threatening bodies are eliminated to be reused in the organ transplant project. This is Cook’s attempt to indicate the ancillary status of women in male-dominated spaces. By shifting the focus to Nancy’s disturbance over her ill health, “the grotto,” symbolic of the womb, is evoked. In short, the subterranean aspect of the hospital as a dingy dark place evoking claustrophobia is expanded to one invoking the rules of a different realm. As grotto is governed by artistic license, with different rules, it evokes the two contrary emotions of “fear and desire” (Connelly 1), which Leonardo da Vinci experiences and expresses while standing at the entry of

grotto. Similarly, these hospitals become a fascinating and dread-inspiring space in the novel.

The encompassing influence of the hospital is shown through the lives of the patients and professionals. The hospital alters their lives. Let us take the case of patients. The reader learns from the prologue that Nancy was admitted only for a minor case, an “extra period” (Cook 2), suggestive of the curability of her condition further assured by her doctor (4). Same was the case with Berman who was admitted for Achilles foot, another curable condition. However, we find them both ultimately brain-dead. The graphic representation of Berman hung on strings at Jefferson Institute with the contents of his stomach out, is disturbing. The hospital transforms both of them into reusable spare-parts. To sum up, the hospital is like the grotto that controls and alters the people’s lives in different ways.

The grotesquery of Boston Memorial Hospital is highlighted through evoking the structure of the building, “not an architectural landmark” (Cook 21) but with its historicity. Further, its description as “interesting and attractive,” made with “skill and feeling” (21), resonates with the grotesquery. By suggesting “studies in American Gothic” (21) with buildings that are “spurts” rather than ones in organized style along with them being described as “an ugly combination of buildings” (21), Cook reifies the grotesque association of Boston Memorial through the notion of formless form.

The grotesque structure appears as “extensions of larger buildings at obtuse angles, millions upon millions of bricks join together to hold up dirty windows and flat monotonous roofs” (Cook, 21). The reader is made to envision the grotesquery in the whole structure “[...] how the sum of the whole is larger than its parts” (21) and is impacted by its visceral effect. She is made to understand the perception of the hospital imparted because of the “innumerable layers of emotional response” (21) as evoked by it.

In this sense, Boston Memorial Hospital is rightly suggested not as a building in itself, but as a living structure with all the “mystery

and wizardry of modern medicine” (21). Moreover, when the narrator explains, Boston is something that rouses “fear and excitement” as the public approach it, while for the professional it is “the Mecca: pinnacle of academic medicine” (21) – a suggestion of wonderment and awe is drawn.

Finally, Cook marks the boundary of the hospital: “a maze of railroad tracks with elevated highway forms made of enormous sculpture of rusting steel” and “the Boston Harbor with water as black as coffee sweetened by sewer gas” (22). In doing this, a sense of fluidity is drawn. Cook beautifully captures the contrast and fluidity, making Boston Memorial prone and permeable to the squalor around. Our attention on the boundary furthers by positioning the clean hospital and dirt of the harbour outside, making the contours of familiar and “normal” visible to us, even as it intermingles with the unexpected. The grotesquery, in this narrative, is mainly from contrasts in settings and it turns received ideas, normal expectations, and social conventions against themselves, questioning boundaries and borders.

Another feature is the contradictory feelings aroused through the depiction of the hospital as ‘upturned-world’, in Bakhtin’s terminology. The readers and the characters get displaced once they enter the world of Boston Memorial and Jefferson Institute. As they realize this world is dreadful, it makes them anxious and they worry about its probability of replication in real life. Boston Memorial’s bitter truth is that many patients who are otherwise healthy turn comatose after some simple surgery, which gives the impression of Bakhtinian upturned world.

Rather than being an inanimate space, Boston Memorial becomes animate, influencing all the people within and approaching it. This nature is reflected when the narrative expresses succinctly, “it is the famous Boston Memorial with its own history and life that animates its halls that prevents wreckers and builders at bay” (21) and becomes even more apparent when we look at Nancy, Berman, Susan and other patients who lie in a vegetative-state, not

responding after the surgery. In brief, the hospital functions as a human being while human beings become liminal and inanimate.

The Memorial generates a visceral response that gets translated and expressed by all persons who encounter it. The readers begin to visualize a situation similar to the fictional one and are horrified. Also, the real-life existence of Boston Memorial blurs the boundaries of fiction and reality. By pitching in these contrasts in the imagination, an ideal situation and a less savoury possibility, the readers are pushed towards confusion about the medical world, its professionals, and workings. It is important to keep in mind that when this initial reaction grips the reader, they might get shocked and horrified, but after some time, it also allows them to pause and think.

4. CONCLUSION

Coma, crossing the boundaries of genres, shows complexity in ‘form’ and ‘narrative’, and it is responsible for awaking strong reactions to the grotesque—laughter, terror, anxiety, and thrill. It is not a straightforward piece of a cautionary tale, but reflective of the unseen and unsaid of culture, just like the skewed surface of a broken mirror.

Cook’s work seems to grasp the key biomedical trends, amidst the socio-cultural conflicting opinions and gives insights into instances of power and role-reversals that are often determined by utilitarian ends. By building a fictional world suspended in the tension of collapsing realities and boundaries, advocacy of Cook strikes a chord and enables the readers to critically evaluate and participate in the changing scenario. The hospital-setting, by spreading its influence beyond its presence, as a structure, participates in their lives in order to make them ‘liminal’.

This study, by arguing how the graphic narrative is integral to the authorial agenda to serve the cautionary tone, perceives the use of depth perception and double-effect. It is Cook’s attempt to capture

the reader's attention masquerading as the saviour of the public. From word to image, Cook's narrative builds discussions and debates that can be visualized, thus making them thrilling and sensational.

The situations discussed in *Coma* should be seen as allegorical representations of organ theft in contemporary times, which need then to be debated and discussed in public realm as such cases are only read in newspapers and media as sensationalistic stories. Ultimately, because the public is the subject and object of this problem, the root cause of organ theft, policies for eliminating such issues should trickle down to the public.

Many aspects addressed in this essay are incorporations of the grotesque in the narrative, the techniques used, and its mechanics. The purpose of the grotesque and its effects have been analyzed to show how the characteristics of 'double-effect' help in bringing multiple layers of meaning to the text. The readers experience an upturned world, characters and events in graphic details. These strategies have a huge role in generating visceral and psychological responses. They also shed light on some socially relevant problems like gender discrimination, the struggle for women's emancipation in workspace and biomedical commercialization. By crossing the boundaries from 'word to image', Cook's fiction is an example of grotesque appropriation that helps to perceive the changing notion of professional ethics.

NOTES

1. Connelly, in the preface to *Grotesque in Western Art and Culture: The image at Play*, emphasizing the key features of grotesque as visuality and boundary creature.
2. In *The Grotesque in Literature: Strategies of Contradiction*, Wolfgang Kayser gives an example of visuality: "the royal couple in clashing contrast with the charm (...) two additional ladies-in-waiting who are deformed and misshapen" (18).
3. Bakhtin notes the medieval carnivals were the lived life of the folk and capable of destabilizing the official culture, unlike the literary weakened form. Goodwin echoes the same in his analysis of modern American

grotesque. Connelly also notes this aspect of grotesque in her introduction to grotesque in the image tradition.

4. Harold Bloom and Blake Hobby, in *The Grotesque*, explore grotesque as a “metaphor of desire” (xi). Shun-Liang Chao, in *Rethinking the Concept of the Grotesque: Crashaw, Baudelaire, Magritte*, defines grotesque as a metaphor providing insight into its use of visual and verbal media.
5. Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and his World*, explores various concepts like the grotesque body, grotesque realism, and carnivalesque. The world that invokes grotesque is the “upturned world” and life during the short period is festive which is called carnivalesque
6. Atmosphere: In the fiction following the Romantic grotesque period, “atmosphere” is used in the sense of setting in order to get a particular effect similar to gothic fiction.

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ON THE EXISTENTIAL POLITICS OF HIP-HOP
(OR, THE CONCEPT OF IRONY WITH CONTINUAL REFERENCE TO
EMINEM)

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Abstract. Hip-hop has long been considered political: as Chuck D. famously observed “rap music is the CNN of the ghetto”. Moving beyond clearly political themes, slogans, and acts of alterity at the heart of Hip-Hop, this essay employs the work of the rap-artist Eminem to draw out and identify a further way in which those of us engaged in political analysis might productively conceive of the genre as being political. Drawing upon the European and American existentialist traditions, this essay suggests that the artist’s irony, hyperbole, and theatricality are constituents of a political worldview that recognizes both the need for self-creation and the pressure, social, political, and artistic, that make this quest for self-creation both an endless struggle and an opportunity for a vivified care of the self. The aim here is not to seek to valorise the rap genre by suggesting that it might offer insight into the political, but rather to point to the ways in which the cultural analysis of politics, and the political analysis of culture, might move beyond the rote by paying attention to the ethical, political, artistic, and philosophical nuances of the object of study.

Keywords: Eminem, hip-hop, rap music, existentialism, irony, theatricality, authenticity, misogyny, homophobia, politics

In 2017, the BET Hip-Hop Awards opened with a freestyle performance by the rap-artist Eminem – a.k.a. Marshall Mathers, a.k.a. Slim Shady – in which he attacked President Donald Trump (Eminem 2017). Liberal commentators cheered his performance, forgetting, perhaps, how, at the beginning of his career, they had scorned him for his perceived homophobia and misogyny. Those critics who felt obligated to explain their apparent hypocrisy suggested that Eminem had grown as an artist, evidence for which

was his supposed agreement with their worldview (Ruiz 2017). Here, however, I argue that the rapper's work has always been informed by a deeply existentialist political and philosophical sensibility. Focusing on the artist's early work, when he was reviled by critics across the political spectrum, I show how, by employing a number of literary tropes and devices strongly associated with the existentialists – including, but not limited to, irony, hyperbole, and theatricality – Eminem sought to cultivate certain responses and values in his audience that parallel the ethical-political objectives of existentialism as a literary-philosophical movement. My aim is to identify the sophistication of the artist's work, and the challenges that it poses to the practices of cultural and political criticism. My analysis cannot, perhaps, help but seem somewhat belated: as Jean Cocteau is said to have observed, "Americans are funny people. First you shock them, then they put you in a museum". It may be, however, that it is only now that Eminem has become a museum-piece that it is possible to curate the exhibit appropriately, identifying how his art worked to expose the cant of much contemporary cultural criticism. Nevertheless, given the (still) controversial nature of the artist's early work, it is perhaps necessary to offer something of a disclaimer about the politics of what follows.

