

Albrecht/Koukoutsaki/Serassis
Images of Crime

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Images of Crime

Representations of Crime and the Criminal
in Science, the Arts and the Media

Edited by
Hans-Jörg Albrecht, Afroditi Koukoutsaki
Telemach Serassis



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Preface

When the Greek-Italian collection “Images of Crime” was brought to my attention, I found the undertaking very interesting, with regard to both its transnational character and the originality of its subject. Originally published in Greek, however, it could only address a limited audience, so when the suggestion to publish it in English came up, I thought that it would be a good idea to include it in the criminological series of *Iuscrim Edition*. The task was finally accomplished thanks to the valuable assistance of *Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences*, Athens, which covered a large part of the translation costs.

This collection reflects to a large extent the need for an interdisciplinary as well as transnational approach in criminology today; an ideal also shared by the *Max Planck Institute*. I believe the contributors, deriving from a variety of specialities, have achieved this goal in their consideration of the various aspects of a very interesting – albeit rather understudied – subject: the representations of crime and the criminal in science, the arts and the media.

Although the criminological literature is indeed flourishing in our days, few studies address the issue of crime in terms of its representation in society. The articles in the present volume employ as their factual subject matter “images of crime and the criminal”, as these appear in several forms of artistic creation, the (ever so influential) media, as well as scientific discourse itself. In this sense, they attain a wider perspective in terms of what modern criminology could (or should) study.

Some of the articles study these representations in criminology itself, in literature or in the media, while others come as a surprise by investigating more unexpected sources of information, such as comics, detective stories or photography. They all tend to show how “images of crime and the criminal” are constructed by either scientific or lay views, and how these produce stereotypes, preconceptions or even policies.

The other dimension – international co-operation – is equally important. I strongly believe that the scientific community should establish international networks and strengthen the exchange of ideas and information. The *Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law* encour-

ages such co-operation and works towards this end. Books like this one are a necessity for the building of a modern, international criminology; more such collective endeavours should appear and more intense co-operation should be established among scholars from diverse fields, as well as from various countries.

It has really been a pleasure working with colleagues from Greece and Italy, and hopefully we shall have the chance to prepare another similar volume, this time with partners from more European countries.

Prof. Dr. Hans-Jörg Albrecht

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Introduction

HANS-JÖRG ALBRECHT, AFRODITI KOUKOUTSAKI &
TELEMACH SERASSIS

In a recent article*, Ian Taylor attempts to “identify a set of objectives for a critical criminology, and perhaps critical social science more broadly, in respect of the unfolding problems of market Europe”. Among the items of his agenda, he included the challenge to “analyse and ‘deconstruct’ the ongoing discursive representation of ‘criminals’, and other threatening others”. Taylor points out the need for “situating critical criminology/critical social science vis-à-vis the new Europe” and raises the issue of a European co-operation in the field. The present collection – although conceived and realised a couple of years before – moves within this framework. It originated in 1997/8 as a result of the co-operation of one of the editors with Italian colleagues and took the form of a volume in Greek language: Afroditi Koukoutsaki (ed.), [Images of Crime], Plethron Publications, Athens, 1999. As language limitations restrict its audience, it was decided to prepare a volume in English; a task undertaken jointly by the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law, Freiburg, and Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens.

The editors share both the wish for an exchange of views beyond national boundaries and a wider perspective for the study of the criminal phenomenon. Although limited in its representativeness, this is a first attempt to bring together scholars from various European countries and representing a variety of disciplines, in order to examine and comment upon “repre-

* Ian Taylor, “Criminology Post-Maastricht”, *Crime, Law & Social Change*, 30: 333-346, 1999.

sentations of crime and the criminal in science, the arts and the media". The stimulus and subject matter is not crime *per se*, but rather the images prevailing in criminological discourse, as well as in various cultural products.

As Stanley Cohen wrote several years ago, in his introduction to a volume with a similar title*:

There has always been some truth in the layman's charge that the sociologist's picture of the world is merely a more complicated representation of his own common-sense way of understanding things. One can also see why sociologists in their quest for academic respectability have bristled at such accusations and insisted on their subject's status as a 'science'. Such defensiveness, though, is not only misplaced in that the sociologist needs to break free from the chains of science, but misses the point that he has to start off with the layman's picture of the world. This is not to say that he must take this picture as the truth, but, unlike the natural scientist, he cannot afford to ignore it. He must look behind the picture and understand the process of its creation, before trying to paint over it and superimpose his own version of what is happening.

This is more or less what the articles in this book are trying to do: scrutinise the "images of crime", as these are fabricated in the mass media, in literature, in other forms of art (such as photography or comics), even in criminology itself, and exhibit both the mechanisms of such construction and its social consequences.

The fact that the contributors derive from such diverse disciplines as criminology, psychoanalysis, philosophy of history, law, or architecture, offers challenging perspectives for the broadening of our scope. We hope that this "multiple dialogue" – among scholars with different perceptions, as well as among varied subjects – will prove to be a fruitful one and continue in a broader context.

Alexander Chryssis' contribution, *Crime and History: From Dostoyevsky's Philosophy to Raskolnikov's Praxis*, constitutes a philosophical approach to the subject. In this article, which focuses on the noted dialogue between Raskolnikov and his interrogator, Porfiry Petrovitch, the discussion about crime is seen from a perspective of philosophy of history and, as the writer remarks, acquires dramatic timeliness in the present:

As is well known, Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov will, of course, give in to the logic of the great men of History. Perhaps, as the author will later confess, not only to serve the general interest of mankind, but also to put his own limits to trial, to find out, in the long run, whether he is a *common criminal*

* Stanley Cohen (ed.), *Images of Deviance*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1971.

or an *outstanding individual* who commits a crime in order to save his fellow men.

Two contributions by clinical criminologists, Alfredo Verde and Adolfo Francia, demonstrate how clinical criminology, by employing narrative and myth-making as its resource, can provide an alternative application of its methodological tools, an application in which one can distinguish a radical dynamic.

In his article *The Innocent Murderer: Crime, Trial and Punishment in Albert Camus' 'The Outsider'* Alfredo Verde uses this classic novel as a clinical case study in order to examine “the structuring of the relationship between the perpetrator, the subconscious motives of crime, the trial and the social retribution, as well as the subconscious utility of punishment for the perpetrator and the society”.

Consequently, what is examined from a clinical point of view is not only the hero – the “narrative self” – but also the social reaction and the collective revenge, as crime and the reaction to it are approached in their interweaving as a unified phenomenon.

Using similar methodological tools, Adolfo Francia (*Criminological Pursuits in Arkas' 'The Lifer'*) attempts a psychoanalytic approach to Arkas' comic strip series (which takes place in a prison with a lifer as its central character). Through an analysis of the heroes and circumstances, the writer is interested in bringing forward the fundamental psychological condition of the lifer, while the space of action of the heroes – the prison – is approached as the social and personal mental space which, as the writer puts it, “with its quality of an object coated with ambivalence, indeed represents both the externalisation of sorrow and persecution, and the ultimate place of emotional confinement”.

The ideological practices of establishing and reproducing the dominant discourse about crime and social control are the subject of other articles which refer primarily to images, representations of crime and – to some extent – representations of criminology. One of the major issues brought forth is that the discourse of the products of mass culture reflects (and is in accord with) the scientific discourse, as this is formulated within the framework of the current social context. In this sense, criminologists and other “specialists”, or the institutional administrators of the issue constitute a basic category of what Stuart Hall calls “primary definers”, that is those who formulate the dominant definitions of crime and the criminal, thus constituting a primary source of societal representations.

The relation between the scientific discourse and the representations of crime is brought forward in Dario Melossi's contribution, *Changing Representations of the Criminal*. In this article criminology itself constitutes the subject matter for the study of the representations of crime and the criminal. His main argument is that the scientific discourse about crime and the forms of its management, as well as the representation of the criminal in the myth-making discourse and the images formulated in the public opinion are issues structurally determined by the type and characteristics of the society within which these images are produced and reproduced.

Making reference to Melossi's article, we could call upon the necessity of rejoining the study of crime and social control with the constantly transforming structural variables, otherwise the discussion on crime becomes merely a matter of "moral education". This could also serve as an answer to the question of how current a discussion about "images of crime" or about (changing) representations of the criminal is, or what its intentions may be. And it is exactly the issue of "moral education" – a key cohesive element of all contributions – which we should re-examine, especially in a period when purely repressive models of social control have been revived, the demand for law and order appears dominant, and the law-breaker is invested again with the attribute of the "enemy", the "alien" who ought to be ostracised from the social body.

If we engage upon a reconstruction of the history of criminology, from the origins of the positivist model until the dispute of its foundation as an autonomous scientific discipline – a debate triggered by the "committed" criminologists of the late sixties, which continues up to the present at the margins of academic criminology – we come to the conclusion that it is not an evolutionary course, but rather a recycling of the discussion about criminal policy. With few exceptions, theory, the constitution of a body of knowledge on crime and social control, seems to be shaken off in view of the need for immediate practical intervention through the reform of penal or the promotion of extra-penal institutions of crime control. Within this framework, the dominant positivist model exhibits once again its capacity to absorb the shocks and remain intact, at least in its hard core; to construct definitions and interpretations of the reality of crime and legitimise the dominant options in the field of social control.

Telemach Serassis, in his article *The Lost Honour of Criminology: A Documentary of the Vicissitudes of a Discipline*, refers to the epistemological and ideological dispute of the discipline which made its appearance in

the sixties, reached its peak with the “deconstructionist” movement, in the seventies, only to fall back in the mid-eighties, through the various versions of “left realism”. As he points out:

[Criminology’s] interrelation with authority – at both the theoretical and applied level – is today more apparent than ever. ... Therefore, it is questionable – in spite of their high theoretical standard – whether the remaining critical approaches can reshape the current ideological and theoretical framework in criminology. More probable and effective appears to be a constant process of adaptation and co-option (similar to the transformation of “left idealism” to “left realism”).

According to the writer, this (inherent) relation between criminology and authority makes the very scientific substance of the field problematic, making a total re-examination of the (scientific) study of crime and social control imperative.

If in the “troubled” years of the late sixties and the seventies the representation of crime and the criminal, as portrayed in Melossi’s article, was characterised by a “leniency”, as, at least in certain cases, it implicated elements of heroism and innovation, today we once again live in an era of “thrashing out” and restoration of the “public threat” image.

The restoration of this image was aided by the mass inflow, in almost every country of the European Union, of economic refugees, originating mainly from Eastern European countries. The “problem of the criminality of foreigners” has become a dominant subject of criminological research and has revitalised the discussion on the necessity of taking effective measures against crime, while various categories have been accommodated under the umbrella of the particularly comprehensive notion of “social exclusion”. The multitude of relevant programmes and research projects attest to Heinz Steinert’s view that criminology “served as the institutionalised form of knowledge about groups to be excluded”. Obviously, the structural socio-economic transformations that led to and (inevitably) followed the phenomenon of foreign immigration, with few exceptions, remained unquestionable, taking the form of short introductory texts in the proposals for the management of the phenomenon, or being reduced to the convenient explanatory schemes which have been produced for a century by the discipline of criminology.

Nevertheless, the “problem of the criminality of foreigners” shapes a particularly interesting field for the study of societal representations of crime and the criminal, as well as of the procedures for the legitimisation of

repressive forms of management of social problems and conflicts. Within this frame of reference, two articles, Christina Konstantinidou's *Societal Representations of Crime: The Criminality of Albanian Immigrants in Athens Press* and Alberto D' Elia's *The Deviance of the Foreign Immigrant in the Mass Media: Results of a Survey in Salento*, refer to the societal representations of crime and to the analysis of the role of the mass media in the reformation and reproduction of the complex reality of crime at the symbolic level of the news.

The basic theoretical issue which Konstantinidou deals with revolves around the ideological role of the mass media, the social construction of reality, ultimately the social construction of consensus. The writer analyses the manufacture of a crime wave – focused on the criminality of Albanian economic immigrants – and associates it with a wider climate of “moral panic” manifest in the Greek society, to point out the absence of an alternative frame of reference that could be brought forward by a “progressive” discourse on the part of the mass media. So, in a more or less uniform frame of social construction of reality:

Moral panic, whose basic function is to “disorientate” “public opinion” and emphasize the symptoms of social crisis and not its causes, displaces Greek society's problems ... towards insecurity from the lack of state “protection” and policing, a fact which legitimises the tightening of repressive mechanisms and a generalised enforcement of state violence and authority.

D' Elia writes on the issue of the collective practices of exclusion of specific social categories, as they are reflected in the mass media. His analysis of the way in which the mass media deal with the deviance of the economic immigrant is based on the parallelism between the two categories, “foreigner” and “deviant”. He focuses, then, at the level of confrontations that take place within the sphere of identification of the reference group, since the notion of “alien” (“deviant”) does not entail an ontological reality, but rather a relationship, one pole of an interactionist model which also incorporates the opposite pole. The discourse of the mass media, according to the writer, is part of this “process of comparison / confrontation, ... while, the images and the stereotypes that specific disturbing personae, as the stranger, incite to our mental imagery, remain intact”.

Petros Martinidis' article, *Crime and Punishment in Detective Stories: Poetic Misdeeds Since E. A. Poe*, conveys the discussion in the field of detective stories and the images of crime, of the criminal, of the prison, as well as of the agents of social control, which this kind of “para-literature”

produces. The writer, invoking Oscar Wilde's maxim that "art influences life more than life influences art", notes:

In other words, the various "devices" that have been the product of a centenary literary endeavour, maintain a critical percentage of involvement in any occasional valuation of misdeed and in the general "wish" for its repression. By illustrating various types of criminals and their acts to the wide public, the aforementioned works restructure the "horizons of acceptance" of the real facts of delinquency, of its organised prosecution, and of the conditions of correction.

The last two articles of the collection deal with *images of prison*, the representation of the place where the prevailing form of sentence is served, i.e. imprisonment.

In Afroditi Koukoutsaki's article, *Societal Representations of the Prison and Comics: The Case of Arkas' 'The Lifer'*, the comics in question are read as a discourse on prison, a discourse which is not only in discord with the dominant one, but communicates a "subversive" ideological content: *The Lifer's* prison is represented as an inflexible de-socialising structure, without outlets, in accordance with the structurally contradictory scheme of exclusion/reincorporation upon which contemporary correctional codes are based.

Massimo Pavarini in his article, *The Tale of 'Correctional Redemption'*, comments upon the illustrative representation of the sentence, based on official pictorial records from Italian prisons. In a period when the theoretical pursuits, the questions which a critical penal theory could pose, have retreated in view of the reformatory intentions for "a better prison", it is perhaps necessary to restore a discourse which, as Pavarini puts it, "was suspended, but never interrupted".

His contribution is an analysis of a "representation of the representation", since, as the writer points out, "by definition, therefore, penitentiary photography is, at all times and in all cases, 'ideological' *par excellence*, in its twofold acceptance of the 'vision' and 'mystification' of reality". The photographic material is interpolated in the text as a fairy-tale, thus taking the form of "staging" the correctional ideology and becoming one more occasion for commenting on it.

This volume is the outcome of teamwork in numerous ways. Several people played a part in the preparation of this collection, in Greece, in Italy and in Germany. First of all, we wish to thank the contributors for accepting our invitation and for their valuable co-operation. Many friends and

colleagues also helped one way or another. A list of names could not possibly be exhaustive and would only do injustice to some; we express our gratitude to them all. We particularly wish to thank the publishing team of the Max Planck Institute (special thanks to Michael Knecht for his ceaseless willingness); Panteion University, Athens, and its Rector, Prof. Vavouras, for providing the necessary funds to cover translation costs; Prof. Geoffrey Pearson, editor of *The British Journal of Criminology*, for his permission to reprint Dario Melossi's article; Plethron Publications, for the Greek language edition; and, awkward as it may sound, two of the editors wish to thank the third one, Prof. Hans-Jörg Albrecht, Director of the Max Planck Institute, for his encouragement and friendly co-operation and for providing the opportunity for this English language edition.

Changing Representations of the Criminal*

DARIO MELOSSI**

In this paper I intend to present a way of connecting views of the criminal which have been developing in public opinion as well as in criminological discourse, with the fracturing, breaking down and recomposition of the social orders within which those views were produced and reproduced. As far as penalty and social control are concerned, I submit that two ideal-typical situations may obtain, between which modern societies have been oscillating. In one, a fragmented and rapidly changing society conceives of itself, through its thinkers, as a plural and conflictual entity. Herein the concept of deviance, or indeed of crime, is relative to the standpoint of the one who is talking, and the representation of the criminal is a fundamentally controversial and contested representation, where *some* criminals at least play more the role of innovators and heroes than that of villains. Examples of this kind of society are Europe and North America at the turn of the century and then again in the 1920s and in the “extended” 1960s. These periods are also characterised by declining imprisonment rates and by a public rhetoric of discourse centred around social innovation, experimentation and change.

* Reprinted from the *British Journal of Criminology* (vol.40, no.2, Spring 2000, pp.296-320), with the kind permission of its editor, Prof. Geoffrey Pearson.

This paper is based on ideas first presented at the Department of Criminology at Keele University, 23 June 1998, and at the 1998 Scottish Criminology Conference in Edinburgh (4 and 5 September, 1998). The author would like to thank Michael Tonry, Nicole H. Rafter, David Garland, Richard Sparks and Malcolm Feeley for having read and commented on previous versions of this paper. Of course the final responsibility for what follows is only the author's. Thanks also to Keele University for having contributed towards supporting part of the research for this paper through the Keele Research Investment Scheme.

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These types of societal periods usually respond to – and are at the same time followed by – periods when the fragmentation has reached “intolerable limits”, at least from the perspective of elites, and the need for a re-establishment of unity, authority and hierarchy (even if under a somewhat changed balance of power) seems to impose itself. These periods suggest theories of social order which are characterised by an idea of unity and cohesion (I would call them “monist” theories) where the basic normative order is consensually shared and where the image of the criminal is one of “the public enemy”, to use the FBI’s 1930s label. The criminal is now a morally repugnant individual (as described by criminologists as well as in “the public opinion” or in fiction) and is in any case the one who poses a deadly threat to society’s moral order. The causes of such a threat, if at all relevant, are to be found within the criminal himself, or herself, and not in social relationships. Examples are the periods when national states were first established in the nineteenth century, the world-wide Depression in the 1930s, and the period after 1973 till today, that Eric Hobsbawm has very aptly dubbed “the crisis decades” (Hobsbawm 1994: 403-32). During these periods imprisonment rates tend to increase, and the public rhetoric is one re-emphasising the value of the collectivity around concepts such as “the state”, “the nation”, “the community”.¹

In order to explore these hypotheses, I rely on the one hand on Kai Erikson’s insight that representations of crime and punishment in the public arena are projections of deeper social and cultural concerns (Erikson 1966) and on the other hand I am following Georg Rusche’s pioneering lead in conceiving the condition (and, I would add, the *representation*) of the criminal as tied to the fate of the most marginal sectors of the working class (Rusche 1933; Rusche and Kirchheimer 1939). Criminologists usually refer to social control as a “response” to deviance, and particularly to legally sanctioned deviance, “crime.” I believe such connection between social control and crime is a contingent matter which depends on the specific nature of what is meant by “social control” and “crime” in a given socio-historical situation (Melossi 1994). Increasingly in contemporary societies the control of crime is subaltern to social practices that are largely based on

¹ What follows is basically a research program. I do not claim that the chronology and the impact of events are the same in all societies and cultures, or even all societies and cultures of the same type. There are time lags and there are specific cultural traditions that should be emphasised and taken into account in a more developed study (cf. e.g. Nelken 1994, Savelsberg 1994, Melossi forthcoming).

the construction of consensus (Melossi 1990) and are directed to controlling the generality of the public rather than the few who are responsible for what is officially defined as “crime”. This was also the view of many “classical” social theorists, most notably the view clearly expressed by Durkheim:

[Punishment] does not serve, or else only serves quite secondarily, in correcting the culpable or in intimidating possible followers. From this point of view, its efficacy is justly doubtful and, in any case, mediocre. Its true function is to maintain social cohesion intact, while maintaining all its vitality in the common conscience [...] We can thus say without paradox that punishment is above all designed to act upon upright people, for, since it serves to heal the wounds made upon collective sentiments, it can fill this role only where these sentiments exist, and commensurably with their vivacity (Durkheim 1893: 108-109).²

These concerns in criminological research speak to social theory in a number of ways. The emergence of a preoccupation with the field of “culture” goes back to a deep dissatisfaction social theorists have increasingly expressed, in the 1970s and 1980s, with the mechanistic view traditionally encapsulated in the Marxist-derived distinction between “structural” determinants of social action and “superstructural” ideological forms. Such dissatisfaction took the direction of an emphasis on a more *autonomous* role of cultural forms and on the feedback of such autonomy on traditional “structural” variables, such as economic variables. In the field of criminology, for instance, theorists manifested a similar dissatisfaction with the relationship between social structure and penalty as this had been most classically expressed in Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer’s *Punishment and Social Structure* (Garland 1990; Melossi 1980; Foucault 1975). This is why I am emphasising here the theme of changing *representations* of crime and criminals. By “representation” I mean the descriptive portrayal of criminals in criminological discourse, in the public opinion or in aesthetic discourse, as a distinctive “type” presenting identifiable moral, physical and social characteristics according to specific locales of time and space (Leps 1992, Rafter 1997, Sparks 1992, Fritzsche 1998). Each cultural environment in fact produces a given “knowledge” of the criminal that spans different discursive forms, from scientific tracts to newspapers, from televised media to fictional accounts. Such representations perform a task in society which

² A paper by Bruce DiCristina (1998) drew my attention to this passage. Similar remarks can be found in George H. Mead (1918).

consists, among other things, of orienting public morality. This work of representing and giving moral orientation can be accounted for, according to a concept of the relationship between social structure and culture which is one of “elective affinity” between social practices that are usually ascribed to “structure” and social practices usually ascribed to “culture” (Weber 1904; Howe 1978). As we will see more specifically below, if rates of punishment, for instance, seem to “respond” to changes in the economy (Chiricos and DeLone 1992; Melossi 1998a) this is not because of some kind of homeostatic “blind” mechanism – even if in such a guise it could be described by social theorists – but because ideas expressed in a publicly available language about where “the economy” is going, what a “social crisis” is, what causes it and who is to blame for it, etc, appear to change, in society, together and in a tight cultural exchange with, publicly available ideas about crime, punishment, and responsibility. Even if the social theorist’s description is simply a *reduced form* description, ultimately the connection between such disparate aspects of social life is a work performed by discourse, i.e. by that discursive interaction which makes social coordination and therefore social practices possible (Marx and Engels 1845-6, Mead 1934, Smith 1976, Melossi 1985a).

This kind of approach is bound to be eminently “reflexive”. Whereas, what is usually called a “positivistic” attitude, has powerfully contributed, especially in the last 15 or 20 years, to obscuring a “reflexive” view in criminology, sociological theory has instead tried to come to terms, for instance in the work of authors such as Anthony Giddens (1984), with the concept of reflexivity – with the challenge, that is, brought to a science of society, by the scientist’s awareness of the necessary implication of his or her ideas, with the material that he or she strives to describe by means of those ideas. Not so in criminology. Or rather: the pronounced reflexivity of the works that appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s such as Matza’s (1969) or Taylor, et al.’s (1973), has brought the field too close to what one might call a kind act of euthanasia to be tolerated within the boundaries of a social science whose fate has always been intimately linked with the issue of political legitimation.

The Penal System between “Exclusion” and “Inclusion”

It is customary today to think of the penal system as a system of exclusion (Steinert 1998). This may be perceived as its “real” function and outcome

but certainly, especially in its very beginnings, it was not imagined as pursuing such a goal. On the contrary, the prison especially was thought of as a mechanism of inclusion, or incorporation, I would say, into a social contract. This was particularly the case in Republican or proto-democratic societies, such as the United States in its beginnings (Thomas Dumm (1987) on de Tocqueville (1835-1840), following Foucault (1975)).

The post-structuralist, critical thinking of 1970s culture pointed out that prisons and 'ideological state apparatuses' in general had been 'invented' with the aim additionally of 'creating subjects' (Matza (1969), Althusser (1970) and Foucault (1975) have all said quite similar things about this) or, in the more direct and transparent language of North-American reformer Benjamin Rush (Dumm 1987: 88), of making "Republican machines", citizens, that is, who know how to govern themselves, the necessary prerequisite to a system based on self-government. What I would like, however, to point out is that the terms of any such "incorporation" into the social contract, into the social body, in fact, tend to respond to the specific juncture a society is going through and to the way in which, in that given society, social order is framed and conceived.

A number of "classic" commentators, from Beaumont and Tocqueville (1833) to Rusche and Kirchheimer (1939), have pointed out the affinity between the main features of the penal system in a given society in a given period and the consideration that society gives its citizens and especially its *labouring* citizens: whereas the valorisation of labour would typically be connected with an attitude of inclusion and incorporation, the *de*-valorisation of labour – in a situation, for instance, of high unemployment – would be usually connected with a concept of the penal system as exclusion, as a system at most of "warehousing" inmates. Whereas this way of thinking about relationships between the social structure and the penal system carries more than a grain of truth, I believe it is still too mechanistic because the definition of a given situation and the politics required therein is never something objectively "given" according to strict economic standards, but is the discursive product of hegemonic processes in which political and economic elites have a very important say. What a "social crisis" is, for instance, depends a great deal on the perspective of the one defining it (O'Connor 1987; Hall et al. 1978; Sparks 1992: 55-77). From the perspective of social elites, a crisis is first and foremost an assault on their power, whether political or economic.

I would therefore submit that two situations may obtain from the standpoint of penalty. In the exclusionary penal mode, society is (successfully) described as being in a state of “crisis”, where order needs to be re-established and the social fabric mended and brought back to unity after having been lacerated and torn apart. Here, it is often the metaphor of the State that appears: Leviathan as a purveyor of order and unity or better, of unification (*reductio ad unum*) and hierarchy – as David Matza explained very nicely (1969). Because one of the main powers of the State is the power to punish (Beccaria 1764), penalty is particularly apt to be used to define powers and boundaries of sovereignty. In such situation, the task which is characteristic of the system of criminal justice is described as one of bringing society to unity by eliminating fragmentation and anarchy.

In the inclusive situation instead, social order is perceived as suffocating and unfair, and social change as necessary. The task which is conceived as characteristic of the system of criminal justice becomes then one of allowing for experimentation and “innovation” (in the Durkheimian sense).

How can we sociologically explore such oscillations? From a *quantitative* perspective, one could show, for instance, that the productivity of a penal system increases in situations of moral panic and crises (particularly when such crises are perceived by elites as threatening the dominant form of social relations, i.e. their power). We can see that incarceration rates tend to increase in situations of crisis (economic and/or political) (Melossi 1985b and 1998a). *Qualitatively* however, we can observe that the representations of the criminal offender change too, i.e. the representations that society produces, and criminologists for society, about the criminal.

The two perspectives, quantitative and qualitative, are related: the devaluation of the person who is at the centre of the penal system’s attention, either as a criminal or as an inmate (usually conceived by the public as synonyms), is related to a rise in the number of such persons. There is, once again, an *affinity* between those social processes that increase the number of inmates and those that change the representation of the criminal. Or rather: it is the same social process, in which the changed representation – in orienting social action – makes it possible for the numbers to go up or down, and the numbers’ seesaw in turn affects the quality of the representation.

I have previously (Melossi 1993) advanced the hypothesis that the sphere of penalty, in its quantitative and qualitative variability, constitutes a sort of “gazette of morality” by which more or less pressure is exercised

on the generality of the public (given that, as I already mentioned, I follow Durkheim – and, for that matter, the classical theorists – in conceiving the main function of the penal system as being one of controlling the public much more than the criminals, who should actually be regarded as the “useful” “bearers” of such control (Foucault 1975)).

Here we come finally to the primary focus of this paper. In the situation characterised by a tendency to exclusion, we may observe in fact that criminologists (*as well as* public opinion and “aesthetic” productions) assume an attitude of distance/antipathy toward the criminal: the deviant is himself seen as the producer of evil (whether he wants it or not), social order is represented as a *given* order which is to be established or re-established, and the representations of the criminal are under the constellation of the *monstruum*, the monstrosity, far removed from any common experience and hence from the possibility of empathy.

In the situation characterised instead by a drive to include, criminologists (as well as public opinion and fictional accounts) tend to assume an attitude of vicinity/sympathy toward the criminal: the deviant is seen as in some sense a victim of society, social order is represented as justly or at least reasonably contested, and the representations of the criminal are located under the constellation of innovation when not of a heroic striving against the dictatorship of fate or social conditions.

In order to offer a less abstract sense of what I mean, a few illustrations follow, taken mainly from the history of criminology.

The Italian Positive School

Cesare Lombroso’s position cannot be separated from the historical context of Italian Unification in 1861 and the subsequent annexation of large provinces, especially Southern provinces, in the ten years that followed, when Piedmontese (“Italian”) army troops engaged in a bloody repression of peasant bandits who were portrayed as instruments of the previous regime and the Church (Molfese 1964; Hobsbawm 1959 and 1969; Adorni 1997). This is the not irrelevant backdrop to Lombroso’s story. Lombroso himself had been for a short period, in 1862, a medical officer in the Piedmontese army in the Southern region of Calabria. He was impressed with the different culture of its inhabitants, a difference that he tried to explain on the ground of “race” (Lombroso 1862, Baima Bollone 1992: 43, Teti 1993: 13-14, 158-65). The skull of Vilella, studying which less than ten

years later he had the famous revelation of the theory of the born criminal (Rafter 1997), belonged to a peasant from Calabria, incarcerated till his death for being a thief and a brigand (Baima Bollone 1992: 114-25). There's a certain bitter irony in this. Let us listen however to Lombroso's famous sum-up of his theory:

Many of the characteristics found in savages, and among the coloured races, are also to be found in born criminals. These are: thinning hair, lack of strength and weight, low cranial capacity, receding foreheads, highly developed frontal sinuses, a high frequency of medio-frontal sutures, precocious synostosis, especially frontal, protrusion of the curved line of the temporal, simplicity of the sutures ... darker skin, thicker, curly hair, large or handshaped ears, a greater analogy between the two sexes ... indolence ... facile superstition ... and finally the relative concept of the divinity and morals (Lombroso 1876:435-36).

It is hard not to see, in Lombroso's theory, a sort of somatic transfiguration of a cultural difference so deep³ that could not be understood on its own terms but had to be racialized in the difference between North and South, between Europe and the Mediterranean, between normality and atavistic pathology (Teti 1993)⁴. Indeed many of the physical characters that were identified by Lombroso in criminals were also ascribed to southerners. The deep historical difference between industrial northern masses that had already been "processed through" the machine of modernity and were therefore ready for self-government at the same time that they were ready to enter the gates of factories and offices, and Southern masses who were tied to a particularly backward type of rural life, finds its roots in history (Put-

³ Revealed however in that closure, "the relative concept of the divinity and morals ..."

⁴ In his remarkable article, "Why Is Classical Theory Classical", Robert Connell (1997) juxtaposes a "colonisation" model for social theory's origins to the usual "modernisation" one; it seems to me the Italian case shows that such juxtaposition is unfounded and that the two insights strongly imply each other. In other words: the "civilising gaze" that eventually was directed at non-"Western," "colonised" people, in all European countries was first experienced and developed toward domestic and mainly rural lower classes (notice also that the concept of "Western" or even "European" is far from being an intelligible, homogeneous one: English speaking authors (such as Connell) usually refer to English-speaking societies and more rarely German- or French-speaking ones as representative of "Western" or "European" cultures: how should the quite different Catholic/Southern European traditions be characterised? The Italian and, especially important on a worldwide scale, the Spanish. See Salvatore and Aguirre (1996) for similar themes about Latin America and Melossi (forthcoming), about Italy).

nam 1993). At the time, it was still so deep, however, that it had to be represented in the myth of the heritage of human evolution as this connected with races and individual dispositions. In 1926, Gramsci would note, in his famous essay on *La questione meridionale* (the southern question):

It is well known what kind of ideology has been disseminated in myriad ways among the masses in the North, by the propagandists of the bourgeoisie: the South is the ball and chain which prevents the social development of Italy from progressing more rapidly; the Southerners are biologically inferior beings, semi-barbarians or total barbarians, by natural destiny; if the South is backward, the fault does not lie with the capitalist system or with any other historical cause, but with Nature, which has made the Southerners lazy, incapable, criminal and barbaric — only tempering this harsh fate with the purely individual explosion of a few great geniuses, like isolated palm-trees in an arid and barren desert. The Socialist party was to a great extent the vehicle for this bourgeois ideology within the Northern proletariat. The socialist party gave its blessing to all the “Southernist” literature of the clique of writers who made up the so-called positive school: the Ferri’s, Sergi’s, Niceforo’s, Orano’s and their lesser followers, who in articles, tales, short stories, novels, impressions and memoirs, in a variety of forms, reiterated one single refrain. Once again, “science” was used to crush the wretched and exploited; but this time it was dressed in socialist colours, and claimed to be the science of the proletariat (Gramsci 1926:444).

It is usually pointed out that Enrico Ferri, a leading Socialist politician and Lombroso’s follower, innovated on the theory of his mentor by introducing a more sociological consideration of criminal “tendencies”. I believe however, that the shift of emphasis in the Positive School, from Lombroso’s theory of the born criminal to the more sociologically oriented position of Enrico Ferri, should also be traced back to a change of protagonists or *personas* in criminal representation and correspondingly to strata and types of working class populations expressing different “criminal” figures.

Ferri, before being a prominent Socialist, was a very successful lawyer and criminal law professor, at least as famous for his scientific theories as for his legal defences, being an orator of great success⁵. Born in the northern rural district of Mantua, one of the very first rural areas in northern Italy where a working-class movement made its appearance due to the more advanced level of “capitalist” land tenure and agriculture, one of his first defences was that of a group of peasant agitators from that area. The Mantua peasants had been engaged in a wider movement of northern rural

⁵ See Radzinowicz’s recollections of his encounter and apprenticeship with Ferri (Radzinowicz 1999: 1-25).

masses called *la boje*⁶ – a movement that demanded better conditions for the agricultural daily workers and better wage levels. In Enrico Ferri's defence in court, one gathers that the vicinity of the orator to the "criminals" he is defending could not be greater, a vicinity which is first geographic, then cultural and political. The mode of the defence turns around concepts of innovation, social justice, social causes of crime, if indeed one can speak of "crime" in this case. Indeed, for Ferri, these men are close to heroes:

As a student of social pathology, I am given to the observation of criminals in prison and in free life, and following the steps of my teachers, I have noticed their moral and physical characteristics which, together with the social environment, drive them to fight the inexorable struggle for existence through the means of crime.

Now, as a professor of criminal sociology, I am very happy to state that from this trial my anthropological studies did not profit a bit, because I had to come to the conclusion – a reassuring one for the lawyer – that no trace of criminality can be found in these defendants. On the contrary, I have to declare that we know from the laws of psychology that heroic souls like Siliprandi and honest people like his colleagues will never be able to become common wrongdoers. These are monstrosities, that can be imagined only by those who do not know the laws of the human heart or who are blinded by passions or personal resentments (*applause*).

And I desire to state that I would always be proud to shake hands with these men whether they will come back to being free men or, by absurd hypothesis, might go back to wearing the prisoner's uniform (*burst of applause*).

But if the professor has idly opened his books of criminal anthropology for this trial, the student and the lawyer together have had to gaze into another page of the great book of life, marred by other pains and other sighs; with patient and painful anatomy, he has had to dissect the poverty that hopelessly oppresses the workers of his native province (Ferri 1886:9).

Tens and tens of pages follow in which Ferri reconstructs the just causes of the complaints raised by the peasants "of his native province" by analysing the economic and social conditions of the Region. The rhetoric is one of social change: those who have been unjustly charged with crime are actually the pioneers of a new world, more just and more humane. They are not criminals, they are indeed "our" heroes. How far are we from the harsh southern mountains where the brigand Vilella was fighting his own primitive and uncivilised struggle!

⁶ From the rallying cry used by the peasants, in their dialect, "*la boje, la boje, e deboto la va de fora!*" (it boils, it boils and soon it will boil over!) (Sereni 1948: 386).

One might however object that we are talking of very different types of crime here, according to a distinction similar to the one that at the time another leading Positivist author at the time, Baron Raffaele Garofalo, amously dubbed as the distinction between “natural” and “artificial” crimes (1891). However, I believe that the choice of which type of crimes criminologists (as well as the courts, the media, etc.) focus upon, is indeed part of our *explanandum*, because our orientation toward specific “facts” of analysis, knowledge, entertainment, etc., is inscribed within and directed by historically variable sets of values (Weber, 1904). One could even dare suggest that the criminals themselves are not immune to the prevailing social discourse on criminality, ready to confirm it with their own actions and in their own self-images. Criminals too belong in a web of social and historical relationships: the particularly cruel character of their deeds or, in other circumstances, their sophistication and innovation depend at least in part on the environment within which they find themselves thrown. According to Dane Archer and Rosemary Gartner (1984), for instance, a society like the US – one, which encourages violence as an important resource to solve conflicts – will very probably end up fostering a higher violent crime rate. The opposite will happen in a society in which violence is shunned but cunning and fraud are more benignly considered, such as, for instance, Italian society (Melossi 1994).

In other words, we cannot really understand Lombroso’s and Ferri’s different emphases, on the “born delinquent” or on “social conditions”⁷ without considering the specificity of Italy’s dualistic socio-economic development, which meant very different types of economic growth, rates of unemployment, types of working class in the North and in the South. The incorporation of a more developed and combative working class in the North brought to a more inclusive and sympathetic attitude toward the kind of problems – even criminal problems – that were emerging there. At the same time a more exclusionary attitude prevailed toward the poor peasants in the South, whether such attitude meant semi-starvation in the fields or outright expulsion through emigration. After Unification, in 1861, the already high imprisonment and unemployment rates in the whole country were even higher in the South. Between 1880 and World War One however, in Italy as in the rest of Europe, the betterment in the conditions of the working class in the North, together with the massive migration from the

⁷ Which does not mean of course that Ferri shied away from the determinism (also *anthropological*) of his mentor (Garland 1985).

South, corresponded to generally declining imprisonment rates (Sutherland 1934, Rusche and Kirchheimer 1939: 138-65, Pavarini 1997, Melossi 1998b).

Chicago: an Attitude of “Appreciation”

The children of Vilella and others like him, tired of having to deal with the arrogance of Northern army officers and local *massari* – the rural middle strata that will be connected with the emergence of *Mafia* – moved *en masse* toward the ports of Naples and Palermo to look for fortune in the New World. Vito Teti, in his recent reconstruction of the debate on the Southern Question (1993), points out how emigration was seen by the southern masses as well as by their enemies, the southern gentry and the northern elites, as a “substitute” for brigandage and crime, a gesture of revolt against a situation that was perceived as not changeable.⁸ The emigrants, the “Americans”, as they were called, were seen as deviant, non-integrated, traitors to their customs and their land. “Escaping to America” was equivalent to “escaping to the mountains” (the choice of becoming brigands). This imagery fuelled at the same time the contemporary panic about immigrants’ crime that was developing in those years on American shores, from the streets and alleys of New York to those of Buenos Aires (Teti 1993: 24-25; Salvatore and Aguirre 1996).⁹

Southern Italians were of course not the only ones; together with them, driven by similar circumstances, were Russian Jews and various Eastern European peoples, replacing the Irish and the Germans who had crowded Ellis Island’s barracks earlier on. Chicago, even more than New York, was a big draw for these men and women. With its factories, its stockyard, its rail- and river-ways in a privileged position in the mid-West of America, migrants were flocking to Chicago by the tens of thousands, the fastest growing city in America in those years. And in Chicago it was therefore natural for the newly founded Department of Sociology, of the newly founded University, to find the central metaphor of the social process in the

⁸ In fact, mass migration in 1890-1913 might have been a not irrelevant cause for decreasing imprisonment rates in Italy in the same period.

⁹ Paul Federn, in a Freudian-inspired essay, noted at the time that there was a deep psychological affinity between the cultural ethos of Bolshevik revolutions and that of the United States, both types of societies being likened by their Utopian attempt at building “fatherless” societies, i.e. societies without authority, hence – a criminologist might note – “anomic” (Federn 1919; Melossi 1990: 72-91).

issue of migration, in the same way in which many Chicagoans found reasons for their own militancy and advocacy in migrants' causes.¹⁰ Jane Addams' Hull House – the leading experience of the settlement movement in the US – was a vital centre of these interests, where the likes of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead and William I. Thomas would congregate, discuss the events of the day, converse with the migrants, and generally understand “the social process” as this was taking place in Chicago (Addams 1910; Bulmer 1984; Deegan 1988; Lindner 1996). Many volumes have been written about the experience of the Chicago School. The point that I would like to emphasise however is what David Matza later called an attitude of *appreciation* by the Chicagoans toward the deviant worlds they were describing: the immigrants, the hobos, the taxi-dancers, the prostitutes, the juvenile delinquents. Such appreciation had its roots in a vicinity of the sociologist to his object that in some cases was simply coming from a feeling of political and moral solidarity, in other circumstances from the researcher having shared at least part of his subjects' experiences, as was the case for Nels Anderson (1923) or Thorsten Sellin. The connection between such vicinity and the particular methodology used by the Chicagoans, an ethnographic approach that involved the need for talking to, living with, getting to know the people they were writing about, seems self-evident enough.

The concepts of social order and social control that emerged from Chicago could only reflect such attitudes: social control was a matter of interaction in a world sharply divided along lines of language, culture, religion, class, ethnicity, an eminently *relative* and plural concept where the official definitions of social control and therefore of deviance were in the worst case due to brutal suppression of opposition and in the best case to that democratic process that “the Chicagoans” valued so highly. Never was social order however conceived as given or crystallised. On the contrary, Pragmatist thought, the overarching philosophical expression of the Chicago *Zeitgeist*, stressed the fluid becoming of social life, and ideas such as those of “the social experiment” and “the social laboratory,” applied particularly to the Settlement movement and Hull House (Dewey 1931; Addams 1910). This Chicago “ethos” was the quintessential expression of Progressivism and later on of the spirit of the 1920s, “the jazz age”, an era of ruthless capitalist development that was to last until the rough awaken-

¹⁰ Many of the sociologists and criminologists here mentioned were themselves, in different ways, also outsiders.

ing of the 1929 great crash. This was a period of optimism and experimentation powerfully captured for instance in Scott Fitzgerald's prose:

It ended two years ago, because the utter confidence which was its essential prop received an enormous jolt, and it didn't take long for the flimsy structure to settle earthward. And after two years the Jazz Age seems as far away as the days before the War. It was borrowed time anyhow – the whole upper tenth of a nation living with the insouciance of grand ducs and the casualness of chorus girls [...] Now once more the belt is tight and we summon the proper expression of horror as we look back at our wasted youth ... (Fitzgerald 1931: 21-22).

In fact, after an increasing trend in incarceration rates during the nineteenth century, quite typical of a country that in many ways was still taking shape, the period between the 1890s and the 1920s presented the clearest decline in the history of the US incarceration rates (Cahalan 1979; Berk et al. 1981). This was to change after 1929, when the unprecedented unemployment of the Depression was accompanied by a sharp rise in imprisonment, even if not wholly proportional to the extremely sharp upward lift of unemployment (Jankovic 1977). Even if the rhetoric of the “public enemy” championed by J. Edgar Hoover, Chief of the newly formed Federal Bureau of Investigation, was created during these years, the generalised character of economic misfortunes in the Depression kept at least the level of *relative* frustration lower than might otherwise have been, and the progressive tinge of political solutions kept open the possibility that “public enemies” were not all chosen from the lower classes.

Edwin Sutherland's criminology was probably the best representation of such progressive stance, exposing the criminal undercurrents present in so much of official society (and connecting that view to the quintessential pluralist theory of social control and deviance, differential association theory). This he did most famously of course in *White Collar Crime* (1949), the criminological tract belonging in F.D. Roosevelt's “New Deal”, but if one considers his previous publication, *The Professional Thief* (1937), an attitude of benevolent indifference toward the thief Chic Conwell goes together with a thinly veiled contempt for the hypocrisy of official society. In his conclusions, discussing “the profession of theft” from the perspective of differential association, Sutherland writes:

[The thief] receives assistance from persons and agencies which are regarded as legitimate or even as the official protectors of legitimate society. In such persons and agencies he frequently finds attitudes of predatory con-

trol¹¹ which are similar to his own. The political machine which dominates the political life of many American cities and rural districts is generally devoted to predatory control. The professional thief and the politician, being sympathetic in this fundamental interest in predatory control, are able to cooperate to mutual advantage. This involves co-operation with the police and the courts to the extent that these agencies are under the control of the political machine or have predatory interests independent of the machine. The thief is not segregated from that portion of society but is in close and intimate communication with it not only in his occupational life but in his search for sociability as well. He finds these sympathisers in the gambling places, cabarets, and houses of prostitution, where he and they spend their leisure time¹² (Sutherland 1937:208-09).

The “Neo-Chicagoans”: Sympathy for the Devil

After a period of social recomposition, spanning the New Deal, the war and then the 1950s cold war, best expressed, in sociology, in the systemic aspirations of Talcott Parsons’ structural functionalism,¹³ an attitude of appreciation of deviance re-emerged of course in the 1960s, at the end of the most sustained positive trends in economic history and in conjunction with another decade of declining imprisonment rates (Cahalan 1979; Berk et al. 1981). Such an attitude went to the point of seeing the deviant as a sort of hero or saint, and reached its climax with the theory of social reaction, or the labelling approach. Stanley Cohen (1972) has written of “folk devils” in his landmark essay about the Mods and the Rockers in 1960s UK. Indeed, borrowing from another icon of the 1960s, one can actually speak of “sympathy for the devil” for the kind of attitude shared both by many young people at the time and by the kind of sociology produced by some of these young people. In his reconstruction of the “making” and “unmaking” of the New Left (in specific, the SDS) during those years, Todd Gitlin (1980) devotes a few pages to “the aestheticising of violence in films”. Probably the first and the most famous among such films, was *Bonnie and Clyde*:

¹¹ Note the changing fortunes of the term “predator” that the *revanche* criminology of the 1970s-1990s would of course reserve to the *lumpen* element (“the underclass”); Sutherland (1937: 208) has a footnote thanking A.B. Hollingshead for suggesting the term “predatory control”.

¹² Still in the late 1970s Cressey (1978) would define white-collar criminals as “subversives.”

¹³ The post-war desire for ethical stability also brought about a revival of interest for natural law theories to which Parsons was no stranger (Parsons 1970: 67, Pound 1960, Fuller 1964, Sciulli 1986).

Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* was the most skilled, the most provocative, and probably the most popular; it launched not only new fashions but a hero cult; it stylised violence in living colour. Though Penn's heroes lived during the Depression and started robbing banks to help out (or make a gesture toward helping out) dispossessed farmers, they were not the creatures of economic ruin. Unlike the characters in 1937 and 1949 movies based on the same real-life Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow, Penn's characters were free-standing angels, children of the sixties set three decades back. Their doomed life of crime began as a lark, an escapade of sexualised bravado up against boredom and impotence¹⁴ [...]