The most common objection to Eminem's work is that it employs vile slurs towards, and depicts violence against, women and homosexuals. For many of Eminem's critics, the use of this language and depicting such violence is akin to endorsing the same. While taking issue with these assumptions about the artist and his work, I do not seek to endorse the worldview these critics believe Eminem to be advocating; nor do I seek to deny that his work *might* have deleterious impact on the marginalized groups about whom these critics are rightly concerned. As Jean-Paul Sartre noted, the social impact of a work of art has just as much to do with the audience as it does with the artist and his or her intent (Gillespie 2012, 53). There is a considerable difference between employing prejudice and prejudiced language to achieve artistic effects and advocating for the positions that are expressed. The artist's responsibility for the effect

of his or her work nevertheless remains an open question: to deny any or all responsibility on the artist's part would be just as vacuous as to draw a direct line between the actions of any one audience member and any one work of art. For this reason, viewing Eminem and the controversy over his work through the lens of existentialism is particularly useful, not least because one of existentialism's concerns is precisely to collapse the trite binaries of such claims about causality by exposing their platitudinous nature

CURTAIN UP

"From the very beginning", wrote Simone de Beauvoir, "existentialism defined itself as a philosophy of ambiguity" (de Beauvoir 1976, 9). While Sartre observed, "the word is being so loosely applied to so many things that it has come to mean nothing at all" (Sartre 2007, 20). It begins with the denial of the given – social, political, and philosophical – and with the rejection of abstract principles and supposed insights of formal logic. It turns instead to a Greek 'care of the self' politico-philosophical tradition concerned with who one is and how one acts. On this understanding, "the [Platonic] dialogues were written not to 'inform people' but to 'form' them" (Hadot 2004, 73). In the nineteenth century, this tradition of self-care intersected with a fear of the masses, what Nietzsche, following Emerson, labelled 'the herd', and with the perceived dangers of mediocrity and conformism. Although this concern was evident in the work of thinkers as diverse as John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and Alexis de Tocqueville, what marked out both Nietzsche and Kierkegaard as the forebears of existentialism was the manner in which each sought to overcome that problematic homogeneity. While Mill, Marx, and Tocqueville, looked towards social, political, or historical forces for a solution, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche turned to the literary and the affective. They sought to write themselves out of the herd by creating themselves as individuals in literary form (Nehamas 1985). The

centrality of the literary and the poetic is suggested by their shared goal of originality. Such originality – such creation of the self – did not require starting from scratch. Rather, it demanded that one create out of what already existed, ‘making it new’ in Ezra Pound’s phrase. As de Beauvoir observed, inadvertently capturing the hip-hop method, “[t]he creator leans upon anterior creations in order to create the possibility of new creations” (de Beauvoir 1976, 28). The goal was to avoid being described in the dominant vocabulary of the day and to create one’s self and thus to become an individual: to be, in Emerson’s phrase, a system and not a satellite.

At the heart of this emphasis on self-creation was a dual commitment to authenticity and responsibility. The authentic-self required living in such a way as to ‘become what you are’, in Nietzsche’s phrase. This meant embracing the contingency of one’s own existence while rejecting what Lyotard would later call ‘metanarratives’ about one’s place in the world and about the historical or philosophical necessity of the standards of the society in which one lived (Lyotard 1984). It was a struggle that de Beauvoir identified as the “perpetual tension to keep being at a certain distance, to tear one-self from the world and to assert oneself as a freedom” (de Beauvoir 1976, 23-4). Such authenticity demanded that one refuse to be defined by the gaze of others (Moran 2013, 104). Likewise, the commitment to personal responsibility demanded that the agent embrace his or her choices and their consequences. To do otherwise, Sartre suggested, would be to live in bad faith (Sartre 2007, 37). The existentialists, then, were oppositional in outlook and style. Just as Kierkegaard attacked the press, the Church, and the dominant Hegelian philosophy of the day, Sartre sought to “give the bourgeoisie a guilty conscience” (Flynn 1984, 65): to expose the hypocrisy and dogmatism which underlay even the most liberal of their ideals. By exposing the bad faith underpinning and expressed in those ideals, the existentialists sought to free humanity to construct its own values without delusion. This commitment to self-creation, and the capacity it generated to live in a world of contingent uncertainty – rather than

to hide behind the fictions of metaphysics and objectivity – were deeply connected to the ethical and the political. Values could not just be taken as a given but had to be understood as human creations. Sometimes caricatured as an ‘anything goes’ approach to ethics and politics, it was rather concerned with doing consciously what had hitherto been done unconsciously, embracing the uncertainty of life and saying, with Nietzsche, ‘Thus, I willed it’.

Employing a method that he called ‘indirect communication,’ Kierkegaard offered a polemical, fictional, and poetic engagement with the world that was also highly theatrical. Presenting his work pseudonymously, Kierkegaard hid behind a variety of fictional personas – the word *persona* deriving from the Latin word for an actor’s mask – distancing himself, often disingenuously, from the views of his characters and ostensible mouthpieces. In this he echoed not just Socrates – upon whose ‘habitual irony’ Kierkegaard had discussed in his dissertation – but also that of Plato. Indeed, readings of *Platonic* – as opposed to Socratic – irony suggest the ways in which Kierkegaard sought to generate uncertainty in the reader so as to cultivate a kind of dialogue between the reader and the text, constructing a social, political, and ethical pedagogy in which the (ideal) reader was forced into a rigorous scrutiny of everything he believed in and lived by (Fish 1972, 1). Such an engagement offered an opportunity for the reader to cultivate his or her own self, rather than simply to orbit Kierkegaard’s text.

In his reading of Plato’s *Republic*, John Seery identifies both Socratic and Platonic irony, paying particular attention to the latter. Plato seeks, Seery suggests, to draw our attention to his authorial presence in the text, indicating that there is a distinction between what the text *says* and what it is trying to *convey*. This ironic distinction, Seery argues, “sets up a dialogue between Plato and us (as Plato’s audience) in order to prompt us toward further reflection regarding the nature of political justice” (Seery 1990, 100). Socrates’ criticism of the poets, he argues, along with other blatant textual inconsistencies such as his rejection of mimetic speech – the primary form of dialogue in the *Republic* – casts ironic doubt upon the claims

that are made in the text, generating an ongoing sense of uncertainty in the reader: recreating the frustrations of speaking to the historical Socrates. In existentialist terms, Simone de Beauvoir labelled the individual incapable of his type of ambiguity the “serious man” who “puts nothing in question” (de Beauvoir 1976, 49). Consequently, she suggested, everything was a threat, both to him and to his sense of self. Because the world was beyond his powers, “he will be constantly upset by the uncontrollable course of events” (de Beauvoir 1976, 51). By offering him- or herself as an experiment in authentic living, she suggests, the existentialist seeks to overcome the ‘serious man’ in the interests of an authentic ethical life. The purpose of the literary existentialism was not, then, merely to illustrate the philosophical, but rather a way to cultivate an ethical sensibility towards the world and one’s place in it. Eminem’s critics seemed, then, to be ‘serious men’.

CRIMINAL

The concerns of Eminem’s earliest critics were threefold: his work was offensive and damaging to the subjects of his attack; he was responsible for the actions – or potential actions – of his audience; and he was inauthentic. In January 2001, GLAAD asserted that “his lyrics advocating violence against lesbians and gay men send explicit messages that endorse hatred”; lamented “The refusal of Eminem, Interscope Records and Universal Music Group to take personal/corporate responsibility for the lyrical content of *The Marshall Mathers LP*”; and offered excerpts from his songs to support their claims. Likewise, the National Organization for Women (NOW) declared: “Eminem’s music contains some of the most explicit descriptions of violence ever to make their way into people’s homes. In addition to constantly calling women bitches, sluts and whores, Eminem sings about killing his wife and raping his mother. He strikes out at everyone, including his fans, but has a particular bloodlust for women, lesbians and gays” (Bozza 2003, 98).

They too listed selections from his lyrics to support their claims. In the face of the rapper receiving multiple Grammy nominations, Grammy head Michael Greene called the artist “repugnant”, before asserting, “I don’t think it’s an accurate depiction to say that the message has anything to do with why the recording got a nomination. Again, remember this organization is very cognizant of theatre. Eminem is theatre” (Victoria Advocate 2003). Only Elton John – who performed a duet with Eminem on the 2001 Grammy telecast – seemed willing to defend the rapper on *content* grounds: “As a gay artist, I’m asked by a lot of people, ‘But what about the content of Eminem’s music?’ It appeals to my English black sense of humour. When I put the album on the first time, I was in hysterics from laughing” (John 2001). Many did not find this defence funny. “To treat his words as a joke communicates to a large number of boys and young men that violence against a wife, girlfriend or mother is something to laugh at” observed NOW (Bozza 2003, 98).

THEN WHY WOULD I SAY I AM?

In *Ecce Homo* Friedrich Nietzsche declares: “Whoever thought he had understood something of me, had made up something out of me after his own image (...) and whoever had understood nothing of me, denied that I needed to be considered at all” (Nietzsche 1989, 261). It is a provocative challenge to his readers that complicates any attempt at criticism. If the reader thinks he or she has understood his work, he suggests, then he or she has simply projected his or her own needs on to it; if he or she thinks that Nietzsche is not worth considering, then he or she has clearly misunderstood him. Infuriating as it might be to the reader, Nietzsche’s rhetorical strategy seeks not to discourage people from reading his work but rather to cultivate in them the attitude of uncertainty appropriate to read it correctly. It is work, he suggests, that should not be dismissed, turned into a systematic program, or reduced to a few stock phrases, but rather embraced in all its complexity. It is also an

attitude that the reader must adopt to the world in which he or she lives, showing how his writing might serve as a pedagogy appropriate to the worldview of philosophy understood as a commitment to care of the self.

Nevertheless, for those hostile to Eminem's work, the song *Kim* seemed to be clear evidence of his hatefulness. The track starts with the narrator addressing a baby girl in affectionate terms. Suddenly, his tone changes, he is now addressing a woman, threatening her with violence. The song progresses with the narrator's furious tirade in which the woman – Kim – is blamed for all the man's problems. Eventually, against a background of struggles and screams, the listener hears the narrator kill the woman. The song is graphic; the listener is spared no detail. Its overall impact is enhanced by knowledge of the artist's biography: Marshall Mathers, III – Eminem's real name – was once married to a woman named Kim, and they had a young daughter. This led Elizabeth Keathley to deplore "the misogynistic violence of Eminem's rap songs" (Keathley 2002, 3).

There would appear to be similar evidence to support the claims that Eminem is a homophobe: his work is rife with references to 'fags', 'faggots', 'lezzes', and 'dykes'. The artist's attempts to parse his own use of the terms – "the term 'faggot' to me doesn't necessarily mean a gay person" (DeCurtis 2005, 296) – met with little sympathy. Indeed, in response to a scene in Eminem's semi-autobiographical movie *8 Mile* in which Eminem's character defends a gay co-worker, Scott Seomin of GLAAD observed: "I believe that scene was strategically put in there to get media attention as well as to reveal in an artificial way the many layers of this man. But I don't think he's that complicated" (Stephens 2005, 27).

The deflationary impetus behind the desire to expose Eminem for what he 'really is' – to dispense with the notion that he is a complicated artist – is, perhaps, a manifestation of de Beauvoir's 'seriousness': an unwillingness to live with the ambiguity engendered by the artist's work, for Eminem's art is considerably more complicated than many of his critics are prepared to admit. Indeed,

there are a number of occasions when he displays quite different attitudes towards women and homosexuals.

The epistolary track Stan is a case in point. It has two narrators; Eminem plays both roles. The narrators are the eponymous fan and a rapper named 'Slim'. The track, which shares much with Sartre's play *The Condemned of Altona* – not least its ending and its narrative device of a posthumously-played recording from a lead character killed when he drives his car off a bridge – consists of a lopsided correspondence between the fan and singer, with Stan becoming increasingly agitated as he details his problems, including his difficulties with his girlfriend, only to receive no reply. Increasingly furious, Stan puts his pregnant girlfriend in the trunk of his car and drives it off a bridge, killing them both. The final stanza of the song consists of Slim's letter to Stan. Apologizing for not writing sooner, the rapper attempts to address some of Stan's problems, suggesting that he seek counselling. He asserts that Stan and his girlfriend need each other and, moreover, that Stan may need to treat her better. One instance of enlightenment, however, failed to appease Eminem's critics. Nevertheless, given his reputation, it does seem unexpected; as does the appearance of an image of gay tolerance in the song *The Real Slim Shady*, where the narrator declares that he can see no reason why two men cannot elope. Likewise, having previously claimed to hate 'fags', the narrator of the song *Criminal* cautions his listeners to relax because he likes gay men. As with Plato's *Republic*, the juxtaposition of such contradictory viewpoints is a persistent trope in the artist's work. It could be, of course, that the artist is simply confused about his position, or that he is the sort of bourgeois hypocrite despised by the existentialists. More plausible is, however, the suggestion that his persistent contradiction is evidence that he is engaged in a complex literary assault on the values of the society of which he is a part, and thus an attempt to create himself anew.

As John Seery notes, Plato makes much of contradiction as an ironic strategy in the *Republic*; Eminem employs such contradiction to achieve irony about his irony. In the song *Kill You*, for example,

he attacks his critics and suggests that he is being entirely earnest, viciously rejecting any suggestion of artifice. The coda to the song is, however, laughter followed by the assertion that he is just playing – a device he also employs elsewhere. The hollowness of this laughter may simply add to the listener's unease: the listener is not sure whether the narrator is kidding, or whether his final comment is simply an empty disclaimer. It is an effect that is heightened by the ambiguity of the song's title. Most literally it suggests murderous intent, and yet it also encompasses the violence inherent in some of the words often used to describe comedy and comedians: 'she killed,' and 'you're killing me'. Nevertheless, there are instances in which the artist's narrator appears – paradoxically – to be more earnest about his ironic intent. In the song Stan, for example, hearing that Stan cuts himself, Slim tells his fan that he only says this in jest. Indeed, the suggestion that a fan might seek to emulate his song is said to make the narrator sick. Indeed, the artist has suggested that he wrote the song as "a message to critics, like, 'Look, this is what happens if somebody takes my lyrics seriously'" (DeCurtis 2005, 295). That the fault is with the fan not with the artist is indicated by Stan's reference to the urban myth surrounding Phil Collins's *In the Air Tonight*, suggesting Stan has a propensity for misreading even the most innocuous of lyrics. There are, nevertheless, multiple layers of irony at work here too, for the claim that Eminem is responsible for those who would take his words as a spur to action, provides a fecund resource for the artist's method.

Much of the invective directed at Eminem concerned his alleged responsibility for his audience's actions. On *Sing For The Moment*, the narrator responds to suggestions that music can alter moods by asking whether it can also load a gun and cock it too. Likewise, in *Who Knew*, the narrator similarly denies responsibility for the actions of others, noting that he just said what he said without knowing that it would lead his listeners to follow his fictional example. In the same song, he also appears to hide behind a liberal defence of the word opposed to action, asking how much damage he could do with a pen. This position is, however, quickly called into question by

comments that might find favour with many of his more conservative critics. Noting that he saw three young kids at a violent movie, he asks if their parents were the same ones who condemned his work. Indeed, he repeatedly turns such criticism back onto his critics, observing that it is not his fault if children copy him because parents are responsible for their own kids. The viewpoint is reinforced on the track *My Dad's Gone Crazy* featuring the artist's daughter Hallie. In it, the narrator concludes by saying that he would not let his daughter listen to his work. Indeed, the artist's thoroughgoing ambivalence – and/or commitment to ambiguity – is demonstrated by the song *Criminal*. In it, he appears both to shrug-off the criticism of his work, and to embrace it, suggesting that it is not the performer but the critic who must give an account of him- or herself, declaring himself to be whatever that critic declares him to be, before asking why he would say it if it were not true. Echoing Napoleon's answer to any criticism – “That's me!” – Eminem observed in an interview with Antony DeCurtis: “that's why I made that song *Criminal*. And that's why I said, ‘Hate fags? The Answer's yes’. Homophobic? Because people were calling me homophobic. That's why I say, ‘I am whatever you say I am’. Whatever you call me, that's what I'm going to be” (DeCurtis 2005, 295).

Whoever could tell when Socrates was being serious and when he was joking, Goethe observed, would be doing humanity a great service (Nehamas 1998, 7). As Seery suggests, however, the pedagogical value of the *Republic* lies in the uncertainty it cultivates in the reader. The same might be said about Eminem, as is evidenced by both the pervasiveness of deliberate contradiction in his work and by its highly theatrical nature. Indeed, as far as the latter is concerned, his theatricality exposes the positions of both those who would deny his literariness affects the negative impact of his work and those who suggest that such literariness prevents his work from meaningfully affecting his audience. Eminem shows how, in attempting to expose him, his critics end up exposing themselves. Certainly, there is something absurd about the seriousness with which NOW, GLAAD, and others, solemnly

published and recited the very lyrics that they believed damaging to others and that, as such, should be banned: a decidedly self-defeating move, serving only to disseminate still further the very words that they found so offensive. Even more problematic for such critics is the way in which their own recitation of the lyrics undermines any suggestion that the words themselves are inherently offensive, that context – such as the artist’s theatrical presentation of them – does not matter, even as they themselves appeared to consider the context in which they repeat the lyrics as mitigating their presentation. In this way, Eminem posed multiple problems for his critics in ways that echo the works of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, repeatedly turning their words and positions back onto them. On *Who Knew* – the absence of a question mark furthering the ambiguity surrounding the artist – he tempts his audience to take him literally, then scolds them for doing so, offering a wonderfully petulant image in which, when asked to watch his mouth, he responds literally, asking if they want him to take out his eyeballs and turn them around. Likewise, on *Rain Man*, he declares he finds his critics offensive for finding him offensive, perfectly capturing the shrill incommensurability of much of our contemporary political debate. Similarly, in *Cleanin’ Out My Closet*, the narrator asks his critics if they have ever been discriminated and protested against, before announcing that he has. In turning himself into the victim, the artist seeks to turn the tables on his critics. As such, they now must explain *themselves* – in the sense that they have to explain why his depiction of the situation is inaccurate – rather than having him explain himself. The theatricality of his work poses similar problems to such critics, further suggesting how the artist calls the established and the given into question in a way that echoes the work of the existentialists.

Accepting the award for best rap record of the year at the 43rd annual Grammys in 2001, Eminem observed: “I want to thank everybody who could look past the controversy and see the album for what it was – and also for what it isn’t” (Strauss 2001). Given his generally scathing responses to critics – responses which made

Sartre's assertion that "many of the people who interview me are not qualified to do so" (Sartre 2007, 55) look remarkably mild – it might be that the Eminem accepting the award was not the Eminem who appears on his records. The suggestion that some, or all, of his monikers were personas was not, however, something that the artist chose to reveal at the Grammys. His commitment to irony, theatricality, and Kierkegaardian indirect communication went all the way down. In the first instance, each of the personas he adopts is at least one remove from the artist – even 'Marshall Mathers' became as much of a cover as 'Bob Dylan' is for Robert Zimmerman – creating an ironic distance between the artist and his speech. In many instances – such as Stan – the words and deeds that Eminem's critics find so objectionable belong to other characters, creating a further distance between the artist and the work. That the adoption of such masks is a deliberate strategy on the part of the artist is suggested by the ways in which he constantly played with the concept of his identity, from the opening song of his first CD *My Name Is*, through *The Real Slim Shady* on *The Marshall Mathers LP*, to *Without Me* on *The Eminem Show*. Even here, however, the artist seeks to destabilize our understanding of his work. For just as he places a distance between himself and the performance, he also weaves in elements from his own biography, such as in the song *Kim*, tempting the listener to conflate the artist with the narrator, and thereby to generate further uncertainty in his audience, part of a broader strategy of identifying then blurring the distinction between rap and reality. The song *When The Music Stops* from *The Eminem Show* plays with the conflation of the hyperbolic world of rap with the world in which it is created, suggesting decidedly negative consequences for those who confuse the two. As such, it is never clear whose views – if anybody's – the artist is expressing in his work.

In keeping with the existentialist tradition, moreover, much of this irony is wrapped inside theatrical motifs. His third CD, *The Eminem Show* was followed by a fourth, *Encore*, and by a greatest hits collection called *Curtain Call*. The artwork on each one depicted

curtains and a stage, generating a multi-tiered self-referentiality that draws repeated attention to the artifice in his work. Indeed, he is not just theatrical in outlook, but also meta-theatrical. The artist constantly highlights not only his own artifice but also to that of his performance. What literary critics call ‘baring the device’ – artists drawing attention to the medium in which they are working – is a persistent motif in his work. It is to be observed, for example, on *Role Model* – itself a heavily ironic title – where, after requesting a mic check, he asks if they are recording; in the similar mic check on *Who Knew* and on *Cleanin’ Out My Closet* where he complains about not being able to hear the snare in his headphones. It is telling that these meta-theatrical moments became more prevalent in his work as the controversy surrounding it grew, possibly because so many appeared to have missed his ironic purpose. In this frustration, he once again shares an affinity with Sartre who regularly complained about the ways in which his theatrical works were misunderstood, even as he too sought to destabilize any final reading of his works.

In their desire to ‘expose’ Eminem as inauthentic, it is, then, critics who are exposed as inauthentic. They are ‘serious men’ who exhibit an inability to live in the condition of uncertainty that marks the human condition. Observed de Beauvoir in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, “the serious man readily takes refuge in disputing the serious, but it is the seriousness of others which he disputes, not his own” (de Beauvoir 1976, 50). In each instance, such seriousness demands a final answer to its own uncertainty. Thus, for example, Elizabeth Keathley acknowledges the artist’s multiple personas but conflates them into one. “Mathers” she notes, “has a large ‘Slim Shady’ tattoo on his upper left arm, and he, like many rappers, has been arrested for gun-related violence in apparent imitation of his own musical fantasies” (Keathley 2002). Her work is redolent of the faintly patronizing tone that many critics adopted towards the artist. Their snobbery is evidenced in the ways in which many of these critics seemed to regard Eminem’s heavily ironic musical performances as literal, but to suggest that his ability to talk intelligently about his work is a kind of disassembling theatre. Both

Keathley and Edward Armstrong, for example, talked disparagingly of Eminem's "handlers," and Armstrong goes out of his way to suggest that Eminem is a puppet of his producer and mentor Dr. Dre (Keathley 2002; Armstrong 2004, 347). That such criticism is itself a racially inverted – and highly ironic – reworking of the criticisms levelled against Phillis Wheatley by, among others, Thomas Jefferson, further suggests the ways in which Eminem's work serves to disrupt and confound the critical response to his work (Slauter 2011). Indeed, the question of race indicates the difficulties Eminem poses to his critics, for he repeatedly seems to beat them to their would-be punches.

In the semi-autobiographical movie, *8 Mile*, Eminem plays an aspiring rapper, Jimmy Smith, Jr. – another persona – involved in a number of rap-battles. In the exchange of insults that marks the film's final battle, Eminem's character renders his opponent literally speechless by acknowledging every potential criticism that could be levelled against him before his opponent could make it. Although a fictionalized account of his life, the scene nevertheless captures the way in which Eminem preempts his critics by acknowledging in advance the criticisms they will make. Indeed, in keeping with the existentialist approach, the artist does not break down his critics' claims into their constituent parts to expose faulty premises and suspect reasoning but renders such criticisms problematic through performance. Thus, when Vincent Stephens claims Eminem is inauthentic because his audience is made up of white suburban teenagers his criticism misses the mark because Eminem, like Nietzsche's Napoleon, repeatedly acknowledges that of which he is accused. In the song *Who Knew* the artist denies that he does black music, suggesting instead, that he does white music for high school kids. Similarly, and even more problematically for Stephens, in the song *White America* Eminem acknowledges precisely that which Stephens believes exposes him, noting that he is so beloved of white America that he is embraced by fans on the MTV youth show TRL. Indeed, the artist's constant references to his own whiteness, and the relationship between this and his commercial success, indicate

that he is more than aware of this source of his appeal. More than once he compares himself to Elvis Presley, the most famous whiteface act in history. It is hard to ‘unmask’ somebody for that which they readily acknowledge.