At the Hollywood premiere, I heard, someone in the audience stood up at the end and yelled, "Fucking cops!" He got the point. The spirit of Bonnie and Clyde was everywhere in the movement – and in the larger youth culture surrounding it – in the summer and fall of 1967 and on into 1968 (Gitlin 1980:197,199).

American sociology of deviance went from Howard Becker's "appreciation" of his jazz musician friends smoking dope (Becker 1963) to a "Romantic" heroization of the outlaw or maybe we should say "sanctification" in the case of Jean Genet and his *Journal du voleur* (1949), Jean-Paul Sartre's "Saint Genet" (1952), whose presence looms large in Matza's *Becoming Deviant* at the same time that Genet was touring American campuses showing support for the "Black Panthers". It is especially and most powerfully in David Matza's *Becoming Deviant* that this attitude, which is at the same time moral, cultural and political, emerged most clearly. In this classic piece of anarchist literature, an old polemic argument, that finds its roots deep in the Enlightenment thought¹⁵, was presented anew: how can Leviathan, whose hands have spilled the blood of thousands or indeed, during the century that is coming to a close, of millions, dare to judge who is and who is not a criminal? More specifically (at that time), how can the government of the United States, engaged in a war against the civilian population of Vietnam, dare to jail those of its citizens who have engaged in what is officially defined as "crime"? Let's hear it however from the sharp and unusual prose of Matza, in his conclusions:

In its avid concern for public order and safety, implemented through police force and penal policy, Leviathan is vindicated. By pursuing evil and pro-

¹⁴ On the issue of "youth problems" during the pre-1960s years cf. Albert K. Cohen (1955), Paul Goodman (1956).

¹⁵ Most eloquently in a short tract by none else than the Marquis de Sade within *La philosophie du boudoir* (1795), entitled "Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, if You Would Become Republicans."

ducing the *appearance* of good, the state reveals its abiding method – the perpetuation of its good name in the face of its own propensities for violence, conquest, and destruction. Guarded by a collective representation in which theft and violence reside in a dangerous class, morally elevated by its correctional quest, the state achieves the legitimacy of pacific intention and the appearance of legality – even if it goes to war and massively perpetrates activities it has allegedly banned from the world. But, that, the reader may say, is a different matter altogether. So says Leviathan – and that is the final point of the collective representation (Matza 1969:197).

Notice the date: 1969. Not only were those the years of generalised turbulence in North America and Europe, of working class' unprecedented strength (Boddy and Crotty 1975), of a new progressivism and experimentalism in all sectors of social life, but also, consistently, of a generalised, harsh criticism of traditional ways of penality and especially of the prison. It is no accident that in these years we find concentrated: prison protests and riots in all industrialised countries, continuous calls for penal reform that in some cases came close to asking for the outright abolition of the penitentiary, the emergence of a revisionist history and sociology of punishment that culminated in Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* in 1975, and finally a decreasing trend in imprisonment rates in many Western countries.¹⁶ In the United States, in 1973 the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency went as far as recommending a moratorium on prison building and the use of imprisonment as an extremely limited last resort device (Zimring and Hawkins 1991: 65-6, 87). However, the orientation of authoritative recommendations was soon to change very decisively.

A "Revanche" Criminology

The tide of penality (as well as of many other social processes) turned around this same year, 1973, the year of the oil and energy crisis, the start, according to historian Eric Hobsbawm, of the "crisis decades" (Hobsbawm 1994). If until then the history of western economies had been one of unparalleled growth and development, and of tight labour markets that finally in the 1960s had encouraged workers' organisation and defiance (a defiance, as we have seen, that would extend to many other aspects of social life), around 1973 everything started to change. One may suggest that Matza's work was as critical of his own times as well as foretelling of the

¹⁶ Certainly among these the US (Cahalan 1979) and Italy (Melossi 1998b).

future, not only because, as it has often been remarked, Matza's veering toward an anti-determinist position opened up to a future rhetoric of responsibility and retribution, but especially because the coupling of Leviathan and penal policies was to become tighter and tighter in the years to follow. Penal policies are implemented by the State – Matza wrote – in order to achieve one of the main features of the State and “its” not least accomplishment: the representation of society as a unified (and hierarchically ordained) structure (Matza 1969; Melossi 1990: 155-68). A few years after the publication of *Becoming Deviant*, at least in the United States, the *ethos* that prevailed more and more was one of forceful unification of society after years and years during which everything had been questioned, from the family structure to the supremacy of the white race, from the work ethic to a policy of moderation and temperance, from gender roles to chains of authority in all social institutions.

At that time, the conservative sectors of the establishment launched a pointed, self-conscious, purposive *revanche* that lasted at least from the Nixon to the Bush presidencies and found an international echo in Margaret Thatcher's policies in the United Kingdom.¹⁷ Twenty and more years of rising unemployment, deep restructuring of the economy and, together with this, of deep *disciplining* of the working class would follow. At the same time, the most massive process of incarceration that ever happened in the West from the days of “the great interment” in the seventeenth-century started taking place in the United States.¹⁸ The total numbers of those in prison or under some kind of correctional control came quite close to a sizeable portion of the demographic groups at the bottom of social stratification, such as the Afro-Americans and the unemployed (Melossi 1993; Beckett 1997; Western and Beckett 1998; Tonry 1995; Miller 1997). The new tune was accompanied by a change in criminologists' mood. In a 1977

¹⁷ One may object to not including in such *revanche* Clinton's US or Tony Blair's UK but it seems to me that, by the mid-1990s, the conservative counter-attack had become so successful that constituted simply a new consensus, a new hegemonic received opinion that allowed “Left” governments to build their own views on crime, order and security, *starting* from that consensus.

¹⁸ This dramatic increase in imprisonment rates in 1970s-1990s gave the lie to all the main explanatory mechanisms identified by the 1970s sociology of punishment: there was certainly no “decarceration” at work here (Scully 1977), nor oscillations around a “stable” level (Blumstein et al. 1977), neither a simple effect of unemployment (Jankovic 1977, Greenberg 1977 – on the possible applicability of Rusche and Kirchheimer's model to the US 1970-1992 period, see Melossi 1993).

article endowed with remarkable foresight, Anthony Platt and Paul Takagi identified a new *realist* criminology: such criminology was to rediscover that the harm inflicted by criminals on individuals and communities was *real*; that criminals were often mean and/or inferior types of human individuals; that penalty did indeed serve the positive function of protecting society from predators of all kinds, people who are not deserving of our sympathy. It is in this sense that I would like to talk of a “revanche” criminology, a criminology, that is, that took it upon itself not so much the task of criticising and innovating, as it had been in the 1960s, but the opposite task of restoring and shoring up, contributing to the solidification, legitimation and complacency of a community of well-behaved people who needed guidance and orientation after a period of deep tumultuous change.

The criminology of the period between 1970s and 1990s certainly took many forms, different among themselves theoretical inspiration, politics and criminal policy recommendations. Recently, David Garland has made an useful distinction between a *criminology of the self*, ‘that characterises offenders as rational consumers’, exemplified by the routine activity approach, and a *criminology of the other*, ‘of the threatening outcast, the fearsome stranger, the excluded and the embittered’ (Garland 1996: 461). Still, I would submit that what such different orientations decisively have in common is, as Garland himself points out immediately after having posited his distinction, ‘an official criminology that fits our social and cultural configuration – one in which amorality, generalised insecurity and enforced exclusion are coming to prevail over the traditions of welfarism and social citizenship’ (Garland 1996: 462). They express an attitude of distance, antipathy, even contempt, for their object of analysis. The general emphasis on ‘predatory street crime’ is particularly revealing, as Platt and Takagi had noticed more than 20 years ago. Routine activity approach (Cohen and Felson 1979) moved from the assumption that the predatory nature of criminals¹⁹ was a given, not to be explained: only criminals’ opportunity to commit crimes was to be explained. Genetic inferiorities should not be excluded and would often correlate with race (Wilson and Herrnstein 1985, Herrnstein and Murray 1994). An “actuarial” penology rediscovered the value of the positivists’ concept of “dangerousness” (Blumstein and Cohen

¹⁹ The animalistic imagery of the predator, which can hardly be presented as a piece of detached scientific description, fits nicely with the ‘evolutionary ecological’ theoretical assumptions of this approach which harks back to Spencerian motifs and Hobbesian suggestions.

1979, Blumstein 1983, Greenwood 1982 – for a critique cf. Feeley and Simon 1992). And, according to Gottfredson and Hirschi’s “control theory”:

Criminal acts provide *immediate* gratification of desires. A major characteristic of people with low self-control is therefore a tendency to respond to tangible stimuli in the immediate environment, to have a concrete “here and now” orientation. People with high self-control, in contrast, tend to defer gratification.

Criminal acts provide *easy or simple* gratification of desires. They provide money without work, sex without courtship, revenge without court delays. People lacking self-control also tend to lack diligence, tenacity, or persistence in a course of action.[...]

Recall that crime involves the pursuit of immediate pleasure. It follows that people lacking self-control will also tend to pursue immediate pleasures that are *not* criminal: they will tend to smoke, drink, use drugs, gamble, have children out of wedlock, and engage in illicit sex (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990:89-90)²⁰.

And so on and so forth, in a long list of activities contradicting the usual middle-class, work ethic, American way of doing things. Gottfredson and Hirschi’s prose carries more than an echo of Lombroso’s list, especially of Lombroso’s final item, “the relative concept of the divinity and morals”. Even in more “left-wing” accounts, less connected to established criminologies, such as Jack Katz’s (1988), “bad asses” are however real and dangerous “bad asses.” Such homogenised portrayal of criminals, without distinction of ‘right’ and ‘left’ help us come to the core of the theoretical issue that is here at stake. The social transformations at work between the 1970s and the 1990s produced at the same time a historically rooted criminal phenomenology and an account of it that was reflected in criminologists’ work. Both the type of crime and the criminological account were different from those characteristic of the previous period. The attitudes of “distance/vicinity,” or “sympathy/antipathy” are not at all solipsistic, idealist, constructionist products of more or less ideologically inclined criminologists but are socially produced attitudes rooted in solid circumstances

²⁰ I was witness to a rather amusing scene, during a panel of the American Society of Criminology in San Diego (1997) when a small group of European criminologists in the audience, eager for the session to finish in order to go take a smoke outside, were however trying to make the correlation between crime and smoking a bit more problematic vis-à-vis the position of two young American presenters, students of Hirschi, who defended the pristine validity of such correlation completely oblivious to the humorous aspects of the situation.

such as, *in the 1970s-1990s period*, a higher unemployment rate, racism, a consumerist culture, a society fostering violence – circumstances at least in part different from those that had characterised the US society in a previous period. As Jonathan Simon has noted, the nineteenth-century spectre of the ‘dangerous classes’ reappeared in the ‘underclass debate’²¹.

The collapse of the power of the working class to demand improvements in their income and security, combined with the growing economic irrelevance of the urban poor, has driven a return to more exclusionary role for punishment. Separated from the edges of the working class by hardened economic and geographical borders, those members of the underclass committed to state prison no longer provide a coherent target for the strategies of integration and normalisation (Simon 1993:255).

What made the criminology of this period what I am calling here a *revanche* criminology, therefore, lies in the ideological disconnection (Smith 1981) of the issue of crime from such circumstances, in focusing on the end-product of crime and criminals *naturalising* it in ways not too dissimilar from what Lombroso had done almost a century earlier, without shedding light on the ways in which such end-products have been in fact socially produced. In doing so, criminologists powerfully contributed to the validation and reproduction of the overall re-direction of social relationships in the US and other societies in the period considered. The representation of crime became a way in fact of talking about society and society’s ills that went much beyond phenomena and types of behaviour legitimately identified as criminal by penal law. Rather, they addressed the moral value of society as a whole.

Once uprooted from its embeddedness in the complexity of social relationships, the question of crime became simply a question of moral edification. Hence the *revanche*: the main issue was one of combating the “bad” morality of the 1960s by means of a new, “good” morality. In the *revanche* movement the appreciative or agnostic stances of the previous criminology were often expressly evoked as having contributed to the fall – Charles Murray and his colleagues at the Manhattan Institute being as much concerned with the treasons and perversities of the intellectuals themselves as with the predations of the underclass.²² In ways similar to what had hap-

²¹ Indeed only a desire for terminological originality and the fear to be tinged with a socialistic vocabulary must have caused the participants in the underclass debate to shy away using the identical but much older term *Lumpenproletariat*.

²² On the construction of a new ‘penal common sense’ in the US and its subsequent worldwide diffusion, see Wacquant (1999).

pened in the late 1920s and 1930s when the rise to power of Fascist regimes in Europe had been accompanied by their also then successful polemic against the “softness” of previous liberal regimes on crime,²³ the criminal was represented as a *monstruum* – a being whose features are inherently different from ours and shocking to the well-behaved.²⁴ The criminal was once again portrayed as an incarnation of the ultimate sin of breaking the fabric of society apart, somebody who had to be contained through incapacitation or death in order to restore the unity and order of society, i.e. in the colourful language of Matza, the power of Leviathan. These monstrosities were paraded around in the media too numerous to all be recorded here. Suffice to recall perhaps the most famous, or maybe the most politically useful, the case of “Willie” Horton, “a wonderful mix of liberalism and big black rapist”, in the words of one of the producers of the political advertisement about Horton in the Bush Campaign (Karst 1993: 73-4).²⁵

The devaluation of the criminal went together with the collective devaluation of the social group to which criminals were seen as belonging, namely a racially defined and demonised underclass. The devaluation of the *underclass*, however, went hand in hand with the devaluation of the *class* as such, that is of the working class as a whole, in the very literal sense of a twenty-year long containment in weekly wages coupled with unprecedented increases in working time (Melossi 1993; Peterson 1994; Schor 1991). In the 1960s, crime had often been seen as innovative, sometimes as a challenge to unjust institutions, whether these were political or economic institutions. It was possible to identify with the lowest stratum of society because such stratum had not been described as sordid and shameful. Starting in the early 1970s, all this was to change. Crime was built to be a synonym for everything that was wrong in American culture. It was

²³ On the 1930s *leitmotiv* of the “Weimar prison paradise” see Rusche and Kirchheimer 1939: 179.

²⁴ I do not know whether anybody has gone farther in this rhetoric than Bennet et al. in their *Body Count* (1996), when they talk of ‘a new generation of street criminals’, ‘super-predators’, ‘the youngest, biggest, and baddest generation any society has even known’.

²⁵ Horton was the black Massachusetts convict who raped a white woman while on a furlough programme when Michael Dukakis was governor of the state and that became a favourite card of George Bush’s 1988 presidential campaign against the same Dukakis whose vice-presidential candidate was the African American leader Jesse Jackson!

necessary to “say no” to illicit behaviour, whether the consumption of illegal substances or the committing of crimes. There was nothing glamorous in crime and drugs, whether illicit or licit (the very successful campaign at vilifying tobacco smoke is a very good example of such strategies). Drugs were consumed by inferior, not glamorous, people, of lower-class, often ethnic, extraction (Reinerman 1979).

In short, the criminal was no longer a human being similar to us, as Sutherland had written, or whose destiny we can even appreciate, as Becker and Matza had proposed, let alone an innovator and a hero. Again in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, the spotlight of the criminologist, very much like the spotlight of police helicopters in the dystopian LA portrayed in Mike Davis’ *The City of Quartz* (1990),²⁶ has been focusing on people who are not at all nice or charming. On the contrary, they are dangerous. They are either bad or saddled with some kind of personal deficit which makes them act as bad people.²⁷

Very often, furthermore, *they* are very different from *us*, so different in fact that, even if one has to discount (but not everybody agrees on this)²⁸ some kind of constitutional anthropological difference of the Lombrosian or the more recent genetic varieties, one can however notice the different colour of *their* skin or the fact that *they* come from different, less civilised, places. There is no doubt that western societies have been hit, starting in the 1960s, with unprecedented amounts of crime that, at specific times and places, went together with a very deep destructuring of accepted ways of doing things, morality, values. This very deep cultural change has been responded to on the one hand by incorporating elements of the cultural revolution within the social control setting provided by a so-called “consumerist” culture (especially those aspects having to do with the lifestyle choices of middle class men and women) and on the other hand, as we have seen, by a very extensive process of criminalization and the creation of new “*classes dangereuses*”. As it has always been typical of the way of func-

²⁶ Reverting, in this sense, to pre-1960s times, before the time, that is, when, according to Bill Chambliss (1978: 14), criminologists had stopped looking outside of police cars (and together with the police) and had started looking *inside* police cars, *at* the police!

²⁷ The self-image of criminals was not immune to such deterioration: the 1980 New Mexico State prison riot, probably the most pointlessly blood-thirsty uprising in the rich history of North-American prison riots, took place exactly at the beginning of the new Reagan “law and order” Era (Morris 1983. Colvin 1992, Rolland 1997).

²⁸ Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) and Herrnstein and Murray (1994).

tioning of the criminal justice system, the criminalizing response has mainly concerned the underclass, i.e. ethnic minorities in many countries and immigrants in others. This attitude repeated a century-long *refrain*. Already in 1833, de Tocqueville and de Beaumont, in their report *On the Penitentiary System in the United States*, had noted:

[I]f the statistical documents which we possess of Pennsylvania, should be applied to the rest of the Union, there are in this country more crimes committed than in France, in proportion to the population. Various causes of another nature explain this result: on the one hand, the colored population, which forms the sixth part of the inhabitants of the United States, and which composes half of the inmates of the prisons; and on the other hand, the foreigners pouring in every year from Europe, and who form the fifth and sometimes even the fourth part of the number of convicts. If we should deduct from the total number of crimes, those committed by Negroes and foreigners, we should undoubtedly find that the white American population commits less crimes than ours. But proceeding this, we should fall into another error; in fact, to separate the Negroes from the whole population of the United States, would be equal to deducting the poorer classes of the community with us [in France], that is to say, *those who commit the crimes* (Beaumont and Tocqueville 1833:99; my emphasis).

The coloured, the immigrants, the poor are *those who commit the crimes*. Many researchers have already told us that these people even today are indeed those who commit the crimes, and that this is not a product of discrimination toward them (Blumstein 1982, Tonry 1997, Barbagli 1998) as if the issue of discrimination were disposed of once ascertained that apparently it does not unfold within the criminal justice system. On the contrary, it seems to me that a more important question is about the relationship between economic, political, social and cultural discrimination and a higher involvement with (officially perceived and labelled) criminal activities.

Whereas most of my references are to developments in North American societies, I think one should add that in many societies, in Europe and probably now also in Latin America, where only quite recently a system of social control mainly based on consensus has been established, the “criminal question” has emerged there recently as well. This process has unfolded together with the maturation of democratic forms of government that have put an end to very deep and divisive lacerations in civil society and has emphasised at the same time the need for a process of social *unification*. In the same way in which a rhetoric of the “public enemy” emerged in the United States around the time of the New Deal (that saw the incorporation of organised labour within the system of government), so only today, with

the coming of age of a “respectable” and non “anti-system” Left in Italy, for instance, and other European and Latin American²⁹ countries, is the spectre of “crime” (as opposed to that of “political violence”, whether from governmental or non-governmental agencies) appearing in these societies for the first time as a matter of public concern.³⁰

Conclusions: Toward More Humane Representations?

Already in his ‘Foreword’ to Cullen and Gilbert’s *Reaffirming Rehabilitation* (1982), Don Cressey protested vigorously against the ‘neo-conservative’ turn taken by ‘American’ government in penal matters, and called for ‘renewed humanitarianism’ (Cressey 1982). It seems to me that today, 17 years later, such change is overdue. The hegemony of the kind of society that was built by those who brought their *revanche* against the 1960s is now uncontested, probably more so than in their wildest dreams. Conservative criminologists are able to portray the recent decline in crime rates in the US, especially *violent* crime rates, as a measure of the unmitigated success of repressive policies, even if other mainstream criminologists call for caution about such judgements (Blumstein 1998, Rosenfeld 1998). Once again, it is hard to discover any form of opposition on the horizon, except maybe for those forms of marginal upper-class eccentric art where cultural opposition takes refuge in periods like this. However, the very strong decline in unemployment rates – at least in the countries that have spearheaded this whole process, the US and the UK – may harbour an indication of changing times in penalty also.³¹ After one quarter of a century of “reconstructing” moral stability, respect for authorities, work habits and profit margins, the time may be ripe again for questioning a suffocat-

²⁹ In Latin America this is probably true for a country such as Argentina.

³⁰ What I am submitting, in other words, is that ‘crime’ tends to emerge as a central figure of social discourse and preoccupation only after certain historical conditions are given and one of such conditions is the completion of societal democratisation and unification. On the more general argument and more specifically on the Italian case, see Melossi (1990, 1997 and forthcoming); and Della Porta and Reiter 1996; on Turkey, see Green (1998); on Spain, see Cid and Larrauri (1998); on France, see Wacquant (1999); I believe that aspects of this argument may also apply to the current situation in Northern Ireland.

³¹ There is certainly a cyclical argument which is implicitly being presented here. In a previous work of mine I referred to Kondratieff’s idea of “long waves” (Kondratieff 1935; Melossi 1985b). For an application of this type of (long) cyclical thinking to long-term social change cf. Zvi Namenwirth (1973) and Robert P. Weber (1981).

ing, rigid and certainly “repressive” moral and legal order. The case of ethnic minorities’ and new migrants’ crime could probably be one of the most obvious to try and look at in a different perspective from that of simple criminalization.³²

Finally, let us try and summarise the argument presented here. I have identified two “typical” scenarios between which modern societies have found themselves: one, that sees a fractured, quickly changing, society expressing a concept of itself as a plural and conflictual entity, within which deviance, or indeed crime, is relative to the standpoint of the one who is doing the defining, and the representation of the criminal is an essentially contested representation: *some* criminals at least, play more the role of innovators and heroes than that of villains. One may find these kinds of societies in Europe and North America in the period between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s and, later on, in the 1960s-early 1970s. As we have seen, these periods are also characterised by declining imprisonment rates and by a public rhetoric of discourse centred around inclusiveness, social innovation, experimentation and change.

Such “open” types of society follow or precede societal periods when, at least from the standpoint of elites, the fracturing and disorganisation have reached “unthinkable excesses”, and the want for re-instituting a unity of authority, purpose and hierarchy (even if under a somewhat changed balance of power) asserts itself as a matter of social life and death. During such periods, predominant (“monist”) theories of social order are characterised by an orientation toward unity and cohesion, the normative order is consensually shared and views about criminals are organised around the label of “the public enemy”. Wrongdoers are now morally repugnant individuals, in the eyes of criminologists and the public alike, especially because offenders pose a deadly threat to society’s moral order (different definitions of this threat can be found, for instance, in Beccaria (1764), Lombroso (1876), or Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990)). The causes of such a threat, if at all relevant, are to be found within the criminal himself, or herself, and not in any societal cause.³³ Periods when national states were first

³² The recent development of a “cultural criminology” with its renewed sympathetic interest for all kinds of “social deviance” might constitute a signal in this direction (Ferrell and Sanders 1995; Ferrell and Hamm 1998).

³³ What appears to be a reference to ‘societal causes’, such as fragmentation of the family, is usually referred back to the weakening of the moral temper of the individual anyway.

established in the nineteenth century, the reaction in the 1930s against the “revolutionary” 1920s, and “the crisis decades” after 1973 (Hobsbawm 1994: 403-32) are all good examples of such situations. As we have seen, at such points imprisonment rates tend to increase, and the public rhetoric is one re-emphasising the value of the collectivity around concepts of “the state”, “the nation”, or “the community”.

In orienting the activities of the many social institutions that frame the question of “crime” and “punishment”, representations perform an essential role in connecting the main articulations of “the social structure”. Beyond artificial and often parochial distinctions between qualitative and discursive analyses on the one hand and quantitative ones on the other, publicly produced and shared representations link the ways in which human agents perceive of and give accounts to themselves and others of phenomena of crime and punishment, with regularly changing “structural” variables indicating specific aspects of the economy, the polity and society. It is in this sense that a few years ago I had advanced the idea of a “grounded labelling theory” in which observation of the social activity of labelling should be connected with observation of more traditional structural aspects (Melossi 1985a). The present paper should be understood as a further contribution to that line of research and at the same time as a research program to be further developed.

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The Lost Honour of Criminology

A Documentary of the Vicissitudes of a Discipline*

TELEMACH SERASSIS**

Wenn die Philosophie ihr Grau in Grau malt, dann ist eine Gestalt des Lebens alt geworden, und mit Grau in Grau läßt sie sich nicht verjüngen, sondern nur erkennen; die Eule der Minerva beginnt erst mit der einbrechenden Dämmerung ihren Flug.

Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*¹

Sheffield and Berkeley, 1976

Maybe we should not have any criminology. Maybe we should rather abolish institutes, not open them. Maybe the social consequences of criminology are more dubious than we like to think. I think they are. (Christie, 1977: 1)

These introductory remarks by Nils Christie must have caused astonishment to his audience that evening of 31 March 1976 at the University of Sheffield. Surely, the last thing they would have expected to hear at the

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¹ “When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then a form of life has become old, and with grey in grey it cannot rejuvenate itself, but only become known; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only when dusk falls.” – Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of the Right*.

foundation lecture of a Centre for Criminological Studies – and from the lips of such an eminent colleague – was such an absolute rejection of the field, a total denunciation of the “*dubious consequences*” (consequently of the “*dubious intentions*”?) of criminology.

On the other hand, however, maybe it was not a bolt from the blue: The epistemological and ideological questioning of the field had already started both on the other side of the Atlantic (among others: David Matza, 1969; Richard Quinney, 1970, 1974; Anthony Platt, 1973; Herman & Julia Schwendinger, 1970) as well as in Britain. It was actually a man from Sheffield, Ian Taylor, who a few years before (1973) had set, together with Paul Walton and Jock Young, the foundation-stone of *New Criminology* with their book published under that very title. Furthermore, it is quite possible² that some members of the audience had read (or even heard of) the work of a French scholar who simply could not conceal his aversion to criminology:

Have you ever read any criminological texts? They are staggering. And I say this out of astonishment, not aggressiveness, because I fail to comprehend how the discourse of criminology has been able to go on at this level. One has the impression that it is of such utility, is needed so urgently and rendered so vital for the working of the system, that it does not even seek a theoretical justification for itself, or even simply a coherent framework. It is entirely utilitarian. (Foucault, 1980: 47)

What was not perhaps so clear to the audience, however, was that criminology had already entered one of the most critical phases in its (short) intellectual history. Developments in the field itself, in the intellectual milieu in general, as well as in Western society and politics – which will be outlined further down – led to an escalation of the crisis in the discipline, finally resulting in the loss of its scientific and social “honour”.³

At about the same time the famous School of Criminology of the University of Berkeley ceased to exist, having exceeded the “limits of academic tolerance” (Geis, 1995). The decision had been made two years earlier, after a long-lasting controversy, when Chancellor Albert Bowker announced on 4 June 1974 the final discontinuance of the School. A few days earlier the campus police – assisted by riot police who had been called in

² Although the first English-language edition of *Surveiller et Punir* appeared in 1977 (*Discipline and Punish*, Allen and Lane, London), while other texts of Foucault’s were translated in 1980 (Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Michel Foucault – Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Pantheon Books, New York).

³ The term “honour” is deliberately used here to imply the pride and value traditionally denoted to the field and its social utility by criminologists.

for backup – had broken into the School building and had evicted nearly 300 students and members of staff who had been occupying it in an attempt to avert the decision.⁴ The events at Berkeley, although they were relegated to collective oblivion, constitute a typical case for the historical study of the scientific and social foundation of the field and its relations with politics and power, as well as of the role of criminologists.

The epistemological and ideological crisis in criminology, but also in science and society in general, certainly drew ideas and inspiration from views (or their subsequent interpretations) already formulated; still, the 1960s offered the ideal context for its manifestation. As Stanley Cohen, one of the leading figures of the deconstruction movement, noted (1988: 11): “In one tiny corner of the cultural map of the 1960s, a group of academics in Britain, North America, and parts of Western Europe gathered themselves around the old subjects of crime and punishment, deviance and its control. What we started saying was mostly interesting and creative, sometimes extravagant and silly, always typical of the wider intellectual and political culture in which we lived”. Student movements and the general political upheaval, which reached its peak with the reactions to the Vietnam War and the European revolts of 1968 shaped, together with the new radical trends in literature and art, a climate of intellectual and political debate; within it, began a total re-examination of the ideological and epistemological “taken-for-granted assertions” in social sciences. Criminology, for reasons set forth below, became one of the central and most vulnerable targets of the new criticism; but at the same time it constituted the domain for the development of fertile discussion which surpassed the limitations of its representatives as well as the tolerance margins of the dominant system (political, academic, and penal). The attack was carried out from without (with Michel Foucault as its main agent) as well as from within: the students of the 1960s assumed in the 1970s positions in the educational and research system and young scientists, with radical ideas, fresh experiences, a different perspective for science and the academe,⁵ began to teach, to conduct

⁴ An extensive presentation of the events, together with estimations by the protagonists, is given by Gilbert Geis (1995). See also Schauffler (1974) and Schauffler & Hannigan (1974) for a “first-person” account.

⁵ Platt (1973: 109) wrote about this level of confrontation – based on his own experience (see below): “In their counter-attack, our liberal critics have adopted a superficial radical rhetoric and accused us of bad manners, arrogance and crudeness. We should not get side-tracked into a debate on etiquette, for it is through our theory and practice, not manners, that our efforts will be judged”.

research, to publish extensively, and to participate in political, social and scientific activities.⁶ In this vigorous debate, scholars from other fields – history, political science, sociology of law and the penal system – also took part, thereby broadening its overall scope. They thus facilitated, in their individual ways, the ongoing disengagement from the ideological and methodological shackles of positivism. At the same time, however, as the vision of social liberation of the 1960s was still vivid, a rich political and social activism developed. Its themes were rich and varied: study of economic crisis and western capitalism; rape, women’s rights and feminist movements; state, power and socialist utopias; challenging the legal edifice; and a fundamental re-examination of the prison institution, in sympathy with the abolitionist and prisoners’ rights movements.⁷

This criticism involved not only the subject and the methodology of criminology, but also its position and role within the social and political system. Discussion on these issues was radical and twofold; it could be directed either at the overthrow of the dominant “paradigm” and its substitution by a new one, or at the ostracism of criminology from the scientific terrain. At any rate, it led to a *deconstruction* of the field and a condemnation of its intrinsic relations with state power.

Pavia, 1870

In 1870 I was carrying on for several months researches in the prisons and asylums of Pavia upon cadavers and living persons in order to determine upon substantial differences between the insane and the criminals, without succeeding very well. At last I found in the skull of a brigand a very long series of atavistic anomalies, above all an enormous middle occipital fossa and a hypertrophy of the vermis analogous to those that are found in inferior vertebrates. At the sight ... of these strange anomalies the problem of the nature and of the origin of the criminal seemed to me resolved. This was

⁶ Two such assemblies, with great influence upon the debate in the field and significant production, are worth mentioning: the *National Deviancy Conference* and the *European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control*. For a personal account of their formation and function, see Stanley Cohen’s interview to Maeve McMahon and Gail Kellough (1987: 134).

⁷ This mostly under the influence of Foucault. As Cohen put it (1988: 10), “if [Matza’s] *Becoming Deviant* was the book for the end of the 1960s, ... then Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* was surely the book for the end of the 1970s”. Thomas Mathiesen (1974) has also played a principal role in the abolitionist debate.

not merely an idea, but a flash of inspiration. At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal. (Cesare Lombroso)⁸

Thus a “scientific discipline” was born. Despite some views to the contrary, in the genealogy of the field Cesare Lombroso’s *Criminal Anthropology* is considered as the school that marks the transition to the scientific period of the study of crime. The *Classical School* of the study of the criminal phenomenon retreated in the face of the “appeal of positivism”⁹ and, as Cohen (1988: 4) has observed, it was regarded as “mere metaphysical speculation”. It goes without saying that “the emergence of this new form of knowledge, with its concepts, objects and methods of study, required for its possibility much more than the ecstatic discoveries of an Italian doctor in the prisons and asylums of Pavia” (Garland, 1985c: 110-111).¹⁰ Nevertheless, it still remains the case that the *criminal man*, the new abstraction around which the new science of criminology began to revolve, served manifold purposes, at the scientific, social and political level.¹¹

The first and most obvious consequence of the adoption of the positivist model was a shift from *crime* to the *criminal*: This meant in effect that crime *per se*, its nature and meaning, did not need to be scrutinised by criminology; hence, legal definitions of crime could be taken for granted and assimilated into the new discipline which could thus safely preoccupy

⁸ Cited by Garland (1985a: 109-110; 1985c: 111).

⁹ The title of the second chapter of *New Criminology* (Taylor et al., 1973: 31-66).

¹⁰ Garland (1985a: 73-111; 1985b) offered an excellent analysis of the conditions that led to the displacement of classicism and its substitution by this “new form of knowledge”.

¹¹ According to Lindesmith & Levin (1937: 670), “It may be that the theory of the born criminal offered a convenient rationalisation of the failure of preventive effort and an escape from the implications of the dangerous doctrine that crime is an essential product of our social organisation. It may well be that a public, which had been nagged for centuries by reformers, welcomed the opportunity to slough off its responsibilities for this vexing problem”. Similarly, Taylor, Walton and Young (1973: 40) commented on the great appeal of biological determinism: “... it removes any suggestion that crime may be the result of social inequalities. It is something essential in the nature of the criminal and not a malfunctioning of society. In addition, it achieves the utter decimation of the possibility of alternative realities. For the biologically inferior is used synonymously with the asocial. The analysis focuses on the individual who is unable to be social; thus atomised, he poses no threat to the monolithic reality central to positivism”.

itself with the “reasonable” question “*why some members of society violate its rules?*”.¹²

The new program was to focus not on the crime (the act) but the criminal (the actor); ... At the centre of the criminological enterprise now was the notion of causality. ... Whether the level of explanation was biological, psychological, sociological, or a combination of these (“multifactorial”, as some versions were dignified), the Holy Grail was a general causal theory: Why do people commit crime? This quest gave the subject its collective self-definition: “the scientific study of the causes of crime”. (Cohen, 1988: 4)

Apart from its subject matter, criminology in its positivist guise is also grounded on two theoretical principles; namely a *consensus model* of social organisation, as its legitimising basis, and *determinism*, as its epistemological framework.

The *consensus model* provides the “certainty” that the rules in a society represent the general interest and guarantee its normal function, while at the same time law reflects to a great degree these rules. As a consequence, those members of society who violate these rules cannot but constitute a distinct group that has to be studied apart and in itself, so that its particular characteristics can be identified and analysed.

An inherent feature of criminological positivism, *determinism*, provides the methodological framework for such analysis:¹³ the criminal must have some distinct (biological, psychic, social) attributes¹⁴, which are taken to be

¹² Various attempts (among others, Sellin, 1938; Sutherland, 1940) to re-examine and redefine the subject of criminology failed to result in any shift of interest from the causality of *criminal* (or “*deviant*”) behaviour. According to Fritz Sack (1994: 4), “[t]he simple question: ‘What is crime’ is still an embarrassing and intricate question for criminology – despite its routine and pragmatic handling in the empirical workshops of the discipline. The reason and source of this embarrassment became clear when criminologists did not succeed in finding an answer to this question, other than that which is given by the penal code. All attempts that were made by sociologists and criminologists to arrive at a law-free, independent, scientific and authentic definition of crime have failed in the past and are doomed to fail in the future”.

¹³ “The evocation of natural science presents the positivist with a powerful mode of argument. For the system of thought which produces miracles of technology and medicine is a prestigious banner under which to fight. It grants the positivist the gift of ‘objectivity’; it bestows on his pronouncements the mantle of ‘truth’; it endows his suggestions of therapy, however threatening to individual rights and dignity, with the air of the inevitable.” (Taylor et al., 1973: 32)

¹⁴ With emphasis on the first two, at least in the “hard” version of criminological positivism.

almost inevitably responsible for criminal behaviour. Within this framework, then, what is left for criminologists is merely to discover those attributes and offer society the service of eradicating such criminogenic factors and relieving society of this harmful phenomenon.

Talking about the “suicidal tendencies of criminology”, Massimo Pavarini (1994: 50) quoted Ferri’s (optimistic?) anticipation with which the latter concluded his 1900 opus *Sociologia Criminale*: “[Criminology] will dig its own grave because scientific diagnosis and positivist explanation of the causes of criminality ... will reduce the number of delinquents to an irreducible minimum in the future organisation of society which everyday is emerging more strongly” – a vision which more or less remains up to this day the ideal of the field. Beyond the self-destructive self-perception of the discipline, were its epistemological assumptions taken to their logical extremes, the strong positivist version of criminology is inescapably led to a project which is vain in its ambitious proclamations but so unfortunate in its outcomes, for the discipline itself and for the society it is supposed to “serve”. Criminology, however, never relinquished its noble calling: what with decades of research and theorising, treatment and prevention programs, endless observations, measurements and arguments, series of books, articles and reports, high-sounding conferences with overloaded programmes, debates and expert meetings, but also, and above all else, with untold suffering for victims, for offenders, and for their environment. All such prolific activity, then, does not seem to have bent the morale of criminologists – *the truth is somewhere out there and we just have not been able to discover it yet!*

Another historical peculiarity of criminology has to do with the fact that it has never been in possession of its own autonomous scientific field. In fact, its theoretical infrastructure, its methodological armoury, ultimately its very scientific prestige, are all borrowed from other disciplines: from sociology, psychology, criminal science, biology, psychiatry, to mention only the most influential ones.¹⁵ Usually, scholars coming from such established disciplines enter criminology with their distinctive formation and episte-

¹⁵ This relationship is not the same as that in the forms of co-operation between disciplines which actually use the facts and developments of other fields as their material. For example, the use of theoretical physics in engineering or of biology in medicine is “transformed” into a different form of knowledge (often incomprehensible to the original “providers”); respectively, the use of mathematics in economics or of history in other social sciences. This certainly is not the case in criminology.

mological stock, and, naturally, incorporate the phenomenon of crime as part of *their* research interests.¹⁶ At the same time, they quite understandably strive to dominate the field, as the subjects of crime and its control, apart from their scholarly fascination, are always profitable within the socio-political structure; studying them can be an institutionalised scientific activity that is associated with power and authority, and the benefits accruing from such ties.¹⁷ As a consequence, these scholars try to appropriate the subject, either directly (*“the study of the criminal phenomenon is primarily a matter of biology; or psychology; or psychiatry; or sociology; or criminal law”*, and so on), or indirectly, by setting up cognitive sub-systems, thereby fragmenting the field into “specialised areas of study” (*“criminal sociology”*, *“criminal psychology”*, *“criminal psychiatry”*, and so on).¹⁸ This is not just a technical point, as it touches upon the quintessence of the discipline, its *raison d’être*, as it were. One could very well argue that there is no need for criminology to exist (here come Christie and Foucault again); the other disciplines, which study the criminal phenomenon in any case, can arguably continue doing so, possibly maintaining the nomenclature of their specialities, as well as co-operating with each other, in the framework of a “multidisciplinary” approach. Consequently:

Criminology ... is not a science, nor even a knowledge which aspires to scientificity. It is a social-problem-solution which utilises some of the methods

¹⁶ Lombroso himself was a psychiatrist; the most eminent figures in the field were and are mostly sociologists or jurists, while the contemporary “guru” of administrative criminology in the United States, James Q. Wilson, is a political scientist and Professor of Administration. Furthermore, the device of the “multifactorial approach” – already present in the Italian positive school – seems to acknowledge the problem, without contributing to its solution. Today the organisation of criminological studies – in spite of notable exceptions – seems to follow more or less the national tradition. For instance, in Italy, criminology continues to derive its status from clinical criminology and forensics; in Germany – and to a great extent in Francophone countries – it is associated with criminal sciences and legal studies; while the Anglo-Saxon tradition tends to incorporate criminology into the social sciences.

¹⁷ A good example is the enduring contest between psychiatry and criminal law, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, currently exemplified in the area of drugs.

¹⁸ Cohen (1988: 4) put it quite vividly: “Somewhat like a parasite, criminology attached itself to its host subjects (notably, law, psychology, psychiatry, and sociology) and drew from them methods, theories, and academic credibility. At the same time, somewhat like a colonial power landing on new territory, each of these disciplines descended on the eternally fascinating subjects of crime and punishment and claimed them as its own”.

and much of the prestige of other scientific disciplines. Its objects of study – and this applies as much to present day criminology as to that of a century ago – are the “criminal” and the forms of “criminality”. These objects are neither real entities nor theoretical products but are instead socially-defined problems in need of a scientific solution. The “criminal” or his “criminality” become objects of study precisely because they are chosen targets of particular social policies. Theoretically, the criminal has no more right to a science of his own than do the law-abiding or the “honest poor”. (Garland, 1985b: 3)

To the outside world, criminology retains its academic reputation for combining scientific neutrality with humanitarianism, despite the fact that its status derives entirely from the exercise of power throughout the penal apparatus. And it retains its credibility as a policy-relevant science, despite the fact that in terms of *success* in dealing with the crime problem, it should long ago have been relegated to the status of alchemy, astrology, and phrenology. (Cohen, 1988: 26)

Positivism in the social sciences stemmed from the need of the modern capitalist state to develop mechanisms for the systematic monitoring and control of the emerging ethnic populations.¹⁹ As a result, there has always been an intrinsic bond between positivism and “social mechanics”, in the sense that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the social sciences departed from the philosophical notion of the study of man and society and functioned mainly as a body of knowledge that could serve the needs of the dominant ideology. In this respect, criminology came to adopt a “hard” version of positivism²⁰ directly associated with the state apparatus and acquired a privileged position in policy-making, with all the consequences implicated in such an interweaving.

How, then, could such a discipline, with questionable epistemic value, with a subject and prerogatives defined primarily by socio-political and non-scientific criteria,²¹ with a doubtful, overall, quality of scientific discourse,²² with repeated and obvious failures in its proclaimed goals,²³ ever

¹⁹ Foucault, in his analysis on “governmentality” (1991), argued that the formation of such new entities, as the population or the economy, as well as the development of new social sciences for their study and surveillance, were two important requisites for the emergence of the modern state in the eighteenth century.

²⁰ As Taylor, Walter and Young (1973: 10) pointed out: “It is important to distinguish positivism as used in criminology from the positivism involved in social and psychological theory at large, if only because criminological positivism has been more obviously and clearly framed with a view to immediate practice”.

²¹ On the discussion of the social definition of crime and deviance, see – among others – Becker (1963/1973), Chapman (1968), and Phillipson (1971).

²² Apart from the already mentioned criticism by Michel Foucault, an analysis of (pre-

manage to survive and develop, demonstrating such exceptional endurance to all the challenges and destructive criticism it has been subjected to? The first answer comes from Foucault (1980: 47-48):

I think one needs to investigate why such a “learned” discourse became so indispensable to the functioning of the nineteenth-century penal system. What made it necessary was the alibi, employed since the eighteenth century, that if one imposes a penalty on somebody this is not in order to punish what he has done, but to transform what he is. ... Yet they know perfectly well that the instruments available to them, the death penalty, formerly the penal colonies, today imprisonment, don’t transform anyone. Hence there is the necessity to call on those who produce a discourse on crime and criminals which will justify the measures in question.

David Matza (1963: 143) talked about the “*the great task of disconnection*” achieved by criminological positivism: the disassociation of crime (and its study) and state (and its study). Contrary to classicism, the issues of crime, norms, the law and the state were struck out of the criminological agenda and for more than a century the study has been focusing on the criminal and his²⁴ behaviour.²⁵ Even the so-called “sociological approach” of crime was in fact an exercise in social psychology, while the issues of social organisation, class, power, and the nature and function of law were of no interest to the field. Even one of the patriarchs of criminology, Sir Leon Radzinowicz, could not help noticing this (political) dimension of criminological positivism:

It served the interests and relieved the conscience of those at the top to look upon the dangerous classes as an independent category, detached from the prevailing social conditions. They were portrayed as a race apart, morally depraved and vicious, living by violating the fundamental law of orderly so-

war) American criminological production by C. Wright Mills (1943) is also very revealing.

²³ “Why should it be that a century of theorising and research should have made little or no apparent impact either upon the trends of crime and society or upon our ability to modify criminal tendencies in individuals?” (Radzinowicz & King, 1977: 107)

²⁴ “Political correctness” and the use of female pronouns are more or less irrelevant in the case of the criminal: According to both (scholarly and lay) stereotypes and official data, “he” is almost always male (as well as young, poor and – most often – coloured or “exotic”).

²⁵ Lindesmith and Levin (1937: 661) had made a similar observation: “What Lombroso did was to reverse the method of explanation that had been current since the time of Guerry and Quetelet and, instead of maintaining that institutions and traditions determined the nature of the criminal, he held that the nature of the criminal determined the character of institutions and traditions.”

ciety, which was that a man should maintain himself by honest, steady work. (Radzinowicz, 1966: 38-39)

Drawing on Lakatos's distinction between the "external" and "internal" history of a scientific discipline, David Garland outlined this innate identification of criminology with authority, at the level of criminal policy, penal repression and social control:

[T]his ideological foundation – this social problem *raison d'être* – taken together with the reforming concerns of criminologists, crucially affects the subsequent development of the discipline. Instead of settling down to a development which is internally directed in accordance with the patterns of theoretical logic, criminology is continually transformed and directed by external factors – by the demands of penal policy, political viability and ideological conformity. In other words, criminology's policy programme – its external relations and its external history – continues to assert its ideological effect upon the "science" of criminology. The two cannot be separated because they are interdependent – the science is the program and the program is the science. Precisely because criminology's object is a social problem – defined by policies, ideologies and state practices – its 'external' origins will always be internal to it. (Garland, 1985b: 3)

Heinz Steinert (1997: 115) argued that "criminology ... served as the institutionalised form of knowledge about groups to be excluded".²⁶ Using the notion of *social exclusion*, Steinert asserted that many specialities of sociology were employed by the liberal state in order to study the lower classes, while at the same time, anthropology is associated with the need to produce knowledge about the "exotic other", i.e. foreign (colonial) societies. In all such forms of knowledge, scientists unquestioningly accept that their calling includes the provision of information aiming at social exclusion. Criminology, by providing the theoretical backing for extreme forms

²⁶ A similar view was expressed by Stuart Henry. In a conversation with Gregg Barak and Dragan Milovanovic (Henry et al., 1997), he contemplated about the future of (critical) criminology: "The future troubles me with haunting questions of the past. I don't have the answers. The questions are simple. Why do people create differences and then evaluate others as good and bad? ... The fundamental issue is the problematic nature of social construction, evaluation, and investment in, difference. ... Making differences and evaluating categories as good or bad, is the problem. The solution is not easy because, as academics, we are invested in the production and evaluation of difference. The solution is difficult because modern industrial society, intellectual capability and scientific progress are based on the generation and sustenance of differences, as though these constructions were real. They are not real. But that we invest in their reality is the problem and the solution. What can be done to transcend this fundamental problem?"

of social exclusion (such as imprisonment), is included among the key “as-sociates” of the state.