MY TEA’S GONE COLD

Were Eminem simply a trickster, then the challenge he posed to critics in his early work would still be of interest, if only as a masterclass in misdirection. One of the key reasons why existentialism serves as a “productive hermeneutical lens” for his work is, however, its focus on suffering (Gooding-Williams 2010, 18). The rapper repeatedly references his own tears and misery. Such admissions are hardly part of the alleged traditional machismo of rap. Indeed, the artist plays with and subverts a number of the conventions of hip-hop in such a way as to frustrate almost any criticism of his work. For every image of machismo and violence, there is one of weakness and victimhood. In *The Way I Am*, the narrator declares himself to be the meanest MC on Earth. In the very next song, *The Real Slim Shady*, he appears to make a similar boast, declaring himself to be better than 90 per cent of other rappers. At first hearing, perhaps, the line appears to be more of the same, and yet there is an implicit recognition of his own inferiority to at least ten per cent of his would-be rivals. In the braggadocio of rap, this ten percent is a considerably bigger admission of weakness than it might initially seem, showing how even what appears to be a simple boast in keeping with the conventions of the genre, actually poses considerably more difficulties for his critics than the predictable nature of their responses suggests they are aware. From an existentialist perspective, moreover, the language of authenticity and responsibility that these critics employ further suggests such critics’ inability to interrogate their intellectual prejudices. Many seem, for example, to employ this existentialist language as a stick with which to beat the object of their criticism, but are unwilling to

employ it as a hermeneutic tool for engaging with that which they fear. Employing this language of authenticity and responsibility in a manner more consistent with existentialist thought reveals the complexity that such critics miss.

Richard Goldstein argues that Eminem's appropriation of victim status is "what trial lawyers call 'the abuse excuse'. Under the basher lies a boy betrayed by his wife and mother. We've heard it all before" (Goldstein 2004). If Eminem were indeed offering up the 'abuse excuse', as Goldstein asserts, then any suggestion that the artist might be productively viewed through an existentialist lens would have to be withdrawn. Denying responsibility and offering excuses are an anathema to the existentialist worldview. Eminem's position is, however, considerably more complex than his critics suggest. Although the song *Kim* is violent, scary and deeply unpleasant, Eminem's critics have repeatedly failed to notice the ways in which the artist betrays the narrator in the song, or the ways in which the narrator betrays the artist. Those who would reveal the subtext of his work do not acknowledge that the subtext is actually almost always text, and that it is Eminem as the author of the song, who presents it to us. Throughout the song the narrator draws repeated attention to his own weakness. At times he is pathetic – suggesting that his wife thinks he is ugly. Even as he berates her for all his and her failings, the narrator identifies his own role in their problems through a self-consciously weak justification. Had the artist sincerely been concerned to portray his wife or ex-wife as the cause of his problems, it is unlikely that he would have chosen to include the details of his own infidelities and weakness in the song. In this way, perhaps, the audience is meant to see the narrator as something weak and vile, and certainly not as somebody to be emulated. The abuse that he details is not an excuse; it is rather a compelling account of the cycles of dysfunction that often produce domestic violence. There is no incitement to violence in such songs; rather, there is exactly the opposite. Far from glamorizing such acts, Eminem shows us them in all their violence and horror, sparing his listener none of the details. By drawing attention to the causes of

such violence, the artist is showing us that it emerges from *somewhere* and that tackling it requires more than the condemnation of those who report on it. To accuse him of *promoting* such violence is, perhaps, akin to accusing Jonathan Swift of promoting infanticide and cannibalism in his *Modest Proposal*. While it is perfectly possible that some people reading Swift might become cannibals, there are sufficient indicators in the text to suggest that this is not the aim of the work. Much the same can be said of Eminem, even as his critics repeatedly miss it. Indeed, his work repeatedly serves to expose the hypocrisy of those who would fixate on rap-lyrics as the cause of such violence at the expense of more plausible social determinants.

If Eminem were presenting his victimhood as an excuse for his alleged violence, he might be thought to be seeking to evade the responsibility for the potential actions of his audience in a way that contradicts the existentialist worldview. Such a claim nevertheless confuses the ways in which the artist's critics employ the term 'responsibility' and the way in which the existentialists do. For Sartre and others, individuals were responsible only for themselves. As such, readers or audience members who carried out heinous acts as a result of reading their work would have missed the point of their writing. Such people would have become satellites rather than systems, imitators rather than creators, consumers rather than artists. Those who would suggest that Eminem is employing the 'abuse excuse' might initially seem to be on stronger existentialist ground, and yet, by presenting himself as an unattractive, pathetic individual who seeks to rely on such a defense, Eminem defuses the criticism, not through preemption – as he does elsewhere – but rather by embracing his role in creating the chaos he depicts in his personal life. Even more than this, however, Eminem embraces an existentialist responsibility in his commitment to authentic self-creation.

Between the songs on Eminem's CDs are a series of skits. One features a record company executive and an initially upbeat Eminem becoming increasingly deflated as the executive recounts, in lurid detail, what various retailers thought of the record. Ironically, he

describes in terms more violent than Eminem might use what they would like to do to him for producing such an offensive piece of work. In each such instance, Eminem portrays himself as an outsider butting heads with big business, lawyers and other guardians of morality. The irony here, of course, is that such skits appeared on one of the best-reviewed, best-selling albums of the year. Eminem is, perhaps, portraying himself at his weakest when he is at his strongest. It is precisely because he has such strength that he is able to depict himself in this way. In this, as in much else, the artist has taken the events of his life and employed them as the raw materials for creating himself as a work of art in much the same way that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche sought to write themselves out of the conformity. Eminem, like these forebears, has become a satellite not a system: he takes responsibility for creating himself as an authentic individual out of the anterior creations of others.

CURTAINS CLOSE

By the time of the release of Eminem's fourth solo CD *Encore* in 2004, there was a definite sense that the onetime *bête-noire* (or *bête-blanche*) of American cultural criticism had become far less shocking to the nation's sensibilities. Even *Newsweek* was moved to observe – in a review tellingly entitled “The Fake Slim Shady” – that “judging by most of the album, Eminem – like so many other rappers – still thinks bagging on bitches, homos, or anyone who's not in his camp qualifies as fighting the power (...) [w]ho would ever have thought we'd long for the good old days when Eminem could really p--s us off?” (Ali 2004, 76). Far from the hate-filled, invective spewing danger to America's children that he had been three years earlier, Eminem seemed to have become too safe, too predictable, and too mainstream. Paradoxically, some saw this as evidence of the artist's growth. The *Nation*, who had been among the voices condemning Eminem in 2001, argued that with *Mosh* – a song attacking President George W. Bush that demanded

American troops be brought home from Iraq – the artist had moved “from his usual critique to lyrics reflecting sincere political passion”, leading them to suggest that “Eminem has truly made a leap” (Graham-Felsen 2004). What these critics failed to recognize, however, is that it was not Eminem who had changed, but rather the culture he had affected. Like Harold Bloom’s ‘strong poet,’ Eminem had created the taste by which he was to be judged (Bloom 1997). While, for many of his critics, Eminem had become responsible but inauthentic in a way they could understand, the artist himself had, in an existentialist sense, been responsible and authentic from the very beginning. His work was evidence of the continued relevance of existentialism in the American ethical-political life: the tension between that which embraces, cultivates, and lives with uncertainty and that which denies it in favour of the pre-existing, the given, and the apparently certain. In their refusal to engage meaningfully with an artist who challenged them to do otherwise, Eminem’s critics suggest that Jean Cocteau was only half-right: Americans – and American social scientists and cultural critics in particular – are an unknowingly tragic people too.

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“GABRIEL DE PEDRO QUINTET”.
DECISIONS IN SEARCH FOR A SONORITY

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Abstract. “Gabriel de Pedro Quintet” is a popular music group from the city of Santa Fe, Argentina. The objective of this work is to analyse the production process and musical performance around the recording and presentation of the album *La mujer árbol* (2018). The theoretical framework conceives music as a process and performance, not as an isolated object. The research field is organized by the “chain of decisions”: poietic, immanent, preproduction, proto-performance, performance, recording (editing, mixing, mastering), post-production, aesthetics and aftermath. It is concluded that the study of human decisions optimizes and sustains the reconstruction process of artistic production and the search for a musical sonority.

Keywords: musical performance, music analysis, the chain of decisions, production, recording, staging

INTRODUCTION

Gabriel de Pedro Quintet (GdP5) is a popular music group (mainly tango) from the city of Santa Fe, Argentina. Their fourth album, *La mujer árbol* (EPSA Music 2018), is a sound construction with a result previously thought, experienced and then materialized for distribution. The objective of this work is to analyze the production process and musical performance around the recording and presentation of this album. In this line, we will try to explain how sound results based on decision making and to analyze the physical space where the recording was made (performance staging), the digital space built from the mix and use of plugins, and the space where the listeners perceive the music –the “soundbox” (Moore 2012, 29).

The theoretical framework of this research conceives music as both a process (Cook 2001, 3) and performance (Cook 2013, 1-2), and not as an isolated object. Studio recording is understood as performance recording; it is the result of a creative process and a sound search mediated by decisions. This theoretical perspective allows a direct relationship between theory and musical practice.

Our research field is organized by the “chain of decisions” (Pitich 2018, 111-114). This is a framework of analytical study that systematizes the processes of production and communication (before and after) of a performance. This chain includes basically nine different links that can be rearranged, repeated or absent. These are: poietic, immanent, preproduction, “proto-performance” (Schechner 2013, 225), performance, recording (editing, mixing, mastering), post-production, aesthetics and aftermath.

We presents several methodologies of analysis, subordinated to the components of each links: trajectory of GdP5, the original repertoire of *La mujer árbol*, preproduction, porto-performance (instruments and influences of its members), the performance in the recording studio, the recording process (editing, mixing and mastering), the sound results of the album, the post-production (album premiere organization, album graphic design, repertoire order, record label), the performance on the stage (official album presentation), and finally, the album reception together with its repercussions. In this case, two particular performances will be analyzed: one made in the recording studio and the official live presentation of the album. For this reason, the chain of decisions has ten links. Next, *Black chart 1* synthesizes each of these links with the theoretical framework or source and its corresponding object of study:

PROCESS	POIETIC	IMMANENT	PREPRODUCTION	PROTO- PERFORMANCE	PERFORMANCE (IN STUDIO)	RECORDING	POSTPRODUCTION	PERFORMANCE (ON STAGE)	ESTHESIC	AFTERMATH
SOURCE	•Interview	•Peralta (2012) •Cook (1987)	•Interview	•Schechner (2013) •Interview	•Sachmacher (2015) •Interview	•Moore (2012) •Interview	•Interview	•Sachmacher (2015) •Interview	•Spotify for artist •YouTube	•Newspaper •Hashtags (#)
OBJECT OF STUDY	•Biographia •Context	•Sheet Music (Composition)	•Planification •Management	•Rehearsal •Instruments •Musical technique	•Staging •Interpretation	•Recording •Mixing •Mastering •Results: <i>La mujer árbol</i>	•Graphic design •Repertoire order •Recorded label •Premier organization	•Staging •Interpretation	•Streaming	•Critiques •Comments

BLANK CHART 1. Chain of decisions from *La mujer árbol*

GABRIEL DE PEDRO QUINTET

GdP5 was formed in 2009 with the idea of following the tradition of Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Salgán tango quintets. From this musical base, they incorporated other musical genres like jazz and cultivated music. The group is integrated by Gabriel de Pedro (piano and direction), Raúl Vallejos (violin), Danilo Cernotto (bandoneon), José Luis Vallejos (double bass) and Mauricio Pitich (guitar). The group has shared the stage with artists of international prestige such as Néstor Marconi, Guillermo Fernández, El Sexteto Mayor, Lidia Borda, Santa Fe Jazz Ensemble, Viento Sur trombone quartet and the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra, among others.

It highlights in their career the call as “Cultural Ambassadors” by the Secretary of Tourism from Santa Fe (2009), the prize awarded by AADI as “2010 Revelation Tango Group”, the declaration of “Cultural Interest by Santa Fe Province” (2010), participation in the International Tango Festival of Quito (Ecuador, 2016) and the invitation by the Ministry of Culture from Argentine Nation to represent Santa Fe in the cycle “La Patria Tanguera” at the Néstor Kirchner Cultural Center (Buenos Aires, 2016). Since its formation, the quintet has recorded four albums: *En la boca del lobo* (2009), *Tango Maestro* (2013), *Quedémonos aquí* (2016) and *La mujer árbol* (2018).

COMPOSITIONS

The process of composition and arrangement of the works that make up *La mujer árbol* covers a time period from August 2004 to May 2017. Next, the repertoire that integrates the album is listed chronologically, by their composition date and other information provided by Gabriel de Pedro in the interviews:

1. “Barrio Sargento Cabral” - composition date: 08/2004 - Inspired by my parents' neighbourhood;
2. “La mujer árbol” - composition date: 2008 - Dedicated to Mariángelos López;

3. “Taconeando por el boulevard” - composition date: 05/2012. Originally titled “Al Gran Salgán”, inspired by Horacio Salgán;
4. “Recuerdo” - arrangement date: 02/2014;
5. “Flores negras” - arrangement date: 04/2016 - Dedicated to Miguel Abuelo for a strange relationship of the theme “Himno de mi corazón” and “Flores Negras”;
6. “El andariego” - arrangement date: 08/2016 - Dedicated to my father;
7. “Loca bohemia” - arrangement date: 08/2016 - Dedicated to the music of Francisco De Caro;
8. “Milonga de agua” - composition date: 02/2017 - Dedicated to my master Gerardo Gandini;
9. “Mesa de amigos” - composition date: 03/2017 - Originally titled “Días de asado y Fernet”, inspired by my great friends of Santa Fe;
10. “Danza de Martí” - composition date: 04/2017 - Inspired by my daughter Martina de Pedro;
11. “Impresiones andariegas” - composition date: 05/2017 - Inspired by the problems of my family.

This repertoire includes four instrumental tangos arranged by de Pedro (4, 5, 6 and 7) and seven own compositions: six instrumentals (2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 11) and one song (Gabriel de Pedro's lyrics and interpreted by Guillermo Ibáñez, 1). With this information, one can observe how the composer establishes relations between his personal life (family –parents, wife and daughters–, friends, professors and favourite composers or interpreters) and music. De Pedro mentions specific musical influences for this album: Horacio Salgán, Francisco De Caro, Alfredo Gobbi and Gerardo Gandini. At the same time, he emphasizes that “the compositional resources, the orchestration, the arrangements and the stylistic interpretation from each of them, is what I value of their works the most” (Gabriel de Pedro, interview with the author). Throughout this research, we will work mostly on focusing on examples of the seven compositions of Gabriel de Pedro to be able to relate the poetic and musical analytical level through interviews with the composer. According to the musical analysis of all album scores, we stand out the “technical foundations of the tango” (Peralta 2012, 9-13), the “traditional methods of analysis” (Cook 1992, 7), and the stylistic resources of other popular genres. The compositional elements used

are listed below and the album links to Spotify and YouTube are attached:

<https://open.spotify.com/album/6OjfDichZcGp7u5La3DelQ?si=U1RdbXDU RgmqtiwqgWZUeQ>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_kLMc9wmEPF82AE2NI-yienYbC2o_bRQdg

1. Legato melodies

- Violin in “Taconeando por el boulevard” from 01:29" to 01:42".
- Violin in “Danza de Marti” from 00:04" to 00:42".
- Bandoneon in “La mujer árbol” from 01:02" to 01:20".
- Violin in “Milonga de agua” from 01:11" to 01:23".

2. Rhythmic melodies

- Tutti* in “Taconeando por el boulevard” from 00:05" to 00:15".
- Guitar and then *tutti* in “Danza de Marti” from 00:43" to 00:51".
- Guitar in “La mujer árbol” from 00:47" to 00:58".
- Tutti* in “Milonga de agua” from 00:01" to 00:17".

3. Ornaments

- In “Mesa de amigos” guitar upper *mordente* in 00:58", piano *acciaccatura* and *trino* from 01:34" to 01:50".
- Violin *acciaccatura* in “Danza de Marti” in 02:07".
- In “La mujer árbol” piano *double acciaccatura* in 00:44", guitar upper *mordente* superior in 01:29" and violin *trino* in 02:53".
- In “Milonga de agua” bandoneon *acciaccatura* in 00:17" and guitar upper *mordente* in 02:17".

4. Variation

- In “Taconeando por el boulevard” from 01:47" to 02:18".
- It alternates between violin, bandoneon, guitar and piano in “Danza de Marti” from 02:41" to 03:05".
- Piano in “Milonga de agua” from 03:10" to 03:14".

5. Tango accompaniment (Peralta 2012, 55)

- Marcato*: piano y double bass in “Mesa de amigos” from 01:11" to 01:24".
- Síncopa*: bandoneon and piano in “La mujer árbol” from 01:34" to 01:49".
- Bordoneo (milonga pampeana)*: guitar and double bass in “Milonga de agua”, from 01:12" to 01:57".

- *Milonga criolla*: piano, guitar and double bass in “Milonga de agua” from 00:30" to 00:53".
- 3-3-2: piano and double bass in “Danza de Marti” from 02:35" to 02:40".
- *Pesante*: piano, bandoneon and double bass in “Mesa de amigos” from 02:05" to 02:19"; rhythmic section (guitar, piano and double bass) in “Danza de Marti” from 00:50" to 00:56".
- *Yumba*: in “Recuerdo” from 00:36" to 01:08".
- *Umpa-umpa*: guitar in “Taconeando por el boulevard” from 02:11" to 02:16"; and bandoneon in “Danza de Marti” from 01:27" to 01:46".
- *Blanca*: rhythmic section in “Loca bohemia” from 01:08" to 01:15".
- *Coral*: bandoneon in “Danza de Marti” from 02:06" to 02:17".
- *Vals*: piano in “Barrio Sargento Cabral” from 01:51" to 01:58".

6. Contrapuntal elements (tango and cultivated music)

- Guitar in “Taconeando por el boulevard” under the piano solo, from 01:48" to 02:02".
- The whole quintet in “Mesa de amigos” from 00:36" to 00:52".
- Bandoneon and guitar in “Danza de Marti” from 01:56" to 02:02". Here, the work of counterpoint resembles the “developed variation” described by Schoenberg (1963) in his analysis of Johannes Brahms, in the essay “Brahms, the Progressive” (1933). The first subject tessitura includes a minor 6th, which allowed Pedro to perform the counterpoint “more comfortably” (Gabriel de Pedro, interview with the author).
- Guitar and violin in “La mujer árbol” from 02:34" to 03:04".
- Violin and bandoneon in “Milonga de agua” from 01:13" to 01:17"; and canon (entrance order: piano, guitar, double bass with bandoneon and violin) from 02:21" to 02:29".

7. Harmony (tango, jazz and popular song)

- In “Danza de Marti” the key signature is *Gm*. The composition has part A and part B. Gabriel de Pedro works on a system of polarization of tone, which is not completely diatonic or tonal but includes many chromatic changes. The introduction ends in *G* (major homonymous). Part A starts with *Bb* and then regionalizes at *Cm*. Part B the *Bm*. Throughout the work, the related modal areas that appear are relative to *Gm* (*Bb*, *Cm*) and *G* (*Bm*). In the “traditional” tango form, parts A and B are usually contrasted with a major-minor homonymous relation, here this connection is replaced by a major-minor modal relationship (*Gm-Bb* and *G-Bm*).
- In “La mujer árbol”, the harmony was influenced by the American songs from the album *My Song* (1978) by Keith Jarrett. The work is in *Mib* and uses harmonic progressions by fourths (sonority that the composer described as “ecclesiastical”). The texture of the whole work is melody accompanied (by chords of the same

instrument) and harmonized melody by other melodic lines (of different instrument). Modal relationships are used to replace similar harmonic functions. The dominant (*C7*) of the second degree (*Fm*) is used for cadence in *Mib* (*V7/II-I*), here *C7* can be reread as a *Bb6b5/C* (*V6b5/C*) but without the third. The transition to different modal centres is made through the progression *IIm7-V7* characteristic of jazz (*Abm7-Db7-Gbm*). The work ends in *G*, the third major degree of *Mib*.

•In “*Milonga de agua*” the only tonal sections are the *milonga criolla* (*Gm-D7-C#7*) and the modal *milonga pampeana* (*F#m-Em*). The melodic resource that the composer uses to connect the modulations is the *La* major pentatonic scale. The rest of the work is built from counterpoint.

8. Orchestration (tango and jazz)

•Main melody in octaves with violin in the lower voice and bandoneon in the higher one; the habitual tango disposition of placing the violin over the bandoneon is reversed (resource extracted from Horacio Salgán).

•Counter melody of the left hand of the bandoneon in unison with the low register of the violin.

•When the guitar plays the melody, due to its low amplitude compared to the rest of the instruments, the melodic instruments (violin and bandoneon) are silenced or intervene in a register far away from the guitar one; the piano and the contrabass rhythmically accompany.

•The rhythmic function of the piano left hand in tango is usually octaved by the contrabass, this function is not always respected. The contrabass is usually the only instrument that occupies the low register and the piano fulfils a jazz function by performing compings, playing melodies or counter melodies.

•Piano and guitar never play a tango *marcato* (quarter note) together. When the piano plays it, the guitar plays *umpa-umpa*, melody or counter melody and *vice versa*.

•Many passages use unison *tuttis* (and octave) and some are harmonized, through this resource a greater rhythmic and dynamic force is achieved with the melody.

•There are instruments that according to de Pedro are not “compatible” with others, the bandoneon and guitar combination does not usually occur on the album except in the *tuttis*.

Gabriel de Pedro highlighted the fact that the orchestration of this album was written with the intention of recording a piece of acoustic music and not performing a live concert only. In this way, an attempt to achieve a levelling between the differences in the amplitude of each instrument was made, especially with the guitar since it has acoustically less volume.

9. Sound effects (tango)

- *Látigo*: in “Mesa de amigos”, violin in 02:05" and guitar in 02:10"; in “Milonga de agua” guitar in 00:35" and violin in 00:38".
- *Abanico*: guitar in “El andariego” in 2:21".
- *Glissando*: guitar in “Taconeando por el boulevard” in 02:28", in “Mesa de amigos” in 03:00".
- *Guitarrita*: violin in “Loca bohemia” from 00:43" to 00:48".
- *Golpe de caja*: bandoneon in “Milonga de agua” from 00:32" to 00:33".
- *Chúster*: bandoneon and guitar in “Danza de Martí” in 01:51".
- *Campanitas*: piano in “Danza de Martí” in 01:29".

10. Accompaniment with arpeggios (popular song)

- Guitar in “Mesa de amigos” from 00:28" to 00:32".
- Piano in “Danza de Martí” from 00:04" to 00:42".
- In “La mujer árbol” piano from 00:30" to 00:48" and guitar from 02:03" to 02:33".
- Guitar in “Milonga de agua” from 01:12" to 01:57".

11. Guitar strumming (popular song)

- In “Mesa de amigos” from 01:00" to 01:03".
- In “La mujer árbol” from 00:14" to 00:17".

12. Borrowing (cultivated music):

- In “La mujer árbol” is quoted Andy Summers electric guitar riff from The Police song “Every breath you take” in 01:34".
- In “Milonga de agua” de Pedro quotes the “Acorde de Macedonio”¹ [Macedonio Chord], harmonic sonority that Gerardo Gandini uses to characterize this character (Macedonio) in his opera *La ciudad ausente* (1994), in 00:23".