In a parallel line of thought, criminology – together with other social sciences – can be considered to constitute a typical example of what Althusser (1970) designated as “ideological state apparatus”: a system of production of knowledge and politics which does not operate in terms of violence, but by ideological means; it does, however, provide the framework and the theoretical rationalisation for the use of various forms of violence by the “repressive state apparatus” (more specifically, the penal system).

The commitment to the positivistic-deterministic model led to what Matza (1969: 143) identified as the “*partial blindness*” of the scientist or the intellectual – that is, the formation of the areas of research in such ways that certain issues are essentially omitted, either by being altogether circumvented or by being taken for granted. It is also in this vein that Cohen referred to the refusal of criminologists to acknowledge the political nature of their field; the *raison d’être* of criminology is sustainable only to the extent that society sets rules, some people break them and some are punished:

These are matters intimately concerned with questions of values, political conflict, and power. Criminologists have retreated from this battlefield by pretending it doesn’t exist. This is done under two guises: the Neutral Scientist pursuing a question for the pure truth or the State Technician, the social engineer who keeps the system running smoothly. Occasionally, the criminologist ventures forth as the Humanitarian Reformer, and in this guise has done much to eradicate some of the grosser irrationalities and barbarities of the legal and penal system. But there remains a political timidity that shuts out certain problems. (Cohen, 1973: 51-52)

The formation of research programs in criminology – that is, the selective preoccupation with certain issues and the concealment or neutralisation of others – is also related to two additional factors, directly associated with the inherent attachment of the field to authority: namely, the relationship between criminology and criminal policy, and the funding of research and higher education.

As Garland (1985c) has shown, criminology is innately bound with criminal policy. This, as it were, is its “noble cause”: the elimination of criminality. In spite of the occasional appeals to the “scientific purity” of the field, few criminologists cherish illusions about it.²⁷ In both theory and

²⁷ The President of the American Society of Criminology, Joan Petersilia, Director of the RAND Corporation’s Criminal Justice Program, in her presidential address at the 1990 ASC annual meeting, expressed her concern for the weakening of this relation-

research, the bulk of the positivist output either aims at shaping some kind of policy or is itself the result of the involvement of criminologists in such policy-oriented programs. The immediate result of this relationship is that criminologists tend to deal with issues that may have some (direct or indirect) applicability; and, on the other hand, they are directed by the formal agents of criminal policy to the study of issues which serve the interests of established authority. There thus develops an ideologically and epistemologically dominant criminology²⁸ within which academics, researchers and young scholars can operate without much room for dispute. In an essentially restricted frame such as this, regardless of the degree of flexibility it may possess, non-conventional (or, as it were, "deviant") scientific views, which set forth new issues or challenge the system itself, are either incorporated into the mainstream discourse or completely ostracised. In this process universities play an important role, since they train young students according to the dominant principles and, by means of their co-operation with the state, secure a field of action and an audience.²⁹

ship: "Part of our stated mission is to be a forum for the exchange of practical information between researchers and the field – those who set policies and those who make them work. That seems especially compelling at a time when crime is a major public concern and the criminal justice system is, quite literally, in crisis. In the early days, the link between research and the system was virtually embodied in the faculty and students, and the influence went both ways. But since the academic has largely replaced the practitioner in the classroom and in research, the link has grown weaker and, with it, that kind of immediate influence". (Petersilia, 1991: 3-4)

²⁸ "The dominant mode of theorising in criminology remains wedded to an establishment view that the object of criminology as a science is correctionalism. Establishment criminology seeks to correct human behaviour in a manner that will reduce crime. The fact is that since the inception and development of criminology and the hundredfold multiplication of academics and social workers who have become involved in it, crime has simply increased. This fact of increasing crime rates is somehow ignored by most establishment criminologists, who are still busy receiving state grants and state funding by filling in forms that often have, as a leading question, 'How will this proposal help reduce crime?'" (Walton, 1998: 2-3)

²⁹ On the process of "homogenisation" and the role of education, see Christie (1977). The role of universities in legitimising the state was also analysed by Miliband (1969: 220-221): "[T]he state everywhere now plays an important, even a decisive part in determining how, both in teaching and research, universities may play their part in 'serving the community'... In other words, what they serve is, using the word literally, an alien purpose, that of the state. And not only do they serve it; by so doing they identify themselves with it, and accept it as legitimate, worthy of support". And further down (231) "The question of the role of the universities in the legitimization process is in many ways connected with the more general question of the role of in-

The School of Criminology of the University of Berkeley and Anthony Platt's personal adventure constitute a most unfortunate but very telling example (Geiss, 1995; Schauffler & Hannigan, 1974). The School was officially founded in 1950, but it had already existed since 1916, when the then Chief of Police of Berkeley, August Vollmer and Professor of Law Alexander Kidd set up a program for the training of criminal justice personnel. The first Dean of the School was Orlando Wilson, former police Commander and Professor of Police Administration, who resigned in 1960 in order to become Chief of Police in Chicago. In 1961, Wilson was succeeded by Joseph Lohman, who, following the guidelines of the University, broadened the curriculum by adding a social science dimension to the taught subjects (which had hitherto been largely technical and focused mainly on law enforcement); in addition, Lohman managed to draw significant funding for both research and postgraduate studies. His death, in 1968, coincided with a pervasive crisis both in the University and in the whole country. In the years that followed until its discontinuance in 1976, the School became a focus-point for progressive criminologists from the United States, from Canada, as well as from many European countries. Renowned scholars, such as Sheldon Messinger, Paul Takagi, Anthony Platt, Barry Krisberg, Herman Schwendinger, were among the faculty, while many of its undergraduate and postgraduate students developed into outstanding figures of radical criminology. The School interrupted its traditional connections with the local police and the judiciary and turned to a radical analysis of the social and legal system. Marxist analyses prevailed in lectures and debates, while at the same time teachers and students participated in the social and political activities of the era.³⁰ These develop-

tellecuals (who may not, of course, be academics, just as all academics are not intellectuals) in the fashioning, as distinct from the transmission, of ideas and values". Ronal Akers (1992) described the transformation, in the late 1960s, of criminology in the United States, from a sociologically-oriented field of study to a legally-oriented one, under the patronage of the federal government and its agencies – such as the Law Enforcement Assistance Association – who sponsored criminal justice programmes in American universities and colleges.

³⁰ "Arguably, one of the earliest U.S. centres of what eventually became critical criminology was the School of Criminology at the University of California at Berkeley. It was there that the intellectual movement then known as 'radical criminology' began to take organisational shape in the form of the Union of Radical Criminology, and the publication of a journal, *Issues in Criminology* (later *Crime and Social Justice* and eventually *Social Justice*) which served as an important vehicle for disseminating radical thought in criminology." (Michalowski, 1996: 10)

ments were in total discord with the dominant ideology, both in American society and the universities, and resulted in the formal discontinuance of the School by the then Governor of California, Ronald Reagan, in an unprecedented demonstration of both political and academic authoritarianism.³¹ Members of staff who were not tenured were dismissed. Such was the fate of Anthony Platt, whose tenure application had been rejected twice, due to his political action, although he was by general agreement one of the most brilliant scholars at Berkeley. In the first instance, his application was rejected, in spite of the favourable proposal, on the pretext that Platt had been arrested during a protest in 1969. He had been charged with vandalising a car (its tires had been slashed), which was eventually proven to be his own! A second charge, resisting arrest, was dismissed and Platt's consequent suit for false arrest and battery led to an out-of-court settlement in his favour, discharge of the involved officers and a public apology by the Chief of the Berkeley campus police. All these, however, did not have the slightest effect on the deliberations of the university committee, which of course could not tolerate even the idea of one of its faculty members being arrested.³² Three years later, the Rector was somewhat more forthcoming and honest in his rejective report: he would not mind such activity on the part of a professor of mathematics or physics, or even psychology, but he considered it inappropriate for a criminology professor!³³ Obviously, Platt had not paid attention to Dennis Chapman's (1968: 22-23) warning, with

³¹ Perhaps no other account could better summarise what happened, than the words of two of the protagonists: "California officials and university bureaucrats overwhelmed the radicals even though sympathetic faculty and thousands of students in other departments supported them. A law-and-order alliance formed by liberal academics joined the bureaucrats and validated their decision to deny radicals a place at Berkeley." (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1999: 108)

³² The approach was not so novel: As early as in 1918 William Isaac Thomas, professor at the University of Chicago and one of the most prominent figures of American sociology, was dismissed after his arrest by the FBI, although the charges were dropped. Thomas himself was an unconventional intellectual with social and political activity and advanced ideas that came into conflict with the established views, while his wife too was involved in pacifistic activism. See Coser (1977: 534-535).

³³ Reported by Geis (1995:285). Miliband (1969: 228) commented on this form of ideological control: "For the tragedy of American universities in the McCarthy era – and after – is not only that many of them were debarred from employing communists and other 'subversives'; an equal or even greater tragedy, is that they mostly found little difficulty in endorsing 'loyalty requirements; and that those who were not so debarred used their autonomy and freedom in appointments similarly to exclude such men and often to get rid of them if they had them".

regard to the role of the social sciences: “The social sciences are a part of the symbolic system by which societies adapt and are controlled. ... The social sciences accept the stereotype of the criminal as given, for to challenge it would involve heavy penalties. The penalties are, to be isolated from the main stream of professional activity, to be denied resources for research, and to be denied official patronage with its rewards in material and status”. A few years later, in an interview in *Crime and Social Justice*, a journal that Platt has been publishing together with Gregory Shank, Paul Takagi and others, Noam Chomsky was explaining why, in his opinion, intellectuals avoid any involvement in political issues: “There’s a big personal cost. This is a very rich society and it pays people off very well if they conform with the privileged sectors. On the other hand, if you are a traitor to your class – since the state does not have resources of violence to use against the privileged – you know you don’t end up in concentration camps. But life is difficult in many other ways. You are marginalised at school, vilified, ignored, and it is just a tremendous burden on your time and energy” (Dieterich, 1985:105).

Funding is one of the thorniest issues in scientific endeavour altogether; it becomes extremely crucial in the social sciences, and when it comes to criminology, it can really be a matter of sheer survival. Given the field’s subject, the state is almost the exclusive financial source for both research programs and higher education, either directly or indirectly: ministries, the criminal justice system, specialised agencies and state-controlled funding establishments. Even non-governmental grants, however limited, are almost invariably associated with policy-making and directly political concerns: research foundations and think tanks of political parties, pressure groups (usually “moral entrepreneurs”), various political formations, and so on. In consequence, there is intense control of research programs, exclusion of undesirable views (it would be most unlikely even for the most liberal authority to finance the study of its own subversion), but also, to a great extent, manipulation of the selected ones.³⁴

Nils Christie (1997) pointed out that criminological research is entangled in an extremely awkward situation. On the one hand, the state is interested

³⁴ On the governmental funding of criminological research in the United States, see Galliher (1979; 1999) and Takagi (1979). This dependence on the central authority has been pointed out even by liberal criminologists; see, for example, the criticism by Radzinowicz (1994) and Hood (1987) on the control of criminological research in Britain by the Home Office, which conducts directly a large part of this research.

in material that will assist its normal functioning and, as a consequence, the funded research should accept its fundamental ideological doctrine. And on the other hand, the data provided by the state – which is at all events the main provider of criminal statistics and other data concerning the operation of the criminal justice system – are already processed and elaborated according to the perspectives and needs of the official system. In addition, the state is the major – if not the sole – fund resource of higher education,³⁵ as well as the main employer of graduates, either in the criminal justice or the educational system. Consequently, there is not only ideological but also practical dependence of the field on state authority, with all the serious limitations that this entails for the make-up of the discipline.

Washington, D.C., 1972-4

On Sunday morning, September 8 [1974], President Gerald R. Ford attended St. John's Church, across from Lafayette Park. Afterward, he invited a pool of reporters and photographers into the Oval Office, where he read a brief statement and then signed a proclamation granting Richard Nixon a "full, free, and absolute pardon" for any crimes "which he, Richard Nixon, has committed or may have committed" during his presidency. The time had come, the President said, to end this "American tragedy" and restore "tranquillity". (Kutler, 1990: 553)

The problem of preventing future Watergates cannot be fully resolved by law. If law alone were enough, after all, there would have been no Watergate to begin with, for there are laws aplenty against such ventures. The place at which sensible reform begins is acceptance of the fact that no law will stop men with a strong will to disregard it. Accepting this casts doubt on the need for radical reform of existing legal and institutional arrangements. (Winter, 1974: 83)³⁶

As already mentioned, the 1960s shaped the ideological and intellectual framework for the manifestation of the discrediting of criminology during

³⁵ "There is no dispute about the fact – it is indeed the merest commonplace – that with the exception of some private institutions of higher learning, notably in the United States, the universities are very largely dependent upon the state for finance in the pursuit of their main activities, namely teaching and research. One obvious consequence of that fact is that the state has come to have an increasing say, directly or indirectly, in the manner in which the universities use the funds which are allotted to them." (Miliband, 1969: 220)

³⁶ Report by Ralph K. Winter, Jr., project director of the Advisory Panel on the Study of the Legislative Implications of Watergate; James Q. Wilson was among the members of the panel.

the two decades that followed. A series of crises aggravated the political climate: the Cold War, the Cuba crisis, the Vietnam War, the dictatorships in Western Europe, the regimes of the Warsaw Pact and the “Prague Spring”, “May ’68”, irrespective of their specific causes, features and outcomes, brought forward issues which had remained out of stage for more than half a century. One particular event set forth most profoundly all those issues which had been (hypocritically) disregarded by criminologists³⁷ – the meaning of crime, the forms and aims of intervention, the political dimension of the field. The Watergate scandal, on 17 June 1972, in which high-rank state officials were involved and which led – after persistent efforts to cover it up – to the resignation of President Nixon on 9 August 1974, did not allow anyone to overlook the indisputable (but carefully hushed up) fact that actions which may not fall under the so-called “common crime” and concern the upper socio-economic interests and the state itself cause even greater economic and social harm. Such phenomena did not fit in the traditional subject of criminology, while the positivistic model and the respective methodological tools could not be applied in such cases. As Cohen (1973:52) ironically observed: “Were those involved in the Watergate affair or local cases of political corruption just unconditional extroverts? Suffering from identity crises? Trapped in a criminal subculture? Why aren’t criminologists busy giving *them* pencil-tapping [psychological] tests and trying to find out whether they had ‘cruel, passive, or neglecting’ mothers?”³⁸

³⁷ That is to say, *mainstream criminologists*; radical criminologists had already engaged in the study of such issues. As Elliott Currie (1999a: 16-17) observed, “it wasn’t ‘radical’ to point out that frightening and potentially abusive techniques of ‘behaviour control’ were being used in some prisons (which we said), or that prisons were increasingly being used to contain the consequences of larger economic and racial inequalities (which we said), or that some American actions in Vietnam came under the definition of crimes by any intelligible standard, or that the police in many cities were increasingly getting involved, since the riots of the 1960s, in scary and professionally troubling forms of paramilitary surveillance and penetration of the ghettos. Nor was it particularly ‘radical’ to point out that contemporary capitalism contained powerful pressures toward crime and violence. All of this was just *true*, and the fact that all too many ‘mainstream’ criminologists were mostly silent about these things was more a reflection of their timidity and retreat from social engagement than of our radicalism.”

³⁸ In an impressive way, the first lady of the United States, Hillary Clinton, recently called upon her husband’s traumatic childhood, but only in order to reason a traditional form of “deviant behaviour” – his abundant (“inappropriate”) extramarital activity, and in particular the Lewinski case. Quite soundly, journalists (but not crimi-

The theoretical background for this “new age” of criminology was provided by Howard Becker,³⁹ who with his labelling theory brought to the fore the issue of norms – their definition as well as their application.⁴⁰ According to Becker (1963: 14):

deviance is not a simple quality, present in some kinds of behaviour and absent in others. Rather, it is the product of a process which involves responses of other people to the behaviour. The same behaviour may be an infraction of the rules at one time and not at another; may be an infraction when committed by one person, but not when committed by another; some rules are broken with impunity, others are not. In short, whether a given act is deviant or not depends in part on the nature of the act (that is, whether or not it violates some rule) and in part on what other people do about it. ... Deviance is not a quality that lies in behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it.

Ironically enough, the subject of criminology returned to its “pre-scientific” period, namely *crime*; but this time with a new theoretical and methodological armoury. Interactionism, as well as Marx’s and Foucault’s writings, provided the framework for what was probably the most fertile discussion in the field of criminology on both sides of the Atlantic – North America and Western Europe. This period – roughly the 1970s – was characterised by a remarkable production of radical criminological discourse, representing an endeavour to overthrow the dominant views on law, crime, the criminal, but also on the state and political power itself. Taylor, Walton and Young’s *New Criminology* (1973) – although they repudiated their views later⁴¹ – could be described, somewhat arbitrarily, as the equivalent of *L’Uomo Delinquente*, with regard to its importance in the genealogy of the field. At about the same time, Richard Quinney (1970, 1974) upset the criminological ethos with his Marxist analyses of crime in relation to the

nologists...) mockingly wondered whether the bombings of Iraq and Yugoslavia and, in general, President Clinton’s imperial attitude within the international “new order” should be attributed to these childhood traumas.

³⁹ For a personal account of his very interesting life and career, see Debro (1970).

⁴⁰ The issue of norms had already been set forth by Thorsten Sellin in his pioneering work on culture conflict (1938), but the social and economic conditions of the period had not facilitate further elaboration. Obviously the conjunction was more favourable for Becker.

⁴¹ As Pavarini (1994: 58) very accurately noted: “Even if the authors of that successful book are now extremely critical of what they believed, and perhaps were, 20 years ago, I suspect, ironically, that they will pass into the history of criminological thought precisely for what they now seem almost ashamed of”.

capitalist system and to the role of criminology.⁴² The Schwendingers (1970) caused similar discomfort by connecting crime with fundamental human rights and their violation by capitalism.⁴³ The common aim of all such efforts was the overturn of the positivist model, its subject, methodology and ideology. Through the basic ideas of symbolic interactionism, crime was “demystified” and the interest turned to those issues that had remained persistently in the dark: law making, the function of the criminal justice system, the ideology of the positivistic model, and, ultimately, state, power and authority. The main characteristic of the various ramifications of this deconstructive movement was undoubtedly the element of politicisation⁴⁴ and the transfer of the study of crime from criminology to sociology and political science – in short, the appearance of a form of “political economy of crime”.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the noble intentions, its “ideological purity”, its rich theoretical production and the favourable conjunction, this enterprise very soon revealed its inherent weaknesses. In the end, the new approach did not manage to displace the traditional criminological programme; the “great overthrow”, both at the ideological and epistemological level, was never accomplished.

Contrary to expressed opinion regarding a “paradigmatic revolution” in criminology, it is an indisputable fact that the positivist program, its propositions and methodology, never ceased to be in operation and produce results, and of course never ceased (for how could it?) to reflect and serve the

⁴² “Criminology – as the scientific study of crime – has served a single purpose: legitimation of the existing social order. The established system has been taken for granted; departures from and threats to social order have been the objects of investigation. In the name of developing knowledge about crime, most criminologists have supported current institutions at the expense of human freedoms and social revolution. Through a special form of reasoning and adherence to a particular ideology, the needs of the individual have been identified with the need to maintain and perpetuate the existing order.” (Quinney, 1974: 26)

⁴³ “What is certain is that the legalistic definitions [of crime] cannot be justified as long as they make the activity of criminologists subservient to the State. It is suggested that an alternative solution can be developed which is based on some of the traditional notions of crime as well as notions organised around the concept of egalitarianism. In this process of redefining crime, criminologists will redefine themselves, no longer to be the defenders of order but rather the guardians of human rights. In reconstructing their standards, they should make man, not institutions, the measure of all things.” (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1970: 138)

⁴⁴ “The retreat from theory is over, and the politicisation of crime and criminology is imminent.” (Taylor et al., 1973: 281)

dominant ideology.⁴⁵ Accordingly, one could assert that a parallel field, in constant conflict with criminology, was formed, which bears unduly its name (even with the addition of some adjective: “critical”, “radical”, “Marxist”, or whatever).⁴⁶ Cohen used the term “anti-criminology” (alike with similar movements in other scientific areas, such as “anti-psychiatry”) and has been adequately realistic as to the outcome of the enterprise (1988: 22):

Any attempt to explain the fate of anti-criminology must avoid a narcissistic exaggeration of its importance. True, these ideas were diffused with commitment and enthusiasm, and true, they reached the centre of the criminological enterprise. But at no point has the theoretical or political momentum been strong enough to pose a real threat to the dominant tradition. Today’s conservative criminologists are debating with the legacy of liberalism and need never even mention any more “radical” perspective. The pristine form of anti-criminology must look like pure science fiction to the hard realists of crime control.

As its appearance, so is the retreat of the “New Criminology” due to internal and external processes, as well as the political circumstances of the period.

Merseyside, 1981

In May 1979 a Conservative government was elected in the U.K. which was to have a major impact on the political economy and social conditions throughout the 1980s. For some “Thatcherism” offered an immediate solution to the disruption of the so-called “winter of discontent” which preceded the general election. Its roots, however, were well established in the shift towards a free-market economy and greater intervention via the law which had been key characteristics of the Heath government of the early 1970s. ... [T]he range of New Right organisations which developed in the mid-1970s and their champion, Margaret Thatcher, successfully hi-jacked the concept

⁴⁵ “What radical criminology did not do to any significant degree was to challenge the criminological establishment.” (Young, 1986: 8)

⁴⁶ Tiftt and Sullivan, as representatives of an anarchist perspective, have been more explicit on this point (1980: 5): “Our statements ought not to be construed as a search for a methodological or ideological updating of liberal criminology. Our cry is not for a ‘new criminology’ as a distinct body of knowledge that promises equality within the framework of mechanisation or the state. Our objection is not that criminology has been bad or sloppy or methodically disjointed or the work of technicians, but that there *is* a criminology.... Our cry, if anything, *is for a different world*, without a criminology or a science of punishment...”.

of "freedom", so long the clarion call of parliamentary socialism. The programme adopted by parliamentary conservatism, then, was constructed from a neat dovetail of economic libertarianism, popularly portrayed as monetarism, and social authoritarianism. (Scraton, 1987: vii)

The riots in various British towns (Brixton, Southall, Toxteth, Merseyside, and elsewhere) in the summer of 1981 and the reaction to them were the first clear indications of the new authoritarian state which Prime-Minister Margaret Thatcher envisaged. Ian Taylor wrote about those incidents and what followed:

"On 13 July 1981 the Merseyside police became the first force in mainland Britain to make use of rubber bullets and the notorious CS gas on civilians, and, in the same week, the government announced that army camps would be used to house those who received prison sentences as a result of the riots. The government also announced its intention to introduce a new Riot Act and proclaimed its support for more aggressive police responses in any future situation where there was 'a threat to public order'. As in Ireland, and as over the question of soccer violence at home, the social violence of the inner-city under-class was to meet with the force of intensified penal discipline". (Taylor, 1981: ix)

This course of events led the British representatives of the *New Criminology*⁴⁷ to a revision of their stance toward crime and its management. They felt that the analyses of anti-criminology had no practical effects or potential for intervention in the new state of affairs. As Lea and Young (1984: 11) wrote, "The left ... seeks to minimise the problem of working-class crime; left-wing criminology has – with a few notable exceptions – spent most of the last decade attempting to debunk the problem of crime. ... It sees the war against crime as a side-track from the class struggle, at best an illusion invented to sell news, at worst an attempt to make the poor scapegoats by blaming their brutalising circumstances on themselves" – especially when "the mass media and a substantial section of right-wing opinion are convinced that the crime rate is rocketing, that the war against crime is of central public concern and that something dramatic has to be done to halt the decline into barbarism". Consequently, "[a] new left realism about crime must seek to navigate between these two currents".⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Quite ironically, it was the architects of *New Criminology* who set the mark for this new shift: Taylor (1981) and Young (1986; Lea & Young, 1984). See also the collective volume by Matthews & Young (1986).

⁴⁸ Jock Young was one of the principal theorists of the "left realism", with vigorous activity and substantial production (among other: Young, 1987; 1988; 1992). For a

What lay latent in the reasoning of the “new realists” was, once more, the relationship of crime and criminology to political power. With increasing intensity – not only in Britain, but also in most European countries and North America – the criminal issue was becoming central in the programmes of political parties which were in government or contending for power.⁴⁹ Progressive criminologists – especially those affiliated to left-wing parties, such as the Labour Party⁵⁰ – felt the pressure for realistic pro-

discussion on “left realism”, its terms of formation and weaknesses, see Taylor (1992) and Ruggiero (1992). The latter particularly pointed out the theoretical weakness of the task in relation to crime, institutions and the discipline itself (that is, the issues which were central in the deconstructive criticism in which they had participated under different guise): “The realists lack the kind of reflexivity which would be necessary to explain the social condition of the existence of their own discipline and its role in constructing and shaping social problems. They do not consider how their own subjectivity and their own role may influence their ‘realistic’ depiction of social phenomena. ... Their being ‘inside’ the institutions prevents them from widening their terrain of research and consequently their domain of knowledge”. (1992: 38)

⁴⁹ On the “law and order politics” in Britain, see Downes & Morgan (1997). Respectively, for U.S.A., see Platt (1994a,b), as well as Currie (1999b). Kramer and Michalowski (1995) examined the divergence between the electoral programme of the Democrats and the criminal policy of the Clinton administration; similar observations could be made for many European countries. As they noted, “When Bill Clinton was elected in 1992, many people from centrists to the Left, had reason to hope that a new set of more progressive social policies would be forthcoming. ... These hopes were never very realistic to begin with, but they were seriously diminished by the actions of the Clinton administration during its first two years.” (Kramer & Michalowski, 1995: 88). And further down (98-99): “During his first two and one-half years in office, Clinton has manifested a dual approach to crime control. The neoliberal, rhetorical side accepts earlier liberal ideas about the macro-social roots of crime and emphasises that any real reduction in crime will depend upon addressing its underlying social causes. ... The neoconservative policy side reiterates a belief in the efficacy of formal control, particularly through more policing and more punishment, including the net-widening effects of boot camps. Thus, Clinton’s approach to crime control appears as a hodgepodge of hard and soft strategies that tend more to reconfirm conservative crime-control policies (Clinton’s iron fist) than address the fundamental social inequalities that generate high crime rates (Clinton’s velvet tongue)”.

⁵⁰ It is quite indicative that John Lea and Jock Young’s book, *What Is to Be Done About Law and Order?* (1984), is one of a series of books by the Socialist Society under the general title “What Is to Be Done?”, which “will deal with the central social and political issues of the day. They will set out the arguments, provide information and answer important questions, offering a political agenda for the 1980s” (from the back cover). Cohen in his interview to McMahon and Kellough (1987: 146) explained: “You can’t understand the left realist theory unless you understand what has happened to the Labour Party in England, and why a cohort of English academics (not

posals of immediate application, within the given socio-economic framework⁵¹ – visions and utopias could wait.⁵² According to Cohen (1988: 22), “left realism is a Labour Party criminology, produced by socialists moving from sectarian left groupings into the central political arena”.

Aside from the political circumstances, the “anti-criminology movement” was a victim, on the one hand, of its own contradictions and an intellectual and ideological fatigue, and, on the other, of the tactical manoeuvres of traditional criminology. In spite of certain common aspirations of the various currents, their ideological profile ranged considerably from left liberalism to orthodox Marxism and anarchism; moreover, it is not at all certain – rather the opposite – that all these versions shared the same visions and the same perspectives with regard to science, to the state, or to power in general. After an initial period of enthusiasm and euphoria, such and other contradictions inevitably came to the fore and led to a theoretical and ideological splintering of an enterprise that had none of the monolithic stability of positivism, let alone its political leverage or financial rewards. Besides, as already mentioned, on no occasion was the order of things in either science or politics seriously threatened.

That which played a determining part in the course of events was undoubtedly the tactical manoeuvring of traditional criminology – its competence to adapt and co-opt:

just criminologists) have moved to the Labour Party and are developing a criminology *for* the Labour Party. I think that’s what left realism is: it’s a socialist version of law and order”.

⁵¹ “For too long the politics of law and order have been a monopoly of the right. Yet the left have every reason materially, politically and ideologically to intervene in this area. We are too paralysed by our preconceptions easily to take up the challenge which is demanded of us. The opportunities for an initiative from the left are enormous; we must not shrink the task” (Lea & Young, 1984: 272). “[T]he [left] idealists with their myopia about crime simply turn their back on the problem” (262).

⁵² Of course, this kind of swing does not concern only crime and criminology. As Daniel Singer wrote, in an anniversary evaluation of “May ’68”, “The questions raised in 1968 – over the meaning of growth, the purposes of the social division of labour, the menacing size of the ruling Leviathan and its real function – could be and were dismissed as rather utopian or not very urgent at a time when the economy was forcing ahead, incomes were rising and the welfare state was ensuring unprecedented security. Today in Europe with millions of jobless, where our inventive ability leads to longer lines of unemployed, where the welfare functions of the state and social security in general are being threatened, these are no longer abstract or distant questions”. (Singer, 1988: 34-35)

The Marcusean notion of repressive tolerance tells us of the extraordinary powers of modern capitalism to absorb, co-opt, and neutralise even the most radical attacks against it. This is the same point made (more forcibly and persuasively) in the theory of “recuperation”, produced by the International Situationists in that most far-reaching of all critiques ever made of modern culture. ... Unlike in certain areas of natural sciences, it is impossible to construct a model that so fundamentally undermines all previous assumptions as to create a completely new discipline. With the exception perhaps of abolitionism, nothing produced by anti-criminology, neither the discovery of any new facts nor the creation of a new mode of understanding the old facts, came remotely near this type of paradigmatic or disciplinary revolution. The special history of the criminological discourse – the deep interpenetration between knowledge and power – makes this prospect even more unlikely than in any other branch of the social sciences. To be against criminology, it seems, one has to be part of it. Indeed ... some influential members of the original anti-criminology cohort have now decided to make a virtue of the apparent necessity, abandoning as wholly misconceived the attempt to construct an alternative discourse and returning instead to the citadels of the old criminology. (Cohen, 1988: 8-9)

Hence, traditional criminology finally managed, to a great extent, to absorb the shocks caused by the attack; and this was accomplished in two ways:⁵³

Firstly, certain strands of the criticism were adopted, at both the theoretical and the applied level.⁵⁴ As Steinert (1997: 123-124) outlined:

The simple, obvious and basic fact that ‘crime’ is a category that is defined by society and state, that is a political and historical concept, reached some reluctant recognition. After a moment of irritation, the ‘traditional’ side of criminology found out that this new fluidity of the concept posed no insurmountable difficulty. Its critical impetus can be neutralised by (1) adding ‘stigma’ as one additional factor to the array of manifold causes of and influences on crime and the criminal which constitutes the uniting framework of the discipline; (2) adding ‘law-making’ as an additional topic to the field of criminology and criminal law; (3) accepting that there is exemplary punishment and that ‘we’ have to shrewdly regulate this selectivity so as to optimise its deterrent effects.

⁵³ In no case, of course, should the fact be overlooked that traditional criminology always had the support of authority, as illustrated above. These tactical manoeuvres were mainly employed in the process of adaptation to new facts (which were at all events visible and affecting it), as well as to pressures by liberal trends from within.

⁵⁴ A characteristic example being the community programmes, which were applied complementarily to repressive measures and were finally led to failure, thus deepening the crisis in critical criminology. See, on the matter, Cohen (1986).

The second process – of “co-optation” – was more individualistic: it had to do with the capacity of scholars to remain consistent with their views and principles, resisting incentives for conformity and sanctions for their “deviance”. The exclusion process, scientifically and intellectually, has been described above. The advocates of the anti-criminology movement both in Western Europe and North America (and especially in the United States) found themselves excluded from research programmes, prestigious higher education institutions, decision-making procedures, as well as wider audiences; they did of course continue to participate in congresses and contribute to specialised journals (though not always so easily⁵⁵), but had almost no access to the mass media and a wider audience.⁵⁶ Furthermore, their views were either lacking the element of immediate applicability or were rejected as unrealistic (or “utopian”), resulting in their having no access to the domain of criminal policy.

Moreover, the students of the 1960s, by now the young scholars of the 1970s, were no more the visionaries of “all or nothing” – they were willing to negotiate for much less.⁵⁷ To the intellectual and ideological fatigue, a personal one was added; the sanctions described by Chapman (but also by

⁵⁵ In 1977 Harold Pepinsky submitted to *Contemporary Crises* an article titled ‘Communist Anarchism as an Alternative to the Rule of Law’. The article was originally rejected by the anonymous referees of the journal and, after a one-year correspondence of the editor, William Chambliss, with the writer and the reviewers, it was published in 1978 together with the reviews and the letters exchanged. Certainly there are many more articles – especially by scholars not so eminent as Pepinsky – that have been rejected (and never published) by journals, especially more conservative than *Contemporary Crises*.

⁵⁶ “Critical criminologists daily live with the realities that their work is largely ignored except by a handful of concerned academics or perhaps those who are sympathetic to their interpretations of crime and justice issues. The media, and thus most Americans, simply dismiss progressive criminologists even though they may be the academics best-equipped to explain various social phenomena and especially crime, since they depart from behavioural interpretations and focus instead on the political economy of crime and punishment.... Due to their ideological interpretations of criminalisation, crime, and the social reactions to it, and to their lack of popular prestige, this group of criminologists is consistently excluded from the sacred halls of legislative action (or inaction) and, as a result, has almost no voice in public policies concerning crime and justice”. (Tunnell, 1995: 89-90)

⁵⁷ “Many youngsters active in 1968, once the movement collapsed, went back to cultivate their own gardens, devoted their energy to their profession or even when they resigned themselves to rallying to the Socialist Party, did so without any illusions”. (Singer, 1988: 29)

Chomsky) were very severe indeed⁵⁸ – how many could survive without formal recognition in their own field, without research support and the means to work, without an audience, without the accompanying social and academic status?⁵⁹

Sheffield, 1987

Criminology has doggedly mastered the crisis of the 1960/70s and come out of it enriched and unshaken. (Steinert, 1997: 124)

Enriched and unshaken – but what about its “honour”? Did criminology regain its “lost honour”?

In Western Europe, and especially in Britain, “left realists” did not seem to have any particular problem in their co-operation with traditional criminology. The latter adapted in time to the spirit of the age, while the realists, though “left”, tended to forget rather conveniently that crime is a socially and politically defined concept – and perhaps it is not so bad to imprison people; as long, of course, as “the right ones” are imprisoned:

⁵⁸ In some cases they went too far, assuming alarming proportions: In 1982 Khrushro Ghandhi, co-ordinator of the (ultra-conservative) *National Democratic Policy Committee* launched an attack against criminologists – with press releases and a memorandum to the California Attorney General – accusing them that they had constituted an international terrorist network and calling for further investigation and action: “Since the late 1950’s, the branch of social sciences known alternatively as ‘criminology’, ‘international law’, and ‘deviance studies’ has been a thinly veiled cover for training, recruiting and deploying of international terrorist organisations, both of the communist and neo-fascist varieties” (*Executive Intelligence Review*, Jan. 23, 1982). The target of his attack, which received great publicity, were progressive criminologists, both in North America and Western Europe, the School of Criminology of the University of Berkeley (which had already been discontinued), the journal *Crime and Justice*, the *European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control*, but even criminologists who could hardly be considered a threat to the established order (let alone “terrorists”): among others, Sir Leon Radzinowicz, Cherif Bassiouni, Marvin Wolfgang, and Denis Szabo, president of the International Centre of Comparative Criminology at Montreal (which was itself accused of backing up the – considered a terrorist organisation – *Le Front de Libération du Québec*) and the International Society of Criminology. For a detailed account, see Shank & Thomas (1982).

⁵⁹ “More than in any other field of sociology, the student of crime and its control suffers from the pressures and delusions of relevance, impact, the wish to be listened to by the powerful.” (Cohen, 1988: 30)

What is even more surprising is that the 'social definition' understanding of 'crime' is gradually being given up even by 'critical criminology' – 'Left Realism' being the most programmatic case. This goes with a new willingness to have the state punish – if the right people are punished.... In the course of a century we have refined, but not radically abandoned the position which criminology had right from the start. (Steinert, 1997: 124)

In the summer of 1987, the National Conference on Crime and Criminology was organised at the University of Sheffield, with a large attendance by British criminologists from the whole ideological and epistemological spectrum: conservative positivists, liberals, left realists; academics, researchers, but also officials from state or private organisations and agencies. As Taylor (1992: 108) observed, the main feature of this conference was the "amnesia" in respect to the theoretical attack of the previous two decades and the absence of any epistemological and political debate and conflict. He spoke of a "*reinvention*" of criminology:

... the immediate conditions of constraint and occupational insecurity that obtained in many higher educational institutions in Britain was provoking the *reinvention*, for the most pragmatic of reasons, of a professional and disciplinary concept of 'criminology'. And it was also as if the continuing escalation of crime rates in Britain, up by some fifty percent overall since the election of the Thatcher government in 1979, had generated the urgent, popular and political, demand for a criminology that *could* produce some practical and immediate answers. (Taylor, 1992: 108-109)

The response of the Left to this demand had been "left realism", i.e. the pursuit of resolving the problem on the basis of the pressure exerted upon the working class by common crime and the sense of insecurity marking the lower strata of big cities. On the other hand, however, there developed a sort of "professionalised" criminology: more and more criminologists began to be employed outside higher education, in both the criminal justice system and state (such as the Home Office Research Unit) or private (such as the NACRO – National Association for the Care and Treatment of Offenders) agencies. The demand has been for the discovery of solutions – immediate and applicable – without the "annoying" burden of ideological and methodological discussions within academic criminology. This trend, labelled "administrative criminology",⁶⁰ prevailed and developed in the

⁶⁰ Cohen (1988) uses the term "managerial". Both terms describe the disconnection from the scientific study (either positivist or critical) and the association with the administration (the management of the system).

United States where, with James Q. Wilson as its dean, it determined federal and state criminal policy; with crime control as an alibi, it shaped an extremely authoritative framework of social control, employing repressive mechanisms that lead to prison or the death row.⁶¹

Positivist criminology – and especially its liberal side – has been facing a new, unexpected attack from the conservative camp, which has had quite enough of liberal, humanistic, and various Marxist declarations (and the controversies among them), as well as with the endless quests for an effective treatment of the criminal⁶² – the conclusion that “*nothing works*” has been confronted with the determined “*zero tolerance*” policy. As Elliott Currie (1999b) ironically remarked: “[New York] Mayor Giuliani has proven all those carping sociologists wrong. It may indeed have been true until recently that the criminal justice system wasn’t doing much to reduce

⁶¹ On the situation in the U.S.A., see Platt (1994b) and Currie (1999b). The United States, together with China and Russia, prevail in imprisonment and death penalty rates.

⁶² Jerome Miller, in his address in acceptance of the August Vollmer Award at the 1987 annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, pointed out the danger involved – even for traditional criminology – in this departure from theory, the concern for technical issues and the extremely close co-operation with the system. Referring to an expert meeting organised during the early years of the Reagan administration by the Justice Department, with (guess who) James Q. Wilson as co-ordinator, he commented: “It was an early harbinger of the now familiar practice of the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the National Institute of Justice – routinely putting a ‘spin’ on meetings, research findings, and policy studies, imputing credibility to those which fit current ideology, and disregarding or deep-sixing those which don’t”. As for the content: “It was as though there were no history to the field. Important studies, theories, and research findings from the past were either not known, selectively ignored, or cast aside” (Miller, 1988: 7). Similar remarks were made a few years later by Travis Hirschi (1993: 349): “Administrative criminology has no theory of crime, and little memory of the results of crime research. As a result, it is forced to return again and again to the beginnings of the field, putting all possible causes of crime and all disciplines on an initially equal footing, and proposing an ambitious program of research to sort out the important causal variables and decide once again the relevance of the various disciplines to the crime problem. (Scientific criminology is said to have begun with Lombroso’s examination of the skull of a ‘famous brigand’. The present work on several occasions refers with some authority to a possible link between head injuries and violent behaviour.) Academic criminology has a history. For example, many criminologists are aware of the origins of their discipline in biological positivism, and many know the crime-control policies that followed from the assumptions of that perspective. As a result they are nervous about forming an unexamined connection with authorities interested in crime control.”

crime, but that's because we didn't let it. Now we've shaken off our self-imposed shackles, and it's 'working'".

Addressing the 1999 annual meeting of the Western Society of Criminology, Currie offered an analysis of recent developments and trends in American criminal justice system and criminology, and expressed his concern:

The truth is that I find myself very troubled about the state of crime and justice in America. And I'm troubled both as a citizen and as a criminologist. As a citizen, I'm troubled by the drift of our crime policy and by the shoulder-shrugging inattention to the massive injustices we have tolerated, or precipitated, in the name of fighting crime. As a criminologist – as a professional – I'm troubled by the drift of our public discourse about these issues – a discourse that seems to me to be increasingly removed from most of what you and I in this room actually *know* about crime. (Currie, 1999b).

Awaiting the owl of Minerva (dusk is falling)

We live in difficult times. At the time of this writing [summer 1999], war is raging in Europe. Our own country, Norway, as well as the United States, are engaged, continually dropping bombs in Kosovo and all over Yugoslavia. Ethnic cleansing is taking place on the ground, probably intensified by the bombing. Almost all over Europe, and certainly in the United States, prison figures are soaring and the so-called criminal justice system has been transformed into a major apparatus of repression, engaged in a war of its own against presumed enemies inside our countries. In Europe and the United States, modern electronic technology is increasingly being used to carry out surveillance over large segments of the population. Schengen, Europol, and Eurodac within the European Union and Echelon, which heavily involves the United States, are registration and surveillance systems that come to mind. In times like this, we need analyses of specific issues as well as overarching analyses that tie the repressive, dangerous, and bewildering aspects of national and international developments together. (Christie & Mathiesen, 1999: 13)

If powerful states all around the world today can systematically deny the systematic violations of human rights they are carrying out – then we know that we're in bad shape. But we're in even worse shape when the intellectual avant garde invent a form of denial so profound, that serious people – including progressives – will have to debate whether the Gulf War actually took place or not. (Cohen, 1993: 113)

Today, upon our entering into the new millennium, the situation appears rather bleak, both at the social and scientific level. New terms, such as “globalisation” or “the end of history”, enter our vocabulary and restruc-

ture the social and political thinking. The western world is faced with the highest rates of imprisonment and of socially excluded segments of the population. Institutionalised control systems, such as the Schengen Information System, meet no substantial reaction whatsoever. On the contrary, they are widely accepted together with other repressive measures, such as harsher penalties, more prisons, intensive (“zero-tolerance”) policing, disregard of human rights, and so on, all in the name of moral panic and fear of crime, masterly fostered, to a great extent, by the dominant ideology and the mass media.

And criminologists? What is the role and the social responsibility of this army of academics, researchers and experts? The overall picture is rather disappointing: criminologists either participate – as counsellors, experts, or executives – in the shaping and administration of the system, or observe helplessly the course of events. Perhaps following upon developments in society as a whole, the discipline seems to have lost the vigour and the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s and 1970s.

In the mid-1990 we passed, in California, the notorious “three strikes and you’re out” law, which has since helped to jam our prisons, mostly with people of colour, to the detriment of every other more productive public purpose. I doubt that there can be more than five professional criminologists in the state of California who ever imagined that three strikes was a good idea. But where was the organised criminological opposition to the measure? In my view, every professional organisation, state and national, should have been loudly and visibly making their scepticism and alarm an inescapable feature of the public debate. But that didn’t really happen. Most of the organised opposition came from brave but underfunded and overmatched non-profit advocacy groups, which ... have borne a disproportionate share of this sort of work. Could we have stopped three strikes? I don’t know, but we certainly could have put up a much better fight, and educated a lot of people about the issues more generally in the process. And you could say this about the criminological response to recent public policy issues in practically every state in the Union. (Currie, 2000)

Regrettably, the same can be said about the response to such issues in Europe as well: In spite of a few notable, isolated exceptions (among others: Cohen, 1993; Christie & Mathiesen, 1999; Taylor, 1999), the scientific community does not essentially react to the building of “Fortress Europe” (through such steps as the Schengen Treaty) or to the violations of human rights, even within the democratic European countries.

At the “purely scientific” level, in spite of existing penetrating theoretical analyses that strive to keep open the discussion on the genealogy and

epistemology of the field, the general impression is that the main features are a total disregard of theory (and ideology) and a commitment to the pragmatic association of criminology with criminal policy. We have been led to an outspokenly technocratic perspective, deeply authoritative and dangerous, the principal representative of which is the so-called administrative or managerial criminology.⁶³ Within such a perspective, there emerges the phenomenon of excessive specialisation: studies and research projects on extremely specialised, often “technical”, issues, with almost no reference to the social and political framework – as if it were the study of a micro-organism in a laboratory tube – with the apparent aim to prove their “usefulness”, to secure an advantageous position within the educational and/or political system.⁶⁴

It suffices to go through the various articles published in the numerous journals of the field: with a few exceptions, it is sad and dispiriting to see more and more specialised topics, with almost no theoretical background and naivety that reaches the boundaries of ignorance. “How come that so much criminology is that dull, tedious and intensely empty as to new insights?” wondered Nils Christie (1997: 13), bringing to mind Foucault’s conclusion a quarter of a century ago (1980: 47): “Have you ever read any criminological texts? They are staggering”. One gets more or less the same impression by attending any (national or international) criminological conference.

A few years ago, Cohen (1988: 23-25) tried to map the field, employing ideology as his main criterion, and distinguished six trends: *conservative*, *managerial*, *liberal*, *socialist*, *abolitionist* and *theoretical*. Cohen saw an alliance of conservative and managerial criminology, as well as the great impact of their ideas, but also their great theoretical weakness. Their relation with authority may be stronger, but at the theoretical level they are not such a potent adversary as positivism has been: “the combined force of the

⁶³ For an (almost prophetic) analysis of the “intellectuals for law and order”, see Takagi & Platt (1976).

⁶⁴ A good example is the current occupation of more and more criminologists, especially younger ones, with such topics as economic, organised, and white-collar crime. Sutherland (1940) had already raised the issue six decades ago, but it has become “profitable” only within the contemporary (neo)liberal ambience, with available funding, research projects, and professional prospects. This is yet another example of the “channelling” of research into areas of particular interest for the state or the economic and political establishment in general.

real alternatives – liberal, left realist, abolitionist, and good, old-fashioned sociological – is stronger than it ever was” (Cohen, 1988: 26).

An optimistic prospect, at least at the theoretical level. Steinert (1997: 125) expressed a somewhat different view:

Maybe we have not been radical enough in our critique of criminology. It is a long time since Nils Christie opened a lecture with “Maybe we should not have any criminology” and the sentence has not been repeated often since. But its logic that, “crime” being an ideological, state-defined concept, our object of inquiry has to be wide enough to include this ideological use, is not at all obsolete. In fact, “critical criminology” is a contradiction in terms. There can only be critique of criminology. Instead, we have been taken in as just another theoretical speciality in the field.