13. Reconstruction and recomposition (Gandini 2009, 97-98)

- In “Milonga de agua” participate all instruments. This resource can be identified because the instruments are intervening mediated by silence and the rhythm section (guitar, piano and double bass) and stop generating a constant rhythmic pattern; a texture like Anton Webern's *Klangfarbenmelodie* appears. From 2:30 " to 02:48 ".

14. Improvisation (jazz)

- Piano solo in “Recuerdo” from 01:30" to 01:54".
- Chronologic solo order: bandoneon, guitar y piano in “La mujer árbol” from 02:03" to 03:19".

15. Walking bass y comping (jazz)

- Double bass in “Danza de Martí” from 01:27" to 01:46".
- Piano and double bass “La mujer árbol” from 02:03" to 03:05".

Based on the scores analysis we can affirm that 50% (e.g. 3-9) of the musical resources or “technical foundations” that GdP5 uses come from tango, 30% from cultivated music (e.g. 7, 12 and 13) and 20% from jazz (e.g. 6, 14 and 15) or popular song (e.g. 6, 10 and 11).

PREPRODUCTION

The preproduction of *La mujer árbol* began in February 2016 and was oversaw by the group's director. Gabriel de Pedro planned to rehearse weekly from March 2016 until the recording date (originally scheduled for October 2016). However, since the violinist Raúl Vallejos suffered an illness, the group was inactive from August to December 2016. Towards the end of 2016, preproduction was resumed. Some of the elements that formed part of the recording management were:

- Coordinate the recording days between Estudios Ion, the recording technician, the piano tuner and the musicians.
- Lodging in Buenos Aires.
- Round trip transportation (Santa Fe - Buenos Aires).
- The persons in charge of helping the musicians' wives with their children.

Planning a recording of eleven tracks conditions the effort of the musicians both physically and mentally (concentration). GdP5 had the experience of recording their first album *En la boca del lobo* (2009) in 3 days, *Tango Maestro* in 2 and *Quedémonos aquí* in 1 day. Due to the results obtained in the second album and the available budget, it was decided to work in 2 days. Furthermore, another “essential” aspect highlighted by the members of the quintet at the time of recording was to establish the order and dynamics (breaks and meals) of the repertoire to record for also managing the energy use and everyone concentration. The recording order was as follows:

Three tangos of this repertoire were already known by the group: “Taconeando por el boulevard” and “Barrio Sargento Cabral” – included in the album *Tango Maestro* (2013)– and “Recuerdo” – included in the album *Quedémonos aquí* (2016).

First day	Second day
1-“Taconeando por el boulevard”	6-“Loca bohemia”
2-“Mesa de amigos”	7-“Danza de Marti”
Break	Break
3-“Milonga de agua”	8-“Flores negras”
4-“Recuerdo”	9-“La mujer árbol”
Break	Break
5-“Barrio Sargento Cabral”	10-“En andariego”
(piano and voice)	11-“Impresiones andariegas”
	(solo piano)

PROTO-PERFORMANCE

Proto-performance or “proto-p” (Schechner 2013, 225) is what precedes and/or gives rise to a performance. It is composed of three elements: training (individual), workshop (theatrical exercises) and the rehearsal (group). In our object of study, porto-performance covers the individual training (of each musician with the particella) and the rehearsal (considering physical space, frequency of meetings, duration, scores and equipment).

GdP5 began rehearsing for the recording in March 2016, periodically on Mondays from 9 am to 12 pm. Every fifteen days, only the rhythm section (piano, guitar and double bass) rehearsed on Thursdays from 8 pm to 10 pm. We must remember the recess suffered by the quintet from August to December 2016. On more than one occasion, the group practised in the studio of Pablo Delmonte (DMD Sonido) to record the rehearsal, listen to it, have references of the sonority that were being obtained and work in the experimentation of different mixings. This factor helped the

musicians in the preparation for the recording since the disposition of them in the space, the acoustic perception and the visual are factors that differ between the rehearsal room, the DMD Sonido studio and Estudios Ion. However, GdP5 members stressed that the most “uncomfortable” factor when recording in studio is the use of headphones as “artificial room” (created with the software Pro-Tools) where each musician listens to the rest through a return by headphones. Is emphasized that in performances the quintet does not use in-ear to monitor itself, they use returns located on the stage.

INSTRUMENTS AND INFLUENCES

Knowing the musical instrument and influence (personalized, academy or professional studies) of each member helps to understand the individual and group sound or musical technique. Next, the instruments used in the recording, the professors and the received musical influence are detailed through interviews with GdP5. The influences of musical genres are expressed in percentages and were ruled by the members themselves, as shown below is *Black Chart 2*:

GDP5	INSTRUMENT USED	PROFESSOR	ACADEMY STUDY	PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY
Gabriel de Pedro	Grand piano Boston	Edith Valeri de Montul, Amalia Pérez, Ernesto Jodos, Gerardo Gandini	Professor graduated from ISM-UNL.	Cultivated music 35% / Tango 30% / Jazz 15% / Popular song 20%
Raúl Vallejos	Violin Alexander Zuzuk, 2008	Mauricio Cepeda, José Bondar, Ljerko Spiller	Violinist graduated from Esc. Pcial. N°9901	Cultivated music 60% / Tango 40%
José Luis Vallejos	Double bass ¼ Michelangelo (Monaco) Euronic, 2017	Alberto Dabila, Norberto Juez	Double bass player graduated from Esc. Pcial. N°9901	Cultivated music 60% / Tango 40%
Danilo Cernotto	Bandoneon Alfred Arnold (Doble A) Liso, 1920s	Federico Pereiro, Rodolfo Mederos	Professor graduated from ISM-UNL.	Cultivated music 25% / Tango 25% / Jazz 25% / Other genres 25%
Mauricio Pitch	Esteban González Guitar, Rosewood, 2011	César Angeleri, Eduardo Isaac, Néstor Ausqui, Sebastián López, Angel Hussein	Licentiate graduated from ISM-UNL.	Cultivated music 30% / Tango 30% / Jazz 25% / Other genres 15%

BLACK CHART 2. Instruments and influences of GdP5.

Adding the influences and the musical studies of each members, the group sound result yields the following information: cultivated music 42%; tango 33%; jazz 13%; other genres 12%. As a consequence of these data, when listening to the album *La mujer*

árbol, one would expect to find a sonority deeply rooted in the tradition of cultivated music and secondly in tango.

PERFORMANCE IN THE RECORDING STUDIO

At the time of recording, the articulation of the staging includes musicians, recording technicians and any other person present h. All of them constitute the architectural, visual, sonorous and literary space creating a production system “in a present point of space and time” (Szuchmacher 2015, 10). The architecture is what organizes all the elements joining the scenes (or different recording take), actors (or musicians) the spectators (listeners or technicians). Estudios Ion is an architectural space designed exclusively to mediate the meeting between recording takes and listeners.

From a “denotative vision” (Szuchmacher 2015, 21), Estudios Ion was founded in 1956 by Tiberio Kertesz, a Hungarian musician. The recording room A measures approximately 8 x 12 meters (96m²). It has a wooden floor that once functioned as a ballroom. The study luminaire is carefully measured to avoid the entry of noise into the equipment. Among the technological equipment, the microphones (Neumann U47, U67, SM69 and KM84) play an important role in the creation of the sound. All of these made the studio famous, being internationally nicknamed as the “Abbey Road of Tango” - an example of its “connotative vision” (Szuchmacher 2015, 23).

Furthermore, it was declared a “site of cultural interest” from City of Buenos Aires in 2005. Its current director, Osvaldo Acedo, and the sound technician Jorge “El Portugués” Da Silva were awarded the Gobbi de Oro prize and the Konex for their contributions to Argentine popular music in 2015. Moreover, “El Portugués” Da Silva is the oldest recording technician in Ion. He has more than 50 years of studio work and has trained many professionals such as Javier Mazzarol, Hernán Grasso and Alejandro Saro. Much of the history of tango, folklore and national rock of Argentina was recorded in this place. To all this, it is added the popular recognition that the studio had through the program

“Encuentro en el estudio” transmitted by Canal Encuentro from 2009 to 2016 and presented by “Lalo” Mir.

The possibilities of choice for this fourth album were many and the group's experience was not limited. Gabriel de Pedro decided to record *La mujer árbol* in Estudios Ion due to the satisfactory sound result (defined as “recording quality” by de Pedro), as obtained in the recording of the album *Tango Maestro*. Added to this, the room A de Ion has the possibility to record each member in acoustically separate rooms, an essential factor for the type of mix that the quintet sought.

RECORDING, EDITING, MIXING AND MASTERING

Recording

La mujer árbol was recorded at Estudios Ion (Buenos Aires) on July 9th and 10th, 2017 from 10 am to 8 pm on both days. Sound recording is the electrical or mechanical recording of sound waves. Currently, Ion has analogue and digital media recording technologies, and GdP5 opted for digital. Microphones are used to record changes in atmospheric pressure (sound waves) and then, using recording software, the acoustic signals are digitized. The software used to record was Pro-Tools HD 8. Black Chart 3 shows the equipment used to record each instrument:

INSTRUMENT	MICROFON	PREAMPLIFIER	RECORDING TECHNIQUE
Double Bass	AKG C12 (the tube)	Gml	“F”
	Senheiser MKH 405	Avalon 737	On strings (Bright)
	Electrovoice PL20	Mci (Mesa de Ion)	“F”
Piano Low	Neumann U67	Petrungaro NV-II	X Near Coincident
Piano High	Neumann U67	Petrungaro NV-II	Y Near Coincident
Piano Left	Roger R121	Mci	A
Piano Right	Roger R121	Mci	B
Guitar	Schoeps	Mci	A - Fret XII
	Neumann U87	Gml	B - Bridge
Bandoneon Left	Neumann U47	Mci	-
Bandoneon Right	Neumann U67	Mci	-
Violin	Neumann U67	Mci	-

BLACK CHART 3. Recording equipment used in *La mujer árbol*

As in their last session, the group simultaneously recorded the different takes all together, there were no overdubs. However, unlike the previous albums (2013), this time the quintet changed the spatial location to obtain takes of each instrument without the interference of another musician's sound in the microphones. Photo 1 shows the disposition in room A. In the back, there are three little rooms where, from left to right, Guitar, Bandoneon and Violin were located. We can see how each one has windows to not interfere with the musician's visions when they play together and be able to see their corporal gestures.



PHOTO 1. Recording Room A, Estudios Ion, *La mujer árbol*

In Photo 1 and Image 1, we can see that the double bass shares the same room with the piano, but presents an isolation using acoustic plates, carpets and insulating blankets (dotted lines). The blue lines represent acoustic walls and windows with double-glazing. Below, there is a blueprint of the quintet location and the acoustic isolation.

The new spatial location of the musicians in different rooms allowed the group greater control and availability of resources at the time of mixing the album. Recording an instrument in an acoustics

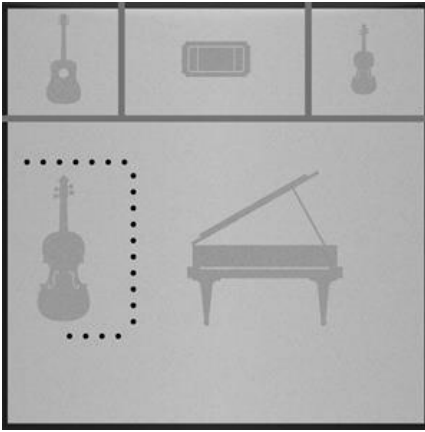


IMAGE 1. Distribution plane of the instruments and isolation in room A, Estudios Ion, La mujer árbol.

isolated from other sounds gives to the technician the possibility of modifying amplitudes, equalizing and redistributing each instrument freely in a new digital space. The group made between two and three takes of each work with a break of approximately

15-20 minutes among each. After recording each one, the group went to the main control and listen to which was the most convincing shot in terms of interpretation: sound, dynamics, tempo and number of mistakes.