What, therefore, can the place of criminology be, given its theoretical, historical, and epistemological heritage, and the prevailing circumstances? In addition, and perhaps more importantly, what is today the role of the criminologist, a scholar who deals with one of the most ideologically charged subjects in the social sciences?

The Belgian criminologist⁶⁵ Hercule Poirot, in Agatha Christie’s *Crime on the Orient Express* (1934), offered the passengers of the famous train two alternatives with regard to the murder he was investigating (and involved each one of them). By the same token, there appears also to be two alternative courses which the study of crime can follow and, respectively, the scholar can choose from.

This choice unavoidably needs to be made taking into consideration the ideological and political implications of the study of crime and its control. It ultimately has to do with the kind of future each scholar envisages and his (or her) willingness to be part of the prevailing system or to strive for a different kind of society. As two scholars coming from different disciplines – criminology and physics, respectively – have put it:

What seems on the surface to be technical arguments about what we can and cannot do about crime often turns out on close inspection, to be moral and

⁶⁵ “The public image of the criminologist is a very strange and shifting one: at times a Sherlock Holmes figure, sniffing around for clues; at times a white-coated scientist analysing blood stains; at times a psychiatrist explaining a child’s delinquency in terms of the child’s unconscious desire to punish the mother; at times a soft-hearted do-gooder turning our prisons into holiday camps. And indeed, people calling themselves criminologists have appeared in Britain under all these and yet other disguises.” (Cohen, 1973: 46)

political arguments about what we should or should not do; and these in turn are rooted in larger disagreements about what sort of society we want for ourselves and our children. (Currie, 1985: 19)

There can be no pure social science in the sense that pure physics exist; it is useless to look for social laws that human beings obey as the planets obey (or approximately obey) Newton's laws. What must guide the social scientist in choosing between different research-action programmes is to a very considerable extent his choice of future. And choosing between different futures is not likely to be value-free! Just as in the physical sciences aesthetic criteria play an important role in both problem identification and problem solving, so in the social sciences aesthetic criteria in problem identifying and solving are reinforced by moral, ethical and political criteria. Whereas in the physical sciences it is simply wrong to claim that there exist "value-free", "objective" criteria which at all times enable the physical scientist to decide which research programme he should turn in the hope of solving outstanding problems, in the social sciences it is not only wrong but dangerously so. For the ideology of "value-free" social science promotes a belief that in so far as it is scientific to attempt to solve social problems at all, it is so only if solutions are sought within the social framework whose values the social scientist has internalised. Thus in tending to deprive contemporary society of speculation with respect to "alternative futures", the ideology of "value-free" social science is not only intellectually stultifying but also, given the direction of existing trends, exceedingly dangerous. (Easlea, 1973: 322)

Stanley Cohen gave the last chapter of his famous book, *Visions of Social Control*,⁶⁶ the title "What is to be done?". His aim was "neither a handbook of practical recommendations on the one hand nor a set of lofty political platitudes on the other. The point is to clarify choices and values." (Cohen, 1985: 38). According to Cohen, the sociologist of crime and punishment should not produce knowledge for the operation of the system: it is not his job to "advise, consult, recommend or make decisions", just as a sociologist of religion should not be a priest or a theologian. Many criminologists today, however, choose to take holy orders and theologise.

The state of criminology as a discipline does not leave much space for those who do not wish to become "clergymen of the system". Its interrelation with authority – at both the theoretical and applied level – is today more apparent than ever.

As for its effectiveness, the famous "dialogue" between science and policy, the following story (though considered fictitious) is revealing enough:

⁶⁶ Maybe "the book for the end of the 1980s", to continue his own proposition (see note 7).

A man travels in a small balloon when suddenly it starts losing height until it stops just before it crashes. The man tries to figure out what to do when he sees a passer-by and asks him where he is.

"You're in a small balloon, a few meters above the ground, in the middle of a field.", answers the passer-by.

"Surely, you're a sociologist!", comments the man angrily.

"Yes, how did you know?", wonders the passer-by.

"Your answer was a precise description of the situation, but had not a trace of essence."

"And you must be in social policy."

"Yes, how did you figure it out?"

"Well, you're exactly in the same situation as before, but now it's my fault!"⁶⁷

Furthermore, at the epistemological level – in spite of (optimistic) contrary views⁶⁸ – three decades of deconstructive efforts did not manage to shake radically the perceptions and methodologies of the field. As Muncie put it (1998: 232), "... the concept of crime will forever remain problematic: its existence dependent on legal sanction, which in turn is grounded in particular sets of economic and political relations. Competing criminological paradigms may offer alternative readings of this reality, but the biggest obstacle to the generation of future knowledge may be the restricted discourse of criminology itself". Perhaps the unfeasibility of a "scientific revolution" is due precisely to the fact that the scientific substance of criminology is

⁶⁷ "Who can still take seriously a scientific endeavour that has used millions of dollars of research funds to come up with this 'state-of-the-art' finding: 'While great caution must be exercised in making causal connections, it does appear on the basis of limited evidence that the rise and fall of crime rates may at least be tentatively correlated with a decrease or increase in the risk of imprisonment' [James Steward, Director of the National Institute of Justice]." (Cohen, 1988: 26)

⁶⁸ Peter Young, addressing the 1991 British Criminology Conference (1992: 436-437), expressed his optimism as to the prospects for a progressive course in criminology: "I wish to reassert one central point: that there is a viable criminological project that has been deeply marked by utopias. This counters a critique of the discipline that appears from time to time – the idea that criminology is complacent or can be understood primarily as a product of power, as an adjunct to the penal system. Quite the opposite; there is an important sense in which criminology has always been innovative and oppositional; it has a deep-seated critical impulse. This does not mean that individual criminologists, or even whole schools of criminologists, have not served the interests of the powerful, but I do think a degree of reflection on what this really means is called for. Criminology also has blind spots and the range of questions analysed may be in many ways restrictive. ... The original and continuing critical potential of liberalism, positivism, and socialism ought not to be underestimated; these are utopias which still have a course to run".

disputable. Therefore, it is questionable – in spite of their high theoretical standard – whether the remaining critical approaches can reshape the current ideological and theoretical framework in criminology. More probable and effective appears to be a constant process of adaptation and co-option (similar to the transformation of “left idealism” to “left realism”).

A second, certainly more strenuous, prospect has to do with the *framework* that *anti-criminology* has managed to shape: a field of study, which, despite its usage of the term “criminology” (with a multitude of alternative defining adjectives), had a mere terminological relation with it. The ideological and epistemological confrontations, the differences in the perception of the subject and the analysis of the social and political reality, are so fundamental that the relation of the two fields becomes almost schizophrenic. Heinz Steinert’s closing remark (1997: 125) is extremely inciting: “‘Progress’ in criminology has meant breaking through the limits of the discipline. Theory and research that do not do this are regressive and side with the forces of social exclusion”.⁶⁹

Audacious as it may sound,⁷⁰ it could be more challenging to strive not for the mutation of criminology itself, but for an altogether fresh framework for all those rich ideas which the creative quest of so many decades

⁶⁹ In a similar line of thought, Fritz Sack (1994: 12) wondered: “don’t we have to transcend and transgress the limits and borders of criminology in its average understanding in trying to analyse the events that we are faced with and which we signify with the elegant euphemism ‘socio-political change’?”. Accordingly, René van Swaaningen (1998: 53) maintained that “... the old problems of unemployment, of class-, race- and gender discrimination, or of crimes of the powerful are still there, and thus we still need a criminological critique which addresses these macro-sociological questions as contextual factors of crime problems. Though the critical criminological project is in need of revision, ... the theoretical gains of ‘modern times’ should not be forgotten altogether, for the currently fashionable orientations at business- and social administration jump too easily over the most central questions of criminal justice”. And further down (53-54): “The normative and theoretical impulse of critical criminology should ... compensate for the nearly exclusively neo-positivist, empiricist and applied development of the discipline. With a lack of theoretical and analytical elaboration of empirical findings and a lacking reflection upon the concrete legal processing of social problems, criminology will become a superfluous discipline”.

⁷⁰ As Raymond Michalowski wrote (1985: 412), responding to those who put down the propositions and visions of critical criminology as unreasonable and utopian, “Change is possible. When seen from the dominant consciousness it is also an unreasonable goal. However, to paraphrase that former juvenile delinquent George Bernard Shaw: *‘Reasonable men and women adapt themselves to the world. Unreasonable men and women seek to change it. Therefore all progress depends upon those who are willing to strive for the unreasonable.’*”

has bequeathed us; a frame of reference that would serve, above all else, society as a whole and would accordingly refuse to function as a mechanism of social exclusion and alienation.⁷¹ After all, the “honour of criminology” ought to concern only those who take it for granted.

In *Crime on the Orient Express*, the twelve passengers chose the most convenient and least troublesome of the two alternatives presented to them by Hercules Poirot, and not the one that seemed to be more decent and closer to reality.

Karl Marx, however, is always up-to-date: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.”⁷²

Postscript (What Is to Be Done?)

There are no particular reasons for optimism. There is no easy way out, no prescription for a future where the worst will not come to the worst. Working with words, I have nothing more than words to offer: Words, attempts on clarifications of the situation we are in, attempts to make visible some of the values being pushed aside in recent hectic attempts to adapt to demands that are in fashion just now. (Christie, 1994: 175)

The subjects of crime and its control are intrinsically political ones. The conceptional construction of *crime* and the *criminal*, as well as the ways in which they are managed and controlled, are the outcome of social, political and administrative processes. The state plays an important role in defining *crime* and then applying this definition in the social and political arena. Criminology, at least in its mainstream version, engages in the study of the consequences of such applications, perceiving them as real, value-free entities. Thus, the criminal and his behaviour become cognitive categories, the proper subjects of a discipline which seeks to unravel the hidden codes of such behaviour, in order to reduce the persistently enduring rates of crime. In this sense, criminology represents a case *par excellence* of posi-

⁷¹ Half a century ago, Albert Einstein, in his message ‘On the Moral Obligation of the Scientist’, which he sent to the forty-third meeting of the Italian Society for the Progress of Science (October 1950), exhorted the scientific community: “If today’s man of science could find the time and the courage to reflect honestly and critically about himself and the tasks before him, and if he would then act accordingly, the possibility for a sane and satisfactory solution of the present dangerous international situation would be considerably improved”.

⁷² *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach* (1845).

tivist science, as this has been outlined in the writings of the Frankfurt School.

The historical study of the phenomenon of crime, as well as of the criminological discourse, reveals the significance of social control for the political system. Ever since its formation, criminology has been serving the established authority towards this end, obstinately resisting any attempt to change its paradigmatic framework and even going as far as to censor and strike out any form of criticism. The reluctance of positive criminologists to acknowledge the political character of their subject matter has become disturbingly dangerous in the last decades and has resulted in the doctrines of “administrative” criminology, and all its consequences: intensified social control, expanding social exclusion and prison overcrowding.

Nils Christie (1994) and William Chambliss (1999) offer two of the most thorough and insightful analyses of the current situation and the dangers involved. In his “Postscript” to the second edition of “Crime Control as Industry”, the former expresses his (justified) concern:

This situation might also have consequences for the remaining industrialised world. When the USA breaks away from all earlier standards for what it can do against parts of its population, and when Russia represses to its former standards, then this threatens what is usually seen as an acceptable number of prisoners in Western Europe. A new frame of reference is established. As a result, Western Europe might experience increased difficulties in preserving its relatively humane penal policies. The other countries in Eastern Europe might also feel encouraged to follow the examples of the two leaders in incarceration.” (Christie, 1994: 199)

The latter provides sufficient substantiation for his claim that “[i]t is the law enforcement bureaucracy, the politicians, the media, and the industries that profit from the building of prisons and the creation and manufacture of crime control technologies that perpetuate the myths that justify wasting vast sums of taxpayer’s money on failed efforts at crime control” (Chambliss, 1999: xii). Perhaps one should add “criminologists” to this list.

Traditional mainstream criminology has been obstinately denying its political nature, although it has always been a discipline committed to the interests of dominant authority. At the same time, human misery appears to have escalated and the problems which specialists are supposed to relieve have reached an alarming peak, calling into question the very foundations both of modern democratic societies and of Western rationalism.

Stanley Cohen's query "What is to be done?" is a recurring one, perhaps more pressing today than ever before. Elsewhere (1998: 122) he has argued about the "three voracious gods" that need to be appeased: "first an overriding obligation to honest intellectual enquiry itself (however sceptical, provisional, irrelevant and unrealistic); second, a political commitment to social justice, and third (and potentially conflicting with both), the pressing and immediate demands for short-term humanitarian help". Failure to appease any one of the three "voracious gods" leads to mutilation of the scholar's social and intellectual function.

Our task is seemingly impossible: to combine detachment with commitment. There is only one universal guide for this: not to use intellectual scepticism as an alibi for political inaction. (Cohen, 1998: 126)

Late modernity seems to be a difficult period in the history of Western civilisation. Some have gone as far as to characterise it "the new Middle Age", only this time with much more powerful resources at its command. Whatever the case may be called, the bottom line of the situation is the dissent from civility and rationality. The ideological dispute of the 1960s and 1970s, together with the social and economic developments of the last decades, have produced the opposite outcome to that expected; instead of an advance towards social justice, even hitherto taken for granted social and political rights have been diminishing. The student of issues so central to this predicament, as crime and its control, ought to function as a social critic, rather than as a social mechanic, in an attempt to reverse the course of events by means of both intellectual enquiry and political commitment.

The work of an intellectual is not to shape others' political will; it is, through the analyses that he carries out in his own field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to re-examine rules and institutions and on the basis of this re-problematisation (in which he carries out his specific task as an intellectual) to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role as citizen to play). (*Foucault, 1988: 265*)

Among the twelve passengers of *Orient Express*, no one differentiated as to the choice between the two alternatives. Fortunately, among scholars – in this case those studying the criminal phenomenon – there are aplenty whose intellectual output as well as personal example provide the frame of reference for alternative visions and action.

As the opening, so do the closing remarks belong to Nils Christie, one of the most consistent advocates of abolitionism and critical thinking, an intellectual who has always struggled for social justice and for a humane and rational criminology:

The criminology I like is one carried out from an impossible position in the middle of a triangle between government, human misery and academic demands. My identity is one of a cultural worker, one close to other people of letters. We know so little that government is willing or able to use. At the same time we see so much misery that we have to act. We need to conceptualise our insights and give them forms that enable us to take part in great intellectual dialogues. ... One of the challenges for criminology is to analyse the social conditions giving unwanted acts their particular meaning. In this activity, criminology might be able to give advice on how to find, preserve and nurture those social conditions which work against recent trends of seeing so many unwanted acts as crime in need of penal action. Instead we could open the way for alternative forms of perception and alternative ways of control. Doing this, criminology might come to play an important role in the defence of civil society. (*Christie, 1998: 130*)

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Societal Representations of Crime

The Criminality of Albanian Immigrants in Athens Press

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Introduction

In the past decade, the expansion of the “black economy” and the further growth of illegal employment in Greece, together with great socio-economic changes in the former USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe, as well as wider realignments in the world economy and the military-political sphere, resulted in a massive inflow of alien legal or illegal immigrants and refugees. Thus Greece, together with other Southern European countries, was transformed from a country with an outflow of emigrants into a host country for immigrants – particularly after 1990. According to scholarly estimates of the immigration phenomenon in Greece¹, economic immigrants from non-EU member countries constitute 5% of the general population – almost 10% of the economically active population (and approximately 20% of the total number of wage earners). The overwhelming majority of immigrants come from Albania, while smaller numbers come from Poland, former Yugoslavia, Egypt, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines et al., not to mention a substantial percentage of immigrants of Greek origin from Pontos. According to the relevant bibliography, Karydis (1996: 22) estimates that the number of aliens in Greece in 1996 must have

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¹ See Linardos-Rylmon (1993), Katsoridas (1994), Karydis (1996: 15-26), KAPA Research S.A. (1995), Kontis (1998), Lianos et al. (1998), Petrinioti (1993).

reached 450,000-500,000, a number which does not include refugees of Greek origin. He believes that 350,000-380,000 of the above continue to remain as illegal residents – on a seasonal or permanent basis, while estimating that 60% of illegal immigration concerns individuals who initially entered the country legally, but stayed on illegally as "irregular" immigrants (except, that is, for those who entered the country without valid travel documents from the start).

The cheap labour force which the illegal, mainly economic, immigrants represent is employed in economic sectors where a tendency to infringe, either partly or wholly, upon labour and insurance legislation has already manifested itself as well as in sectors facing great difficulties, where the supply of cheap labour provides formerly non-existent opportunities for recovery. The agricultural, building, part of the arts and crafts, fisheries and service sectors are the main fields of immigrant employment (Linardos-Rylmon 1993).

Until 1997, state services had not taken any legalisation or social policy measures to resolve the problems faced by immigrants. On the contrary, a particularly harsh repressive policy was applied², combined with a simultaneous tolerance of the black economy's expansion on the part of the Greek state, and especially of violations of labour rights and of the relevant legislation (Linardos-Rylmon 1993: 9 and on). In 1997 (PD* 358-359/97, PD amendments 241/98 and 242/98) legalisation procedures for illegal economic immigrants were announced with the issue of the Limited Duration Residence Card ("green card")³. It has not been possible, so far, to evaluate the effects of this regulatory act, either on the economic immigrants' employment status or on the wider labour market and Greek society as a whole. The entry and stay of legal and illegal immigrants in Greece, espe-

² State policy towards illegal alien workers is exercised in Greece on the basis of Parliamentary Act 1975/91 "*Police control of border crossings, entry, residence, employment and deportation of aliens and identification procedure for refugees*". In spite of its severity, the act did not check the wave of illegal immigrants, nor did it exclude them from the black labour market.

* PD: *Presidential Decree*.

³ Up to 31/5/1998, about 380,000 immigrants who had entered the country prior to 31/12/1997 had applied for a green card. According to article 3 of PD 359/97, a green card will be valid for one and up to three years "*according to the type of work performed by the alien, the state of the labour market in Greece and the overall interests of the National Economy*", and can be renewed on one or more occasions for two years at a time.

cially from Albania, has, in recent years, become a central subject of public discourse by authorities, scientists, politicians, the mass media, etc., thus influencing the perceptions and attitudes of social groups in various ways. The analysis of the relevant bibliography⁴ makes it clear that this matter is causally related to the increase in crime and the accumulation of social problems in the host countries, while also providing an opportunity for the development of a critical stand in relation to violations of fundamental human rights and the "resurgence of nationalism and racism".

The profusion of issues and questions, which the issue of economic immigrants raises in the present context, sparked off research on the representation of this phenomenon in the daily Athenian press. A research project undertaken in the undergraduate seminar "Societal Representations of Crime and the Mass Media" of the Sociology Department of Panteion University, under the supervision of Lecturer Aphrodite Koukoutsaki, provided the stimulus for writing this article. The seminar's objective was to analyse the representation of economic immigrants' criminality in the discourse of the Athenian daily press and the reactions this caused in a formal and informal framework over a period of four months (February-May 1998).⁵

On the basis of the findings of previous studies and the data of this pilot project, I shall attempt to provide an answer to the vital problem raised by actuality itself: *what is the singularity of the representation of economic immigrants' criminality in the Athenian press? How can this problem be related to the social construction of reality, the production of a social consensus and the legitimisation of the mass media's existing power and dominance relations?*

In their effort to produce "rare", "impressive" and "spectacular" news stories, the mass media place particular emphasis on events perceived as "violations" of social rules, either on a judicial or a moral-political level. Within this framework, a large part of daily news coverage is filled with acts of violence (robberies, murders, rapes, acts of vandalism, intragroup violence etc.), which are filed, as a rule, under home news (police and law courts news coverage).

⁴ Askouni (1997), Vamvakas (1997), Voulgaris et al. (1995), Dimitras (1993), Greek Human Rights Watch (1995-1996), Karydis (1996, 1997), Mikrakis (1998), Paidoussi (1998), Petraki (1998), Spinelli, et al. (1992), Triantafyllidou (1998), Fragoudaki & Dragona (1997).

⁵ Several undergraduate students of the Sociology Department took part in the seminar and the research project.

In particular, as far as news on petty crime is concerned, the mass media, through their thematic classification (the incorporation, that is, of each news story in a thematic category), "manufacture" a new type of crime (immigrants' crime, crimes against the elderly, juvenile crime, drug-induced crime, suburban crime, serial murders etc.), with characteristic offenders, victims, conditions etc.

According to Fishman (1981), if a topic has enough potential to retain the media's attention for a sufficient number of days, then, in all probability, it will constitute a crime wave. This means that, for it to arise, it must somehow be based on real events, that is the relevant incidents which supply the media must exist, otherwise it withers and fades away. In addition, however, it is essential to get the participation of the mass media in their entirety as well as the formal social control agencies (mainly the police) and various specialists (criminologists, psychologists, psychiatrists etc.), who take part in the public debate, for a crime wave to be manufactured. Moreover, while the subject remains on the daily agenda, events within this thematic category will continue to be mentioned, confirming the "reality" of the issue. It is in this sense that, according to Fishman's definition (1981: 100), crime waves constitute "media waves".

Simplifying generalisations of crime waves carry a particular ideological weight. By means of exaggeration and stereotype construction, symbolisation and dramatisation, groups such as immigrants, "marginals", soccer fans, anarchists, drug addicts etc. are mystified, demonised. It is indeed quite often through the cumulative effect of the intermediation of "sources" (mainly formal social control agencies) in the public debate on crime prevention and control, the penal system and generalised social lawlessness, that a *moral panic*, according to Cohen's (1980) definition, is generated, a climate of social insecurity which eventually favours moves towards more autocratic forms of crime controlling, generalised social repression and violations of fundamental individual rights.

Content analysis

These general theoretical principles delimit the study's empirical part. The central objective of the analysis is to explore the form which social construction of reality concerning "the Albanians' criminality" takes in the Athenian press. We are not concerned with establishing whether and to what extent the Albanian immigrants' criminality representations corre-

spond with reality (Albanians' "true" criminality, that is), but with the in depth analysis of the Athenian press's ideological structures relative to the predominant ideology on crime, the criminal and social control.

The method of analysis used is the contents' thematic analysis, that is the systematic description and classification of the denotative content from selected newspaper reports. The objective of this approach is to explore the framework within which the problematic and argumentation of the Athenian Press function with regard to the economic immigrants' criminality phenomenon. In addition to this basic method, I proceeded to a selective semiotic reading of certain published texts. This analysis, which is carried out on the basis of denotative and connotative/mythological meaning, examines newspaper pieces as parts of a broader text - public discourse - and seeks out the organisational structures of its semiotic system.

The greater volume of the texts analysed comes from the "Botsis Foundation's Electronic Archive of the Athenian Press" (lemmas: "immigrants", "Albanians" and "immigrants' criminality") selected from five Athenian newspapers (daily and Sunday editions): *Elephtheros*, *Elephtheros Typos*, *Elephtherotypia*, *Ethnos* and *Ta Nea*, for the period from February until May 1998 inclusive. In addition, I have used news stories from earlier years (1991-1995) and from the period immediately following (up to March 1999 inclusive) from my personal archives, in full knowledge of the lacunae that such a collection may entail.

The particular nature of the analytical topics obviously depends on the study's theoretical underpinnings, the development of preliminary assumptions, as well as the messages' particular content and form. In the present case, any information concerning the relationship of the press with "the Albanians' criminality" (news stories, pictures, opinions, collective images, views, attitudes, etc.), in other words the sum total of reactions raised by such a topic, falls within this empirical study's terms of reference. It was therefore decided to include sentences of an informational, pragmatical nature, as well as phrases containing value judgements.

Following a first exploratory reading of the texts, three basic thematic categories, incorporating all the relevant topics were drawn up:

- *Representation of Albanian immigrants*
- *Crime wave – representations of insecurity*
- *Social reaction (formal and informal).*

The findings of the analysis

I shall try to seek the basic ideological axes which representations of the Albanians' criminality phenomenon revolve around, aiming to set a general direction for the issues arising.

I have a dual target: on the one hand to demonstrate the ideological unity of various forms of public debate and, on the other examine ideological differentiations and shifts, and chart the field of tension which characterises the present conjuncture. What I finally wish to ascertain is whether existing differences or contradictions cause fissures in dominant debate, or if, on the contrary, some form of consensus is formed through them, an organised validating "theory" concerning the definition of crime, the criminal and the social control system, that also entails an implied "system of ideas". This endeavour benefited from the valuable conclusions of other relevant research studies.

From the chronological comparison of the five newspapers' texts we derive the following scheme:

1. From the beginning of February 1998 and up until the middle of March, the newspapers attach particular weight to police news coverage, with continuous references to "street crime" news stories (robberies, manslaughters, acts of violence, break-ins, etc.) where specific mention is made of offenders' or suspects' nationality in the case of aliens (mainly Albanians). Furthermore, during this same period, an atmosphere of "deep insecurity of "Greek citizen" due to the "[nightmarish/dramatic/worrying] rise in criminality" is represented through various pieces (interviews of burglary victims, founding of burglary victims' committee, purchases of weapons, recourse to private security companies etc.). On March 17, 1998, the Minister of Public Order announced that measures would be taken to "eradicate crime" and these were made public. These announcements get a "negative", "neutral" or "positive" treatment, according to each paper's political line⁶.

⁶ The newspapers' deep involvement in party politics means that news stories related to the activities or statements of political agents receive extensive coverage only in those papers towing a "similar" political line, while being "ignored" by others. It must be clarified that, when stating that a news story or statement is "ignored", we rarely mean that it does not appear at all in the papers categorically opposed to the agent's ideological and political line. What differentiates each paper's coverage of such an event is the extent and emphasis attached to it, or the form of coverage given to the "event" (favourable attitude or, in contrast, critical and sarcastic). The increase in volume of the "source's" original information material or on the contrary its shrinkage (special

During the following days, new cases of “Albanians’ criminality” keep being reported (the most prominent being the murder of a police officer during a skirmish between a patrol and “Albanian criminals” in Kastoria, on March 21, 1998). These cases were followed by reports concerning forms of “informal social reactions” (beatings of Albanian workers in Ikaria, incidents in various areas, but also media denunciations of a wave of albanophobia etc.), as well as measures taken and statements made by local authorities (recourse to private security firms, etc.).

2. The continuous news coverage of the “problem” triggers an intense “anti-Albanian” climate, which reaches a peak with the resolution of the local council of Palaio Keramidi in Pieria (Central Macedonia) to “restrict Albanian immigrants’ freedom of movement and gathering etc⁷.” (Prime news on March 26, 1998 and the days immediately following). Immediately after, the five newspapers can be more clearly separated, as we shall see later in detail, in direct correlation with the primary definers’ measures and statements, in two basic categories: in the first, *Elephtheros Typos* and *Elephtheros*, undifferentiated from the preceding period, keep accusing Albanians (but also more generally foreign immigrants) of criminality and calling upon the government to tighten the “inadequate” repressive measures. In the second category, the newspapers *Elephtherotypia* and *Ta Nea* commit themselves to a “campaign” against “racist and xenophobic attitudes of a large section of the Greek population”, by shifting the weight of their news coverage in a most singular manner. The attempt to “balance” the “Albanian criminal” stereotype by simultaneously promoting that of the “good Albanian immigrant, a victim of prejudice”, plays a central role in this “campaign”.

3. For the rest of the period up to the end of May, all news stories (references to specific “crimes”, to formal and informal social reaction etc.) as well as the relevant press editorials fall within these two trends. In other

processing, fuller coverage, occasion for reporting and interviews, pictures etc. or by contrast its “burial”, aggressiveness or ironic titles), are direct functions of the agent’s party political affiliations and his identification with the respective paper’s political “line”.

⁷ In March 1998, the local authority had, among other things, banned Albanian immigrants from gathering and moving around after sunset, “in order to check criminality”. This resolution had been annulled as unlawful and excessive by the Three-member Council of the Central Macedonian region, while criminal charges had been pressed by the Attorney’s Office of Katerini’s Court of First Instance against the president and the local council for disturbing the peace and sowing dissension among the people.

words, these two tendencies form the representation of reality invoked by the papers. It is worth noting that *Ethnos* keeps the most ambivalent stance throughout, since it draws elements from both interpretative frameworks simultaneously⁸, while its coverage of news related to “Albanians’ criminality” is, at the same time, substantially less extensive compared with the rest of the papers.

Taking these data into account, the simplest way to define the objective and form which the newspapers’ rhetoric assumes, but also describe the “conflict” I detected in their contents concerning “Albanians’ criminality”, was to classify the various opinions as “conservative” or “progressive” on a *common sense* basis, a classification which, in the specific context, can alternatively be defined as a contrast between “racist”/“antiracist” views. Although I am aware that such classifications raise enormous questions on the scientific corroboration of their significance and also on the way such notions are related to specific Greek newspapers, this classification was deemed necessary for the essence of the conflict among various opinions to be made plain and following, for those common elements which are the logical prerequisites of any conflict to be sought. Thus, I proceeded to classify the papers in a “continuum”, which covers the distance between “conservative/racist” and “progressive/antiracist” discourse. Starting at one end with the “conservative” model and moving towards the “progressive” one, I have placed *Elephtheros Typos* and *Elephtheros* (which more consistently respond to the typology of the “conservative” perception of the immigrants’ question and the phenomenon of criminality), in the first position, followed by *Ethnos* and *Ta Nea*, while at the other end I have placed *Elephtherotypia* (which constitutes the “progressive” retort throughout the period under examination). By means of this flexible categorisation, I wish to stress that each paper’s discourse, to the extent that it constitutes a version of some ideology, adds, to begin with, a contradictory nature and a high degree of ambiguity and inconsistency, which are greatly affected by the present context, but also by the constraints imposed by each paper’s journalistic practices of writing, compiling and presenting the news.

⁸ This ambivalence in *Ethnos*’ attitudes and value judgements has also been noted elsewhere (see Konstantinidou, 1997). A probable explanation for *Ethnos*’ singularity may be the fact that, on the one hand, it has all the characteristics of a tabloid newspaper directed towards a “wide audience” (sensational human interest stories in intensely personified terms), while on the other, its party political stand in PASOK’s favour “dictates” its support for government policies (police measures against crime and immigration policy motivated, at least in theory, by the respect of human rights).

Fundamental axes of representational practices of the Athenian Press

In order to facilitate reading, the presentation of the study's results was organised so that the data could be interpreted gradually around the three interrelated thematic units that constitute the central objective. Nevertheless, I clarify from the start that this is a purely schematic classification and should not obscure the structural consistency and continuity of all the topics that are in any way "involved" in the issue of Albanian criminality representation.

1. Albanian immigrants

First thematic category: Representation of Albanian immigrants

- Aliens (foreigners).
- Identifiable (external appearance, particular behavioural traits etc.).
- Inferiority (illiterate, wretched etc.).
- Undesirable.
- Socially dangerous, potential criminals (illegal immigrant, outlaw, former detainee etc.)
- Usual suspects (statements of victims or eyewitnesses, usual groups attracting police inquiries etc.).
- Representation of Albanian immigrants compared to other immigrant groups (representation of Albanians as the par excellence immigrant group involved in criminal activities).
- Albanian-criminal (individual and social characteristics, Albanian/criminal identification, comparison with Greek criminals, cases of complicity).
- Cheap labour force (wage earner, worker, frightened, silent, polite, family man, honest, Greek speaking, patriot, sensitive, wronged, exploited, victim of racism and xenophobia).

In order to consolidate a news story's credibility, the Athenian press, generally speaking, bases itself on what are known as "endoxa" ("renowned"), that is on common sense acknowledgements. Given that it wishes to achieve rapid and easy communication, it uses those "self-evident" associations of ideas most accessible to the reader, through a whole set of images and notions (myths) and a series of reasoning schemes, and resorts to

the safest invocations, by involving stereotype elements, elementary contradictions and “clichés”.

The semantic framework of the texts examined consists of two simple binary systems revolving around the distinction between Greeks and Albanians, that is around the axis *us/the foreigners*⁹, which articulates and organises on an ideological level all the remaining dichotomies we come across in the papers’ contents.

The first binary system, which systematises the network of contradictions and mythical equivalencies constituting the “Albanian’s” representations in juxtaposition with that of the “Greek”, is a direct function of newspaper content on criminality:

Albanian/ illegal immigrant/ outlaw / malefactor / bandit / ruthless / armed / members of deadly Albanian Mafia / Albanian Mafioso / Albanian “pistolero” (“gunman”) / exterminator / Albanian godfathers/ Mafia bosses/ sly/ gangster/ cut-throats/ gangs of Albanian bandits/ barefooted/ daring robbers/ beggars/ society’s scum/ murderer/ irresponsible/ uncontrollable/ hardened killer/ armed Albanians/ armed masked men/ thief/ masked men/ spider-men...

Greek citizen/ family man/ neat and homely/ law abiding/ unprotected/ desperate shopkeepers/ our neglected border citizen/ unsuspecting elderly lady, insecure flat tenants/ hostages in their own homes/ terrorised/ fearful/ annihilated/ unsuspecting [cab driver - housewife - citizen etc.]/ exhausted and shocked/ victim of ruthless thugs/ invalid/ old lady/ poor old age pensioner/ elderly couple/ peace-loving person/ inhabitants of border communities/ besieged inhabitants of the region/ furious villagers ...¹⁰

Following Guillaumin’s (1972) typology concerning the fundamental *naming* strategies, we continuously come across the invariable *tautological form* where the alien offenders’ or suspects’ nationality is repeatedly stated

⁹ According to empirical studies, the Greeks’ collective representations have, in recent years, shown “a shift from an almost trisected invocation model of the foreigner by nationality (26% Europeans/ southern Europeans, 16% Americans, 19% Africans/ Asians) to a model with a predominant pole which exhausts itself with one national group only, namely the Albanians” (see Michalopoulou et al. 1998: 180-181).

¹⁰ It is worth noting that in the representations of the Athenian press, the Albanian comes, in the vast majority of cases, into conflict/clashes with the *Greek citizen* and almost never with formal social control agencies (the police) unless the case concerns an act of violence against a police officer (e.g. on 21/3/1998). As we shall see in the following sections, this feature of the semiotic system must be associated with the illegitimation process of the police apparatuses’ effectiveness.

(and therefore stressed) and the *strategy of substitution*, where nationality may be concealed or omitted from the information and appear in substitute form only, so the *naming* is effected by mentioning one or more stereotype attributes and by reference to the group's inherent characteristics:

"Albanians admit double murder" (*Elephtheros Typos*, 17/3/98)/ "Albanians kill mercilessly" (*Elephtheros*, 20/3/98)/ "Huge Albanian invasion of Corfu" (*Elephtheros*, 30/3/98)/ "Albanian situation about to explode" (*Ethnos* 26/3/98)/ "Couple butchered by two Albanian workers" (*Elephtherotypia*, 17/3/98)/ "Albanian accomplice in parents' brutal murder in Karteri of Thesprotia" (*Ta Nea*, 30/5/98)¹¹.

"Mafia members executed the farmer too"/ "Kalashnikov used in assault on police officer" (*Elephtheros Typos*, 21/3/98).

"Two illegal immigrants wanted for couple's slaughter" (*Elephtherotypia*, 14/3/98).

"Travelling on the Greek-Albanian border", "Border "riddled with holes", Anxious scream from the inhabitants of Greek-Albanian border: Fully armed invaders, villages in terror. The ... barefooted immigrants are history. Today, most of them cross the border armed and ready for anything" (*Ethnos*, 30/3/98).

When by contrast, through the reversal, that is, of various attributes, functions, places, behaviors, stances, a dispute arises as to the signification of Greek/Albanian, honest/thug, offender/victim, the "violation" is presented as a "joke" or "peculiarity":

"Wave of robberies in N. Greece ... even Albanians among the victims" (*Elephtheros*, 7/4/98), "Greeks were blackmailing Albanians" (*Ethnos*, 30/3/98), "Young Albanian victim of robbery" (*Elephtherotypia*, 24/3/98), "Son paid Albanian to murder parents" (*Ta Nea*, 30/5/98), "Fellow Greeks blackmailed Albanian" (*Elephtherotypia*, 30/3/98).

In short, it appears that the offenders' or suspects' statement of nationality is, as a rule, sufficient for the ideological *resolution* of the enactment phase to follow. Thus, to the extent that ready-made and fixed attributes are lent to offenders, through the Albanians' manufactured stereotype, no case, not even those of "hideous manslaughter"¹², preoccupies the press beyond its

¹¹ In contrast, a totally different logic is applied to cases with Greek offenders – even though the news story concerns deviant individuals – e.g. "Gangster arrested following chase"... "as was later established at the police station, the man apprehended is D.P., a 28 years old unemployed gym master with a clean record" (*Elephtheros Typos*, 17/4/1998).

¹² In newspaper discourse. Albanian criminal offenders will never become "personalities", as in the Douri case (Varvaressou 1997), the Frantzi, Kolitsopoulou, Monsela

thematic classification and its inclusion under the “one more instance of Albanian criminality” category. It is worth noting that, at least for the period the papers were systematically examined and classified, we did not locate any specialists’ views or news stories concerning the committal of “malefactors” to the criminal justice system (court trials etc), except for very few cases that get mentioned in short one-column pieces concerning court convictions with particularly severe sentences, or the conditions under which those accused or sentenced were detained in jail (except for one case within the framework of the switch of “progressive” discourse to the denunciation of various forms of “informal” violence against foreigners). Thus, the only time Albanians become “known” is when they preoccupy the police authorities and primarily when they fall under suspicion or are arrested for some criminal act (or, by contrast, when they perform “a good deed”).

It is inferred from the analysis, as noted by Auclair (1982), that the news story’s “protagonist”, either as culprit or victim, must be perceived in relation to his deed through the unique role collective imaginary attributes to him. He is reduced, that is, to that “spectrum of operations” which dominant “culture” attributes to him, in other words to an abstraction. We are concerned here with one of the operational conditions of simplistic thought or common sense: the “Albanian” who makes the news is always represented through his signification, first in direct, if not exclusive, relation to his nationality and second, something usually forgotten, by the individual being spread all over with the sole act which made him known (or for which he was considered to be a “common suspect”), thus consolidating his identification with his nationality’s stereotype. Through the construction of the news story, a causal relation is established between the stereotype role and behaviour, and the act is reduced to a product of the stereotype. The foundation of a cause and effect relation between nationality (Albanian) and behaviour (criminal) follows from the simple correlation of two phenomena¹³.

murder cases et al. (Koukoutsaki 1996), which have some times occupied the whole of the media, specialists and “public opinion” simultaneously.

¹³ From this point of view no criminal act committed by an Albanian is considered to be that of a singular personality that requires individual scientific analysis to be understood. On the contrary, as we shall see later, nationality, in a tautological way, prescribes directly the Albanians’ criminal propensity (“conservative” version) or the Albanians’ living conditions are considered responsible for criminogenesis (“progressive” version).

The binary system concerning newspaper texts on criminality dominates, in varying degrees and differentiations, the terminology and intensity of characterisations according to the paper, the news story and the conjuncture. Consequently, although the central element of representation strategies, in all the papers, is the construction of the Albanians' diversity in stereotypical fashion, we note substantial differences concerning the "aggressiveness" or "mildness" of the images and characterisations adopted. Emotionally charged terms predominate in the extreme "conservative" version, where the Albanian's stereotype is rigid and unidimensional and unequivocally identified with criminality. In the "progressive" version, we find "milder" tones and a predominant "moderation", but the illegal immigrant's image is not dissociated from criminal behaviour. As Paidoussi (1998: 746) characteristically points out:

"The framework within which the incident is approached ... is also established by ... the "illegal immigrant" designation. The presence of these foreigners in our country is an illegal act and as such must be handled primarily by the police."

In "progressive" discourse, nevertheless, an attempt is made in an utterly fragmentary way, on both a denotative and connotative level, to "broaden" and "rationalise" criminogenic factors (see below) on the one hand, and to achieve a balance between the existence of "good and bad" Albanians, on the other.

Indeed, in the texts analysed, together with the dominant binary system which shapes and consolidates the (illegal) immigrant-criminality junction, according to Karydis' definition, a second system is expounded, primarily in *Elephtherotypia*, to a lesser extent in *Ta Nea* and very marginally in *Ethnos* (it is almost entirely absent from *Elephtheros Typos* and *Elephtheros*). This system tends to predominate after the end of March, when most of the reactions by citizen groups, agents etc. against Albanian immigrants took place. The culminating point was the case of "Palαιο Keramidi", which turned out to be a watershed for the signifying practices of the "progressive" version of the journalistic discourse, *Elephtherotypia's* in particular. Within this framework, the central axis of the representation of Albanians in Greece is the argument: "*Albanians do not exist only as criminals but also as sources of cheap labour subjected to exploitation, and are victims of xenophobic reactions from a section of Greek society*".

In this semiotic system, which does not only concern police and court news coverage, but also the wider category of home news, the relation be-

tween “Albanian” and “Greek” is again represented as one of conflict, the difference being that here we have a symbolic reversal of the offender-victim junction:

Albanian/ poor/ cheap labour force/ human wrecks/ pool of miserable and starving proletarians/ starving/ desperate/ deprived/ wage earner/ worker, frightened/ silent/ polite/ family man/ honest/ wretched/ hungry/ Greek speaking/ patriot/ calm/ hard working/ sensitive/ hurt/ underprivileged/ slave/ underdog/ exploited/ victim of racism-xenophobia-prejudice/ on strike/ protesting/ dignified/ fighter/ our brothers/ militant foreigners...

Greek/ jingoist/ wise guy/ dervish/ junta supporter/ fascist/ cowardly/ cheeky fascists/ beasts/ racist/ nazi/ small time charitable/ hysterical/ concentration camp lovers/ employers/ local exploiters/ savages/ “hounds”...

By leaving intact the underlying logic of the Albanian’s criminal stereotype, the stereotype’s reversal that is attempted in “progressive” discourse, can not but add, in reality, a novel stereotype to the codes, the stereotypes, that is, it is supposedly exorcising.

In short, by reversing existing stereotypes, the journalistic discourse in its “progressive” version, gets trapped in the same unconscious commands, the same logic (honest Albanian kid hands in wallet, the settlement’s homely immigrants etc. in contrast to the Albanian nationality’s inherent characteristics). Even more so, “progressive” signifying practices fail to transgress and challenge, let alone “deconstruct”, the register of values, which constitutes the dominant national (Greek) identity and therefore the value judgements establishing it as uniquely valid. It is impossible, from this aspect, to overturn the stigmatising principles or, at least, challenge social processes through which the notion of deviance is attached to certain behaviours. Therefore, by introducing the distinction between good (integrated, settled, legal) and bad Albanian (criminal), “progressive” discourse’s semantic practice simply reproduces the stigma symbolically, though in an inverted form. An inversion presupposing a necessary process of effacement of all signs that could remind one of the stigma (in behaviour, way of life, manner of dress etc.) and proposing by means of “adaptation” strategies that image which is closer to the valid identity (honest, employed, family man, home loving, bread-winner etc.). This is not refuted even when “progressive” discourse hits out with particular vehemence against the “exploiters” of foreign workers. It is characteristic that during the delegitimation process of “evil Greeks”, a *moral* castigation process as a rule, these are relegated to the sphere of the “irrational”, “extreme”, “self-

interest”, “mental disorders” etc., in short beyond the healthy (Greek) majority. As Balibar (1991b: 334) points out,

“[...] antiracism often feeds on the delusion that racism is allegedly an absence of thought, literally an insanity, and that it would suffice to think about it, to reflect upon it, in order to eradicate it, though what is really needed is to change one’s way of thinking”.

In summary, as an ideological process of reduction, the Albanians’ categorization “reduces every probable complexity to a group generalization and encloses every probable social and temporary fluidity in an absolute definition, within the limits of a character which is per se cause, effect and process” (Guillaumin 1972: 183-184). In this sense, journalistic discourse - by continuously “talking about” “Albanian bandits, Albanian Mafia, Albanian pack, etc,” but also about “honest Albanian youngsters” and “poor Albanian wage-earners” - records “illegal” or “worthy” activities on the basis of nationality. As a result, it successively segregates Albanians on the basis of their (immutable) national characteristics and represents what is “Greek”, which in the present case is identified with the general and unstated (honesty-homeliness-family life etc.), as some dominant category and the immigrants as “foreigners” possessing particular morphological characteristics, indirectly setting them opposite or outside the social system, while at the very same time it is supposedly analyzing their place in it. From this aspect, the Albanians’ representation constitutes the “us” and “Them” relationship as a semiotic system based on difference, in the sense that it represents a system of social relations which classifies “us” (Greek citizen, home-loving, border inhabitants, readers etc.) and “Them” (Albanians, illegal immigrants, dangerous criminals and/or poor and wretched illegal workers) as different and unequal categories, isolating and ostracizing “Albanians” (as criminals or poor aliens) from the national community, as the typical “others within” (Triantafyllidou 1998).

2. *Social insecurity-Crime wave*

Second thematic category: Crime wave - representations of insecurity

- Rise in crime indices
- New forms of crime (increase in violent crimes and crimes against property)
- Importation of crime (entry of criminals in Greece)

- Albanian Mafia
- Albanian gangs - looting, break-ins
- In-group criminality (victimisation of Albanians, comparison of crime presentation with Albanian offender and Greek victim, effects of intra-group criminality on Greek society)
- Fear of victimisation
- Causes of the problem (political situation in Albania, opening of frontiers, inadequate controls, immigrants' predisposition to crime, financial necessity, rejection-social marginalization etc.).

During the period examined in detail (Feb.- May 1998), all five newspapers place particular emphasis on the phenomenon of "the rise in criminality and social insecurity afflicting Greek society"¹⁴.

In the same way, the degree but also the way of correlating crime incidence in general with the entry of economic immigrants from Albania, varies significantly among papers but also within each paper, according to the type of text and the context. The findings of the present study confirm Karydis' conclusion (1996: 124) as a general trend at any rate. Karydis considers that the media's intermediating discourse that associates the mass arrival of Albanians with the perceived rapid increase in the country's criminality a determining factor.

In the "construction" of the "Albanian immigrants' criminality" problem, a fact of decisive importance is that the Press ("progressive" papers included) is "forced" to cultivate close relations with its sources¹⁵ in order to cover its news output. Consequently what is fed to the papers is whatever formal social control agencies define as crime and serious crime in particular¹⁶.

¹⁴ The rhetoric of police data and statistics, as well as specialists' opinions, are very often used to this effect. In addition, titles, relevant illustrations, permanent columns and vignettes such as "Cops and Robbers", "Robbery list" (*Elephtherotypia*); "HEL-LAS and HEL.AS" (Greece and Greek Police) (*Elephtheros*); "Greece turned into Soho" with a drawing of a map of Greece covered by a revolver and bullets; house-breaker gets access through window (*Elephtheros Typos*); drawing of housebreaker with headline "Criminals on the loose" (*Ta Nea*).

¹⁵ The main official sources for crime statistics and daily criminality available to journalists of the Athenian press are the Press Releases of Athens General Police Headquarters (for Attica), local correspondents, the courts, their own unofficial sources within or outside the state apparatuses and eyewitnesses.

¹⁶ The relevant Press Releases cover only those cases, which the police consider "worthy" of publication.

At the same time, formal social control agencies, which constitute the primary definers together with the government, set the original definition or interpretation of the issue of economic immigrants' entry and stay in Greece, and lay down the terms that form the basis for its coverage, while arguments against the original interpretation are forced to enter the primary definers' definition, and use this interpretative framework as a starting point (Hall et al. 1978). In this sense, the "sources", as primary definers, set the limits of any discussion of the economic immigrants' issue.

At any rate, the representation of this phenomenon varies according to the morphological structures, the stylistic and rhetorical options etc. to be found at the base of multiform discourse, through which each paper's perceptions are expressed.

More analytically, it became clear that the newspapers *Elephtheros Typos*, *Elephtheros* and to a lesser extent *Ethnos* maintain a steady and consistent line between their daily news coverage and their editorial columns. With "human interest" stories as their circulation's basic axis, they systematically use verbal and typographical sensationalism, "scandalous" titles, pictures, maps, statistics etc., aiming to dramatise daily news coverage. Thus, they manufacture a threatening climate of insecurity through particularly "provocative" rhetorical means, supplying the reading public with all the elements of a moral panic which in the present case, as already noted, is based on the stereotype of the Albanian immigrant. Given the indisputable fact that, in recent years, we have witnessed a rapid increase in "serious" criminality, they associate this rise with the immigrants' arrival, either explicitly or by means of stereotypical contradistinctions such as "us/the foreigners". Within this framework, particular emphasis is placed on "new forms of criminality", which are represented as unprecedented in the Greek environment, a fact which again refers directly or connotatively to "imported crime".

In the "conservative" version, this criminality is attributed in a tautological way to the entry of illegal immigrants, the opening of the borders, inadequate controls etc. To be more specific, it is considered that ineffective control of the borders, to begin with, allowed a large number of "criminals" to enter the country in order to extend their "activities". Yet, on another level, the political leadership of the police and the Greek State in general are held responsible for not intensifying the policing of towns and countryside.

Within this framework, the predominant view, stated or implied, argues in favour of the Albanians' own responsibility and guilt. The "conserva-

tive” view does not really seek, nor does it provide, an answer to the question “why do Albanians commit [more] crimes”. As we saw in the previous unit, the representational manner is such as to imply that “*Albanians commit crimes because they are criminals*” or “*Albanians commit crimes because they are Albanians*”.

From this standpoint, to the extent that the supposed tendency towards specific criminal activities is attributed to assumed “typical” national idiosyncratic elements and characteristics, as noted by Triantafyllidou (1998), social problems supposedly arising from immigration are attributed to racial factors.

On an denotative level and with more care in their pronouncements, *Ta Nea* and *Elephtherotypia* attribute all elements associating the rise in criminality with the alien’s arrival to official sources (the police, the Ministry of Public Order, statistics) eyewitnesses, residents of an area, victims of crime etc.

On a connotative level, however, both *Elephtherotypia* and *Ta Nea* manufacture, in a far more milder way, a climate of “insecurity due to the increase in criminality” which, even in a particularly ambivalent manner and not on every occasion, is associated with the activities of immigrants, mainly Albanians. The cumulative effect of daily news coverage plays a decisive role in this construction, especially police news coverage (enumeration of “the day’s robberies” - “Robbery list”, the special column “Cops and Robbers” in *Elephtherotypia*, *Ta Nea*’s vignette “Criminals roam free” etc.), and the distinction of offenders or suspects according to nationality (even when, as we have seen, the logic is “reversed” and an offender’s Greek identity is stressed or when the media’s wave of xenophobia and racism is pointed out).

Therefore, both *Elephtherotypia* and *Ta Nea*, while relying on all those elements that “inevitably” manufacture both the Albanian’s stereotype (even if reversed) and a climate of insecurity due to increasing criminality in their police news coverage, where the fear of victimisation weighs heavily, they “attempt”, at least up until a point, to contest within their wider home news category and their editorial columns, the Albanians’ degree of crime involvement “promoted by the media and various agents”¹⁷.

Although recognising the tendency for increased participation of national immigrant groups in serious crime during the last years as real, and the fear

¹⁷ I am referring to the case of “*Ios*”, which is probably the only specimen of an elaborated critical approach among most of the stereotypes’ “endoxa”, analysed in the present study.

of victimisation as justified, the “progressive” version, promoted by *Elephtherotypia* with adequate clarity and *Ta Nea* with greater ambivalence, still considers that formal social control agencies, politicians and the media exaggerate, with the consequent construction of a negative stereotype and a climate of racism and xenophobia against poor foreign immigrants (a climate which often leads to criminogenesis). Within this framework, serious problems of establishment and survival, combined with existing conditions in the country of origin, drive immigrants, to a greater extent than Greeks, towards deviant patterns of behaviour (factors of criminogenesis). Particular weight is placed on the fact that the effectively non-existent reception policy for immigrants concerning entry, stay and employment¹⁸, contributes to overexploitation and their “inevitable” recourse to deviant behaviour.

To sum up, all five newspapers adopt, up to a point, the version of the primary definers who consider it as given, by means of a clearly repressive logic, that the immigration wave from Albania creates a problem for the country’s security. On this basis, the conflict between “conservative” and “progressive” versions over the issue of “*economic immigrants and the problems they raise for Greek society*”, is necessarily restricted to the search for the “Albanians” percentage crime involvement compared to the “Greek citizen” equivalent, and the cause of this involvement (national characteristics and individual responsibility on the one hand, poverty, living conditions and legal residence status on the other).

3. *Formal and informal social reaction*

Third thematic category: Social reaction (formal and informal)

- Policing, police attitudes (call for amendments of the law on the use of weapons during the course of duty, accusations, mobilisations etc.)

¹⁸ As noted by Karydis (1996:93), the legitimisation of the illegal immigrant/criminality junction generates confusion “between the level of illegality - due to the legal framework regulating the entry, residence and employment and the level of criminal transgression for serious street crime (violence, sexual crimes and crimes against property) since three fourths of the total number of offences immigrants are supposed to have committed concern violations of the Alien’s Act, that is, that they entered and remain or work illegally in the country. Therefore, it effectively means that their state of existence is being criminalized. For certain national groups, this category of offences covers over 90% of all crimes apparently committed.”

- Repression (sentences)
- Detention conditions
- Disputed effectiveness of the police and criminal justice system, appeals for intensified policing and repression
- Recourse to private security market, installation of security systems
- Action by citizen groups, mobilisations, formation of associations, carrying of guns etc
- Use of violence by formal agents, use of violence by employers or other private individuals, forms of taking the law into their own hands - Legitimisation of violence against Albanians (Albanian: inferior being, socially dangerous etc.)
- Closing of borders
- Deportation
- Social benefits (improvement of living conditions, measures to prevent exploitation of minors' etc.)
- Legalisation (reports in favour of or against legalisation)
- Condemnation of actions against Albanians (references to "xenophobic", "racist" phenomena etc.).

The argumentation of the Athenian press on the Albanians' criminality issue revolves around the representation of social reaction, which comprises our third thematic category. The ideological cycle for handling the crime wave examined here rounds off with this category.

I note, to begin with, that the analysis of the newspapers' relevant representational practices presents some particularity, as the papers' own discourse constitutes a particular form of informal social reaction - whether they adopt the line of "investigative" journalism or the "neutral" recording of reality -. In this sense, the function of the Athenian press does not limit itself to the representation of informal reactions by various social categories or agents, but contributes in a determining way to the moulding of general social reaction that is specific to the historical context. A characteristic case is that of "Palαιο Keramidi". It is at this precise point in time that most composite publications (special editions, journalistic reports or lengthy opinion articles) appear simultaneously in all the papers and we witness what Hall et al. (1978) call the shift from the surface (fact, activity etc.) to the foundation (cause, interpretation) which usually takes the form of news stories evolving into news coverage or special editions, reaching a wider ideological field than daily journalistic practice. At this moment in time,

the media create a climate of moral panic in different versions and of varying intensity, and play a catalytic role in moulding social reaction, both formal and informal¹⁹. Although analysis of the news stories alone would support the working hypothesis that both the local authority's immediate "reaction" as well as the wider social one following the event and the enormous publicity generated are connected to the moral panic generated by the media in the preceding weeks – this view was in fact substantiated by the villagers' interviews recorded a year later²⁰. The villagers admitted in those interviews that there had been no manifestation of criminal activity on the Albanians' part in the village of Keramidi, but that it was the "fear of crime" originating from the media that had led them to take measures against Albanian immigrants:

"We heard that Albanians rob and kill and whenever we turned the TV on, Albanians were being accused of every crime committed, so we decided to take preventive measures and, after that, everyone called us racists".

At this stage, the press tried to obtain justification for its positions from specialists and "authoritative" sources as well as from ordinary citizens, by suggesting prescribed solutions for the insecurity problem and the fear of crime²¹.

¹⁹ Since the "Palaio Keramidi" case, *Elephtherotypia* for instance, undertakes a more active role, by giving greater emphasis to its "antiracist" and "antixenophobic" soul searching. Home news pages essentially constitute a platform for denouncing racist acts against Albanian immigrants, by hosting the views of agents which the rest of the papers, even *Ta Nea*, completely ignore.

²⁰ It concerns a series of documentaries under the general title "News coverage without boundaries" shown by NET in March 1999. Reporter S. Kouloglou and his team paid a visit to Palaio Keramidi in the Pieria region. Following the screening of a documentary on the conditions faced by Greek immigrants in America at the beginning of the century, and of a second one relating a recent episode against a Greek immigrant in Germany, the locals took part in a public discussion on the way economic immigrants are treated in host countries.

²¹ We would agree at this point with Cohen (1980), who sets definitions of reality within a wider social process and observes that media practices are influenced by practices determining the reality of other social agents and institutions - the police, the courts, pressure groups, political institutions etc. The interdependent practices of such agents and institutions create, according to Cohen's approach, an "amplification spiral", where the significance and extent of an original "problem" – that is, whatever those agents define as a problem – undergoes a continuous amplification, as the reality determining processes of such agents mutually support and complement each other. By means of this procedure, the papers, as secondary determinants, play a deci-

As we saw in the previous section, during the period of time analysed, contrasting views are presented in both the “strictly” news coverage content and the columns of the five papers. On the one hand we have the representation of incompetent state machinery unable to fulfil its obligations and a “homogenised” Greek population under permanent threat due to the rise in criminality. On the other hand however, the “progressive” version presents us with the picture of an equally homogenised social category (immigrants) which is endangered either by various forms of informal social reaction (beatings, murders, restriction of movement) (see also Dimitras 1993) or marginally²², by formal social control agencies’ arbitrariness (murders or wounding by police officers or military patrols, “clean up” operations, torture, pillorying, maltreatment of those arrested, under accusation or detention).

It must be emphasised that the paper’s political line (pro-government or pro-opposition) plays an important role in challenging the effectiveness of state institutions. However, independently of each paper’s strictly delineated political motivations, both versions agree that the state is ineffective in coping with the problems “uncontrolled” or “illegal” immigration is supposedly raising for Greek society, and they supply a picture of continuous threat, where the fear of victimisation mainly for citizens, but also for immigrants, reaches “dangerous” dimensions.

At any rate, the critical stance of the press in relation to the effectiveness of formal social control agencies (mainly the police) in coping with crime and/or the vicious circle of “victimisation fear -racist behaviour” of a section of the population, does not prevent it from promoting and legitimising a specific ethical position concerning the targets and roles of the social control system. Within this framework, perceptions take the form of ap-

...sive role in reproducing the “definitions of the situation” of those agents which, as “reliable sources”, have privileged access to the Press.

²² During the period examined (Feb.- May 1998) we did not locate any news stories concerning the victimisation of Albanian immigrants by state officials, except for one case in *Elephtherotypia*, on 6/4, about the maltreatment of detainees by staff at Diavata Prison in Thessaloniki (according to the findings of the study by Spinelli and Gerouki, “Ethnocultural Groups and Conflict Relations at Diavata Prison”). By contrast, news concerning the use of various forms of individual or communal violence by Greek citizen predominate, as well as certain incidents of “intragroup” violence. It would be interesting to explore whether emphasis on informal forms of violence constitute a “cover-up”, on a daily basis, of institutional violence against immigrants (and to what extent this is due to news sources and/or the media) or whether it is simply a fortuitous phenomenon in the present context.

peals or normative models, which clash with the “reality” described and commented on in a particularly caustic way, by Greek papers.

In the course of this research, two appeals were located: the first, which is predominant in both versions (“conservative” and “progressive”), is directly related to the intensification of institutional forms of policing and repression (need for a permanent and generalised police presence on the streets, “long term strategic planning” for policing, improved training, amendment of the law concerning the carrying of arms by the police, a more effective criminal justice system, immediate repatriation or entry regulations for “irregular” immigrants etc.). The second appeal, which concerns the shift towards informal forms of social control (private security, patrols and the carrying of arms by citizen etc.), emerges in a particularly ambivalent way: it appears as a “public opinion” demand, which the “conservative” press “understands” and “shares” but rarely adopts explicitly, while its “progressive” counterpart treats with great reservation, as it considers that, if applied, it might lead to “dangerous situations” (racism, vicious circle of crime etc.). By contrast, the proposal to strengthen repressive mechanisms is represented as a demand by “public opinion” and formal social control agencies, but by “conservative” and “progressive” newspapers as well.

The main conclusion of the content analysis concerning informal social reaction to crime is that it is represented in all five papers as a product of increased criminality and the ineffectiveness of formal social control agencies. By various means and narrative techniques which differentiate each individual paper, informal social reaction is commonly perceived as a consequence of citizens’ security problems created by the offensive behaviour of Albanian immigrants [as well]. Thus, it is stressed on every occasion that the ineffectiveness of penal and, in particular, police mechanisms creates a climate of insecurity that “forces” citizen to take individual security measures (“self-defence”, “taking the law into their own hands”, the bearing of arms, home security systems) or turn to some collective form of crime “prevention” (private security contracts, patrols, restrictions of aliens’ rights on a local level etc.), phenomena which often lead to racist manifestations against all immigrants (a view that appears only in “progressive” discourse).

We can state, in particular, that the “conservative” version adopted by *Elephtheros Typos* and *Elephtheros* appears to categorically challenge the police and penal mechanisms’ effectiveness and demands particularly auto-

cratic institutional forms of crime administration. At the same time, it unequivocally sides with “terrorised citizens”, who “having been abandoned by the state, are trying to safeguard their lives, families and property”.

It is worth noting that in *Elephtheros Typos*, *Elephtheros* (but also *Ethnos*), the terms “they have taken the law into their own hands” and “self-defence” are in most cases misused (as e.g. in the cases of Palaio Keramidi, Giannitsochori in Heleia, Ikaria etc.) and “incriminate” Albanian immigrants as a social category (either as criminals or dangerous), thus providing informal forms of violent behaviour against them (beatings, abuse, restrictions of movement etc.) with a degree of ideological “legitimation”²³.

These two papers manufacture the picture of an extremely inelastic, rejecting and punishing society, founded on stereotypes of the “Greek home loving individual” and the “Albanian criminal”. Albanian “illegal immigrants” are represented as ruthless villains from an uncivilised country who “invade Greece illegally”, with all the implications that such a picture carries, their human status is taken away, on a semiotic level, from them (they are always nameless, voiceless or without identity) with the assistance of nationality (foreigners), recourse to extreme solutions of “elimination” (“throw them in the sea”) or more commonly of direct repression (“throw out the scum”, “repatriate them”) becomes possible without any contradiction arising, on a semiotic or moral level, with a “civilised” democratic society’s proclaimed humanitarianism, or the issue of the “suppression of human rights” being raised.

In papers adopting milder tones that tune down the racist and nationalistic connotations of *Elephtheros Typos* and *Elephtheros*, an effort is made to maintain a balance between “hard” facts (police statistics), the fear of crime and a “sociologising” or “psychologising” critical stance against the phenomenon of racism. Within this framework, the “progressive” version is better aligned with formal social control agencies and the government, who view the shift from formal social control forms to informal private ones with suspicion and distrust (private security, citizen’s actions with recourse to repressive “self-defence” and “self-organising” etc. practices).

²³ To be precise, the use of these terms implies that Albanians, as a social category, have infringed upon some possession (Greece’s territorial integrity, public interest, general welfare, security, property, corporal integrity etc.), that they are in other words “guilty of something”; and the Greeks, because of the “state’s absence” are forced to “defend themselves” or “retaliate” without the legitimate authority’s assistance.

Nonetheless, it is important to stress that even within this “framework”, informal forms of reaction are mainly perceived as a consequence of the state machinery’s ineffectiveness in controlling foreign criminals, so that a negative stereotype is created against the entire body of immigrants in Greece and a climate of insecurity, racism and xenophobia is being cultivated.

At any rate, the appeal for “citizen’s security” seems to be the “progressive” discourse’s predominant claim as well, and given the context, this can be interpreted as a demand for regularising the immigrants’ presence by means of increased policing mainly, or measures of socialisation.

While “sympathising” with citizens who turn to methods of “self-defence” in their desperation or insecurity, *Ethnos* in particular, thanks to a mixture of “populism” and “progressiveness”, and *Ta Nea*, professing a relative “balance” and “neutrality” by means of their layout and narrative techniques, contribute to a situation where the police and penal systems’ ability to cope with criminality is being contested, and at the same time denounce both the “transgression” of various informal forms of reaction to crime and the cultivation of xenophobic and racist feelings.

Elephtherotipia differentiates itself from *Ta Nea* and *Ethnos* to a certain extent, as it is the only paper that unequivocally condemns all use of informal forms of violence against immigrants, whether they are considered guilty of a crime²⁴ or not (Kriekouki, Corfu, Giannitsochori in Heleia, Ikaria), and categorically qualifies all collective “precautionary” reactions by citizen or authorities (Palaio Keramidi, Amaryntho of Chalkis, Symi etc.) as racist actions that turn all immigrants as a social category into targets²⁵.

²⁴ According to Karydis’ (1996:161) and Dimitra’s (1993) data, ever since 1991 several Albanians have been shot dead “while attempting to steal a bicycle”, “because they were suspected of stealing a cassette recorder”, “because they were suspected of arson”, “because they frightened a farmer”, “so that their employer could save on their wages” etc. During the period examined by this study, we recorded the case of a rural constable who received a two year suspended sentence for killing a twenty year old Albanian in June 1996, at Argyropouli in Larissa, because he was stealing water melons, and the murder of two Albanian burglars by a seventeen year old resident of Asprokambos in the Korinthian region (3/11/1998).

²⁵ It terms the decision by the local council of Palaio Keramidi “the imposition of martial law” (26/3/1998). *Ta Nea* adopt a more neutral phraseology, renaming, as a rule, violence against immigrants as “dangerous social situations” or “excesses”.

Consequently when informal social reaction comes close to, or actually oversteps the established bounds of legality (use of force by informal agents, abuse, “taking the law into one’s own hands”, “self-defence”, “pogrom” etc.), then the “progressive” version of the Athenian Press undertakes to defend the state of law and order using a moral tone, an act which constitutes an intervention in the administration of the immigrants’ “problem” on the papers’ part.

In summary, the Athenian press turns formal social control (police, courts, and prisons) into a protective structure, whose absence or ineffectiveness constitutes a threat to society (criminality beyond control). As the fear of crime and the inclination towards informal forms of “protection”/violence are interpreted as consequences of real criminality, the predominant appeal for strengthening repressive state apparatuses (i.e. through more intensive policing, making the penal system harsher and more effective and regulating immigrants’ entry) appears to be a logical and common sense conclusion. Thus, we observe that, in the name of safeguarding the national interest, the common good or the citizen’s safety, a rather autocratic punitive system seems to be gaining the upper hand as a predominant ideology of social control, at the expense of a remedial, reforming anti-crime policy.

The conflict between the “conservative” and “progressive” versions within this framework focuses on two points: firstly, whether recourse to more repressive forms of administrating the criminality phenomenon, as well as the “supervision” and “control” of entire social categories, are justified in order to safeguard society’s security, and secondly, whether the shift towards private forms of social control is fair, since these will act as auxiliaries and not substitutes of formal control, or whether they run the risk of sparking off racist manifestations and legitimise the breakdown of the state of law and order, by obscuring the fact that elemental individual rights are being violated.

Conclusions

The selection of what constitutes a news story, how it is to be evaluated, classified and rated on a daily basis is affected according to each paper’s overall philosophy and social perception, which is closely interrelated to the system of representation and interpretation supplied by the dominant ideology. According to this viewpoint, typical news reporting values oper-

ate as a superficial structure that gives shape to a hidden “deep ideological structure”, the consensus view of the world. Within this study’s framework, this means that the representation of Albanian criminality presupposes a concrete perception and an entire set of established premises about crime, criminogenic factors, social control, the way society works, national interest, the labour market, the immigrants’ countries of origin et al.

The basic conclusion is that as a rule, the Athenian press adopts traditional criminological assumptions concerning the definition of crime, the criminal, law and order and the criminal justice system, as expressed by the primary definers (police, courts, specialist scientists etc.). As deviance is perceived by the latter as an inherent attribute of specific types of actions, the “problem” of the increase in crime and foreign immigrants’ participation in it thus constitutes an objective fact.

To begin with, through various narrative and rhetorical techniques, all relevant news coverage obscures the fact that newspapers as ideological apparatuses fully participate in the manufacture of social reality through their representational practices. Furthermore, if formal social control agencies produce and legitimise the stereotype of the Albanian criminal, it is only with the media’s contribution and approval that this stereotype can be publicised, demonised and become consolidated in the collective images of various social categories (Daskalakis 1985:153); a “role” which the Athenian Press fully accepts even though pretending to refute it at the same time.

As already noted, the newspapers’ representational practices entail the reinforcement of the Albanian criminal’s stereotype, as the violent crimes (sexual, manslaughter, robbery, assault and battery) the Albanian immigrants are mainly accused of, while quantitatively insignificant as a proportion of total criminal offences, cover almost exclusively the forms of crime treated by the press; forms which stoke moral panic against crime and common revulsion against criminals (Daskalakis 1985: 139).

Moreover, the tenacity with which the press “seeks”, through the “personalisation” of news stories, the causes and “distinctive” characteristics of criminal behaviour (based on a series of hypotheses related to the criminal’s personality) in the sense that crime appears as the offender’s expected behaviour incarnating the stereotype, follows from the acknowledgement that, as an objective fact, crime can be subjected to a causal approach. We have noticed that there is a tendency to incriminate personal traits, temperament and nationality in the “conservative” version. In the “progressive” version, social characteristics, the environment and social conditions

constitute, even in a particularly contradictory and suggestive manner, the determining factors of criminogenesis. In both frameworks it is, at any rate, implied that individuals deviate (for personal or social reasons) because of slack formal social control (ineffectiveness of the police and penal systems) and what is required is the restoration of law and order.

This explanatory framework does not take into account that, historically, every society creates its own characteristic forms of deviance and criminality. These do not constitute an objective fact, but a moral label-stigma which gets attached, through a series of complex social processes, to behaviours incompatible with socially predominant notions of legality and normality, and which violate formally codified rules or normatively preserved behavioural codes. The fact that deviancy as a political phenomenon, interwoven with the notion of state authority, is a behaviour defined by social groups and institutions with the power to stigmatise certain behaviours as deviant, is passed over in silence²⁶. What is mainly obscured is the fact that social control mechanisms, which lead to someone being officially pronounced a criminal and then sanctioned to the legal and penal system's correctional practices, explain how one may turn into a criminal and also what form informal social reaction to crime may take (see Daskalakis 1985).

Thus, through the multiplicity of ways and means of "recording" relevant news or "interpreting" the Albanians' criminality phenomenon employed by the Athenian Press and through the "gimmick" of symbolically legitimising the model of "investigative" journalism, both the questions set and the answers given by the press validate and reproduce the predominant ideology on crime and social control, thus contributing to the reproduction of the social consensus. For, on the one hand, on the pretext of a crime wave, which it had decisively contributed in bringing about the Athenian Press, appears as an institution ("the fourth estate") that recognises and stigmatises the social system's "malfunctions" (illegal immigration, criminality, ineffectiveness of the police and penal systems, shift towards informal forms of social reaction and informal forms of violence), voices criticisms, and calls for state intervention to resolve Greek society's problems caused by immigration. On the other hand, however, the press conceals the "informal" aspects of the selected issue and, being unable to effect a substantial break with predominant ideological formulations, clearly promotes

²⁶ See Daskalakis (1985), Koukoutsaki (1996-97), Tsalikoglou (1989), with an extensive bibliography. On the stigmatisation or labelling theory in Greek bibliography, see Tatsis (1989), Archimandritou (1996).

a consensus model. This model accepts that the penal code, the police, the prison etc., constitute institutions which [ought to] secure order and [to] protect members of society from crime and [to] safeguard the preservation of fundamental social values. Even in its most “progressive” version, the Athenian Press believes that the fight against crime will be successful when “forces of law and order” able to prevent and punish crime are set up; that is when a mechanism of repression/rehabilitation is established, that will “retaliate” against crime to an extent commensurate with the obvious (or underlying) threat to society’s security. Within this framework, formal social control agencies (mainly the police) are not represented as a state repressive mechanism, however a call for the modernisation and long-term strategic planning of policing is put forward so that it may cope with new forms of criminality (Mafia, international circuits, technology etc.), and contribute to an effective safeguarding of public order through the penal system.

From this perspective, informal social reaction is represented as a consequence of feelings of insecurity produced by “real” criminality. Consequently, the structures of contemporary society are, once again, excluded from the analysis, the political issues concerning the criminal stereotype, the role of formal social control agencies, the social division of labour etc., are not examined. At the same time suggested “solutions” do not go beyond the context of a rehabilitational view of crime at the best of times, which is presented as pathological (individual or social pathology) and is examined in terms of interventionist socialisation and rehabilitation. It is worth noting that, even those texts of the “progressive” press which could be considered as acutely critical of inadequate reception measures for immigrants and the Albanians’ stigmatisation, “round up” with an appeal to the state of law and order to cope with criminality and seek the welfare state’s intervention in the immigrants’ favour, as the ultimate regulator of inequalities and eradicator of prejudices; and all this within the framework of safeguarding social peace and the national interest.

The unattainable combination of repression and integration, of more authoritarian management of social problems and democratic procedures and contradictions of the modern state fail to be mentioned or are rather distortedly deflected through the personalisation of authority (incompetence, reluctance, big promises, politicians’ negligence), through the problem’s transference to the executive level (government, police) and the inadequate enforcement (or erroneous application) of criminal or immigration policy. Finally, no printed piece or newspaper produced a novel set of

interpretations on the direct political nature of questions and problems surrounding the criminal and/or immigration phenomenon. The result is that the Athenian Press ends up by schematising a socio-economic issue as a foundation of predominant ideology (see also, Konstantinidou 1997).

Hence, that which differentiates the “progressive” version from the “conservative” one is that in the former “racist exploitation of the criminal’s national origins” is criticised (*Elephtherotypia*, 11/ 4/ 98) on the basis of the acknowledgement that immigrants’ social living conditions constitute criminogenic factors for a limited number of individuals, but stigmatising factors for the entire social category of immigrants. In the “conservative” version, nationality is emphatically promoted as the interpretative key to Albanian criminality as an objective fact, while accusations of racism are rejected.

In this way, the point of friction is located at “the extent of Albanian criminality” and at “whether and what measures should be taken”, and the conflict between “progressive” and “conservative” perceptions is epitomised by the polarisation between arguments in “defence” of the persecuted Albanians (in the sense that they do not commit as many crimes as they are shown to or that when they do commit them there are extenuating circumstances because of their wretched living conditions) and arguments for their uncritical rejection as “illegal immigrants-dangerous-criminals”.

On the basis of this juxtaposition there arises a picture of a national team (the nation, Greece, the Greek citizen etc.), which in its “conservative” rhetoric is absolutely homogeneous and terrorised, and threatened not simply by criminals, but by criminals of another national team.

What is important in this picture, and which the press decisively contributes towards by its representation of the crime wave and the concomitant social insecurity, is that Albanians constitute a threat against the nation. Thus formal and informal social reaction, as expressions of the social consensus and national unity, legitimise the strengthening of repressive mechanisms and justify recourse to the use of violence (state or private) and the curtailment of individual rights. Seen from this angle, the “conservative” view of the Athenian Press is ideologically more consistent, in the sense that denotative and connotative levels of discourse rarely clash, since they are in line with the tenets of racist/nationalist ideology to begin with.

Without overturning the picture of a social threat from the increase in imported criminality, the “progressive” version incorporates “liberal” demands for resolving problems arising from illegal immigration, but does

not stop manufacturing the “exclusion” of Albanians, either as criminals or poor illegal immigrants, from the dominant national team. In the same way, the annihilation of the Albanians’ voice, through their marginalization and symbolic annihilation, ensures their exclusion from the public debate and turns, as a rule, Albanian immigrants (criminal or not) into “objects” of protection and not “subjects” of rights. It is precisely this process of moulding social reality that lends a contradictory character, on an ideological level, to “progressive” discourse. Furthermore, it encourages a high degree of ambiguity and unreliability, which is deeply influenced by the context and the constraints imposed by journalistic practices of writing, structuring and presenting the news. Thus, the “progressive” perception is very often “trapped” between the contradictions of stated opinions and the printed texts’ connotative meaning. *Elephtherotypia*, in particular, appears to be continuously oscillating between all those everyday technical, commercial and aesthetic constraints and demands of a tabloid newspaper, which, by definition, relies on sensational journalism, and a system of manufacturing “interesting” news that inevitably strengthens the predominant definition of crime and the stereotype of the Albanian criminal, as well as investigative social journalism’s own “self-image”. Within the framework of “popular anti-racism” this “challenges” the conventional wisdom that incriminates all Albanian immigrants as a social category for the increase in criminality²⁷.

And so, even in its most “progressive” version (*Elephtherotypia’s Ios*), the Athenian press confuses, as a rule, two levels: insecurity, fear of victimisation, taking the law into one’s own hands, having recourse to informal social control forms and what is generally labelled xenophobia or racism within the given context, are mainly represented as resulting from the *real* increase in criminality (*and* in the number of Albanians participating). In this way, however, the fact that the various forms of informal social reaction, including racist acts, do not result from the fear of victimisation created by [the immigrants’] *real* criminality, but are generated by the products of formal social control apparatuses (by the stereotype of the [Al-

²⁷ In spite of the fact that these two approaches keep their distances page wise, it remains to be answered whether these contradictions in the paper’s discourse are capable of creating the required fissure in the predominant ideology’s reassuring certainties and the prerequisites for more active reading. Alternatively it may be that through ambiguity and inconsistency, ideological structures become so “confused” that everything remains ambivalent, unanswered and unresolved.

banian] criminal) is obscured. Also within this framework, the semantic practice of the Athenian press, in its “conservative” or “progressive” version, is decisive.

If the analysis of the representation of immigrants’ criminality and of the appeals for related policies to cope with the immigration phenomenon is then placed in a wider historical and cultural dimension, that is if “the aliens’ crime wave”, as a media construction, is incorporated within the wider legitimisation process of a “moral panic”, because of the “generalised crisis and lawlessness plaguing Greek society” (see also Tsagarousianou 1994, Tsili 1995), then the social consensus framework which is called upon to “regulate” the social “disturbance” is broader than the ideological framework which delimits the immigration and racism/anti-racism issue. Moral panic, whose basic function is to “disorientate” “public opinion” and stress a social crisis’ symptoms and not its causes, displaces Greek society’s problems from the insecurity relative to employment opportunities, social poverty, intensified phenomena of exclusion and the sense of social insecurity and discontent due to the shrinking welfare state and the contestation of fundamental social rights, turning it towards insecurity from the lack of state “protection” and policing, a fact which justifies the tightening of suppressive mechanisms and a generalised enforcement of state violence and authority. In this sense, various “versions” of moral panic (immigrants, drug addicts, marginal individuals, juveniles, sports fans, beggars etc.) create the prerequisites for a state justified in suppressing entire social groups and not only offenders and deviant individuals. In this way, though, by failing to put forward a truly alternative conceptual framework of social reality and social power relations, even “progressive” discourse tends, in the end, towards the “corruption of the state of law and order and the fashioning of conditions for bringing about a consensus in favour of more autocratic forms of administering society” (Koukoutsaki 1996-97: 66).

By paraphrasing Miliband (1969), we could state that if the power structure and the role of social control in the manufacture of crime and criminal are not contested, social criticism, however penetrating, can turn out to be of great use to the status quo. Its use is fostered by its contribution to the existence of an intense but safe debate and dispute, and the promotion of “solutions” for various “problems”, “solutions” that obscure and divert attention from the greatest of all “problems”, namely that social criticism concerns a social state of affairs where inequality and exploitation are structurally predominant and their resolution is not a matter of time and social “integration”.

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The Deviance of the Foreign Immigrant in the Mass Media

Research Findings in the Area of Salento*

ALBERTO D'ELIA**

The aim of this paper is, firstly, to outline the common characteristics of the categories of deviance and of the stranger, in order to examine, subsequently, the manner in which the mass media handle the interrelation of these two themes.

This theoretical review will be followed by the empirical verification of the outlined themes, by means of empirical research that was conducted on the daily press of the wider area of Salento in the summer of 1996. We shall, thus, move from the analysis of the social interaction, through which specific collective practices of exclusion against certain social categories are formed, to the manner in which these very practices are reflected on the field of discourse and language.

Drawing parallels between the stranger and the deviant

The concept of «the deviance of the stranger» is constructed by two sociological categories, which, despite being distinct, have several common elements.

* Translated by Ismini Chassapi.

The present paper is based on the author's dissertation in Sociological Criminology, which was presented at the Law School of the University of Bologna in March 1997. After the commentary of the supervisor of the dissertation, Professor Dario Melossi, a re-examination of the conclusions was considered necessary, as well as their completion in the light of later readings and reflections.

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It is true that deviance stresses the unavoidable social confrontation of one member of society with the majority of the social body. When the former manifests a line of conduct, which is considered antithetical to the norms, the expectations or the customs that the majority itself considers legal, or accepts *de facto*, several strategies of social control are adopted, in proportion to the malfunction that the deviant act itself may induce to the organisation of social life.

However, what must be underlined is the fact that, in this manner, «there exist no acts which are deviant in themselves, but merely social definitions of what constitutes compliant conduct or deviant act» (Gallino 1993: 219).

In addition, according to a recognised sociological view, the stranger «...does not denote an ontological reality but a relationship; it constitutes the one pole of a model of interaction, which also includes the opposite pole and their interdependencies, and the tensions that arise between these two poles». (Tabboni 1993:31).

Consequently, the image of the deviant, but also that of the stranger, are determined more in terms of relations, of social interaction, than on the basis of their inherent characteristics. This is why these categories induce such fascination in the sociological milieu.

In the train of thought of certain scholars, for example, we can trace a similar drawing of parallels:

[T]he condition of the poor resembles that of the stranger, who also lies in a position of antithesis in relation to the group. This position of antithesis, however, includes a precise relationship, on the basis of which the stranger constitutes part of the group as one of its defining elements. Thus, the poor is undoubtedly positioned outside the group since he constitutes a simple object of the actions of the social group; in this case, however, being out of the group is, to say it briefly, nothing but a special form of being within. [...] This duality, which seems difficult to explain rationally, is an absolutely elementary sociological fact (Simmel, in Tabboni 1993: 105).

In this particular case, Simmel used the example of the poor as a typical figure of the deviant, of the «other», in relation to the society that accepts him. What emerges, however, from the first lines, concerns mainly the unavoidable level on which similar juxtapositions are made, namely the sphere of identification of the reference group.

In other words, the assertion we would like to make is that social interactions of this kind obey the natural processes of formation of the self, which mainly occur through a nexus of interpersonal relationships.

The fact that the I acquires consciousness of him/herself through the consciousness of the others, the fact that the potential of formation of the I is structured through the co-operation and interaction with the others, constitutes one of the fundamental cogitations of modern philosophy, which is substantiated by the theoretical and empirical research of psychology (Tabboni, 1993:67)

And further:

In this manner, the condition of the other is immersed in and entangled with the identity; and the stranger – symbol of the other – not only lies in the distant and primordial origins of the «we», but it intervenes constantly as an essential and inalienable constituent of the existence of the «we». Therefore, the juxtaposition of the we and the stranger is not merely external, occasional and academic; it is, on the contrary, internal, structural and existential, too. (Remotti in Bettini 1992: 34).

A similar process of mutual recognition, for example, is revealed in the ethnic conflicts, especially those occurring in the urban spaces.

In this case, the conflict carries out an identification function, a function of mutual recognition between the social actors who live in the same environment but, nevertheless, do not share the sense of belonging to a common group (Cotesta 1992: 8).

Thus, in this light and on the basis of what has been mentioned above in relation to deviance, we could assert that the social and ethnic conflict not only sustains or reinforces the unity of the group, but creates this very unity.

With regard to the previous claim, a facet that should be underlined involves the strong bond that is developed between the personal identity and the social integration of each individual in a reference group.

Certain clarifications on deviance

If each social group determines its identity, its otherness, mainly through the interactions with those that deviate from the norms and the social expectations, it is necessary to focus on the manner in which these social relations are perceived, that is, on that public space where new identities, new othernesses are discussed and formed. The issue, then, is not a matter of definition, of classification, but is closely linked to the determination of «that public space» where the interaction between the social group and the deviant, between the society of reference and the stranger takes place.

In general, based on the aforementioned assertions, we could draw the conclusion that the knowledge each member of the society acquires, regarding the external reality, does not emanate from a direct relationship, but is intermediated by the mental images that one obtains through his experience from this relationship.¹ Thus, if both the social interaction among individuals and the manner in which these individuals imagine it and represent it are of significance, then, emphasis should be given to the methods with which the social relations under discussion are represented, particularly by the mass media, which function as intermediaries among the social actors.

Returning to deviance, one sociological approach (Melossi 1993, 1996) has indeed pointed out that the discussion and the trial of well-known acts of deviance provide a means through which society re-examines the legal, ethical and social boundaries existing at a given historical moment.

In this case, Melossi refers to Kai Erikson's studies on deviance, pointing out that, under certain conditions, the public trial of the deviant individuals contributes to a re-evaluation of the validity of the principles which have, to a certain extent, founded the cohabitation among the citizens.

Erikson, in particular, points out that the confrontations with the deviant individuals must be collective, social and public. In the past, the trials were indeed held in the squares or in the public open markets. Today, in the same manner, Erikson claims, we display the deviant in the frame of the public information that the mass media provide.

[...] In a figurative sense, at least, morality and immorality encounter one another on the public stand (Erikson 1977: 224).

Thus, the thoughts which follow, will revolve, for the most part, around how these new frames of information influence, distort or advance the sensitive social confrontation between the society and the deviant, the society and the stranger. The analysis of the contemporary social system and of the way it generates forms of deviance is indeed inconceivable without a more general reflection on this change in the system.

¹ «In order for the empirical world to become intelligible, it is necessary to be framed by an imaginary replica of itself" (Teodorov 1997: 126).

Deviance and the mass media

Thus, with regard to the character of the public discussion or process, which accompanies the appearance of new forms of deviance, we shall investigate in close detail certain specific trains of thought concerning the manner in which the issue of deviance is presented in the symbolic field of the mass media.

Deviance, for example, which is characterised, *inter alia*, for its exceptionality in its level of social reality, is, on the contrary, transformed into a recurrent element in the news reports. In this sense, we share the view that

the importance and the characteristics of deviance change significantly when it becomes a news item, because in the news report, the hierarchical relation between normality and exception is reversed, so that, in the frame of the example of the mass media, the act of deviance constitutes the rule² (Grossi, in Grandi, Pavarini & Sismondi 1985: 314).

More generally, we could add that

the journalistic narration utilises, at first, the invasion of the unexpected, of the unique, of the not normal, to organise, later, the dramatic in the frame of a story which provides it with a meaning and brings it back to the order of the predictable things. In short, to everyday reality. In this sense, anything we intend to define as «discourse» of the press corresponds to the complete and absolute adoption of this «everyday reality» by the newspaper (Landowski, in Semprini 1990:220).

In other words, according to this view, the mass media bring to everyone's experience events which have occurred even at some distance, but which are, nevertheless, always exceptional, extraordinary and on which we are called to express an opinion, to side with, to take a position in favour or against certain events (and certain leading actors); in this manner, they become collective experiences.

At this point, the particularity of the discussion about the stranger lies, thus, on the fact that the figure of the «deviant stranger» is what characterises it. If the deviant, as we argued, represents under certain conditions that which lies outside the group, exemplifying what is accepted and what is

² On the basis of this reversal, the scientific character of journalism, if not its detrimental character, has been widely disputed: from a scientific point of view, anything that is recurrent and constant can indeed become a research object. The exception, at most, confirms the rule (De Martino & Bonifacci 1990: 151).

rejected by the community, what happens when the stranger, the foreigner commits a crime, that is, violates the legal norms and is consequently punished?

We take for granted the fact that the foreigner, that is, the person who comes «from the outside» in relation to the community of reception, is already for this reason a deviant, since by necessity he deviates, he is distant from the norms of cohabitation (formal and informal) of the community which receives him, although he may not yet be subjected to sanctions of repressive character due to this fact. Consequently, the next step in this line of arguments defines that the stranger who commits a crime is in reality twice deviant: one first time when his deviance (namely the fact that he is a «stranger» in relation to those who receive him), although not pleasing, has not yet become the object of a public and formal process of stigmatisation, and a «second» time (deviance) when he faces the measures which directly emanate from the strategies of the formal social control. This model abides by the categories of deviance, or the «primary» and «secondary» deviation of Lemert (1981: 19 et seq.).

A novel sociological perspective: no sense of place

On the basis of what we have defined earlier, we cannot bypass the capacity of the mass media themselves to create new social environments, within which a new way of creating relationships, identifications and confrontations among the participants is developed.

Indeed nowadays, thanks also to the mass media, the relationship between individuals and society has become more fluid, more fickle (Schiavina 1995:9). The notion of social experience itself has changed: one acquires knowledge, through the intermediation of information, of events which have occurred in other places to the same or larger extent than those one gains awareness of directly through the specific experience, or within one's small community.³ According to this approach, the issue does not merely concern the crossing of the «virtual realities» with the social experience of the individual, but equally concerns the change of the notion of place itself:

³ «We are, of course, referring to an irreversible element: the information, which emanates from our personal experiences begins to diminish to the advantage of the technologically mediated information» (Schiavina 1995: 18).

In the past, the place determined a fairly specific category of communications. The electronic mass media, however, have changed the relative sense of the real and of the indirect encounters. Nowadays, by means of the electronic media, the social actors «go» to places that they wouldn't wish – or they wouldn't know how – to go, and the public «is present» at distant events (Meyrowitz 1993: 211).

This change is of great significance, since it alters the meaning of our social experience and, along with it, our ability to think, to consider that we are closely linked to a physical location.

The electronic media [...] use physical location in a strange manner. Although they violate the boundaries and change its social character, they use it as a field of social events (Meyrowitz 1993:211).

That is to say, they have distorted the appearances themselves

of the identity, of the group, of socialisation and of hierarchy, which were once attached to specific physical locations and specific experiences (Meyrowitz 1993: 214).

These social changes, along with the weakening of the traditional ties of the group, are of the greatest significance vis-à-vis other forms of associations. The process under progress, however, is not devoid of contradictions and imbalances. On the contrary, judging more wisely, one can deduce that these conditions of crisis are the essential intermediary of the course from an old form of social organisation to a novel cohabitation order, which, has been declared all along, but is far off from its harmonious and definite establishment.

The search for «roots» and for the «national identity», for example, according to the view of the aforementioned sociologist, does not denote the birth of the group in the traditional sense, but its erosion. The contemporary need of re-determination, through collective identities or cultural traditions, denotes in this light a conscious crisis of identity and a sense of relative lack of roots.

Indeed, at first sight, this odd contradictory tendency is due to the fact that the collective social experience which is created by the mass media, forms wider bonds and links, but, simultaneously, inevitably superficial ones, since they are not based on a real social experience but merely on a «virtual» one.⁴

⁴ «Although most people watch television on their own, television succeeds in giving the viewer a sense of bond with the external world and with the other viewers» (Meyrowitz 1993: 153).

In the background of this sociological fact there lies, however, one additional dimension, not less significant or problematic, which concerns the economic (beyond the political) situation of our international community. We refer to the wide phenomenon of the circulation of capitals, in which significant mobility is observed, and which possibly constitutes the foundation of the «restructuring» that the communication industries of each state are undergoing.⁵

However, if on the one hand, the globalisation processes tend to weaken the basis of faith and identity, which are linked to social, political or cultural dimensions, it is also obvious that there remains, on the ideological level, and dispersed ...

[...] a persistent and retrospective desire to reproduce the nation that died and the moral and social certainties that disappeared with it... to rectify and to invent an illusive unity based on the faded images of the nation (Robins & Torchi 1993: 21).

We could draw the conclusion that this is the origin of the dual tendency of the new economic-social system of the end of the century: on the one hand, it tends towards globalisation and on the other towards the local dimension. And is this due to the fact that the new system of relations is not stable and strong enough, so as to have acquired such a global co-ordination and control to secure the peaceful cohabitation of the parties (Schiavina 1995: 93).

Common sense and local Press

Thus, if every system of information reflects the conditions of the environment where it was born and established, now what remains is to comprehend the manner in which it acquires roots in the social experience. To attempt, that is, to discover the specific area on which the system under discussion acts, in order to gain the support and consensus of the people, which is subsequently observed on the level of reality, especially in the case of deviance.

This «area» on which our attention now focuses, has never been an object of agreement among the scientists. One interpretation that we often encounter in the sociological field, concentrates on the «common sense»,

⁵ We refer to their parallel tendency: on the one hand towards globalization and on the other towards the «local dimension», that is, to the fact that they must, in any case, be based on the physical reality of places, structures, human activities etc.

which, according to Erikson, for example, is the «abstract synthesis of decisions and opinions [...] that a community expresses in relation to a specific problem» (Erikson 1977: 223). Every civilisation, for that matter, is based on a set of elements that are taken for granted, or on elements that must be considered as true and which contribute to the formation of a common basis of judgement.

It regards, after all, «interpretive patterns [used] to orientate and provide order and meaning to the everyday life» (Gallino 1993: 581), which a great number of people share. Normally, common sense, in order to be such, must be necessarily based on a commonly shared social experience, either direct or indirect, and this is achieved through the gradual socialisation of the individual, by means of instruction and knowledge of the social circumstances he encounters in the course of his existence.

socialisation is the process of «becoming», the transition from one role to the following. Thus, socialisation lies in close relation to the informational characteristics of the identity of the group [...]. In a sense, every process of socialisation tends to take possession of the commonly accepted but specific pieces of information of the reference group⁶ (Meyrowitz 1993: 98).

This process is even more obvious when one coming from the outside tries to become integrated in a social group that is different from that one belongs to.

An individual, who is on the verge of becoming integrated in a group, is excluded from the complete sum of information of the group [...] The individual who is being socialised acquires access to the information of the group, but this usually occurs gradually and often abiding by specific times and deadlines (Meyrowitz 1993: 98-99).