Editing

The editing process is used to “fix” sounds in a recording. Among the most common editions are take-out noises, breaths, synchronize rhythms, combine musical passages of different recording taps and refine notes, among others. The album edition took place from August 24th to 31st, 2017 in Santa Fe in the DMD Sonido studio. Pablo Delmonte was in charge and Gabriel de Pedro and Mauricio Pitich participated. The software used was Pro-Tools 12 (Native). In this specific stage, noises were eliminated during the silences such as instruments blows and breaths, some rhythmic *tuttis* were synchronized, notes of the contrabass were tuned, and some ends better achieved from other takes were extracted.

Mixing

The mixture of *La mujer árbol* was postponed since the end of the edition, in August, because the wife and daughters of Gabriel de

Pedro suffered a car accident in October 2017. As a result, the music was mixed on November 10th and 11th, December 9th, 22nd and 23rd, 2017 in Buenos Aires in the personal studio of Hernán “Nano” Grasso. Gabriel de Pedro was only present, and the rest of the group listened to the samples while different results were obtained. The software used for this process was Pro-Tools HD 10 and Universal Audio Plugins (UAD).

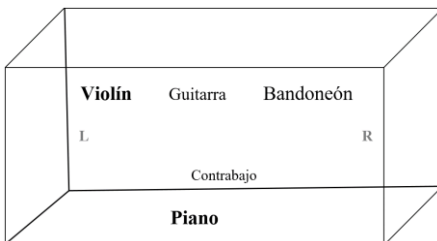
In this process, all recorded sounds can be mixed within one (mono), two (stereo) or more channels. Here, parameters such as amplitude, harmonic content, dynamics and panoramic position, among others, are manipulated with the purpose of adding effects such as reverb, equalization, emulators, etc. For the whole album, three different types of reverb were used, creating different depths: Medium Hall, Medium Room and Plate. In addition, it was decided to incorporate Parallel Compression where the instruments compressions were separated between low and high frequency. All this information was extracted from recording sessions, specifically from the mixing screen (Photo 2) in Pro-Tools and the interviews with the technicians.



PHOTO 2. Mixing screen in Pro-Tools of *La mujer árbol* track

Unlike the rest of the album, for the track “Impresiones andariegas” (solo piano prelude) the following plugins were used: Manley Massive Passive equalizer, Tape emulator (Virtual Tape Machines), DMT140 Plate reverb, API 2500 compressor and FabFilter equalizer. The original idea for this work, tells de Pedro, was to imitate the beginning of the song “Wish you were here” by Pink Floyd, where the guitar riff seems to be reproduced from an “old” tube radio until another guitar enters with the “contemporary” album sound. In “Impresiones andariegas”, they tried to start with an “old” sound and, at the middle of the track, to make a transition towards a “contemporary” sound. However, this could not be possible since the piano presented slight perceived detunings in the harmonic resonances. As a result, de Pedro decided to alter the original sound of the piano throughout the track, “imitating [looking for] the sound of my mother's vertical piano, where I used to study [...], that piano keeps the sadness of certain household problems respect to my parents” (Gabriel de Pedro, interview with the author).

A fundamental aspect for de Pedro when constructing the digital space of the mix was the disposition of the instruments in space. After having experienced other mixes in previous productions, in the rehearsal within Pablo Delmonte's studio and in the careful listening of certain groups, the director decided to give the violin and the guitar a “special” place since he was looking for a particular sonority where these timbres are fundamental to achieve it. In this way, the use of equalization, reverb, emulators and panoramic position were carefully treated so the sounds of the other instruments do not exceed or eliminate them. Next, Image 2 shows



the spatial result (location – Left or Right– and depth) created in the mix by means of the plugins.

IMAGE 2. Mixing soundbox (digital space) of *La mujer árbol*

The main problem that the criolla guitar has in this group is that the register in which it plays usually interferes with the piano and double bass registers. On the other hand, when it comes to playing a solo where the violin or bandoneon participates (accompanying or with a second melody), it lacks a dynamic range conducive to cope with this task. Particularly in this album, the guitar has less reverb than the rest of the instruments, which generates less depth or resonance in the space and one can perceive it easier. At the same time, the conflicting registers with the piano and the double bass (Sol2-Fa # 3 or 196Hz-369Hz) were increased with an equalizer. In the section of musical analysis, it was mentioned those considerations by the director when thinking about the guitar orchestration.

On the other hand, bandoneon is commonly the instrument that is traditionally most representative for the sound of “argentine tango” and is typically acoustically placed above the other dynamics in recordings. However, Gabriel de Pedro gave first place to the violin as a melodic instrument decreasing the dynamics of the bandoneon.

Mastering

This process aims to gather a homogeneous album in sound by integrating mainly two aspects: the sound power perceived as time passes and the spectral content of each cut. Currently, there are three types of mastering: digital, analogue or hybrid; the difference is the equipment used in the process (plugins or physical machines). The basic elements which technicians work with are equalizer, compressor and limiter.

Sebastian Andreatta (recommended by Grasso) oversaw the mastering of the album. This was performed in Buenos Aires, at Orange Sound.Studio, on February 23rd and 24th, 2018. Gabriel de Pedro, Pablo Delmonte and Mauricio Pitich were present. The work was done with analogue and digital equipment (hybrid mix), the software used to master was Pro-Tools HD 10. During this process,

the main objective was not to lose the “natural” or “raw” acoustic sonority achieved in Estudios Ion, not to alter the frequency work carried out in the mix and to preserve as much as possible the dynamic differences (*pianissimo* and *fortissimo*).

The working methodology was as follows: Andreatta proposed a mastering based on previous discussions with Gabriel de Pedro. A first sample was chosen and, based on conformities the other tracks were accommodated. Special attention was paid to the track “Barrio Sargento Cabral” (piano and voice) and “Impresiones andariegas” (solo piano). The organic change required a mastering change, the same thing that had happened with the mix. Specifically, in tracks “Mesa de amigos”, “La mujer árbol”, “Milonga de agua” and “Loca bohemia” the gain of frequency from La2 to Mi3 (220Hz-329.63Hz) was increased to highlight the passages of the guitar on the fifth and fourth string.

After the first day of mastering, the songs were played on various devices (speakers, in-ears, external headphones) to compare the performance and choose the sonority that best suited the idea of the composer. The next day, work continued based on the preferred material.

SOUND RESULTS FROM THE ALBUM

The combination of recording physical space (in Estudios Ion) and digital space (created in editing, mixing, and mastering) generates a variable listening space (soundbox). Allan F. Moore (2012, 36) describes two different forms of soundbox perception: a listening in front of two speakers and another one through headphones. In the first case, the physical distance between the listener and the speakers imitates the space where the performance occurs (not completely agreed with this, the acoustic conditions of different rooms can modify the listening of the same track). In the second case, the listener's head functions as the performative space. The soundbox analysis will be done using Bose SounTrue headphones (in-ear) to

avoid the loss of frequencies due to the variability of the reproduction equipment and the acoustic conditions of any room.

Entering the soundbox analysis, Moore distinguishes primary components and secondary ones (many of these parameters were previously worked in the *Compositions* section). Furthermore, Moore distinguishes the “functional layers” (2012, 19-28) to analyze recordings integrating four spatial dimensions: laterality, depth, pitch and time. Next, the four functional layers in the reception of the album *La mujer árbol* are listed, described and exemplified:

1. Explicit beat layer

Tango is a popular genre that is characterized by not having percussion instruments. The musicians use other resources (tango accompaniment) to establish a pulsation. These are *marcato*, *blanca*, syncopation, *umpa-umpa*, *bordoneo* and guitar strumming. Unlike popular pieces of music, tango does not have a constant pulsation. The tempo can be accelerated or decelerated according to what the soloist proposes, what the rhythm section (piano, guitar and double bass) impose, what the director decides or the pianist suggests. In relation to the album, the following examples are mentioned:

- Soloist modifies the tempo: violinist in “El andariego” from 01:28”.
- Rhythmic section modifies the tempo: in “Mesa de amigos” from 02:37” to 02:52”.
- The previous decision indicated in the arrangement: in “Danza de Marti” from 00:52” sudden change without anyone directing a new tempo.
- The pianist modifies the tempo: in “Danza de Marti” from 02:18” the eighth note in the left hand of the piano introduces a new tempo. In “Milonga de agua” from 00:31” with the rhythm of *milonga criolla*.

2. Functional bass layer

The tango tradition implemented the octave recourse to the double bass with the left hand of the piano (one octave higher). However, Gabriel de Pedro avoids this resource when looking for sound results from jazz or popular songs. On these occasions, he uses comping as detailed in the musical analysis. A variant of this

resource, very used by GdP5, is to octave the double bass with the guitar lower strings (also a higher octave). For example, the guitar lower-strings (*milonga pampeana*) and double bass in “Milonga de agua” from 01:12 " to 01:57 ".

3. Melodic layer

Gabriel de Pedro grants melodic participation to all instruments of the quintet. From highest to lowest, participation is located: violin, bandoneon, piano, guitar and double bass. A resource widely used by the director at the time of orchestrating a melody is the formation of it through the intervention of various instruments (a resource that the composer claimed to have it learnt from Horacio Salgán). For example, in “Taconeando por el boulevard”, from 00:20 " to 00:35 " (bar 11 to 18, Image 3), there is no instrument that plays completely the main melody. Instead, it is distributed to different instruments, in order: tutti / guitar and piano / violin, bandoneon and piano / piano / violin and guitar / bandoneon / guitar and piano / violin and guitar / guitar.

IMAGE 3. Main melody orchestration in “Taconeando por el boulevard”

4. Harmonic filler layer

In GdP5, the instruments in charge of fulfilling a harmonic function are piano, guitar and bandoneon. Again, the guitar has a dynamic and timbre disadvantage compared to the other two. As described in the *Compositions* section (in orchestration), the director thought carefully about the place where the guitar wanted to stand. In this

way, de Pedro uses different combinations of instruments and their registers to generate a variety of harmonic strata:

- Piano and double bass: in “Mesa de amigos” from 01:11" to 01:24".
- Guitar and double bass: in “Mesa de amigos” from 02:37" to 02:50".
- Bandoneon and double bass: in “Danza de Marti” from 01:27" to 01:46".
- Piano, guitar and double bass: in “Taconeando por el boulevard” from 01:31" to 01:39".
- Bandoneon, guitar and double bass: in “Recuerdo” from 01:31" to 01:54".

It should be highlighted that the soundbox (Image 2) matches the listening of the sound results through headphones. In the recording, the functional layers are perceived from a tango tradition sounds, with variables from genres such as jazz and popular songs. With these combinations, de Pedro declared that he tried to obtain personal compositional sonorities.

POSTPRODUCTION

On May 18th, 2008, Gabriel de Pedro took a photograph of his wife Mariángeles López in a house in the town of Arrollo Leyes, Santa Fe. This record was the germ for the composition of the song “La mujer árbol” (written the same year), which later gave name to the album. De Pedro never showed this photograph, he only used verbal explanations to convey his ideas about the album: the woman (the feminine) and the tree (nature). The composer declared: “the title of the song is related to something melodic and sweet” since in that photograph he appreciates the union of two fundamental elements for human subsistence or for life development: “the tree that gives us the oxygen and the woman who gives human life” (Gabriel de Pedro, interview with the author).