Thus, it is on the level of communication that a form of «control» is established between what is commonly recognised and what, in contrast, remains outside the sphere of the commonly accepted, of the social.

We find it particularly interesting to underline this facet, because it transfers the perspective relating to the problem of social control from a legal-repressive element (of classical type) to an element of communicative type,

⁶ Emblematic, in relation to this issue, is the comparison between the similar condition of the child and the foreigner / immigrant in the effort to be integrated in society (Firestone, in Meyrowitz 1993: 98). However, with one additional difficulty In the case of the foreigner, who «already possesses a world» (Melossi 1996: 74).

a transfer which is characteristic of a democratic system that is based on consensus (Melossi 1996: 74).

Indeed, for Mead also

there exists an interchange between social actors in a communication process, within which a meaning is determined [...]. This «subject» of discussion can be determined only because a social practice occurred within which these meanings were formed (Melossi 1996: 73).

The mass media intervene in this social practice to reinforce, to weaken, to stress or to propose a consensus, which, however, is already expressed in the frame «of what everyone knows» about social life.

Therefore, the mass media themselves cannot attempt to impose contents that are at great distance from the social experience of the public, but they may offer the interpretive structures of specific social events instead of others, creating a kind of agenda of the issues of priority, which are also characterised by a particular narrative style.

On the other hand, the methods themselves with which the mass media handle specific issues, decisively influence the public discussion on certain priorities, underlining, for example, specific views at the expense of a more general and detached consideration of the same situation.

Consequently, as was already stated, only the incident which possesses specific qualities, like those of exceptionality, of causing shock or concern, becomes news.

The public opinion, in its turn, gains awareness of certain phenomena – in our case, that of the immigration of foreigners – only in terms of a social problem. Unless it has formed its own equally strong image or specialised knowledge to juxtapose the interpretive structure that the mass media propose, raising in this manner a kind of resistance. In this case we would have the so-called «oppositional reading», which «assumes a receiver that understands the reading [...] which has been constructed and is proposed to him, but re-determines it within an alternative frame of reference» (Grandi 1994: 121).

Thus, we can reach the conclusion that

The transformation of each event into a news item constitutes a social process even before being determined by the professional and organisational frames; it is a negotiation that takes place among various social actors, who

introduce in the game political, economic and cultural means (Sorrento 1995: 13).⁷

In other words, to establish successful communication, it is important not only to present the contents (cognitive values) to the receiver, but also, and mainly, to make him believe them and to guide him to adopt a specific communicative attitude (pragmatic values) (Grandi 1994: 74).⁸

In the remaining part of the paper, we shall examine the specific ways in which the «negotiation» of meanings between the mass media and their users takes place, mainly by means of an analysis of the «criminological» discourse that the mass media of Salento adopt in relation to the ethnic minorities that exist in their territory.

Salento: crossroads of immigration

It is infuriating to think of localities, communities, cities, provinces and even nations as independent concepts in a period when the global flexibility of capitalism is stronger than ever... Nevertheless, it is imperative that a global strategy of resistance and transformation should start, based on the real fact of locality and of the community. (David Harvey, in Robbins & Torchi 1993: 13).

After reviewing the general situation of the phenomenon of immigration of foreigners in the mass media, we believe that it is now appropriate to focus

⁷ In this light, ideology ceases to constitute a set of contents that pass through the mass media transmitters to the public, and it becomes a set of norms that structure the contents, a kind of molding filter of all the possible contents. Thus, it is not correct to talk about a «transfer» of ideology from the mass media to the public, because ideology, as a semiotic system of representation, is simultaneously dependent on both the mass media and the public [...]. This view would allow us to explain the failure of the apocalyptic theories and the partial success of theories like those of the «reinforcement of the pre-existing public opinion» and of the «selective insight» (Grandi 1994: 68).

⁸ «In this perspective, thus, communication is not perceived as a simple informational event, but, following the Anglo-Saxon philosophy of language, it is a true and real *act*, an activity which transforms the participants in the inter-subjective relationship. It is an act that one person performs on another. The notion of the exchange, as those of the fighting structure and of the negotiation, transform this place into a non peaceful field, into a field of conflict, of agreement, of conquest, of recognition. The effectiveness of the communication lies not so much on the information that one receives, but mainly on that which is adopted, because it constitutes complete and internal acceptance. If, adopting the discourse of the other means, in a way, that you believe him, then you must speak in order to be believed» (Magli & Pozzato 1984, in Grandi 1994: 74).

on the specific local incident of a discussion that would, otherwise, remain vague.

The analysis, beyond the geographical demarcation, will necessarily be delimited, also with regard to the choice of the mass media that will be used as points of reference (indeed, the analysis will be restricted to the local newspapers) and to the period that will be examined (from 1/5/96 to 31/8/96).

The geographical area on which our attention is focused is situated within the borders of the region of Puglia. We refer to Salento or the peninsula of Salento, which constitutes the furthest south branch of the whole region. Indeed, Salento includes the area that extends from the Otranto canal in the Gulf of Taranto, enclosing the provinces of Brindisi, of Taranto and of Lecce.

The reason for examining the area of Salento in this study is mainly the fact that this area has become, especially recently, one of the border zones that have been mostly affected by the phenomenon of immigration, and especially of illegal immigration. The causes of this development are multifarious, but we should not ignore the particular geographical location of the peninsula of Salento, that is, the vicinity to certain foreign realities that have become involved in the immigration phenomenon, and, above all, to the Albanian State.

To the traditional «illegal» immigration, deriving from Africa (Morocco and Senegal), recently there have been added the Albanian – which became the dominant – the Kurdish, the Slav, the Pakistan, the Chinese and that of other nationalities with smaller numbers of immigrants. These populations, when they do not have permanently settled compatriots in the area, use our beaches exclusively as temporary bases of supply and as a transit zone towards Northern Italy and Northern Europe. However, even for the others – those that have already permanently established communities in our area – we could talk about a temporary stay, except for a few exceptions. Indeed, especially among the Albanian population, for a long time a «replacement» process takes place, in the sense that from the legally registered immigrants possessing a sojourn permit dated in 1991 only few remain, because they have been replaced by new arrivals (Perrone 1995a: 21).

Regarding the reasons that have led to the concentration of the phenomenon of illegal immigration in Salento, despite remaining within the aforementioned frame of analysis, we should point out that, more generally, the lack of a policy of planning and support of the periodic immigration wave, on a national and international level, creates in a way additional, stagnant percentages of illegal immigrants (Perrone 1995a: 78).

In addition, the «structure» of the labour market itself, in certain areas of the Italian south, favours the recruitment of illegal working hands, and as a consequence it is more flexible and more easily replaceable in relation to that of the legal labour force.

Indeed, there has been observed that in the Italian south,

in the wide web of the shadow economy, where the weaker members of the labour force (youth, women etc.) find full- or part- time employment, the foreign immigration, especially the illegal one, has created reserves of working hands that accept working conditions which are unacceptable by the Italian labour force, even by its weakest members (Petrosino 1990:90),

becoming, in this manner, competitive in relation to the local work force, since these working hands are offered at lower cost.

In any case, as it was already mentioned, we refer to low level employment, which relates to heavy agricultural work, domestic services, or assistance to individuals that are not self- serving.

Another factor that explains the stay of the «illegal immigrants» in south Italy is certainly inferred by the «face to face» social relations, typical of many provinces of the Italian south, with the resulting potential of avoiding contact with the bureaucratic authorities of the area of stay during the immigration phase. For example, in 1992, it was estimated that the phenomenon of the illegal labour in the agricultural sector was mainly traced in Puglia (38% of the national total) (Marotta 1995: 64). Actually, in certain municipalities of the province of Lecce, the people who are employed in agricultural jobs, or, generally in manual labour, often have the possibility to find work without the need of intermediaries.

The immigration phenomenon in Puglia and in Salento

In general, we can observe that the distribution of the phenomenon of immigration of foreigners is not homogeneous across the entire country. «In 1995, Northern Italy absorbed 51% of the total, Central Italy absorbed 30.79%, South Italy absorbed 10.82% and the islands absorbed 7.11%» (Perrone 1995b: 15).⁹ Thus, as regards the Italian south, it is, in essence, a

⁹ Based on the figures of the Ministry of the Interior, in the same year (1995), the foreign nationals who were in Italy, with a normal sojourn permit, were 922.706. Out of these, 141.577 (15.34%) had come from EU countries and 781.129 (84.66%) from countries out of the EU. Among the latter, 528.585 (67.7%) had come from the countries under development and the remaining (32.33%) from socially developed countries, outside the EU (Perrone 1995b: 13).

phenomenon of limited extent, compared to the percentage of the north. With regard to our case in specific, based again on official data, in 1995 in Puglia

the foreign communities of substantial presence (more than 160 people) are 25¹⁰ out of a total of 23.078 people, which is equivalent to 2.5% of the national total and to 10.82% of the entire Southern Italy. The population originating from countries under development (PVS)¹¹ rises to 20.077 people, a number which is equivalent to 2.57% of the national total. In Puglia, the native population rises to 4.049.972 people, and consequently the people originating from the countries under development equal 0.5% of the total population of Puglia. Even among the different provinces, the distribution is not homogenous, both as regards the figures and as regards the country of origin. The province with the greatest number of immigrants is Bari, followed by Foggia, Lecce, Brindisi and Taranto (Perrone 1995b: 16).

Based on the above remarks, the immigration phenomenon in Salento has a marginal character, compared to the rest of the region or country. However, it should be pointed out from the beginning that, in general, the figures referring to the immigration phenomena are not considered very reliable, at least in regard to certain facets. Referring, more specifically, to the case of Salento, it should be emphasised that the lack of credibility is due, in this particular case, to the extreme geographical mobility of the immigrants, which constitutes this region a «transit zone» towards more desirable destinations, at least from an employment point of view such as, for example, Northern Italy (Perrone 1995a: 21 et seq.). Another factor accounting for the lack of credibility derives from the typology of the immigrants themselves in Salento: to a great extent, they are self employed people working in their own commercial businesses and seasonal workers, either employed by others (in Salento especially in the rural areas), or employed in autonomous jobs.

All the communities of immigrants who are involved in commercial activities demonstrate considerable seasonal variation, because it is financially more advantageous to exercise commercial activities here during the summer and to spend the winter in their native country (Perrone 1995a: 171).

¹⁰ In descending order these are: Albania, USA, Morocco, Tunisia, Greece, Serbia, St. Mauritius, FYROM, Germany, Senegal, Great Britain, Romania, France, Brazil, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Croatia, Venezuela, Sri-Lanka, India, Spain, Russia, Poland, Switzerland, China.

¹¹ Paesi in via di Sviluppo.

On the other hand, even the registration methodology significantly influences the quantitative data, irrespectively of the use to which this data will later be put.

One of the errors in which they have fallen (and continue to fall) is the incorrect estimation of the number of the so-called «illegal immigrants», who are counted differently each time (it is over- or under- estimated). An estimation which (objectively) could be determined with great difficulty, due to both the different «typologies of immigrants», and the areas of reference themselves and the numerous variables which are implicated and therefore are not easily predictable.

Another facet, which has become very common in Italy, is the lack of credibility of the data that have been accumulated by the Italian authorities. Either due to the well-known confusion, or due to the absence of types of reference (of the cultural variables) that could render these data effective (Perrone 1995a: 171).

For all these reasons, thus, we shall use the data that is at our disposal so as to understand the course of the phenomenon, and not so much to claim that we are aware of the exact figure of the foreigners; in any case, this is a clarification that only minutely influences the purpose of our research.

Thus, to the extent that it is possible to use our data, we can claim that the first foreigners who came to Salento were the Moroccans, who were later followed by other communities.

The periods with the greatest influx were two, and therefore we can talk about two immigration waves: the first in the beginning of the 1980s (Moroccans, Senegalese, Sri-Lankans, Philippines, Pakistani, Rom and groups with a limited presence that were later transferred elsewhere) and the other in the beginning of the 1990s (Albanian). The last community was that of the Somalians, which reached a considerable number (100/ 200 people) just in 1992, the year of the political crisis that inflicted this suffering country, although there were a few people before then, who were used as points of reference for the arrivals that followed. [...] It is worth pointing out that the present situation could be considered as one of the periods with the greatest influx. The incoming tide settles in the Otranto canal (Perrone 1995: 172).

The local newspapers in Salento

Our research begins with the analysis of the two largest newspapers of Salento in circulation, the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* and the *Quotidiano*, in the respective editions of Lecce. The period under investigation extends from 1/5/96 until 31/8/96, that is, an entire summer, including therefore the

period with the most significant presence of immigrants in this area, due to both the tourist season, which increases the activities of the peddlers, and the great number of agricultural activities that take place in that period and attract a large number of the seasonally employed foreigners (Perrone 1990a: 57).

The distinction that is usually attempted in the field of social research concerns the Press as a social institution, which constitutes the object of study of the sociologist, and the newspaper as discourse, which is of interest to the semiotician, or, even better, to the socio-semiotician, since the discourse of the newspaper is above all social. (Landowski 1990: 216).

In this paper, we would like to “break” this strict distinction and to attempt, in contrast, to «blend» the two fields, so as to integrate them in our research with greater ease: the relationship between deviance-immigration in the mass media of Salento and, specifically, in the local Press of this region.

The first questions that we shall attempt to answer therefore concern the elements that characterise the front pages of the newspapers on which we shall focus and, mainly, how these features influence the manner in which they handle the news.

Deviance and foreign immigration in the *Quotidiano* of Lecce

A glance at the front page of the two newspapers, during the period of the research, reveals that the issue of «immigration» appears in the *Quotidiano* eight times. All these cases are related to deviance, while only one concerns an incident that occurred outside the boundaries of the region, a fact which demonstrates that the newspaper shows a general tendency to prefer local news to national news; in the same manner, for that matter, that it prefers addressing the familiar sphere of the reader to adopting a formal and unprejudiced attitude.

Based on a first thought, which derives from an initial review of the cases under discussion, we could say that the police reportage often occupies the front page, although it concerns foreign immigrants. However, even where the coverage would allow a more substantiated investigation as far as the different facets of the aforementioned cases are concerned, as, for example, in the inside pages, something of the kind does not happen. On the contrary, both in the choice of headlines,¹² and in the photographs, em-

¹² On the notion of «hot» headline, see Faustini 1995: 181.

phasis is given to elements which are not directly related to the event (constant use of archive photographs of the boat-people* in the open sea, or of patrolling vessel that survey the coastline), in the sense that the functions of influence** and recall prevail all the more against the function of informing and of giving an account of the events.¹³

In addition, the topics of the front page are always articles of the police reportage concerning the local sphere, which in this case coincides with the province of Lecce. As all the articles of the news reportage, they refer structurally to two types of relations (Barthes 1962: 290 et seq.). The first is the relation of causality. Indeed, often in our case, the disembarkation of illegal immigrants is presented as being related to the trafficking of drugs (or of weapons, in other cases).

It is an extremely frequent relation: a crime and its motive, an accident and its circumstances, and, in this light, there exist, of course, particularly effective stereotypes [...]. However, in the cases where causality is, in a way, normal, expected, emphasis is not given to the relation itself, although it continues to structure the narration; the emphasis is transferred to those that we shall call *dramatis personae* (child, old person, mother, etc.), a kind of emotional quintessence which is aimed at reinforcing the stereotype (Barthes 1962: 293).

In this last case, we can refer to those pieces of news, where the attention is focused on the «human dimension» of the event. For example, the case of the «eleven-month-old infant that was abandoned on the beach by his mother», in which the condition of the immigrants who try, irrespectively of the cause, to disembark, is silenced so that, in contrast, the private drama of two people is emphasised and is offered as news.

The stereotype which is reinforced in this manner, concerns the particular «quality of the stranger» in relation to attitudes that, occasionally, put the principles on which everyday social relations are founded into question: the love of the mother to the children, the constant search of peace and quiet or of the familiar, the interpersonal relations etc. These stereotypes

* English in the text.

** *Funzioni perlocutorie*. The term perlocutorie refers to the kind of discourse that causes an influence on the receiver (persuasion, fear) or that provokes a reaction.

¹³ «Since the prevailing facet of the newspaper is commenting on and not any more informing, consequently, in the headline, all the more advantage is given to elements and goals that are not of an informative or descriptive character (puns with functions of recall, insinuating or impressive printing arrangement, adoption of ironic style or witty remarks etc.)» (Proietti 1992: 139).

rouse the public feeling, especially when they address people who are accustomed to direct social relations, to face-to-face relations, which are typical of small provinces. For this reason, the role of the press concerns precisely the capacity to «put the significant events in order», especially the «new» ones, by forming the thematic priorities on which attention will be focused, contributing in this way to the creation of a kind of public agenda of the most significant events occurring within the community.¹⁴

We can argue that in cases of this kind, the reader does not so much approve of what the press says in one or the other specific case, as he shares the «world-view» which is adopted by the newspaper he reads and identifies with (Sorrentino 1995: 114). In this light, we can trace in the Lecce *Quotidiano* a wording strategy, which is based more on emotional complicity¹⁵ with the reader, than on pedagogical distance, which prevails in the Italian journalistic tradition and, to an extent, characterises more a newspaper like *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*.

Deviance and foreign immigration in *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*

A distinct particularity which is observed in the front page of *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* is the informative function which this section of the newspaper tends to acquire independently, without the need of reference to the inside pages. Indeed, when news items related to the immigration (and not only immigration) are published, they usually already include all the relevant information on the event at hand.

What needs to be emphasised here is the «display window» function, characteristic of the front page, which in this way takes the centre of the stage. On the front page the news is presented in full but displayed in certain ways so as to engage the emotional involvement of the readers.

In relation to the *Quotidiano* of Lecce, a clearer strategy of multidimensional handling of the issue of immigration is observed. Although the arti-

¹⁴ The ability of this community to counter-offer alternative images to those offered by the mass media would be, as we saw, different. However, in the case of Salento, it seems more difficult for something of this kind to happen, at least as long as no suggestions towards this direction arise from the organized society, besides those of the volunteer organizations which are fully and closely aware of the immigration phenomenon.

¹⁵ For the notions of *complicity* and of the *pedagogical distance* we are grateful to: Sorrentino 1995: 113 and Fisher & Veron 1990: 158 et seq.

cles that have to date been analysed are seven (in comparison to the eight articles of the *Quotidiano*), we should not ignore the so-called «indices»,¹⁶ that appear in the front page and refer to the inside pages, and which, in addition, contribute to the formation of a more visually attractive front page.

The front page of the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* is, consequently, also rather lively, especially with regard to the issue of immigration. As far as the headlines are concerned, we can repeat what we have already claimed in relation to the *Quotidiano*: that is, that the headlines, instead of presenting or summarising the piece of news, tend to predominate over or to replace it, aiming more at «impressing» the reader, than at informing him.

The piece of news, after all, often loses its primary importance, because of the jugglery, the skilful choice of words and the spectacular style that is shown in the title. We stand in the centre of that complicated and structured phenomenology of the rhetorical-stylistic devices, puns, insinuations, charming of the reader. These devices, were introduced in the frame of the political-social developments that followed '68 as a sign of renovation and in order to render the expressive qualities of the Italian journalism more approachable, but spread to such an extent that they became the distinguished and most distinct characteristic of the contemporary headlines, which soon turned into an exhausted, repeated «cliché». (Proietti 1992: 145- 146).

The other particularity of the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* concerns the news about the immigration in Salento, which is probably drawn from the indices than from the article itself.

***Quotidiano* and *Gazzetta*: a comparison**

As we saw, in the *Quotidiano*, for example, the particular character of the discussion on immigration on the front page and the analytical commentary which follows in the inside pages, consists of the fact that every shocking event is followed by a type of provision of information, which, on the one hand causes an emotional charge (with the phrasal creation of supposedly existing dangers, mainly through the headlines and the narrative techniques), and, on the other hand, in contrast, reassures the reader, by constantly publishing pictures of the police authorities patrolling or interviews

¹⁶ «Synonym of the term *manchette*, that is, reference on the front page to the reportage that follows in the inside pages of the newspaper» (De Martino & Bonifacci 1990: 37).

with police officials which often accompany the news of the police reportage.

In contrast, there is no precise order in the *Gazzetta*, as, often, news featured on the front page appears almost «degraded» in the inside pages through a style of writing which is “drier” than the style adopted in the front page. In other cases, in contrast, the article on the front page has a self-referential function, as it does not include a reference to the inside pages, completing in this manner the informative function entirely with the front page. Moreover, in the case of this newspaper, there is a greater stylistic polymorphism in the presentation of the events which follow one another every time in the framework of the immigration issue, mainly due to the greater use of indices in the front page, but also due to the bigger size of the newspaper itself.

In contrast, a common characteristic of both newspapers concerns the presentation of certain pieces of news, or to put it better, the introductions of certain articles, which instead of following closely the model of the «five Ws»,¹⁷ delay the reference to the core of the news item, in order to give emphasis to less significant details of the event, creating in this way a kind of agonising suspense to the reader, which would attract his attention more.

Consequently, it becomes obvious, in this manner, that the expressive means have acquired considerable gravity in the Press at the expense of the information itself, given the fact that the two front pages do not differentiate between themselves so much as regards the *dictum* but as regards the *modus* in the presentation of the events (Fisher & Veron 1990: 156).

Deviance and Immigration in the *Quotidiano* of Lecce

If we attempt an evaluation of the quantitative data of our research, we shall observe that, in accordance to what has already been mentioned, the articles that refer to the phenomenon of immigration deal, for the most part, with the issue of deviance, since this constitutes approximately 78% of the total number of the articles that were analysed, as the following table shows.

If we exclude the “front pages” (eight in total in the case of the *Quotidiano*) from the enumeration of the articles that relate to the issue of deviance, we observe that the brief news of the reportage account for approxi-

¹⁷ In the first paragraph of every article the fundamental indications of the piece of news should be given (who, where, when, what, why) (De Martino & Bonifacci 1990: 21).

mately one third of the total (in the four-month period, 28 brief articles referring to deviance were traced in a sum of 101). These brief articles can be classified as follows: 15 referring to Salento, 7 referring to the region of Puglia, while the remaining 6 concern the national reportage.

Table 1: Quotidiano

	May	June	July	Aug.	Total	%
Deviance	16	30	26	37	109	78
Local Reportage	7	3	2	3	15	11
Prejudice	4	2	1		7	5
Solidarity	3	1	1		5	4
National Reportage	2	1			3	2

The most impressive dimension in the analysis of the brief news about Salento is the significant presence of articles referring to the illegal immigration and the marihuana trafficking which is related to this. Out of the 15 news items, only 2 do not relate to this phenomenon. On the contrary, the discussion on the illegal immigration does not escape the platitudinous remarks, to such an extent that in the same article numerous news items appear, concerning the disembarkation and the ensuing repatriation of the illegal immigrants or the discovery on the beaches of "suitcases filled with marihuana", simultaneously with the tracking down of the illegal immigrants. Furthermore, in certain cases, when along with the illegal immigrants some locals are also arrested, who, after being paid large sums of money, transport the immigrants from the beaches to the inland, there is not even reference made to the fate of the immigrants themselves, since it is taken for granted that they are deported. In certain cases, the attention is focused on the legal repercussions that the local, who is charged with the offence of being an accessory to illegal immigration, faces.

The characteristics to which we referred here, apply also to the articles (not the brief news) in general, creating often, due to the concentration in the same article of several news items which report the disembarkation and consequent repatriation of illegal immigrants and/or the discovery of "suitcases packed with marihuana", real "medleys",¹⁸ loaded with different

¹⁸ "Typical kind of the Italian journalism, the «medley» [pastone] is a piece in which all the political news of the day are gathered. It is a medley of news, commentaries,

news items, which are, however, linked to the frame of the same information theme that concerns the common condition of the "illegal immigrant".

The other particularity of the manner in which the Press deals with the phenomenon of the deviance of immigrants, is the fact that it always takes the form of the reportage or, in any case, the form of the hot news item, without penetrating or elaborating on an issue so rich in ideas and thoughts as the one we are concerned about. Even on the rare occasions when the *Quotidiano* escapes the style of the reportage in order to analyse other dimensions of the immigration phenomenon in depth, it relapses into the effortless "adoption" of specific dimensions: "MARIA" COMES FROM TIRANA reads the headline of the 22/6/96 paper, in which, apart from the mustering of details in relation to the cultivation of marihuana "in greenhouses" of Albania, the columnist announces "new surprises" in the field of drug trafficking, along the same routes that the illegal immigrants follow. Once more, even when there is an attempt to look more closely at one dimension of this vast phenomenon that is called illegal immigration, resorting to the descriptive style is preferred. This seems to be confirmed by the syntax of the article: short sentences, frequent use of adjectives and metaphors.

We could, thus, conclude these remarks by stating that the discussion, which the *Quotidiano* of Lecce promotes in relation to the issue of immigration, suffers from lacking penetration of the related issues and from limited objectivity. In contrast, it is observed that the information is characterised by cycles of dramatisation of the deviance phenomena and, when these fade out, references to the news events that are related to the issue of immigration reappear, based on more conventional patterns and on the already mentioned simplistic procedures of journalistic syntax, leading to a flat or platitudinous handling of the issue.

In this case, thus, the so-called "tematizzazione involontaria" (involuntary theme-forming) (Sorrentino 1995: 228) of the issue of immigration occurs, in which the lengthy account of news functions at the expense of the detailed analysis. This is also due to the use of stereotypes, which, thus, function as interpretive frames of isolated incidents, which, on different

used in the post-war period when the distribution of paper was rationed and therefore allowed limited space in the newspapers, started gradually to be abandoned and nowadays it is considered outdated." (De Martino & Bonifacci 1990: 162). In our case, of course, the term "pastone" is not used in its original sense.

occasions, would be unrelated. The outcome is summarised in an oxymoron: a detailed superficiality.¹⁹

Deviance and immigration in the *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno*

The particularities of the *Gazzetta* also suffer the consequences of the peculiar shape in which the news are contained. Thus, the increased number of pages of the newspaper characterises the presence of a greater number of news items in relation to what was observed in the previous case, as the following table reveals

Table 2: *Gazzetta*

	May	June	July	Aug.	Total	%
Deviance	31	39	43	34	147	78
Local Reportage	12	9	3	7	31	16.5
Prejudice		1			1	0.5
Solidarity		2			2	1
National Reportage	1	1	3	3	8	4

In respect to the phenomenon of deviance, the other differences in relation to the *Quotidiano* concern, for the most part, the fact that the articles are also triggered by the national reality, but to a larger extent than in the previous case. If we exclude the articles of the front page, where, as we saw, the national dimension is not absent, from the sum of articles relating to deviance (140), the reports, which concern the deviance on a national level, cover more than 42%. This phenomenon can be easily explained if we take into account the larger circulation of the newspaper and the subsequent broader interest, at least as far as the themes of the reportage are concerned. But, it is primarily on the level of theme-forming that the newspaper distinguishes itself from the information model of the *Quotidiano*.

Seventeen articles in total demonstrate the capacity of the newspaper to delve deeper into the issue in the daily reportage, focusing on the various facets of the issue of immigration. This is the reason why the number of

¹⁹ "The daily Press is strained by the need to broaden the fields it handles but also to stand up to the continuous rate with which the events that are presented in 'real time' are piled up, due to the transmission speed of new technologies" (Sorrentino 1995:254).

articles concerning the illegal immigration has certainly a different impact from a numerical point of view, but here is it also significant that the newspaper is not focused on an area that has particularly suffered from this phenomenon, as is Salento. For this reason our analysis will, for the most part, focus on “how” the *Gazzetta* presents this issue.

The first impression one acquires from this type of information regards the larger production not only of news, but also of critical attitudes and styles of writing in the articles that concern the issue of immigration, in such a manner that more than one definition of the same situation are offered to the reader. The relationship between the newspaper and the reader is based on the pedagogical distance that has already been mentioned, which does not mean that it rejects, depending on the given development of the events, other more attractive or more exciting narrative techniques.

Even the aforementioned attempts of theme-forming are principally determined by the flow of events, and not by the desire to shed light on a specific problem. Thus, in the second half of June, after an incident of fraud against certain immigrants, eight articles will appear which deal with the phenomenon: a kind of collection of opinions, interventions, reports, interviews and of anything else that might refer to the problem.

In the case of the *Gazzetta* we find once again the same limitations in the provision of information that we encountered in the *Quotidiano*: medleys in the reports concerning cases of disembarkation, alarm caused by the discovery of marijuana that had been abandoned on the beaches, in an article concerning a crime that was committed by immigrants other news or other crimes committed by locals are also included. In addition, the *soft news* that relates to the issue of immigration is not omitted either, although it is always framed by news items that relate to crimes committed by the immigrants.

Thus, if in the case of the *Quotidiano* we spoke of stereotypes which, due to the absence of theme-forming, function as an organising frame of certain events, in the case of the *Gazzetta*, it seems that we are in a “department store” full of stereotypes, where one can select from multiple and different images, depending on which facet of the specific issue one would like to highlight.

Finally, as far as the field of police reportage and of deviance in general is concerned, in the relevant articles we observe that the emphasis is focused on the issue of the violation of the rules, while the *Quotidiano* was oriented more towards stressing the social poverty that was revealed through the violation of a social rule. However, in both cases, the nature of

the provision of information in specific reports, even violent ones, does not ignore the human dimensions, according to the saying “behind every event there lies a human story” (Sorrentino 1995: 244).

In respect to the coverage of the issue of deviance/immigration by the *Gazzetta*, we could, thus, claim that its greater ability not to restrain itself to bare reportage, is framed by the functional insight in the coverage of those events that are more widely discussed in a certain period. Therefore, from such a course, that is rather schizoid, it is difficult to sum up one homogenous attitude in the discussion on the issue of concern to us. In contrast, we can stress the great flexibility and ability that the *Gazzetta* shows in changing the tones of the discussion, by placing in the core of the manner in which it informs, once again, its own logic of making news, that is, its ability to turn into a “news item” one specific issue instead of another and, consequently, to establish it around a specific core of events placed in a common frame.

“Little Red Riding hood and the wolf”: an exemplary case of journalistic narration

In order to reach the core of the issue of the mass media of Salento, we shall investigate an article that was published in the *Quotidiano* of Lecce, which is more suitable for analysis in relation to others in terms of narrative, but also in order to move from the narrative writing to the latent narrative structure that the newspaper uses.

Besides, we should not forget that the journalistic “piece” consists of the narration of a news item, and, in this light, we can also draw useful conclusions for our analysis.

In this case, the article (the main part) continues the “piece” on the front page and seems to be comprised of various “obstacles”: the minimalist title is founded precisely on the fact that the reader is already aware of the elements of the story from the front page; the photograph (of archive origin, of course) is not directly linked to the event and confirms the preference of the newspaper to fill the upper part of the page with optical aids; finally, in the main body of the article, next to the photograph, the so-called “journalistic prologue” (Faustini 1995: 89) appears, a kind of introduction to the article, usually in bold print, which summarises the event rather briefly.²⁰

²⁰ The event, which became news, regards the story of a young couple from Salento (the girl was under age), who were arrested by the police while they were robbing some-

This graphic means is mainly used to avoid the usual structure of the introduction of the article (incipit), which would normally demand the use of the so called rule of the five "w",²¹ known also by the English term *lead*.

In general, the Italian journalism has made little use of the *lead*, preferring to present the substantial information elements of the news item in the headline, or, to be more precise, in the journalistic prologue.

Thus, it is observed that the introduction of the article is, in any case, irrelevant to these rules, and, as a result, the piece under discussion begins as follows: *Wasn't it much better before, Little Red Riding Hood?*

As a result, with an introduction of this kind, we enter the world of fairy tales, something which complicates our issue considerably.

Apart from the real development of the events, which is rather complicated on its own, what we would like to point out is the subsequent development of the article, focused on the semantic antithesis between victim/criminal, parallel to that between Italian/foreigner and, symbolically, to those between little red riding hood/bad wolf, thus human/animal. That is to say, in this case the journalistic narration shares with the fairy tale the essentially unilateral character of its protagonists (Bettelheim 1993: 75): absolutely good or bad, in such a manner so as to become instantly understood by the readers which it addresses.

As regards the use of the narrative structure of the fairy tale and certain of its heroes by the mass media, we find it appropriate to quote a reflection of Claude Levi- Strauss on this matter:

Even in our modern societies, the fairy tale is not the remnant of the myth, but ends up being alone: the disappearance of the myths upset the balance, and, as a satellite without a planet, similarly the fairy tale tends to get out of its orbit and let itself be drawn by other poles (Propp 1988:183).

Consequently, as in the fairy tale, everything is said through insinuations and symbolisms: the wolf, that is, represents the enemy, or the internal stranger that tries to seduce and entrap us (Bettelheim 1993:45). We could also add that the association human/wolf, in this case, serves the purpose of

one in a hotel. In the girl's narration to the police authorities there is reference being made to the stops of her "journey" and also to the violence she had suffered by a young Albanian who, however, had behaved friendly towards them in the beginning.

²¹ In the first paragraph of every article the fundamental indications of the news item must be recorded, that is, those which correspond to the typical basic questions of the information, for example, of the English journalism: Who? Where? When? What? Why? (De Martino & Bonifacci 1990: 21).

giving the face of the animal to a human, a stranger, who has been stigmatised by a horrendous crime; as, for example, the werewolves that were transformed into wolves because they were blood thirsty and savage.

On this special occasion, the transformation from the human to the animal is, thus, far more subtle and is imposed through language.

The Albanian, the perpetrator of the rape of an under age girl from Lecce, personifies the wolf, despite the fact that, in reality, the incident of the reportage that derives from the article at issue concerns a different case: that is, an insignificant story of a robbery that was committed by two youths from Lecce, who left their homes and the city of Lecce to go to Rimini, seeking their fortune. The rape incident refers to a past incident and is constructed on the basis of the girl's testimony, who is already held in custody in a juvenile reception centre.

In contrast, the central element of the case in the article is the criminal act in which the foreigner is involved, which is reconstructed in the form of a fairy tale, following the common categories of every fairy tale, as they were pointed out by Propp, who called them "functions of the heroes".

From the outset of the fairy tale the following functions are developed:

1. One of the members of the family leaves the house.

In the case narrated in the article, it coincides with the phase of the departure of the daughter from her family with her boyfriend. The columnist here underlines the antithesis between the closed environment of the family, from which the daughter wants to leave, and the open space of the city that was selected as the destination: Rimini.

2. A prohibition is imposed on the hero.

Indeed, the parents forbid the daughter to leave the house. In addition, the antithesis regards her "accessory" to the get-away: her boyfriend, already a drug addict, and therefore herald of subsequent disasters.

3. The prohibition was violated.

Because of that, the departure from the family occurs despite the parents' warning. Order has been upset and, therefore, the conditions are ripe for the entrance on stage

of a new character whom we may call competitor, and whose role is to disrupt the harmony of the happy family, to cause some kind of disaster, damage or malfunction. The competitor may be the dragon, the devil, the robbers, the witch or the stepmother etc. (Propp 1988:34),

or the wolf of the fairy tale, we shall add, that is, the Albanian of our story, who invades the narration at this delicate moment when the protagonist is in a state of "confusion".

The subsequent functions appear as the normal development of what has been said until now: the competitor attempts to recognise the victim and tries to deceive it (and the victim is, of course, deceived);²² finally, he causes harm or damage to a member of the family (in this case, the rape of the under age girl by the Albanian). At this point, with the infliction of damage, the preliminary elements finish and the actual fairy tale begins, demonstrating, according to Propp, exceptional variety.

Nevertheless, the pattern we outlined up to this point follows the classical arrangement of the fairy tale: *prohibition-violation-punishment*.

As regards our object of interest, the continuation of the article represents a kind of jeremiad²³ in accord with the misfortune of the hero-victim, as if almost seeking some kind of reaction to so much violence.

Indeed, at this point the narrative structure replaces the structure of the fairy tale with that of the classic journalistic reportage, which provides assurance about the zeal of the police authorities, already on the tracks of the Albanian culprit.

Then, the news item will take the form of the journalistic serial, since it will also be published in the newspaper of the following day in order to provide information about the course of the investigation and the possibility of arresting the culprit.

The narrative structure seems to be imitating, apart from the pattern of the fairy tale, also the pattern of the popular adventure novels, since it handles a case which moves "from the inside to the outside", that is, from the interior of a world as the one of the family, of intimacy, of Salento, to conclude in depravity, in the egress from this tidy universe through the narration of a crime.

This is where the opportunity is taken to imitate "a typical narrative situation, that of the unexpected intrusion of a person that has the cultural characteristics of the stranger, within the protected and closed space that by

²² "We can observe that the *prohibitions* are always *violated* and the *insidious invitations* are always *accepted* and realized"(Propp 1988:36).

²³ The Introduction "wasn't it much better before little red riding hood?" is also repeated in the end of the article, as if underlining a kind of circularity of the narration, as it was described.

rule belongs to the individual, the family, the community”(Ceserani 1998:42).

The confrontation between the familiar and the foreign formed the basis of a study by Freud²⁴, which triggered a fertile stream of studies, of psychoanalytic content, regarding the figure of the stranger in confrontation with the image of those who are familiar to us. Here, we summarise the essence of the Freudian discourse by restating that the condition of the stranger is that of the other face to which we are familiar. What frightens us most in the stranger is, in reality, the external projection of a completely internal process: the fear of our subconscious, of the “foreign” part that exists inside us. The stranger, in this light, is nothing but the screen on which we project this kind of psychological insecurity.

Cesare Musatti, in an essay with the distinctive title: “Who is afraid of the Bad Wolf?”, addresses the same psychological mechanism, according to which the “wolf” is our Id and the “granny” of the fairy tale is our Superego (as guardian of the family tradition), who, on her part, is in danger of being torn to pieces by the wolf, that is, by the subconscious, which has not undergone the appropriate process of self control.

Thus, the fear of the bad wolf becomes fear of our self, both of our Id and of the ethical norms that conflict with it. This incurable and unavoidable conflict is the cause of stress for anything that is foreign to us, which, in reality, consists in our own condition of being the stranger; this is also the basis of Julia Kristeva’s phrase: “Stranger to our own selves”.

Indeed, according to Kristeva, the troubling condition of the other, to which the image of the stranger refers us, is nothing but a case of stress, where the stressing element is something that has been pushed back and returns. That is why we are advised to discover

our own upsetting condition of the other, because it is precisely this that invades in the face of this “demon”, this threat, this anxiety that is created by the projection of the other on the frame that we persist in considering as our constant “we”. By acknowledging our own upsetting condition of the other, we shall benefit from an external to us foreign part. If I am the stranger, no strangers exist (Kristeva 1988:175).

²⁴ Freud, *The troublemaker*, 1919.

Final Conclusions: the deviance of the image of the foreigner

What we can therefore claim, based on the last case that we examined, is that violence or crime are always presented through the same “representation”, in the frame of specific categories, whether in detective novels, fairy tales, or police journalism.

Indeed, in these cases, we are impelled to say that the persuasion of the audience of readers/viewers passes through elements of aesthetic character, that is, through the form with which all events are organised on stage, or, in the frame of the page as in our case. In other words, it is the confrontation between little red riding hood and the wolf that makes us recognise, through the archetypal confrontation of human/animal, the typical pattern of the fairy tale, in which, someone, innocent or defenceless is threatened by someone else, malevolent and untruthful. As a natural consequence, the former hero is “closer” to us, not only because of the geographical vicinity, but because of the ethical, too, and therefore, it is easy for us to defend him, to identify with him. In contrast, the wolf constitutes by necessity a “foreign” element, external to our group, to our community.

Consequently, as in the folk traditions, the features of the stranger are determined by the dual process of confirmation of our identity through its confrontation with that of the “other”: the stranger on the one hand, and through the confrontation with his otherness.

As time passes, the only element that changes is the “place” in which the process of comparison/confrontation takes place, as we have already pointed out in the beginning of this article, while, the images and the stereotypes that specific disturbing personae, as the stranger, incite to our mental imagery, remain intact.

Moreover, Foucault's studies revealed that the various categories of the criminal, the ill or the mad, were constructed, even in previous centuries, through discourses that were developed within the framework of institutions, so that the structural determination of knowledge and definitions in respect to this issues constituted the very reality of madness, criminology, psychiatry.

In other words, it is in the frame of this relationship between power and knowledge, that, according to Foucault, the very definition and knowledge of individuals of certain reality²⁵ have been created.

²⁵ On this view, see Grandi, 1994:125.

Consequently, even the contemporary knowledge of the phenomenon of immigration of foreigners, does not escape this process of acquiring knowledge: We know about immigration but only about the part that is “distilled” for us by the mass media, according to the specific characteristics of their operation. At the same time, yet, this specific small part of the phenomenon constitutes the very reality with which we are inevitably confronted. Thus, the discussion on immigration, from the point of view of the mass media, becomes the very reality of immigration.

It is obvious that the entire discussion is placed in the historical-geographical frame that interests us in the present paper, that is, the area of Salento, since an analysis of the issue of the mass media outside this frame would have been meaningless.

We share, thus, with Ceserani, the view that the “negative and threatening features” of the stranger

are so strongly pointed out, as the community in which the stereotype is created, is closed to itself, feels weak and threatened, has defined itself precisely in relation to others, has developed ethics and rituals for all cases of possible transgression of the point that delimits its grounds and separates it from that of others (it may be the home, the village, the homogeneous national territory, the national community) (Ceserani 1998:22).

Within the “limits” that Ceserani lists, there is another one, a typical feature of Salento: the “sea”. And it is indeed the sea, the element that awakens most of the anxieties in respect to “the fear of invasion of the stranger”, although, in this light, the area of Salento represents in a small scale, a problem of general nature, that can easily be extended to the entire Italian peninsula; furthermore, Salento itself is a small peninsula, and as such, three of its sides are open to the sea, thus open to the “threat”, real or fictional.

In the history of this land, a history that goes centuries back, the greatest dangers and threats came from the sea; a fact that led more than one scholars to talk, in respect to the history of Salento, about the historical myth of “the different” that comes from the sea²⁶, an issue that is not, of course, part of the contemporary discussion on the immigration of foreigners. To protect their cultural and national integrity, the citizens of Salento, erected in

²⁶ On this issue, compare the substantiated representation of the Turkish attacks on the coast of Salento, the most important of which have remained indelible in the collective memory, as, for example, the one that is linked to the events of “the martyrs of Otranto” in 1480 (Fonseca 1995: 342).

1500 AD and later, towers for the punctual spotting of pirates. These towers are even nowadays a well-known site of the coasts of Puglia.

What we want to point out here is the entire historical heritage of myths, stereotypes, and images of the stranger, that have accumulated throughout the centuries, and out of which the contemporary mass media draw their material in respect to the issue of the immigration of foreigners today, "confine" themselves to a mere modernisation of the frame and literary genre of reference.

Thus, the mass media of Salento could symbolise the contemporary version of the old towers used for the spotting of pirates, to which we referred earlier, reminding us for that matter of the old tradition of troubadours, who, voyaging from village to village, narrated tales similar to the one of the wolf and of a small girl that is in danger of being devoured by the wolf to their amazed audiences. The stranger "even before becoming a literary theme [...] constitutes an existential state" in the same manner that "before becoming the hero of myths and tales, he is a cultural image or projection, present both in the psychology and mental imagery of human communities, that is intensively interwoven in the processes of identity formation of the peoples" (Ceserani 1998: 7).

The mass media, therefore, in the journalistic reportage that deals with the immigration of foreigners, perform a kind of simplification, or, to put it in more rhetorical terms, they perform a synecdoche. They talk, that is, about immigration, promoting only one dimension of the phenomenon (*pars pro toto*), namely, that dimension that guarantees the greatest audience and ratings: that dimension, therefore, that is related to the police reportage, to the deviance, or, in any case, to the otherness, calamities, or accidents²⁷.

Indeed, the televised news do not talk about reality in its entirety, but about a specific part of it, according to the selection criteria that they have adopted (Faustini 1995: 59-60).

The mechanism of synecdoche, on the other hand, is not merely a linguistic device, but represents the primary form of knowledge that precedes other more complex forms of human knowledge. Consequently, the optical and touchable perception of the features of an element precedes, for exam-

²⁷ "In the logic of the market of the emerging mass media systems, the specialized and of high quality provision of material will be available only to selected groups of consumers, while the majority will be offered products of low cost that correspond to the average aesthetic preferences and to the great demand" (McQuail 1995: 351-352).

ple, the recognition of its functional features; the latter being an action of metonymic character (Beccaria 1995: 665-666).

If, however, we accept the fact that simplification through the creation of categories is a constant theme of the physical and social world, (in essence, language and communication are based on unavoidable processes of abstraction and generalisation), it is nevertheless important to differentiate between the normal processes of knowledge-acquisition and their expression under extreme forms of social discrimination and oppression against specific minorities (see Mazzara 1997: 61).

The study and knowledge, therefore, of the mechanisms of production and function of the mass media, lead us to our next point, that is the revelation of that system of information provision that produces, on a daily basis, our "necessary illusions"²⁸, that is, the system of beliefs and prejudices that composes the degree of knowledge we have about reality, as it is transmitted to us by the mass media.

In the case of the mass media, however, we must take into consideration the impressions or the degree of emotion that they are capable of stimulating in their viewers, and not so much the knowledge that they provide, or the reflection they provoke.

The system of mass communication is a producer of great anxiety-provoking material (in our case the news that deal with criminality, social disasters or problems), and, simultaneously, offers, through its intermediation and therefore its distance from the events with which it deals, relief from the very anxiety that it contributes in amplifying²⁹.

The development of the system of mass media, in other words, satisfies the most elementary needs of the human soul: its capacity to be surprised, its need to satisfy its curiosity, its need to feel fear, its need to be relieved. It is for this reason why, only through the study of the function of the mass media, shall we be able to escape the vicious circle that satisfies our deepest psychological needs, even at the expense of the occasional "scapegoats".

Therefore, as long as we are not able to juxtapose to, or to negotiate with the interpretation of reality as it is narrated to us by the mass media, using our knowledge, that will be beyond the established ideas, the image of everything that surrounds us will always be skewed, emphatic, manipulated.

²⁸ The term is by Noam Chomsky (1991).

²⁹ For the elaboration of that dual function, that has also been named "shock and therapy by the news", see Faustini 1996: 224.

The need to release ourselves from the logic of the mass media, becomes, thus, an issue of democracy, so as to be able to recognise that the "ostracism" of the foreign immigrants who reside in our country is an issue that is produced by the information frames which the media provide everyday to picture them as deviant, as criminals, as bearers of social problems and malfunctions.

Only through advancing social relationships between the citizens and the immigrants, on every social level, can a way out be envisioned that would reduce the social distance existing between the strata of the population, as a consequence of the prejudices that accompany these relationships from the outset.

In any case, we should have been taught by history that those periods of contact between civilisations, which ended in a degree of social amalgamation, produced the most creative moments of mankind, opening new horizons and presenting fresh for potential progress.

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Crime and Punishment in Detective Stories

Poetic Misdeeds since E. A. Poe*

PETROS MARTINIDIS**

[...] To begin with, a word in relation to the scene of the murders. Ratcliff Street is a public arterial street in one of the most chaotic quarters of east or nautical London; and in those times [...] it was an extremely dangerous slum. One out of three people could be registered as a foreigner. Every step you made you came face to face with Indian soldiers, Chinese or Mauritians and Negroes [...] of multifarious predatory ethics, impenetrably covered under a mixture of hats and turbans ...

Thomas de Quincey, *Murder as one of the fine arts* (1987: 38-39)

I would like to observe here, that, due to prolonged indulge in reveries and having forgotten what freedom was all about, the convicts considered freedom in our galley as a more liberated kind of freedom, compared to the real freedom, namely that which exists [...]. Even a ragged batman seemed in the eyes of the convicts almost as a king, almost as an ideal, free man, and all that because he walked long-haired, with no chains and no guard around him ...

F. Dostoyevsky, *Memories from the house of the dead* (1990: 452)

Desires and Devices

The declarations that appear now and again about the need to modernise the public order authorities and prisons, or about how to effectively deal with and restrain crime, are to a high degree reminiscent of the assertions

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about the need to perfect weaponry and maintain superb military structures in order to avoid war. To the extent that wars are restricted by means of military exercises or improvements in armaments, crime is also thinning due to high technology security systems, scientifically equipped police forces, organised prisons or splendid programs of social reintegration of former detainees.

The resolute prosecution of crime and any kind of punishment, undisguised or sophisticated, constitute neither a consequence of crime or its indispensable offset, nor a “means” for accomplishing a goal – the prevention of crime. They constitute, for the most part, the most advanced form of administering crime.

And, in the same manner that military readiness offers the western world, not the eradication of wars, but their removal from its territory, allowing war incidents to flourish or even promoting them in other “peripheral” lands, the official concern for crime accordingly succeeds in securing the existence of certain areas of police-monitored harmony in the metropolitan centres, keeping the outburst of delinquency at a safe distance.

Even the attempts of scientific analysis of the relevant phenomena, the attempts for their systematic recording or their multidimensional interpretation, aiming at directing immediate intervention, ultimately achieve the exertion of mostly indirect influence. Classic studies, like the one of George Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer (1939), or that of Michel Foucault (1975), irrespective of the profundity or elegance with which they point out causalities or denounce savageries, mainly influence certain groups of intellectuals, like students of Humanities, troubled artists, progressive educationalists, and sensitive female athletes. At least, until the day that these intellectuals eventually influence some legally or politically responsible official quarters, leading them to contribute to more substantial modifications of the criminal justice system and to practical changes to the correctional institutions.

On the other hand, the fictional portrayal of the conditions of crime and its punishment, the invented narratives and fictions, irrespective of how indirectly they relate to the real world of criminals and to their actions, disseminate to the wider public incidents of illegal acts or the perpetrators’ psychology and the adventurous endings of the police chase, much more effectively.

“There exist oeuvres” wrote Michael Bachtin, “that bear no relation to the real world, but just to the word “world” as a literary setting” (1980: 61).

However, it is precisely this shrinking of reality that, according to Proust, constitutes the great advantage of fiction, when he observes: "... the ingenuity of the first novelist lay in his realisation that according to the way our emotions function, the simplification that would have resulted in the clear and plain eradication of real characters would have brought a decisive improvement. We perceive a real person, irrespectively of how deeply we are fond of him, to a large extent, by way of our senses. He remains, that is to say, impenetrable to us; he just offers a dead load that our emotions cannot bear [...]. The invention of the novelist was his thought to replace those parts that are impenetrable by our sensibility with an equal number of other parts that our sensibility can assimilate ..." (1997: 81).

Literary stereotypes about the fairness or unfairness of the punishments and about the psycho-pathological or environmental causes of delinquency are, as we all know, frequently offered to the public. And, despite being fictitious and invented, they may contribute directly to the conception and evaluation (approval or rejection) of various measures of reform, or, inversely, to the perseverance of various vindictive methodologies or the merciless practice of taking the law into one's own hands. Either in printed, filmed or televised form, the narratives of imaginary wrongdoings possess an impeccable completeness. They do not involve discrete events, statistical frequencies, historic approaches, dubious reproaches, or problematic outcomes.

In fiction, crime has "faces"; its development possesses cohesion, its persecutors ingenuity, and its punishment expediency (or "poetic justice"). And all these, to a higher degree than in real incidents, which are sporadically reported in newspaper columns, or in brief coverage by live links on television, receive much more extensive publicity than any academic endeavour might ever attract.

Apparently, the contentment offered by this imaginary "completeness" is also the basis of what, more generally, the philosophers of art call "aesthetic pleasure". The point at issue here is that the pleasure derives from the skilfulness of the narrative, and not from the subjects themselves, nor from the potential twisted satisfaction of a reader-voyeur of crimes. Sorrow, pity, wrath, feeling moved or whatever other emotion the performances of the imaginary heroes induce, emerge, as a rule, from a kind of "emotional memory" (similar, as Stanislavsky believes, to that which an actor draws on in order to create a theatrical persona), that it build up by numerous past "experiences" of the reader, always as a reader.

The same “memory” however, is used when one judges, approves or disapproves, and more generally, when one perceives the real incidents of one’s social environment, of which he is informed through other “channels”. Social events and similar imaginary narratives are merged, thus, in ways that most probably sustain the validity of Oscar Wilde’s well-known phrase: *art influences life more profoundly than life influences art*.

In other words, the various “devices” that have been the product of a centenarian literary endeavour, maintain a critical influence over any valuation of misdeed that appears from time to time, and over the general “wish” for its repression. By illustrating various types of criminals and their acts to the wide public, the aforementioned works restructure the “horizons of acceptance” of the real facts of delinquency, of its organised prosecution, and of the conditions of correction.

Furthermore, noteworthy is the fact that the starting point of the entire relevant discussion lies in a very critical temporal coincidence. In 1841, an American – E. A. Poe – creates the character of a French detective – the knight Auguste Dupin – who solves the first mystery in detective literature – *the murders in the Rue Morgue* – in Paris. In exactly the same year, a Parisian – Alexis de Toqueville – was awarded an academic title in honour of his ingenuity in describing *Democracy in America*, where he performed a tour, with the initial aim of studying the correctional system and the prisons of this country (cf.: R. D. Heffner, 1987:13).

Crime as an exercise in logic

The history of the human society starts, according to the Bible at least, with a fratricide due to property conflicts (Cain - Abel). The history of detective literature starts, quite analogously, with a mystery occurring in a closed room. Two women are found slaughtered inside their firmly locked – from the inside – attic, while no possible human suppleness could have allowed such a leap that would have led into the attic from the window. Facing the police who stand motionless and full of questions, Poe’s hero immediately presumes the correct solution to the crime and prepares his moves in order to ascertain it (the “superhuman” leap and double crime have been committed, as is later proven, by a blood-thirsty ape that escaped from his master whom, knight Dupin tracks by publishing a small newspaper advertisement announcing falsely that he had already found the animal).

In the approximately forty pages of this story, all those codes that would glorify the “detective literature” in the next 150 years at least, are established. Firstly the entire plot but also the investigation methodology which is based on the “psychological identification” with the possible culpable, are structured according to what later Conan Doyle will very clearly express in the words of Sherlock Holmes: that, facing a mystery, *once you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth!*

Furthermore, the whole narrative system, with the eccentric and rather arrogant detective and the fairly naive, first person, narrator-biographer of his, has been repeated in countless similar variations: in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes as they are “put in writing” by doctor Watson; in the initial investigations of Hercules Poirot, as they are “presented” by captain Hastings; in the deductions of Nero Wolf as they are “nourished” and “narrated” by his assistant, Archie Godwin, etc., up to Adso, the attendant and chronic-writer of the ingenious William of Baskerville, in *The Name of the Rose* (to mention but the most famous examples).

Even the symbolic playing with words or the special linguistic aptitude, characteristic of all the relevant heroes throughout the 150 years of their appearances, find their starting-point in that first story of Poe. For example the pompous hero is depicted solving a double murder in Paris, and more precisely in “Morgue” Street, which means morgue in English while, in French, the first meaning of the word is arrogance, and “faire la morgue à quelqu’un” means “despise someone”.

What was surely “ignored” during the evolution of the para-literature and the detective literature more specifically, was the material reality of the horror that one (or more) murder causes. For the reading public, murder became a kind of game, and the quest for the culpable an exercise in logic. However, although several progressive intellectuals of the time were very caustic on that (Uri Eisenweig 1986), this very attribute of the detective literature was the reason that it flourished.

It flourished as, nowadays, toys with war devices and military conflicts flourish, despite the protest of progressive educationalists or popular arch-bishops. Children enjoy these games, not because some dark violent aspect of their young souls is magnetised by massacres, but because they have a general propensity to handle, on a symbolic level, themes that they perceive as being significant in the world of grown-ups. Analogously, detective literature enjoyed a century of tremendous success, by presenting to the inter-

ested public, a schematised and lucid emergence of order out of a farrago of scrappy traces. Not by responding to some subtle heartlessness of the public.

In an environment of incessant changes, invisible causalities, continual contradictions, unclarified responsibilities, unasserted suspicions and obscure outcomes, as was the environment of the metropolitan centres especially during the establishment of capitalism, the detective literature guaranteed, each time, a final “explanation” to the literary chaos reflecting the real social conditions.

Thus, from the beginning, detective literature has been very attractive by reflecting the unpredictable, the colourful and noisy, the threatening and simultaneously enchanting climate of the big cities. It continued, thus, to a certain extent, a tradition of mysterious magical woods and formidable goblins, that prevailed in fairy tales in the long past. There is, however, a critical distinction in relation to fairy tales. The hero is no longer a prince equally gifted with magic powers or a brave lad, but a rational mind who is able, using the most irrational data, to form a complete picture – a “homomorphism”, a “pattern”.

Something similar was also offered in the same period, by the ingenious “patterns” of Marx for interpreting the driving forces of history, or by those of Freud, for interpreting the mechanisms of expression of the unconscious in the dreams. At any rate, the public – at least the more or less educated and cultivated urban public of this first long period – welcomed with even greater fervour the performances of the fictional detectives, and the reassurance that was offered by an invented final illumination of the crime-related quizzes. Assessing each “murder” as what it really was: a convention in order to disclose the traces and in order to let the ingenuity of each lonely investigator shine.

The same tendency, incidentally, drove the very writers of the genre. Poe, as his biographers note (Philip Van Doren Stern 1977: 330) invented the detective novel as a kind of “rationalising narrative” (as a “tale of ratiocination”) in order to escape from the adversities of his real life and avoid insanity. All others who followed, continued on the same model, attached to the convention of a logical construct. Formulating their stories, of course, in reverse: from the cohesiveness of the answers towards the obscure laying of the facts and the construction of the questions. Just like crosswords.

In a final analysis, this may be the origin and singular identity of the detective literature: a “crossword” with literary aspirations. It is not by acci-

dent, moreover, that it was read and continues to be read by a lot of people, with a similar motive to that of crosswords: “to pass the time”. The difference being that, behind such a modest motive, detective literature succeeded in transforming the chaos, the ugliness and the disorder of the world (an image which is quite reminiscent of Heraklitus’ “σάρμα εικη̄ κεχυμένον”) to a world of order or beauty and in raising all doubts (like Pythagoras’ “παλίντονος αρμονίη”).

All these, of course, concern the initial period. The period from the first works of Poe (*The murders in Morgue Street*, *The mystery of Marie Roget*, *The purloined letter* in the years 1841-43) to the first oeuvres of Agatha Christie (*Who killed Roger Ackroyd?* in 1927). A period in which the whole oeuvre of Conan Doyle was also created. A period in which the metropolises of the west remained perfumed with exotic pimentos, while in the paving stones of their avenues the galloping of the horse-drawn vehicles and the roaring of the first automobiles were being mixed, and the nights were being lit by gas lamps. Moreover, a period in which the social reformers had all the reasons to maintain their seriousness, and the rebels their optimism.

Thus, crime too, remained an exercise in logic. A game with literature, with “evil” in the background as an expression of a rather picturesque mischief. The first opponent of knight Dupin, for example, is the blood-thirsty ape, as a representative of primitive violence, and its errant master, as the man who exploits that violence. Respectively, the main opponent of Sherlock Holmes is doctor Moriarty – an epitome of the mastermind of “evil”. And the criminals revealed by Hercule Poirot are also, from the beginning, twisted natures. All of them are geniuses of evil, who through their satanic machinations manage, above all, to reveal the ingenuity of the positive hero, their persecutor.

Crime as opportunity

Between the first and second world war, a decisive change happens to the public, while the direct experiences of extended criminal violence do not leave much space for picturesque vagueness in the expressions of “evil”. On the one hand the establishment of compulsory primary education in almost all the countries massively increases the literate public. On the other hand, huge massacres and personal benefits, sudden revelations of dingy excellencies or the incontrovertibly cruel exploitation of the weak and a generalised misdeed become everyday experiences of the same public.

At the same time, the image of the urban environment changes once again. The great numbers of cars, the great number of advertising posters, the alluring shop-windows and the electric lighting up of the night, expel the colonial exoticism in favour of a modernistic homogeneity.

Under these conditions, which coat crime with a sense of vicinity to the reader of detective stories, the heroes also come into “closer contact” with the reader. “Closer” both in a metaphorical sense (losing much of the moral clarity and aristocratic virtue that characterised the first detective-intellectuals) and a literal sense: with squabble, man-hunting, punching or gun-fighting episodes between the criminals and their persecutors taking the primary role compared to the previous ingenious combinations, logical inductions, and bright illuminations of difficult enigmas.

Dashiell Hammett, an American once again, instates a critical turn in detective literature. For the decade between 1923-33 which coincides approximately with the decade of alcohol prohibition, and having himself a serious problem of alcoholism, Hammett creates various heroes, “private investigators”, drawing from his own experience as a detective at Pinkerton’s notorious agency: Continental Op (from “operative”), the unique Sam Spade (that appears in *The Maltese Falcon*), and the “slim man”. And from that point on, evil passes from its demon-oriented nature to more materialistic facts.

A man of lucid social consciousness, but also well aware of all inescapable habits of modern life (closer to the continuous pessimism of Hobbes, rather than to the historic perspective of Marx), Hammett seeks in detective-story-writing rescue from his personal deadlocks. Just like Poe. Only now, it is no longer a *game with literature* in the background of crime. The *game*, in Hammett, is twofold and even-handed. A *game* with literature, definitely, (and, in that sense, an excellent game, a game of exceptional handling of narrative style and of the multiple hidden insinuations of his writing), but also a *game* with crime (See Steven Marcus, NA, 7-23).

Hammett’s heroes do not lie indubitably on the side of the forces of good. They are not so impervious, ethic, or altruistic to refuse to accept money or other offers by charming ladies in the name of a final reinstatement of truth. Nor is the reinstatement of truth, incidentally, performed by a lucid reorganisation of all the facts that had appeared in the narrative, troubling the hero and puzzling the reader up to just before the theatrical revelation of the solution. Facing a daily routine in which opaqueness, irresponsibility and arbitrariness prevail, Hammett’s heroes do not come to offer an

opportunistic and alleviating “pattern”, but to put across their own sense of limited intervening capacity and their bitterness.

A similar version is developed by Hammett’s grand successor, Raymond Chandler and his hero, the most famous version to our days “private eye”: Philip Marlowe. By linking brilliant thinking with punching, determination in the revelation of truth with a systematic indirect but functional approach to it, he examines and presents the culpable as a simple human being. Not as an emissary of some satanic sprite. His delinquent acts are thus presented more as the unfortunate outcomes of initial attempts at petty offences and not as the clear expressions of pure brutality.

In a complimentary text on Hammett, Chandler (1964: 175-192) explained that: “down to these dangerous alleys, a man that is dangerous but not corrupted or frightened must descend ...”. Mickey Spinalle, one of Chandler’s successors in the 1950s, is even more unequivocal when he addresses his own readers: “... You read about life, staying on the outside... Even the old Romans did it, spicing their life with action when they sat in the Colosseum and watched wild animals rip a bunch of humans apart, revelling in the sight of blood and terror... There isn’t a Colosseum any more, but the city is a bigger bowl and it seats more people ... There *are* things happening out there. They go on every day and night, making Roman holidays look like school picnics ...” (Spinalle, 1951: 7).

As the readers who desire to consume similar literary experiences grow in numbers, so the description of reality gains in fidelity but loses in literary value. The adventures of Mike Hammer, Spinalle’s hero, focus the game exclusively on the crime, rendering literature a simple, rather inadequate background. The criminal adversaries of the hero are so persistent in their profiteering misdeeds that they deserve excruciating deaths with a bullet in the abdomen or by other, equally atrocious acts (second World War has offered, in between, numerous examples of generalised horror).

Thus, in the first two or three post-war decades, numerous talented writers who enjoy commercial success (from James Hadley Chase, to Patricia Highsmith and Ruth Rendel), concentrate their narratives exclusively on the side of those who commit the crime and not of those that investigate or act against it. The whole development of their stories evolves around the naive clerk or the social outcast of the big city, the business executive or the manager of a bank branch, etc. who unexpectedly decides to, or is blackmailed to become involved in some petty or serious offence. Their tendency at the beginning is always to take “the shortest path to financial

success” or to escape from some impasse. Later, however, something always goes wrong and their petty offence leads to more serious harm being done, their fraud turns to crime, their robbery to bloodbath.

The reader of these detective stories follows the gradual slither of the heroes in committing misdeeds that, initially, those particular heroes did not have the least tendency to commit. The climax of the reading, thus, evades the traditional eagerness to re-structure all the chaotic facts in a coherent “solution”. It turns into a close surveillance of the rapid degradation of the hero to a persecuted criminal. Any possible surprise of the reader is related only to the actual ending of the story or to the improbable prospect of salvation of such a hero (an “improbability” that was particularly exploited by Patricia Highsmith, in the successful final outcome of the crimes of Mr. Ripley).

Even in more classically oriented narratives that survive during this period (like the adventures of Simenon’s Inspector Maigret at the start of this period, and those of the policemen of the 87th police station by Ed McBain, towards the end of the period), the investigation loses its old, rational clarity. The criminals and their persecutors are no longer positioned as the elements of an ideal confrontation. Health problems, personal anxieties, racial demotions and deceits, corrode the positive heroes incessantly, while, their adversaries (especially in Simenon’s work, but also in McBain’s work) present some positive attributes, or can plead for extenuation, since the circumstances that led them to crime are presented with ample sensitivity.

In conclusion, this discrete infiltration or continuous osmosis between virtues and malice in all characters, as it manifests in the second grand period of the detective literature (the mid-war period to the seventies), ends by familiarising the reader with the character of the deviant, and by evaluating the effectiveness of crime. Although “crime doesn’t pay” was the refrain of thousands of detective stories published during that fifty-year-long period, the circumstances of committing a crime, the initial tendencies before the final twists, and the ambiguous tactics of crime persecutors, led, in the majority of cases, to a shrouded doubt: perhaps crime “does pay” after all, despite everything contrary that is said.

The realistic climate and the dialectic treatment of the characters, revealed crime as something that can be dealt with, as an interesting “opportunity”. The literary game with the solution of the enigma became a calculating (and possibly significant) game with the structuring of the enigma. It

was thus necessary to show in some way the fate of the criminal in prison and the conditions of his punishment.

Crime as Recycling

The genesis of every new wave in the detective literature, despite its initial roots, or later refinements, seems to occur in America. The most recent focus – the focus on the post-judicial fate of the criminal and on the conditions of his incarceration – also originates from American writers: Steven King (with the only, in my opinion, interesting book of his being *Rita Hayworth in the Sawsang prison*, 1982) and Thomas Harris (writer of the novel that was turned into the famous film: *The Silence of the Lambs*).

Certainly, between the adventurous escape of Jean Valjean, and the patient escape of Conte Montecristo, the popular literature had already pointed out all the crucial themes related to an incarcerated hero (without taking into account the grand literature and the more or less autobiographical *Memories* of Dostoyevsky). In addition, in the detective literature itself, numerous scenes of heroes being confined in prison, or of heroes that relapsed into crime just after their release from prison, had already made many sporadic appearances.

Yet, it is in the aforementioned works – by Harris or by King, among others – that the prison becomes the main setting of the action. It comes to replace, in part, the proto-industrial exoticism of the cities of the middle of the 19th and of the beginning of the 20th century, or, to replace the homogeneous modernism of the cities between the mid-war and the third post-war decades.

By transferring the action into the cells of long-term convicts and into juvenile departments, into yards of general contacts and of high tech security systems, detective literature preserves, nowadays, the realism of its second period. But, it generally loses every notion of a “game”. Neither a game with literature in the background of crime, nor a game with crime in the background of literature. Neither a mystery to resolve, nor an unexpected turn in a misdeed in progress. Nor a “prison”-symbol of the human fate (like the “personville” or “poisonville” of Hammett, as an allusion to the integrated automatism of the human life).

This third, and more recent, period of the detective literature, seems to be interested more in a kind of “journalistic” intrusion into prisons, than in supporting a contrast between thematic violence and literary aptitude in the

presentation of this violence. And, as it happens with every manifestation of journalistic impression seeking, what is finally presented is the most naive manichaeic confrontation – between the forces of good and the forces of evil, in a stylistically watery lining up of violent acts. (For example, *Sleepers* by Lorenzo Carcaterra, in 1995, or a great number of other mediocre works that became equally or even more mediocre films).

The typical narrative model at issue starts from an absolutely unjust, or extremely strict conviction of the hero to a number of years of imprisonment, and presents the very harsh conditions in which he is found and from which he has to escape.

This initial viewpoint could have proved a valid point: namely, that the very deprivation of freedom for a period of time, just or unjust, is *by itself* the punishment. Consequently, there is no further need for dreadful living conditions, nor for the dangers in the prison, and no need for any rites of passage into the hierarchy of the villains.

Almost never does this issue remain in the foreground. On the contrary, some brutal and blood-thirsty prisoners always appear in the human environment of the unfairly punished hero. So brutal and blood-thirsty, however, to justify the behaviour of the corrupted warders, of the unprincipled doctors, of the venal social workers, and of the sadist head-wardens and to turn the sordid conditions of incarceration into a reasonable offset to a brutality for which the deprivation of freedom, by itself, seems not to suffice.

In essence, this third period of detective literature seems to be totally inspired by television, and by its intrinsically agnostic “democratisation of quality”, as is perceived by that medium. On television a presenter always stands on the side of some decent humanism and slates the brutalities against economic immigrants, or slates the shooting against some poor foreigners who tried to steal some food, etc.

Simultaneously however, this “decent” presenter offers the validity of public speech to various representatives of “associations of citizens who have been robbed”, or other supporters of a legal fascism, who, elaborate in length on the television frames, how the victims are (always) linked to some “mafias”, in what exact way their acts were not the acts of desperate people but of savage and dangerous criminals, and in what exact way, therefore, the “decent people” who shot them were in legal defence, and consequently their actions should be treated as models of heroic self-defence!

Therefore, in the conclusion of such televised dialogues, the TV-viewer, stands customarily in a position similar to the one of Nasreddin Hoca* as a judge, when that hero – an embodiment of popular sagacity – acknowledges the right of the complainant, then the right of the defendant, and finally the right of his secretary, who points out that it is not possible for both parties to be right at the same time!

Something similar to this democratically broadcasted towards every direction “wisdom of television” seems to influence the most recent trends of para-literature too.

In the 1990s, the thrillers by James Patterson (*Kiss the girls*), or the exceptional success of Patricia Cornwell’s heroine, a doctor-dissector of the police (in: *Post-mortem*, *Cause of Death*, etc.) do not describe prison environments, but insist on the sick nature of various paranoid murderers and on the detailed descriptions of their cold-blooded motiveless crimes. They create, as a result, such a hideous picture of the criminal, that no matter how brutal the methods of persecution, of arrest, and of punishment are, they are consecrated as acts well-suited to the ones committed by the criminal.

Crime, in this last period of the relevant fiction, becomes more or less the product of a recycling process. Either with the in-prison adventures, where the unjustly convicted prisoners become apprentices to violence and are led to new crimes in order to be vindicated, or, with detailed accounts of sickening realistic pictures of assault and battery, where the similar violence of the prosecutors becomes justified in the end. (Hannibal Lector, for example, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, assists the heroine of a police investigation despite the fact he himself is a horrendous criminal. We can see him, because of this, with sympathy. But, the horrific conditions of his confinement and surveillance, in the meantime, are not at all depicted, as unjustified or unjust).

The pericentric arrangement that characterises more or less, the architecture of most of the prisons, facilitating, consequently, a central surveillance of the prisoners, directly refers to the arrangement of amphitheatres and arenas. Supervisors and supervised are thus offered to a subsequent, literary or cinematographic, supervision upon the “theatre” of justice.

There are exceptions, of course. Some very successful writers continue to use the traditional models of rational investigation (writers like Ph. D.

* Legendary figure of islamic – and eventually Balkan – folk culture.

James with *A taste of death*, *Original sin*, *A certain justice*, etc., or like Estelle Maubrin, with *Murder in the house of Mr. Proust*), or continue the school of Chandler and Hammett by presenting the ambiguous causes of crime (writers like James Ellroy with *Black Dahlia* and *Big Nowhere*, or Janwillem van de Wetering, with numerous adventures of a hero private detective, or Sandra Scoppettone, whose heroine is a female private investigator from New York that is constantly divided between solving detective mysteries and coping with the difficulties of her lesbian relationship with a female psychiatrist).

Very rare are the cases, however, of writers that handle the themes of the recycled crime without contributing to the “recycling”. A fairly good relevant example is *The Gas Chamber* by J. Grisham, where the horrible act of the criminal does not offset the even more horrible organised society which, under the alibi of a legal ritual, performs a real “cold blood” execution – inflicting the death penalty.

If, countries like the U.S. ever manage to raise their cultural level to the same standard as their economic development, and abolish the death penalty in all the states, this achievement will be as much due to legal reforms as to para-literary successes.

Despite the fact that an inviolable condition in the reading of detective stories is the convention that the writer has tethered the mystery that his hero resolves, all the events narrated in the text do not *vanish into thin air* when the reading is completed. Everybody knows that the writer’s words hold true inside the “world” of the book. On the other hand, regardless of how successfully the words serve our reading experiences, we are sometimes obliged to use the very same words in our every day life. And often we pull them out with all the connotations they have acquired during their literary or para-literary use.

Thus, totally “entrapped” in a very real state of siege, a Sorin Matei* threatened the policemen and the hostages with the fatal grenade and the phrase: “they will only have time to see a bright white light and then noth-

* Sorin Matei: the protagonist of a police man-hunting in Athens, in 1999. Trapped by the police in a small apartment, and having taken a young girl as a hostage, Matei triggered a grenade. As a result, they both got seriously wounded and eventually died a few days later.

ing!” The real criminal defined his totally real entrapment and his imminent conclusion with terms taken from the most ancient narrative: the “white light” – permanent symbol of spirituality, constant background in the artistic depictions of the Holy Spirit, and eternal characteristic of “whiteness”, of purification and of Paradise.

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Crime and History

From Dostoyevsky's Philosophy to Raskolnikov's Praxis*

ALEXANDER CHRYSIS**

*It seems impossible to speak about Dostoyevsky
without the word "criminal" coming up*

Thomas Mann

Instead of an Introduction. A few words about Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov

In September 1865, in a letter addressed to publisher Katkov¹, Fyodor Dostoyevsky hastens to inform him that he is writing a novel that he himself describes as a "psychological account of a crime". A young student decides to rob and murder an old lady usurer, a being "that is good for nothing", not only to relieve his mother and sister of the financial pressure, but also, to find the means to devote himself for the rest of his life "to his humanitarian duties towards mankind", finding, in this way, expiation for his crime.

The crime is committed, but, immediately afterwards, as Dostoyevsky informs his publisher, the psychological process of the crime begins to unfold:

Divine truth and human law take their toll, and he ends up by being driven to give himself up. He is *driven* to this because, even though doomed to perish in penal servitude, it will make him one with people again, and the

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¹ "Letter to Katkov", in Frank J. & Goldstein D. I. (eds.) (1989: 221-224).

feeling of being cut off and isolated from humanity that he had experienced from the moment he committed the crime had been torturing him. The law of truth and human nature won out [...]. The criminal himself decides to accept suffering to expiate his deed. However, it is rather difficult for me, [confesses Dostoyevsky], to make my idea completely clear.

Besides this, my story contains the suggestion that the legal penalty imposed for the commission of a crime frightens the offender less than the law-makers think, partly because *it is he himself who demands it morally*.

[...] I would like to show that this feeling is present in an educated man of the new generation, so that the idea would be more striking and more tangible. [...] In brief, [Dostoyevsky concludes], *I am convinced that my subject will in a way explain what is happening today*. (Frank J. & Goldstein D. I. (Eds.), 1989: 221-224).

In building Raskolnikov's portrait, it is true that the Russian writer draws inspiration from the surrounding atmosphere of his time and place. He is not confined, however, in the sphere of the specific, but transcends its limits in order to trace the hidden sides of human nature, beyond space and time, i.e. beyond History.

It is not by accident that in the first part of the novel *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky places his hero oscillating between two extreme situations. On the one hand, the parasitic, withered figure of Aliona Ivanovna, the repulsive figure of a living dead who, nevertheless, possesses the power to drain the nectar of life and youth from the world that surrounds her. On the other hand, young, fresh girls fading away in the struggle to survive, falling victim, day after day, to exploitation and corruption. And between these two opposite facets of a life that smells death, Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov, forced to select the role of the Crucifier or that of the Crucified, the role of the criminal-saviour or that of the victim, realises the small and the great crimes of his time, but persists in loving.

A hundred thousand good deeds could be done and helped, on that old woman's money which will be buried in a monastery! Hundreds, thousand perhaps, might be set on the right path; dozens of families saved from destitution, from ruin, from vice, from the Lock hospitals- and all with her money. Kill her take her money and with the help of it devote oneself to the service of humanity and the good of all. What do you think, would not one tiny crime be wiped out by thousands of good deeds? For one life thousands would be saved from corruption and decay. One death, and a hundred lives in exchange - it's simple arithmetic! (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 79-80).

As is well known, Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov will, of course, give in to the logic of the great men of History. Perhaps, as the author will later con-

fess, not only to serve the general interest of mankind, but also to put his own limits to trial, to find out, in the long run, whether he is a *common criminal or an outstanding individual* that commits a crime in order to save his fellow men.

As I shall advocate in the following pages, the story of Raskolnikov was however, just a means for Dostoyevsky to express his ideas on fundamental anthropological issues and to criticise some philosophical views on crime and History, views of Hegelian and neo-Hegelian and socialist origin, which were particularly wide-spread in nineteenth-century Russia, but which are also particularly relevant to conditions of contemporary life.

Interpretive views of crime in the perspective of a Philosophy of History. The dialogue between Raskolnikov and Porphyry Petrovich

In the famous dialogue between Raskolnikov and the investigator Porphyry Petrovich in the third part of the novel, the criminal's best friend, Razumichin, poses the crucial question: *does crime exist or not?* This is essentially the fundamental philosophical and anthropological problem which concerns the author, and as I have already pointed out, Raskolnikov's crime presents the perfect opportunity to explore this issue.

The philosophical examination of crime as a social phenomenon begins with the socialist interpretation, that Razumichin hastens to present and criticises quite harshly when he states that socialists attribute crime exclusively to the influence of the social environment. Through a forceful monologue, Raskolnikov's friend distances himself from the socialist interpretation of crime, an interpretation which, in his opinion, is founded on a rash devaluation, or, more correctly, on a misapprehension of the role and importance of human nature.

But let us follow Razumichin's argument closely:

Nothing is admitted, [Razumichin says referring to the socialists]. [E]verything with them is 'the influence of environment', and nothing else. Their favourite phrase! From which it follows that, if society is normally organised, all crime will cease at once, since there will be nothing to protest against and all men will become righteous in one instant. Human nature is not taken into account, it is excluded, it's not supposed to exist! They don't recognise that humanity, developing by a historical living process, will become at last a normal society, but they believe that a social system that has come out of some mathematical brain is going to organise all humanity at

once and make it just and sinless in an instant, quicker than any living process! (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 283).

It is worth noting, first of all, the socialists Razumichin refers to in his critique. Against the logic of nature and of history that, in his opinion, the supporters of the socialist interpretation of crime persist in ignoring, he places the *mechanical* logic of constructing the social environment, in such a manner, that criminal behaviour will supposedly disappear. Razumichin's argument does not, apparently, defy a socialism of Hegelian origin, it does not stand against a socialism of Marxist origin, with which, a little later, the great Russian anarchist Bakunin will settle up in the First International. The critique of Dostoyevsky's hero turns against the mechanical conception of man and society, a conception which characterises, to a significant degree, the utopian socialism of Fourier.

And it comes in the end [Razumichin maintains] to their [the socialists] reducing everything to the building of walls and the planning of rooms and passages in a phalanstery! [a direct reference to Fourier's system]. The phalanstery is ready, indeed, but your human nature is not ready for the phalanstery – it wants life, it hasn't completed its vital process, it's too soon for the graveyard! You can't skip over nature by logic. Logic presupposes three possibilities, but there are millions! Cut away a million, and reduce it all to the question of comfort! That's the easiest solution of the problem! It's seductively clear and you mustn't think about it. That's the great thing, you mustn't think! The whole secret of life in two pages of print! (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 283-4).

From this point of view, the quest for the inner truth of the crime must be directed towards the innermost facets of the human nature. Let us not hasten, however, to condemn Razumichin's argument as *metaphysical*. In the name of the soul, and through his hero's words, Dostoyevsky associates to the great Romantic movement, which, from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, strongly objects to the *mechanical anthropology* of a rigid Enlightenment. Moreover the author himself, ex-member of Petrashevsky's circle, a group strongly influenced by Fourier's utopian socialism, seizes the opportunity to deal with his past philosophical consciousness².

² For Dostoyevsky's relations to Petrashevsky's circle and particularly to the ideas of utopian socialism, see Copleston F. (1996: 151), Frank J. (1991: 252), Venturi F. (1960:86).

A different interpretation of crime is the one expressed by Raskolnikov, an interpretation expressed in a catalytic manner by inspector Porphyry Petrovich in his dialogue with the offender. It is a Hegelian philosophical approach of crime, as I shall demonstrate in the following lines, after first pointing out its essential points.

As Porphyry Petrovich will remind us, the young student Raskolnikov had written an article in the past, in which he analysed "the psychology the criminal before and after the crime" (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 285). The author's argument, however, was based on the distinction between *common* and *outstanding* persons, the content of which is reflected in the dialogue between the inspector and the criminal:

"No, not exactly because of it", answered Porfiry. "In his [Raskolnikov's] article all men are divided into 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary'. Ordinary men have to live in submission, have no right to transgress the law; because, don't you see, they are ordinary. But extraordinary men have a right to commit any crime and to transgress the law in any way, just because they are extraordinary. (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 286).

Raskolnikov's effort to *correct* the inspector's presentation of his argument, offers a further opportunity to trace the philosophical core of his point of view:

I maintain that if the discoveries of Kepler and Newton could not have been made known except by sacrificing the lives of one, a dozen, a hundred, or more men, Newton would have had the right, would indeed have been in duty bound ... to *eliminate* the dozen or the hundred men for the sake of making his discoveries known to the whole of humanity. But it does not follow from that that Newton had the right to murder people right and left and to steal every day in the market. Then, I remember, I maintain in my article that all ... well, legislators and leaders of men, such as Lycurgus, Solon, Mohammed, Napoleon, and so on, were all without exception criminals, from the very fact that, making a new law, they transgressed the ancient one, handed down from their ancestors and held sacred by the people, and they did not stop short at bloodshed either, if that bloodshed- often of innocent persons fighting bravely in defence of ancient law- were of use to their cause. It is remarkable, in fact, that the majority, indeed, of these benefactors and leaders of humanity were guilty of terrible carnage. (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 286-7).

It is my assertion that, at this point, Raskolnikov's view of crime is led, through the ingenious narrative of Dostoyevsky, to encounter the Philosophy of History of the great German philosopher Hegel. Dostoyevsky, as will be proved in what follows, makes an attempt to undermine Hegel's po-

sition on the grounds of 19th century Russia, where the Hegelian and young-Hegelian views had contributed, however, decisively to the formation of a revolutionary Romanticism, especially in the hearts of the Russian students³.

Let us attempt a brief wander into the pages of the *Introduction* to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* by Hegel, focusing our attention on the role of the great men, as the eminent thinker perceives it:

[The great individuals of world history] are those who realise the end appropriate to the higher concept of the spirit. To this extent they may be called heroes. [...] For this spirit, the present world is but a shell which contains the wrong kind of kernel. It might, however, be objected that everything which deviates from the established order [...] is likewise different from what is already there. [...] But the fact that all such attitudes, sound reasons, or general principles, differ from existing ones does not mean to say that they are justified. [...] [W]orld historical individuals are those who have willed and accomplished not just the ends of their own imagination or personal opinions, but only those which were appropriate and necessary. Such individuals know what is necessary and timely, and have an inner vision of what it is (Hegel, 1975, 82-83).

I shall insist on this Hegelian description of the “outstanding men”, of world historical individuals. The fact that renders an individual a great man in History, is certainly not his clash with the prevailing situation, but the concrete negation of the present, a negation that points towards the dialectics of the realisation of the objective spirit. The objective truth of the world spirit, and not the subjective character of this negation, is what transfers the “outstanding individuals” to a world beyond good and evil. Hegel refers to the *crimes* of these world historical individuals, in order to assert that “their position should be seen in an altogether different light”. He refers to these individuals when he recognises, without any moral reservation, that such personalities, unhappy human beings, imprisoned by a passion that shudders and devours them, cannot but “trample many an innocent flower underfoot, and destroy much that lies in [their] path” (Hegel, 1975: 89).

This Hegelian argument is the ground to which the Dostoyevskyeian narrative of Raskolnikov attaches, the narrative of the young student, of the

³ See in this respect the classic book by Isaiah Berlin (1979), *Russian Thinkers*, 136-149, 150-185.

individual that is burning inside by his passion to act so as to contribute to humanity's salvation, the argument of the *criminal* who thought that ...

... all great men or even men a little out of the common, that is to say capable of giving some new word, must from their very nature be criminals – more or less of course. (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 287).

Through this seemingly *innocent* extension of the Hegelian argument, from the great men to those “who surpass the common standard”, Dostoyevsky begins a step-by-step refutation of the German Philosopher's argumentation. The criterion introduced by Hegel for the *objective* and *ex post* definition of the great man as a world historical personality who is ‘allowed’ to commit crimes, since he materialises Reason in History, is certainly reproduced in Raskolnikov's *natural* distinction of people in two categories:

... inferior (ordinary) that is, so to say, material that serves only to reproduce its kind, and men who have the gift or the talent to utter a *new world*. There are, of course, innumerable sub-divisions, but the distinguishing features of both categories are fairly well marked. The first category, generally speaking, are men conservative in temperament and law-abiding; they live under control and love to be controlled. To my thinking it is their duty to be controlled, because that is their vocation, and there is nothing humiliating in it for them. The second category all transgress the law, they are destroyers or disposed to destruction according to their capacities. The crimes of these men are of course relative and varied; for the most part they seek in very varied ways the destruction of the present for the sake of the better. But if such a one is forced for the sake of this idea to step over a corpse or wade through blood- that depends on the idea and its dimensions, note that. It is only in this sense I speak of their right to crime in my article. (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 287-8).

Confronting Raskolnikov's argument, which, without completely identifying with it, is certainly inspired by certain facets of Hegel's Philosophy of History regarding the role of the great men⁴, Dostoyevsky seems to respond by an intense scepticism expressed by inspector Porphyry Petrovich, as regards the *objective* basis of the distinction between common and outstanding people:

How do you distinguish those extraordinary people from the ordinary ones? Are these signs at their birth? I feel there ought to be more exactitude, more external definition. Excuse the natural anxiety of a practical-abiding citizen,

⁴ See the dialogue between Raskolnikov and Razumichin on the transformation of great man to unhappy consciousness in Dostoyevsky, NA, III: 68.

but could not they adopt a special uniform, for instance, couldn't they wear something, be branded in some way? For you know if confusion arises and a member of one category imagines that he belongs to the other, begins to "eliminate obstacles as you so happily expressed it, then..." (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 289).

The philosophical significance of the dialogue between Raskolnikov and Porphyry Petrovich do not, of course, require further commentary. The philosophical interpretations of crime, however, on which Dostoyevsky focused his narrative, impel our analysis towards the quest of the Russian writer's deeper anthropology. Central points of reference of this anthropology are the concepts of *freedom* and *personality*, through which the inner dialectics of Crime and History come up in its authentic and tragic dimensions.

Freedom and Personality in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's Philosophy of Crime and History

The way in which Dostoyevsky presents the tragic figure of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* leaves no doubt as regard the anthropocentric character of his philosophy.

As Zenkovsky, one of the greatest scholars of Russian philosophy, characteristically remarks,

[...] the most important and decisive [point] [in Dostoyevsky's philosophic creativity] is the theme of man. Like all Russian thinkers he is anthropocentric, and his philosophic world-view is primarily a *personalism** [...] For Dostoyevsky nothing is more precious or important than man, although nothing, perhaps, is more dreadful. Man is an enigma, woven of contradictions, but at the same time – in the person of even the most insignificant human being – an absolute value (Zenkovsky, 1953, I:418).

From this point of view Berdyaev as well, in his classic study *The Spirit of Dostoyevsky*, points out that, "... Dostoyevsky possessed a high sense of personality. His vision of life is filled with personalism", to conclude a little later, "Dostoyevsky's work, therefore, is the most decisive turn in the anthropological knowledge" (Berdyaev 1990, 54,60).

Based on this view, it becomes clearly evident that it is impossible to detach Dostoyevsky's approach to crime from the anthropologic conception of the Russian writer. If criminal activity is not set off exclusively by

* My emphasis.

the structure and organisation of the social environment, then the quest for the causes of crime must be extended towards the “dark side” of human nature, towards the deeper psychological elements of the human personality.

Undoubtedly, for the creator of *Crime and Punishment*, the human existence is immersed in all its dimensions simultaneously in the *good* and the *evil*. It is in this sense that I assert that the concept of human nature, according to Dostoyevsky, closely resembles the *antisocial sociability* which the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant⁵ elaborated. Specifically in the case of Dostoyevsky, the struggle between good and evil, a struggle taking place inside the human soul, is certainly an *open* process, the outcome of which depends on man himself; it is exactly this open process which gives rise to the formation of the human being as an ethical personality.

Returning to Zenkovsky, we read:

The fundamental mystery of man consists for Dostoyevsky in his being an ethical creature, invariably and inevitably faced with the dilemma of good and evil, a dilemma *from which he can never retreat*. (Zenkovsky, 1953, 420).

Within such a frame of philosophical anthropology, crime is not a mechanical reaction to the stimuli transmitted by the environment, neither is it the expression of some hidden intricacy of Reason, which unfolds in the scene of History, capitalising on the *passions* of great but also fatal, and therefore weak willed personalities. Crime is a choice of man, and thus, the tragic proof of his freedom, as I shall show in greater detail in what follows. In other words, for Dostoyevsky, man as a personality, as Berdyaev very aptly asserts, remains unique until the end. The Dionysiac man of Dostoyevsky, in contrast to the one of Nietzsche, even after having committed the ultimate crime, the killing of God inside him, “remains unassailable and unique. [...] The entire work of the Russian writer is a defence of man” (Berdyaev, 1990: 64).

In an era of strong self-confidence in his ability to live without God, man – Dostoyevsky insists – is in danger of being crashed both morally and spiritually. The true victim of Raskolnikov is not Aliona Ivanova but he

⁵ According to Zenkovsky (1953:423), on the other hand, “Dostoyevsky’s essential view of man is closer to Rousseau’s anthropology and his basic principle of the original goodness of man. than that of Kant and his theory of ‘the original evil of man’ ”.

himself. The victim of the *apotheosis* of man is not God, who, if existing, exists as a fundamental need for man, but man himself. Raskolnikov is structured and acts as a personality on the cutting edge of a tormenting dilemma: to become God, as an anthropology inspired by Feuerbach would demand, or, to accept God in the face of his fellow man as a value in itself and as an end in itself. In any case, he himself selects; but even when he selects committing a crime, history, his own personal history, has not reached an end yet. In reality, it only then begins! Crime has two faces: the one of pain and the one of freedom. Nobody can enter the kingdom of freedom, without passing the gate of pain (Berdyayev, 1990: 111-112, 201).

In conclusion, the personality of the Dostoyevskye Raskolnikov is not the incarnation of a Nietzschean Superhuman, as Berdyayev aptly observed, but neither is it the extension of the Stirnerean Egoist, as equally importantly another significant scholar of the Russian philosophy reminds us:

What would [Dostoyevsky] say, Copleston cogitates, about the contention of Max Stirner that, after God had been killed, it was then necessary to kill Man, in the sense that it was necessary to get rid of the abstraction 'Man' in the name of the actual men and women, to reject the universal in the name of the concrete particulars? Presumably, the answer is that Dostoyevsky would agree only up to a point, to the point, that is to say, of sharing the view that the substitution of Man for God would end in slavery for actual human beings. Having, however, given us in the person of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* his conception of an isolated individual without God, Dostoyevsky would certainly not regard Max Stirner's philosophy of egoism as acceptable⁶.

Without doubt, the tormenting route of Raskolnikov from crime to punishment, and his departure from the field of Dialectic, in order to arrive to the kingdom of love, substantially distances the Dostoyevskye hero from Stirner's *Unique*. Neither before, nor after the commission of the crime did the criminal follow a Stirnerean model. The salvation of humanity, as the ultimate motive of the criminal activity, presupposes faith in a collective ideal, an element which is incompatible with the individualistic philosophical thinking of the young-Hegelian Max Stirner. In this sense, it is a serious misinterpretation to perceive Dostoyevsky's anthropocentric philosophy as a version of a Dionysiac individualism.

⁶ Copleston F., (1996: 163). When Dostoyevsky came to know the German neo-Hegelians, and especially Stirner, the deep ideological significance of his relation to Belinsky played a critical role: See in this respect Frank J. (1991: 185-198).

In this respect, the view of freedom as this emerges from the pages of the novels of the Russian writer, is of extreme significance. As it has been correctly observed, the Dostoyevskye heroes – and among them Raskolnikov too – become the bearer and the agent of a dramatic transition from a Dionysian to an ethical form of freedom, which the writer himself expresses in the spirit of a Christian love:

Dostoyevsky, through the unfolding of the psychology of his heroes, shows that the [Dionysiac] freedom inevitably leads not only to crime, but also to the destruction of the personality and, therefore, to the destruction of the illusion of that form of freedom. This Dionysiac freedom is destroyed by its own development. It could be said that [Dostoyevsky] corroborates in this manner, in essence the classic theory of freedom, which ensures that “arbitrary freedom” leads to the unrestrained slavery to passions (Papadopoulos, 1995: 108).