The postproduction integrated several elements around the album physical edition and its premiere. Firstly, the elaboration of the art and graphic design (cover, back cover and interior) was overseen by Diego Rocha (EPSA Music designer) during the month

of April and the first fortnight of May 2018. The album cover illustration was made by Simón Salamida, who was summoned by Rocha. Salamida never observed the photograph captured by de Pedro, he only created the illustration from Rocha's explanations about the ideas proposed by the composer. In Image 4, as in the entire album, the colours used are green (with its nuances), brown (with its nuances), black and white. The digital edition (in iTunes, Spotify, Amazon) appeared the first days of June and the physical edition (print of the album) arrived in Santa Fe on July 7th, 2018. Both editions were responsible for the record label EPSA Music (Buenos Aires), which de Pedro has a relationship with since the release of his first album. For replication, the group received financial assistance covering 40% of the total expenses. If they had not received these financial supports, the quintet would not have physically edited this album. These subsidies were granted by the Government of the Province of Santa Fe, the Luz y Fuerza labour union and the National Institute of Music (INAMU).



The design escapes the tango prototype, where the fileteado or the typefaces used in the advertising of the Edad de Oro [Golden Age] (1935-1955) of Buenos Aires tango history and where the typical orchestras, singers, dancers, directors or a bandoneon used to appear. Here, de Pedro identifies with the rock designs arts, punctually with those of Luis Alberto Spinetta.

Secondly, an important factor for the quintet was establishing the order of the tracks on the album. The group sought to begin with an energetic theme and immediately, “taking advantage of the listener early concentration”, propose three compositions of their own (10 minutes approximately). Just in Track 4, a classic tango

appears. Then, it was considered to offer something “relaxed” or “quiet”, a song was placed; it continues with an abstract and aggressive theme; then, the abstraction is contrasted with a sung tango; the dynamics are lowered with a solo piano prelude and it closes with three classical tango tracks. De Pedro highlights two fundamental aspects of this election: the dynamics or track “power” and the contrast “known theme” vs. “unknown theme” for the listener.

Thirdly, another management included in this decisions chain was the album premiere planned at the Teatro ATE Casa España for August 26, 2018. Added to the participation of the quintet and the singer Ibáñez, Gabriel de Pedro also invited two dancers: one from classical and another from tango. For this event, an advertising campaign was carried out on television, radio, social networks and newspapers, which began two weeks before the premiere date.

PERFORMANCE ON THE STAGE (“LA MUJER ÁRBOL” PREMIERE)

On Sunday, August 26th, 2018 at the Teatro ATE Casa España, in the city of Santa Fe, Argentina, the official presentation of Gabriel de Pedro Quintet album *La mujer árbol* took place. It was attended by Guillermo Ibáñez who, in addition to singing “Barrio Sargento Cabral”, interpreted “Tiempo viejos” and “La última curda”. In turn, two dancers participated in the concert, one with training in classical dance (Esmeralda Dotti) and another in tango (Lucía Ferrer). Next, the repertoire order of the premiere, with interventions from other people, apart GdP5, is detailed (the tango 10, 13 and 14 do not belong to the repertoire recorded in *La mujer árbol*):

1. “Recuerdo”
2. “Taconeando por el Boulevard” (Lucía Ferrer performance)
3. “Mesa de amigos”
4. “La mujer árbol” (Esmeralda Dotti performance)
5. “Milonga de agua”

6. "Barrio Sargento Cabral" (piano and voice: Guillermo Ibáñez)
7. "Flores negras"
8. "Danza de Marti" (Lucía Ferrer and Esmeralda Dotti performance together)
9. "Loca bohemia"
10. "La última curda" (GdP5 and voice: Guillermo Ibáñez)
11. "Impresiones andariegas" (playback from the album recording)
12. "El andariego"
13. "Redención" (solo piano, tango by Alfredo Gobbi)
14. "Tiempos viejos" (GdP5 and voice: Guillermo Ibáñez)

Tango, traditionally, is imagined as a partner dance. On this occasion, de Pedro included Lucia Ferrer alone, dancing "Taconeando por el Boulevard" in a canyengue tango style (Pujol 2011, 28). For the song "La mujer árbol", Esmeralda Dotti performed choreography in contemporary dance style. The last participation of the dancers took place while performing "Danza de Marti". They individually interpreted the contrasting sections (song/tango), and, finally, finished dancing together. The non-inclusion of a male dancer figure was a decision made by Gabriel de Pedro to amplify the album's "female spirit". However, the voice of the night was performed by Guillermo Ibáñez. De Pedro affirmed that, despite his ideas, the tango "Barrio Sargento Cabral" (whose lyrics were written by himself) must be interpreted by a man to "better" convey the personal experience in his native neighbourhood in Santa Fe. The male singer voice would physically reflect his voice. In this way, the audience hears the song of a man describing a specific place and they can establish analogies with its composer. It is necessary to consider that this tango was recorded by Luciana Tourné on the album *Tango Maestro* (2013).

Within the staging analysis, denotatively, ATE Casa España was built in 1923 where, for decades, it worked for the Colón Cinema. This reflects the period of modern constitution of the city, retaining the style of the early twentieth century with a facade with art nouveau canopies. It is located on Rivadavia Avenue, a few meters from Plaza España. The complex has a Sala Mayor of approximately 500m², a pullman sector of about 200m², a scenario of around

200m², a 140m² room, an 80m² bar and a 130m² foyer. The characteristics of the Sala Mayor, the place of the premiere, are: sliding roof, ceiling and historical plasterwork; mobile floating floor with metal structure and wooden surface that can be regulated through a hydraulic lifting system; general carpeting and lights; mobile seats and an estimated total capacity of 600 spectators. On the other hand, neither the building nor its rooms have an ideological meaning, nor do they emit signals to the Santa Fe community, nothing of this place conditioning the listener's expectations.

Through these descriptions, it is observed that the staging of GdP5 does not break with the music concert scheme from the spatial distribution of the musicians, the costumes, lighting or listening (the quintet used the sound system provided by the Sala Mayor, amplifying his acoustic instruments through condenser microphones). The only irregularity present in the concert was the reproduction of “Impresiones andariegas”, a track from the sound engineer control booth, which caused the audience to listen to this music behind their backs. This decision was taken by Gabriel de Pedro as he wanted to make the audience listen to the “reminiscence of an old piano”.

ALBUM RECEPTION

At the premiere attended about 150 people. Added to this, Gabriel de Pedro agreed to provide information about the streaming provided by Spotify for artists. “Milonga de agua” leads the list, work with the greatest compositional trait of cultivated music or, in other words, the less tango work of the album. It is followed by “Taconeando por el boulevard”, a composition more “in the style” of tango. It is highlighted that the four tracks most listened on Spotify are original compositions by Gabriel de Pedro and, on the fifth-place, appears an arrangement - “Recuerdo”.

Printed on the album inside, there is a review written by the tango pianist Nicolás Ledesma : “I listen to this CD and I find a music of citizens character with reminiscent of regional styles, I congratulate the musicians and artists for their performers quality, and Gabriel for his works and the thrust that characterizes him in all his works. Come on boys!!!”. These words, in addition to functioning as advertisement for the album, are a valuation or endorsement from a tango artist with years of experience, who could not accept such participation.

CONCLUSION

This research implemented the “chain of decisions” operation as a methodological tool to systematize the communication and production processes of two performances: the recording of the musical album and its premiere. After an extensive synchronic journey (analytical and descriptive) of a process that lasted almost three years, the results and conclusions that each of these ten links showed were the following:

The analysis of the musical compositions showed that 50% of the musical resources used by GdP5 are “technical foundations” of tango, 30% comes from cultivated music and 20% from other popular genres. Based on the influences and the musical studies of each performer, it can be deduced that the quintet musical technique produces a sonority close to the cultivated music with some tango and jazz influences (it is important to note that an analysis of the body implementation of each quintet member could not yet be incorporated here, which would complement the study of the instruments and performance techniques). Considering the sound results of *La mujer árbol*, the functional layers in the recording referred to a tango tradition sonority with variables in the orchestration and/or arrangements coming from genres such as jazz and popular songs. Postproduction established a connection between the compositional ideas of Gabriel de Pedro (poietic level),

the album's rock cover graphic design (used for digital and physical edition) and the tango advertisement for the premiere. The official presentation staging analysis revealed that GdP5 maintains the structure of traditional music concert in terms of musician's distribution on stage, the tango costumes, lighting and their relationship with the public.

The first conclusion shows the margin of imprecision in the study of music through a single analysis or an isolated process when the objective of research is to understand a process or a performance. The interdisciplinary work gave different results that, related to each other, generated an objective explanation serving to diminish the metaphorical use introduced by the musicians and technicians in the interviews. In addition, it is important to note that the interprofessional component is evident in the constant supervision of recording technicians, musicians and graphic designers. This approach diminished the margin of doubt and amplified the analytical perspective of the study object.

In the reconstruction of the preproduction, information about the rehearsal methodology, preparations and recording planning was obtained. The proto-performance revealed details of rehearsal methodology, the attentive listening that the quintet made on home studio self-recordings and the listening on other groups, the previous practice of the headphones used in the recording studio and the experimentation of possible recorded music mix. The analysis of the staging at Estudios Ion identified, on the one hand, “denotative” qualities: physical, technical and technological characteristics of the space used for recording, an indispensable factor for the mix type that the quintet sought to make. On the other hand, it revealed “connotative” qualities: preconceptions, expectations or evaluations, positive as was shown, on the production, as it was managed in Estudios Ion due to its history, the experience of the people who work there and its repercussions in the musical field. The analysis of the recording, editing, mixing and mastering process provided a detailed description of different options to choose, the reason for the decisions taken and a physical-

acoustic explanation of sound results. In addition, it provided the technical and technological elements for the (re)construction of the soundbox.

The second conclusion that all these links show is that a disease, an automobile accident, the time of preparation or study, the work dynamics, the economic administration, the accessibility to certain resources and the social organization/communication of GdP5 were factors that directly affected each decision.

The reception study of the album established that the most listened tracks of *La mujer árbol* are the compositions of Gabriel de Pedro and not his arrangements of classic tangos. “*Milonga de agua*” – the work that moves away from popular music to take root in the cultivated tradition– is the most reproduced. The comparison of the poetic level of the quintet with the early album repercussions corroborated how the trajectory and merits are not proportional to the criticism or social response. This research did not seek to classify the quintet or its listeners musically through the analysis of their decisions, but to find out the reason for each of the steps taken to understand a little more the musical creation, the sound results, the musical consumption and the repercussions. *La mujer árbol* is an album, which, depending on the track that is listened, produces different sound results coming from decisions made by all musicians and based on personal and group searches.

The third conclusion proposes that the study of human decisions amplifies and sustains the process reconstruction of artistic production. A decision, as an object of study, is a concrete data based on a critical or emotional choice between different options that serve to measure consequences or results.

The fourth and last conclusion proposes that the search for a musical sonority is a construction process mediated by different communicated individuals (through actions and physical elements that surround them), where these agents make different decisions interfered by multiple social, cultural, economic, health and/or religious factors to generate unique sound results.

NOTES

1. “Acorde de Macedonio” is a selection of sounds of a chord-timbre structural complex of fixed registration that is presented, partially or completely, in its interventions, with different instrumentation (Corrado, 2001).
2. Tango *canyengue* or *de salón*, opposed to *tango escenario*, is a style for jumping and mincing rhythms, broken and lively, with short and bent steps. Typically interpreted in dances (or *milongas*) citizens and not on the great stages of international dance competitions.
3. Pianist, director, composer and tango arranger. Professor at the Manuel de Falla Conservatory. Winner of the 17th Annual Latin Grammy Awards for “Best tango album”, with *Cuando llora la milonga* (EPSA Music, 2015), with Nicolás Ledesma and his Orchestra.

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