But let us return to our initial question: for what purpose does Raskolnikov revolt? For what purpose does he commit a crime? I maintain, therefore, that he is inspired by and strives for the institution of the human personality, as a value in itself, contrary, in fact, to a world where man – to remember the relevant terminology of Kant – exists for the fellow man merely as a means. It is in essence an attempt to secularise the ultimate demand of the Kantian Ethics, an attempt to materialise a deeper notion of freedom in the field of History, which nevertheless the German philosopher – not by accident – put forward and retained *pure* in the level of the controlling principles.

However, Raskolnikov’s original view is not Dostoyevsky’s view as well. The *geometrical* construction of a society without pain and injustice may guide the “Euclidean spirit” and the *criminal* act of a revolutionary (Berdyayev, 1990: 201), but it is not the expression of the ethical philosophical argument of the Russian writer, an argument that Raskolnikov himself elaborates when he is finally in exile, that is simultaneously the place of his personal Resurrection.

Instead of an Epilogue. The Way out from the Dialectic of History

Determined to surrender, Raskolnikov – in a very revealing dialogue of souls with his sister – confesses his action but denies in essence its criminal character. He defends his *humanitarian* motives, but turns against himself,

for being weak. For him, the crime is not the murder, but his confession, this admission that leads him to surrender and classifies him for ever in the category of “common people”:

I too wanted to do good to men and would have done hundreds, thousands of good deeds to make up for that one piece of stupidity, not stupidity even, simply clumsiness, for the idea was by no means so stupid as it seems now that it has failed ... (Everything seems stupid when it fails). By that stupidity I only wanted to put myself into an independent position, to take the first step, to obtain means, and then everything would have been smoothed over by benefits immeasurable in comparison ...

But I ... I couldn't carry out even the first step, because I am contemptible, that is what the matter is! And yet I won't look at it as you do. If I had succeeded I should have been crowned with glory, but now I am trapped!
(Dostoyevsky, 1999: 564).

Undoubtedly, this confession reveals another significant facet of Raskolnikov's criminal act, its dimension as an *experiment*, as a *trial for the soul*. A facet that was very accurately pointed out by eminent scholars, such as Georg Lukács:

The specific act, Lukács remarks in his *Studies on the European Realism*, is more of an occasion than a real goal or a means. In contrast, the psychological and ethical dialectic that balances the advantages and disadvantages of the specific act becomes the core of the subject. That is, a trial, that will prove if Raskolnikov possesses the psychological competence to become a Napoleon. The specific act becomes a psychological experiment. It becomes, of course, an experiment in which the entire psychological and ethical existence of the agent is involved. But also, an experiment that “its incidental trigger”, “its incidental object” is another human life (Lukács, 1957: 267-268; Berdyaev, 1990: 92).

I shall insist a little further on the character of the crime as an experiment, as a trial of limits. Such a trial does not, of course, concern only Raskolnikov, neither does it constitute an end in itself. This foiled act of transcending limits constitutes for Dostoyevsky the criminal attempt of men (or women), irrespectively of whether they are *common* or *outstanding*, to kill God, who is identified as the presence of love for the fellow man deep in our soul and our entire existence. In other words, this psychological experiment, to which Lukács refers with such emphasis, demonstrates the painful failure, not only of the criminal, but also of humanity in its entirety. However, the end of History does not lie here!

“But now in prison, *in freedom*” Raskolnikov insists that his existence would have been completely meaningless if he had not believed, as he believed, “in an idea, a hope, even a fancy” (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 588). He insists that the only element that distinguishes him from the outstanding men is that “those men succeeded and so *they were right*”, while he was not strong enough and confessed his act (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 589).

It is, thus, clear: Dostoyevsky’s *hero* remains still enclosed in the mine-field of History. Nevertheless, here in prison, in the galleys and in the barren land of his exile, the last act of the drama was meant to take place, when Sonia’s eyes meet his, illuminating thus the “dawn of a new future, ... a full resurrection into a new life” (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 594).

He knew with what infinite love he would now repay all her sufferings. And that were all, *all* the agonies of the past! Everything even his crime, his sentence and imprisonment, seemed to him now in the first rush of feeling an external, strange fact with which he had no concern. But he could not think for long together of anything that evening, and he could not have analysed anything consciously; he was simply feeling. Life had stepped into the place of theory and something quite different would work itself out in his mind. (Dostoyevsky, 1999: 595).

If, for the convict Raskolnikov the Gospel was this “totally different”, the text-symbol of a new life, for Dostoyevsky, the way-out from the Dialectic of History constitutes simultaneously in his own philosophical interpretation of crime, the Catharsis of crimes in the history of mankind.

The course of History, according to the Russian writer, is not pre-determined. It is for this reason that no crime can be legitimised in the name of its hidden or open dialectic. Man is free to live resisting evil, but is also free to be destroyed by reproducing it. The *decision* depends on him. As Nicolay Berdyaev has aptly observed, the dialectic transformation of evil to good, through an intricacy of Reason or of Nature, “is alien in every aspect to Dostoyevsky’s tragic spirit” (Berdyaev, 1990: 96).

I shall repeat this: The way-out from the Dialectic of History, this process of non-freedom and violence, cannot be considered as a product of necessity but of the free choice of man himself between an authentic and a non-authentic way of life.

The fact that Dostoyevsky sought his criterion of authenticity in the Word of the Gospel, is, of course, significant. However, in our difficult times, it is even more significant that according to the creator of Raskolnikov, the bloody bond between Crime and History can be torn not due to a

socio-economic necessity, but, due to the free-willed and life-loaded decision of man to *live* and not to *rule*.

For anyone, however, hastening to condemn Dostoyevsky's position as an expression of an *abstract* and *ahistorical humanism*, as the ideological opinion of a thinker that was trapped in the vicious circle of a *sui generis individualism*, I shall conclude this work with the *Dialectic* of Georg Lukács which, while endorsing this kind of criticism, at the same time transcends its own condemnatory logic:

[Dostoyevsky was] a titan who struggled for an inner truth, a titan who concentrated on the individual, of course, and showed little interest in the social roots, but who always offered the deepest essence of himself with an incomparable honesty and commitment (Lukács, NA: 110).

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The Innocent Murderer
Crime, Trial and Punishment in Albert Camus'
The Outsider*

ALFREDO VERDE**

Part A: The crime

The present article intends to examine the articulation of the relationship between the criminal, the crime and the society that punishes him/her, through the reading of Camus' well-known novel, *The Outsider*. In accordance with the division of the novel in two parts, this article will also consist of two sections: in the first, the deeper dynamics that lead to crime will be examined; in the second, the changes occurring in the personality of the hero, as they are described through the experience of imprisonment, the trial and the conviction, will be analysed. Finally, the article will conclude with some thoughts on the way in which the hero subconsciously perceived the function of the penal system and the dynamics that associate the perpetrator of the crime with the society that punishes him/her.

The Outsider as a clinical case

A possible function of the use of literature in criminology and psychology is that it provides us with "clinical cases", which we can manipulate as if they were real in order to generate and reaffirm our hypotheses.

* Translated by Maria Markantonatou.

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The psychological knowledge of unconsciousness is indeed a narrative knowledge, filtered through the clinical psychologist's sensitivity, which accumulates evaluative elements for the patient and then it restructures them almost in the same way the writer seeks in him/herself the plot and the succession of the novel. The difference lies in that the psychologist "narrates" during the treatment of – and with – the patient, or he "narrates" for the judge, in the field of judicial psychology.

If clinical knowledge is then "narration", exactly the opposite problem automatically arises: is it possible to subvert narration into a clinical case? The answer is usually negative; such an argument may become the target of heavy criticism, especially when it increases the demand, surpassing the actual text, to submit even the writer him/herself into a kind of "hard core" analysis, through and in the context of the work.

Another difficulty arises due to the fact that in the traditional novel the narrator is completely distinguished from his/hers heroes, heroes that are explicitly described in their actions and partially in their thoughts. With the emergence of the psychological literature the narrator, although he/she still retains the third narrative person, penetrates deep into the soul of his/hers heroes reaching the point, as in the writings of Henry James, where the writer by tapping successively into the heroes' personal views is not in the position to narrate in an "objective" way what is happening and at the same time, of course, the reader does not know what "indeed" has happened. The extreme expression of this trend, which in fact is probably more "readable" due to that it is embodied into a particular tradition (autobiographies, memoirs), is that of the "autobiographical novel", the narration of which takes place in the first person, which means that the narrator identifies the "narrative ego" with the protagonist. The narration invades, in a manner of speech, the "hero's mind" in order to tell the story by living it and seeing it through the very eyes of the hero. It does not serve in the purpose of the present work to refer to the bright philological paradigms of this type of literature techniques of the 20th century, from Proust to Svevo. And it is not irrelevant, in my opinion, that the above writers have always been considered to be very close to a particular type of psychological penetration. It is true, narration in the first person means that everything that one narrates takes place in the human mind and sheds some light on the uncertainties, by transmitting passionately to the reader, through a literature technique, what is happening "inside" the hero, on a subconscious and unconscious level. In this way, heroes obtain a quality that makes them seem almost

“real” people. This is exactly the narrative technique, in my opinion, that offers such a splendid opportunity for the novel to be used as a clinical case, as if the discourse of the narrative ego was that of a patient.

We believe that such an analysis, actualised in a famous work, known to many people, such as Camus’ *The Outsider* (1942a), is extremely helpful in supporting a series of views associated with the structuring of the relationship between the perpetrator, the subconscious motives of crime, the trial and the social retribution, as well as the subconscious utility of punishment for the perpetrator and society.

The present assignment, therefore, will not limit itself only to the study of the protagonist as a clinical case; rather it will examine, using the same analytical method, the social reaction to crime. In other words, we will attempt to examine from a “clinical” starting point (in psychological terms) the social reaction and the collective retribution, and the opinion that the moment of the crime and the moment of the social reaction to crime lose their meaning if they are not seen as a concrete phenomenon, an integrated Gestalt (Francia, 1984).

The crime committed by the protagonist in Camus’ novel was often considered to be incomprehensible and unmotivated. This is not a suitable place for a review of the various interpretations and readings of this work made by the literature critic. One of the distinguished researchers of Camus’ work, Brian Fitch (1972) has dedicated a whole book to the different “readings” of the novel and has tracked down seven critical interpretative schools (biographical, political, sociological, metaphysical, ontological, existential and psychoanalytical). There does not exist, however, an originally “criminological” reading of this work, apart from a few brief and not particularly bright references made by Mannheim (1965) and Shoham (1974).¹

¹ Mannheim (1965), in his famous work, refers to Meursault in a chapter titled “The psychology of a normal criminal” and defines his action as a “short-circuited energy”. What is much more interesting from this diagnosis is the square interpretation of the protagonist’s personality and the linkage Mannheim makes with the nazi criminal Eichmann. “in that circumstances, hero Meursault does not show any of the conventional feelings in the whole duration of the narration, neither before or after the incident of the gunshot, not during the trial, until the end when he finally explodes. It is the same detachment, although in very different conditions, that one can ascertain in Adolf Eichmann, who, on the contrary, defends superbly himself during his trial, while Meursault did not seem to care about himself”. Shoham (1974), in a text concerning the “sociology of the absurd”, has essentially collimated with the existential

In contrast to the readings that do imprint the psychological development of the protagonist and surpass this obvious “loss of meaning” with intellectualised remarks on the existential philosophy of the writer (exactly the opposite of what should be done, if one considers that philosophy and reduction of theory is the last line of defence for intellectualism and rationalism),² it is our intention to highlight that it is possible for a meaning to be found in Camus’ novel, and to follow the changes of the inner condition of the protagonist as much in the drama that marks him personally as in his contact with the other heroes, amongst whom a particular importance is placed on those possessing roles within the penal system.³ For this purpose we shall utilise both the means of the psychoanalytical critic and the sym-

interpretation of the novel which derives from that of Sartre (1947), according to which, “*The Outsider*” is a philosophical novel that materialised the notion of the “illogical” as this was theorised in the “Myth of Sisyphus”. Following the Sartrean reading, Shoham asserts that Meursault’s crime is unmotivated and incomprehensible. At the same time, the protagonist is approached as a cold, unemotional, stagnant and insensible persona. Our reading has an interpretation opposite to those of the above mentioned ones.

² Without intending to address all aspects of the matter, we would like to take this opportunity to talk about a few conclusions made by the critics. De Luppe (1960): “Meursault’s life has no meaning and this is the point of the book. It is not directed by a purpose, it is not organised by an idea. It is developed in a blind, automatic way, through the uninterrupted repeat of gestures, of little thoughts, gross senses”. Thody (1957): “In the second part of the book, up to the last page, Meursault remains cold and detached just like in the first part ...”. De Piaggi (1970): “Imprisoned, isolated in the cell, he’s being investigated. Meursault doesn’t change and in order to answer the questions in his trial, he uses the same, simple way with which he was handling his relations with the world before the crime. But if his behaviour doesn’t change, then, the situation is different ...”. At the same direction, Zeppi (1961) thinks that the final exploration is nothing more than the externalisation of what was under the surface from the very beginning.

³ As expressed by Maquet (1956), who tends, however, to see in the meeting with the priest an unpredictable turnover and an awakening without taking into account the slow and progressive character of this change. Fitch (1982) on the other hand, analyses the text in a very detailed manner and reveals the techniques used by Camus to incite feelings of hatred towards the hero in the first part of the novel but then later feelings of sympathy and identification with the “accusers” in the second part (beginning in the first part, until the lawyer appears, up until the first chapter of the second part). Furthermore, in a final twist, the writer then uses these techniques to propel the readers to identify with the “accused” (during the trial and while waiting to be executed). Although this is a truly remarkable critical discourse, we fear it may lose sight of Camus’ aim: simplifying an extremely difficult identification with the narrative ego does not mean a narration of change. It is extremely important here not to confuse the study of narrative techniques with the results produced by these.

bols of the literature critic that relate primarily to the stylistic level, as well as to the structure of the work.

Therefore, we shall attempt to read the text on two parallel levels, on one consisting of the viewpoints of Meursault and of the "internal objects" that he brings forth to the heroes of the penal drama, and simultaneously, from the viewpoint of the penal system itself, as Camus has represented it, and from the implemented social mechanisms that support the trial and the conjunction. It is true, as in any trial, the objective of "reality of the verdict" is formulated, as Francia (1984) suggests, on one hand through the articulation and reciprocal binding of the imaginings activated by the perpetrator, and on the other hand, from the imaginings activated by the social groups and their representatives, through formal and informal social reaction. Indeed, the trial performs not only individualised functions for every single member of society, but also collective ones for the whole of society, not to forget the individualised functions performed for the psychological dynamics of the perpetrator as well.

Here we encounter another substantial problem. As noted by a whole series of writers, under the prism of being realistic, the trial that concludes with a death penalty is unrealistic. The most suitable plea, from the penal point of view, would be the one of self-defence, probably, in the frame of the liable excess of its limits.⁴ Even the Public Prosecutor, in his speech about Meursault, never confronts the crime for which the protagonist is accused of, but rather only refers to the protagonist's behaviour towards his mother. Fitch (1972) notes, for example that in the trial the victim is never mentioned, while Gadourek (1963) points to the fact, that in an almost illogical way, Meursault's supervisor is not asked to testify on his behalf. Furthermore, Grand (1968) locates a structural "breach" in the contents of the novel, a breach connected to the image of the *meurtrier innocent*, the innocent murderer, that Camus embodies as his hero, an idea, which if clearly presented, would hinder us from taking seriously the meaning of the book: "Who could have believed that the French judicial system would have ruthlessly dedicated itself to the extinction of petty clerks, who waste their time on coffee, Fernandel's films and the love affairs of the boss's secretary?" But in reality, as we shall show later, the image of *meurtrier innocent* is fundamental to the psychological dynamics of the novel and to the clarification of the relationship between individual guilt and public punishment.

⁴ The case of *eccesso colposo* in the Italian Penal Code.

Another series of commentaries, that base their work on psychoanalysis, justify, on the contrary, the unrealistic characteristics of the verdict, in which they point to the existence of a projection of an archaic super-egotistic purpose of the protagonist: according to Pichon-Rivière and Barranger (1959), for example, the trial has no other intention but to drive Meursault to "commit suicide" under the intervention of a third party. From this perspective, the broadening of the accusations that is attempted by the judicial system, derives from the pathology of the protagonist himself.

To us then, it seems that both these readings suffer from oversimplification, given the fact that the first tends only to take notice of the "pragmatic" sides of the trial, while the second perceives only the "psychic" elements of the reality of the novel. However, it seems necessary to distinguish at least two levels within the narrative plot, firstly that of the social background and all the heroes that are not identified with the narrator and secondly that composed by the narrative ego. From the side of the narrative ego, the reality of the social surrounding, the reality of the trial is indisputable. And it is a reality which corresponds to the experiences of the writer: Camus was a journalist, a crime reporter and the guillotine was still in use at the time this novel was written. Camus did no more but present various views on this reality, by stretching and exaggerating some expressions of the functions of the penal system. In addition, the student of criminal issues is quite familiar with the emphasis that is placed on the perpetrator rather than on the crime, since this has been the most significant contribution of criminology, which ever since its outset with the positivist school up until the penological "criminal typologies" and the criminological theories on criminal personality, has established the perpetrator and not the act as the subject of a specialized discipline (see Foucault, 1973). On the other hand, even if we wanted to consider the first level, the "real" level of the social background as a level widely influenced by the writer's projections, there still remains a "hardcore", which can be expressed as such: Meursault committed a crime and Meursault is taken to trial and gets punished. Besides that, what differentiates the personality of a criminal from the personality of a psychotic, is exactly the "alloplastic" character, the realisation of his fantasies into the form of energies. Indeed, murder compact and obfuscates the esoteric and the exoteric realities: crime produces a reaction on the punishing mechanisms; this reaction is reflected in the personality of the protagonist. The analysis of these, succeeding and almost theoretically constructed actions, is the subject of this work.

Our evaluation of Meursault's case is that, the crime, the trial and the conviction are useful to the degree that they make him feel alive. However, at the same time, they allow to society to cast out the evil, to purify itself and rediscover its unity after the castigation of the "outsider", the troublemaker. In this way, the primitive mechanism of "destruction" is put into action. It is only after his conviction that the grounds are created for the process of the collective "construction" to take place. In the depressive sense over what the outsider embodies are now placed the figures of the good father and the gentle lord who "offers his pardon", forgives the naughty child and promises to accept it again as a member of society. Death and execution remain however, for the protagonist, the only certainties for the future.

Thus, we shall confine ourselves to the analysis of Perusal's crime by following the critical psychoanalytical stream: it is useful to remind ourselves, at this point, that contemporary literature critics distinguish between "inner textual" readings, the ones based solely on the analysis of the text, and "inter textual" readings, the ones that establish parallels and references with other texts by the same writer, and finally, "hyper textual" readings, which widen the scope of their analysis so to include the biography and personal characteristics of the writer. The sort of interpretation that we shall put forward here will mostly be a type of "inter textual" reading and that as we shall analyse the novel as if it constituted a clinical case, then the occasional leaps over "inter textual" and "hyper textual" interpretations will be clearly mentioned. Indeed, we are not that much concerned about analysing the personality of the hero as we are about using the novel and astonishing preconscious perception of its creator to better understand the deeper individual dynamics that lead to crime and also to comprehend the relation between those mentioned dynamics and the collective ones, the ones that fuel society into imposing the punishment.

The dead mammy: the dynamics of crime

The protagonist: Meursault,⁵ a clerk without roots who lives a passionless life in Algiers. The novel begins with the announcement of the death of his mother, who lived in a nursing home far from town.

⁵ In the work of Camus, names always "speak" in many ways. Meursault originates from the protagonist of the draft of the novel *La Morte Heureuse* (Camus, 1971), that forms the basis of the material for the *Outsider*. Meursault's name, according to Ca-

Camus sketches out a man who appears unemotional and capable only of hurting himself from the sun and passing out from the buzz of the insects. All these comments portray a sort of pain that is incomprehensible and emotions very difficult for the mind to bear. Meursault does not feel a thing after his mother's death. This is exactly what led to his famous detachment, a detachment, which has absurdly provoked a whole series of psychiatric evaluations. We can refer to a few: equanimity (Champing, 1959), de Clerambault's mental automation syndrome (Treil, 1971), schizophrenia (Burton, 1976), failure in work due to mourning caused by the tension of schizo-paranoid anxiety (Pichon-Rivière and Baranger, 1959). Here is an example:

When she was at home, mother used to spend all her time just watching me in silence. She cried a lot the first few days at the old people's home. But that was only because she wasn't used to it. After a month or two she'd have cried if she'd been taken out of the home. Because by then she was used to it. That's partly why during this last year I hardly ever went to see her any more. And also because it meant giving up my Sunday- let alone making the effort of going to the bus stop; buying tickets and spending two hours travelling.*

If one went beyond the diagnosis, what becomes obvious here, as well as in other points of the novel, is that Meursault seems to be completely unprotected in terms of sensory stimuli, he lacks of a "psychic skin" (Bick, 1968) or of an "anti sensory shield" according to Freud's terminology (Freud, 1920): just like a new-born baby that resigns from the protection of the womb and enters the outer world where it is attacked by a storm of sensory stimuli. After giving this theory consideration, we believe it to be the fundamental core of the novel. The death of mother recalls in his memory the essential and ultimate separation, the one of birth. This topic reoccurs later,

mus, comes from "mer et soleil" (sea and sun). "Sea and sun", but also "mère et soleil" (mother and sun), or "mort et soleil" (death and sun), or "meurtre et soleil" (murderer and sun). And if we want to continue this game, "mère et seule" (mother alone) or "meurt seule" (she dies alone) and even "mère seulement" (only the mother): ie. all the topics of the novel: mother, loneliness, sea, sun, death and murder. It looks as though the name recalls them all, an authentic product of a hyper-definition, a very important symbolic crossroad. For a profound and precise study of Camus' symbolisms, that allows the linkage of physical views with the imagines of depth related to parent's imago, see Gassin (1981).

* All excerpts from *The Stranger* are from Joseph Laredo's translation (Penguin Books, 1982).

in the death of Salamano's dog, which, after being infected by a skin disease lost all its skin; the dog's condition forces Salamano to feed it with a nursing bottle, thus the dog strongly represents the helpless and unprotected new-born baby, utterly dependent on its mother's care. For the baby that has just been born every sensory trigger is a slap in the face, every light a sharp razor and every noise a thunderous clap. When his mother dies, Meursault must be born again and face the confusion of the world, a typhoon of stimuli. Pichon-Rivière and Baranger (1959) speak of a new-born that must work out on its own the loss of "endometrial life".

When Meursault arrives at the nursing house, he strongly refuses the suggestion made to him to open the coffin so to see his mother again: he does not want to face her corpse. The feeling of grief seems so distant to him, that he is amazed to watch his mother's old friend crying in despair during the wake. And if a slight sign of emotion shows, it is more a defence against his paranoid anxiety, as if Meursault was afraid that someone could blame him for what happened. "It is not my fault if mother died" he keeps repeating and suspects in his twilight sleep, that his mother's old friends, gathered at the wake, will look at him as if they were his silent accusers. Indeed, this *excusatio non-petita*, this denial of guilt resembles even now an advance announcement of the trial he's going to undergo.

We are not talking, then, of a transgression of the feelings of persecuting guilt and the rest, but rather on the contrary, that in Meursault, we come very "close" to these feelings. Once again, an unsustainable, perceptual situation. A naked soul, traumatised, desolated from all external factors, from the heat and from light, from the noises and the insects. Therefore, in Meursault's eyes, even the tears of Mr. Perez during the funeral, who by the way, is described derisively since he is the object of the mother's old dates sympathy, mix up with his sweat and one cannot tell the tears apart, and as for the white roots of the earth that cover the coffin, they look like flesh thrown into a pool of blood.

Great tears of frustration and anguish were streaming down his cheeks. But because of all the wrinkles, they didn't run off. They just spread out and ran together again, forming a watery glaze over his battered face. Then there was a church and the villagers in the street, the red geraniums on the tombs in the cemetery, Perez fainting (like a dislocated dummy), the blood-red earth tumbling onto mother's coffin, the white flesh of the roots mixed in with it, more people, voices, the village, the wait outside a café, the incessant drone of the engine, and my joy when the bus entered the nest of lights which was Algiers and I knew I was going to go to bed and sleep for a whole twelve hours.

The very next day, another woman makes her appearance. Meursault meets Maria, at the beach, an ex-secretary of the office he works at and he attempts his first contact in the water – Pichon-Rivière and Baranger (1959) make a connection once again with the endometrial condition; later they go to the movies together, to watch a film with Fernandel and within the darkness of the theatre, the physical contact that occurs paves the way for a night of passion. Here a deep split becomes clear: Meursault behaves as if he loves Maria, but he does not seem capable of saying so, every time she asks him, he answers that, he doesn't understand her. This shows, in a sense, his typical detachment. Clearly, love seems to last only as long as the physical contact takes place: as if Meursault can only have had an emotional contact with Maria when he touches her, in other words, when the primordial contact with his mother was reactivated. But in her absence there is no place in his mind for his beloved person, for nostalgia: when, on Sunday morning, Maria leaves, Meursault's mood deteriorates slowly and relentlessly. By the end of this lonely Sunday, Meursault is experiencing feelings of melancholy: "I don't like Sundays ... When mother was still alive our apartment seemed comfortable. Now it is too large just for me ..." Yet these emotions are fleeting and once again, denial takes the upper hand. Everything remains the same as if nothing had happened. "I thought that one more Sunday had passed and that mother was buried now and that I'd start on working and in the final analysis nothing had changed".

On Monday on the way home from work after the meeting, his depression returns. It's worth quoting the whole passage:

On my way upstairs, in the dark, I bumped into old Salamano, my next-door neighbour. He had his dog with him. They've been together for eight years. The spaniel has got a skin disease- mange, I think –which makes almost all its hair fall out and covers it with brown blotches and scabs. After living with it for so long, Salamano has ended up looking like the dog. He's got reddish scabs on his face and his hair is thin and yellow. And the dog has developed something of his master's walk, all hunched up with its neck stretched forward and its nose sticking out. They look as if they belong to the same species and yet they hate each other. Twice a day, at eleven o'clock and six, the old man takes his dog for a walk. In eight years they haven't changed their route. You can see them in the rue de Lyon, the dog dragging the man along until Salamano stumbles. Then he beats the dog and swears at it. The dog crinkles in fear and trails behind. At that point it's the old man's turn to drag it along. When the dog forgets, it starts pulling its master along again and gets beaten and sworn at again. Then they both stop at the pavement and stare at each other, the dog in terror, the man in hatred. It's like that every day. When the dog wants to urinate, the old man won't

give it time and drags it on, so that the spaniel scatters a trail of little drops behind it. But if the dog ever does it in the room, then it gets beaten again. It's been going on like that for eight years. Celeste always says, "It's dreadful", but in fact you can never tell. When I met him at the stairs, Salamano was busy swearing at his dog. He was saying, "Filthy, lousy animal!" and the dog was whimpering. I said, "Good evening", but the old man went on swearing. So I asked him what the dog had done. He didn't answer, he just went on saying, "Filthy, lousy animal!" I could just about see him, bent over his dog, busy fiddling with something on its collar. I asked again a bit louder. Then, without turning round, he answered with a sort of suppressed fury, "He's always there". Then, he set off, dragging the animal after him as it trailed its feet along the ground, whimpering.

The relationship between Salamano and the dog resembles to the one between Meursault and his mother, a destructive relationship, when it becomes a very close one, a relationship in the ray of pursuit. The dog's skin disease is the symbol of destructive, tense contact. The separation recalls to memory only death: the son can only separate from his mother if he sends her to die in the nursing house. Pichon-Rivière and Baranger (1959) concluded that the relationship between Salamano and his dog is stressing the relationship between Meursault and his mother, but then again, they might have done so in a static manner.

The meeting with Raymond, the other neighbour, introduces us, on the contrary, to the sphere of violence. It is as if Raymond, with his sub-bully ethic, with his stories about fights and brawls and with all the "step outside if you are a man" talk, has offered Meursault a chance to get out of his dead-end through an invitation to a sadomasochistic type of game, which is obviously expressed through the relationship with his mistress: he had hit her so bad that she was bleeding. He never used to hit her before. "I did slap her a few times, but in a way, I did it tenderly. She shouted a little. I was closing the windows and everything was as usual. But now things got serious. And I think that this time I didn't punish her enough". Again, according to Pichon-Rivière and Baranger (1959), the relationship between Meursault and his mistress can help the relationship between Meursault and his mother to be "unmasked", to be understood as a relationship with trends very close to sadism. Of course, there is a difference between active (in the perverse sense) sadism and Meursault's potential sadism, the son of a silent mother who has never expressed to her his aggression, apart from sending her to the nursing house.⁶ If one examines it carefully, however,

⁶ In order to relate it to the writer's biography: Camus was a child of a silent mother and Meursault had a lot in common with him. In *La Morte Heureuse* (Camus, 1971), the

Meursault's aggression actually turns upon himself. Raymond who beats up his mistress, Salamano who beats up his dog, they are merely the indicators of a possible solution, the sadomasochistic one. But, being a sadist also means that you have to love. And Meursault neither loves nor hates. His feelings and his emotions are controlled, they are disciplined through a great loss of aggressive energy. The absence of past, life in the present, the denial of his emotions, the dependence upon sensorial triggers and the pain they inflict on him when they become too violent, all these constitute obvious indicators. Camus, through his technique in narration, transports us to the doorway of a world without emotions, either by adapting the style of the American writers, such as Hemingway (short, abrupt phrases, absence of secondary sentences that could offer some notion of "time", of before and after, of any logical method: this is the world of the everlasting present), as Sartre has superbly shown (1947), or by resorting to a singularly emphatic technique, the importance of which Gadourek (1963) highlighted: every time an internal feeling emerges, a steady point and a "but" re-orientate the discussion to the outer elements. In other words, the mentioned narrative technique is useful in showing in what ways the denial is activated, under the prism of the pragmatic "renunciation of the psychic

novel that constituted the first writing of the *Outsider*, that changed crucially in its later writing, the protagonist Meursault, kills a man, his old, cripple benefactor and the same day he gets a lung disease that will drive him to death. Camus got sick from a lung disease when he was seventeen years old. The relationship between Camus and his mother, is described in a piece of the novel *Il rovescio e il diritto* (Camus, 1937), with the title "Fra il si e il no": there we find again the absence of father, the silent mother, the inability of separation (a cat that cannot feed its kitties, kills them when they start dying from hunger), the guillotine. Costes (1973) provides a large analysis of these episodes, in order to reach the conclusion that the structure of Camus' personality is "schizoid". What is important in Camus' psychological development, according to Costes, is that it was affected by a sexual attack of the mother, that kept her awake all night in a painful atmosphere of smells. In other words, a ghost of the primal, violent scene, connected with the primal senses of smell. According to Costes, Camus' writing was a way-out of his mother's silence and his whole work was a form of defence to this silence, an effort to "make his mother talk, to talk to his mother (for her), in order to make her answer him". The fact that Meursault's world derives directly from Camus' world is proved by the very names used in the novel. The grandmother (from his mother's side) who contributed to the upbringing of the protagonist with the use of lash ("Fra il si e il no"), had the name Maria Cardona (and this is also the name of Meursault's lover). The mother's maiden name was Sindes – also the name of his friend the pimp.

reality”, the defensive mechanism of a maniac type against depression, described by Melanie Klein (1935).

Meursault thus adduces almost with pride this absence of emotions, or feelings of friendship for Raymond or love for Maria. But, on a second level, the whimpering of the dog becomes more and more present, as do the old man’s cursing, and during the love meeting with Maria, the following Sunday, so do the shouts of Raymond’s, who is beating up the woman that betrayed him. But Meursault still doesn’t lose his detachment, and after the dramatic scene of the beating of Raymond’s mistress, he eats the food that Maria left him, as if nothing had happened.

However, this state of detachment lasts only until Meursault meets old Salamano, who was abandoned by his dog: this meeting, without knowing why, makes him think of his mother and ruins his mood.

He was looking down at his boots and his scabby hands were trembling. Without looking up at me, he asked, “They won’t take him away from me. Will they, Mr Meursault”. I told him that they kept dogs at the pound for three days for their owners to collect them and that after that they dealt with them as they saw fit. He looked at me in silence. Then, he said “Goodnight”. He closed his door and I heard him pacing up and down. Then his bed creaked. And from the peculiar little noise coming through the partition wall, I realised that he was crying. For some reason I thought of mother. But I had to get up early in the morning. I wasn’t hungry and I went to bed without any dinner.

The next day the momentous events occur in quick succession. His supervisor offers him a post in Paris, Maria asks him to marry her; Raymond invites him to the sea on Sunday. All seem irrelevant. When Meursault goes to have his dinner at Celeste’s, his friend who owns the restaurant, he meets there a “little poor woman”. The woman sits at her table, she orders her meal and immediately pedantically prepares the money to pay the bill, and then opens a magazine and underlines all the radio programmes. A poor woman with mechanical, automated motions: after she finishes her meal, she picks up her things, stands up and immediately walks away without looking back, drawing the protagonist’s attention, who follows her with his eyes until she disappears. According to Gassin (1985), “this automated poor woman” expresses death. Her fatal and exact motions express the exactness of the guillotine: this person theoretically belongs to the set of fantasies related with *imago* of the mean mother. We can also refer here to the Freudian disorder: automatic gesticulation, complete absence of humanity and contact, the fact that she is up to many things at the same time repre-

sents the cold robotized mechanical mother, incapable for any kind of emotional contact. We could refer here to the primordial image of the “mean mother”, who left the child Meursault at her breast: “mean” because she does not pay attention to the child while taking care of it. As Gassin concludes with exactitude, this scene is related to the meeting that follows a little later. Indeed, Meursault meets old Salamano again, who narrates to him the story of his life. The old man tells him that he took the dog after his wife’s death: throughout the dialogue the pain related to separation (from the dog with the skin disease) is revealed at longlast as are the remedial, libido’s folds and the tenderness of the mother-child relationship in the duration of the suckle and the nursing.

I told old Salamano that he could get another dog, but he rightly pointed out to me that he’d got used to this one. I was crouched on my bed and Salamano had sat down on a chair by the table. He was facing me, with both his hands on his knees. He still had his old felt hat on. He was mumbling half-finished sentences into his yellow moustache. He was annoying me a bit, but I didn’t have anything to do and I didn’t feel sleepy. To make conversation, I asked him about his dog. He told me that he’d got it when his wife had died. He’d married fairly late. As a young man he’d wanted to go into the theatre: in the army he used to act in military vaudevilles. But he’d ended up working on the railways and he hadn’t regret it, because now he had a small pension. He hadn’t been happy with his wife, but on the whole he had got quite used to her. When she’d died he had felt very lonely. So he’d asked for a friend in the workshop for a dog and he’d got this one as a puppy. He’d had to feed it from a bottle. But since a dog doesn’t live as long as a man, they’d ended up growing old together. “He was bad-tempered”, Salamano said. “Every now and then we had a right old row. But he was a nice dog all the same”. I said he was a good breed and Salamano looked pleased. “Yes”, he added, “but you should have seen him before his illness. His coat was his best point”. Every night and every morning, after it got that skin trouble, Salamano used to rub it with ointment. But according to him, its real trouble was old age, and there’s no cure for old age.

Beneath the hate, appears here the nostalgic memory of the nursing bottle care and of the touches that soften the pain. In this case, as Pichon-Rivière and Baranger (1959) suggest, the dog does not represent the mother anymore, but represents Meursault himself, the baby that is fed by the breast, the baby that is sketched out under the surface of the physical and emotional space of the mother, “when there was still skin” and they could admire and love it. After the fall of skin parallel to the loss of mother, the new born baby was left without any emotional skin. The cause of the disorder is obvious: the mother did not allow the child to grow its own skin. Under

these circumstances, mother must always be present and the disorders only come to the surface after the separation. So, it is not irrelevant, that, at this point, old Salamano speaks of Meursault's mother and acknowledges the son's feelings of love towards her.

At that point I yawned and the old man said he'd be going. I told him that he could stay, and that I was upset about what had happened to his dog: he thanked me. He told me that mother used to be very fond of his dog. He referred to her as "your poor mother". He seemed to assume that I'd been very unhappy ever since mother had died and I didn't say anything. Then, very quickly as if he was embarrassed, he told me that he realised that local people thought badly of me for sending my mother to a home, but that he knew me better and he knew I loved mother very much. I replied, I still don't know why, I hadn't realised before that people thought badly of me for doing that, but that the home had seemed the natural thing since I didn't have enough money to have mother looked after. "Anyway", I added, "she'd run out of things to say to me a long time ago and she'd got bored of being alone". "Yes", he said, "and at least in a home you can make a few friends". Then he said he must go. He wanted to get some sleep. His life had changed now and he didn't quite know what he was going to do. For the first time since I'd known him, and with a rather secretive gesture, he gave me his hand and I felt the scales on his skin. He smiled slightly and before he went, he said, "I hope the dogs don't bark tonight. I always think it's mine".

But the discussion over the mother causes, as it is natural, the return of depressive emotions, which he does not deny anymore, but they are present in his consciousness: the next day Meursault wakes up with a "vast emptiness inside" and a headache. Even when joking with him, Maria pro-consciously feels his depression and tells him that he looks as if he was "going to a funeral". His Mother's funeral. Actually, for a period of time, the intolerance to perceptual stimuli, as it happened on the day of the funeral, reappears again ("the light ... hit me like a slap"). The day, paradoxically, goes well: all the friends go to the sea, at Mason's, Raymond's friend, and Meursault begins to think that he really does love Maria and that he wants to marry her. But the Arabs, with whom Raymond had an affray, and the brother of the woman he hit followed them. After breakfast, Raymond gets stabbed during a fight. Then Meursault and Raymond find the Arabs near a fountain and Raymond pulls his gun, ready to fire, but Meursault takes it from him, puts it in his pocket and walks with him back to the hovel and then, without obvious reason, walks back to the beach.

The pain starts again: under these conditions, he does not seem capable of working through the mourning. Meursault needs to find peace (retro-

gressive indications), he's bored of suffering: "I was thinking of the fountain behind the rock. I wished to find again the hum of that water, I wished to get away from the sun, from the suffering and the crying of the women, I wished, at last, to find again the shade and the relaxing atmosphere of the shade. But when I came closer, I saw that Raymond's man had returned".

The nostalgia of the breast and the drama of the separation: another person, an Arab, took his place to the breast, to the fountain. The weakening of the emotions did nothing but recall, for one last time, the depression. "It was not me who abandoned mother and sent her to the nursing house", is a thought, Meursault can't shake to relieve, or maybe, "I did it because that was the only way to split up from her, she who had enforced our very first separation", apparently only in order to be reunited with the father (the Arab, peak of the pseudo-Oedipus complex that implicates his friend Raymond). The separation set off the conflict, that does not seem able to find a solution through mediation, the only means of escape is action. Thus, the situation develops rapidly until the epilogue.

I realised that I only had to turn round and it would all be over. But the whole beach was reverberating in the sun and pressing against me from behind. I took a few steps towards the spring. The Arab didn't move. Even now he was still some distance away. Perhaps because of the shadow on his face, he seemed to be laughing. I waited. The sun was beginning to burn my cheeks and I felt drops of sweat gathering in my eyebrows. It was the same sun as on the day of mother's funeral and again it was my forehead that was hurting me most and all the veins were throbbing at once beneath the skin. And because I couldn't stand this burning feeling any longer, I moved forward. I knew it was stupid and I wouldn't get out of the sun with one step. But I took a step, just one step forward. And this time, without sitting up, the Arab drew his knife and held it out towards me in the sun. The light leapt up off the steel and it was like a long, flashing sword lunging at my forehead. At the same time all the sweat that had gathered in my eyebrows suddenly ran out my eyelids, covering them with a dense layer of warm moisture. My eyes were blinded by this veil of salty tears. All I could feel were the cymbals the sun was clashing against my forehead and, indistinctly, the dazzling spear still leaping up off the knife in front of me. It was like a red-hot blade gnawing at my eyelashes and gouging out my stinging eyes. That was when everything shook. The sea swept ashore a great breath of fire. The sky seemed to be splitting from end to end and raining down sheets of flame. My whole being went tense and I tightened my grip on the gun. The trigger gave, I felt the underside of the polished butt and it was there, in that sharp but deafening noise, that it all started. I shook off the sweat and the sun. I realised that I'd destroyed the balance of the day and the perfect silence of this beach where I'd been happy. And I fired four

more times at a lifeless body and the bullets sank in without leaving a mark. And it was like giving four sharp knocks at the door of unhappiness.

The fatal character of Meursault's movements reveals a child that does not have the ability of thinking and whose emotions literally pass to kinetic energy. We believe here that the Arab fulfils a fundamental function: he is the one who prevents the accession to the fountain, to the shade (idealised mother, good mother) and leaves him, at the end, at the mercy of the sun and the sea (*mer et soleil*, Meursault) of the lethal, mean mother. The newborn baby, lost in a storm of perceptual stimuli appeals to the deadly mother, who doesn't include him, but on the contrary, denies to give herself, and so he turns his aggression against the Arab, the male figure, but in reality and on a symbolic level, he is the one who represents the denied breast. Bullets hit the Arab's body without leaving any trace, exactly like the nails in the mother's coffin: Camus uses the same verb (*enforcer*) in order to describe the two incidences despite their huge difference. Hence, there is one more connection between the mother's death and the murder.

The psychoanalytical interpretations over the episode of the murder described it almost in a slow motion. However, they don't seem very convincing in our opinion, as they neglect the pro-verbal and pro-symbolic sides of Meursault's behaviour, examining action as if it was a dream, as if every aspect of the impressions and reality understood by Meursault, were endowed with a precise, symbolic correspondence. According to Stamm (1969), for example, the murder is the expression of the sadistic, homosexual impulses against his father. The rays of the sun are the projection of homosexual desires and the shade mediates between homosexuality and heterosexuality: Meursault's natural condition during the act, the extrusion of the bullets, recall, according to the particular interpretation, the ejaculation. In a similar direction, Costes (1985) speaks about a "double murder", or precisely, a dual aetiology of the crime. Based solely on the novel's text: Meursault kills a "jealous brother", the Arab, brother of Raymond's mistress. But, if we broaden the analysis to the inter-textual and to the hyper-textual level, Costes declares that Meursault kills the faceless invader of Camus' mother, the father of the primordial scene, primordial and sadistic. Both interpretations neglect the matter of the aggression towards mother, that was, on the contrary, recognised by Pichon-Rivière and Baranger (1959). What they assume is that "the subconscious context of the Arab's murder is probably the fantasy of violence on the parents as a couple". More importantly, as we were saying before, both these interpretations

stress every different detail and tone and thus both end up overlooking the characteristics of the protagonist. Indeed, from this moment on, Meursault lives in a world of “weird objects”, by which he feels hunted, a world which has at its centre the figure of the Arab, representing the primordial forbiddance: “You shall not return to where you came from” and he is exposed to this insufferable condition of the separation.

Therefore, Meursault’s action can be placed in the category “criminality as an alternative to melancholy” (Rossi and DiMario, 1975): his act consists of a breakthrough action, one related to the inability to deal with the loss of his mother. It is an inability, which has to do with the primordial, assimilating – and for this reason extremely contradictory – relationship with the mother herself. As Rossi and DiMario claim when they refer to Freud’s (1915) fundamental contribution to the relation between mourning and melancholy, “the desire to extinguish the object of love derives from the fear of losing it and results in pain”. Meursault tried to control the fear of loss, by identifying himself with the invader, initially, by sending his mother to live in a nursing house. But this didn’t help very much: in the end his mother died, she left him permanently, she left him for good.

Meursault’s anger then targets his father, who is now being represented by the Arab (the brother of Raymond’s mistress), his mother’s ally who turned her back on him. Actually, the content of Meursault’s action could be effectively described, in accordance with Francia’s view, by interpreting this member as nothing else but a symbolic patricide, useful, in its own right, in the denial of the feelings of guilt for the matricide. “The idealised mother does not exist anymore and that is the father’s fault, not mine (I didn’t kill her!). By murdering father (the Arab), I turn my rage against the one who was there only for taking her away from me, when he should not have been there (at the moment of weaning), the one that was absent when he should not have been absent (later, during the infancy), the one who never allowed me to return to mother’s embrace, firstly because he took her away when I needed her, then because he made her more depressed in her terseness and her coldness by leaving and by abandoning me”.⁷

We do not have to wonder what Meursault gains through the murder as the answer does not seem so difficult: to moderate the feeling of guilt for his imaginary crime, matricide, already expressed in the transposition of his

⁷ Here, we touch upon the problem of the father’s disappearance, that agonised Camus himself, by following a recommendation included in Slochower’s work (1969).

aggression towards the father and then, furthermore, towards his father's substitute, the Arab. And, at the same time, to repeat the tragic event of the separation, thus, to try to control it. (Freud, 1920 – Rossi and DiMario, 1975).

This transposition of anger towards father seems to be a final attempt to realise the Oedipus' triangle: but, this attempt is quite an impossible one because it is almost the same as the separation of the actual extinction of father. Thus, it is fatal for Meursault to fall again into this assimilating relationship with the tremendous mother, who is represented by the prison he will be sent to and the conviction to death.

Part B: The trial and the punishment

An in-depth study of a piece of literature within the scope of criminology may present an important opportunity to examine the relationship between the deeper dynamics that lead to crime and the response of the society that punishes. In the first part of our study, the analysis focused upon the inner emotions in the famous novel *The Outsider* by A. Camus, which led the “antihero” Meursault to commit his crime and that, in terms of psychoanalytical critical readings, can be reduced essentially to Meursault's inability to deal with his feelings related to his mother's death. In the second part, we will examine the results of incarcerations over the personality of the murderer (the beginning of the process of elaborating the mourning), as well as the dynamics of the trial which aims to construct the “murderer”, who is then turned into an “innocent victim”, an indispensable element for the purifying relaxation of collective guilt.

Detention, investigation and trial: the construction of the matricide

After the Arab's murder, Meursault is arrested and then literally registered in a different dimension, the dimension of the penal system, where “different” rules apply: strange rules, rules according to which people are “only” what they declare. Here, ambiguities are forbidden.

These aspects, typical characteristics of the penal system, arise as early as Meursault's first discussion with his defence attorney, together with the ominous cracks about what is going to be the “real accusation”, the fact that he condemned his mother to live in the nursing house and that he did not show signs of pain at her funeral.

He had sat down on the bed and explained that some investigations had been made into my private life. It had been discovered that my mother had died recently in a home. Enquires had then been made at Marengo, and the magistrates had learned that I'd "displayed a lack of emotion" on the day of mother's funeral. "You will understand", my lawyer said, "that I feel rather embarrassed at having to ask you this. But it matters a great deal. And the prosecution will have a strong case if I can't reply". He wanted me to help him. He asked me if I'd felt any grief that day. This question really surprised me and I thought how embarrassed I'd have been if I'd had to ask it. I replied though that I'd rather got out of the habit of analysing myself and that I found it difficult to answer the question. I probably loved mother quite a lot, but that didn't mean anything. To a certain extent all normal people sometimes wished their loved ones were dead. Here the lawyer interrupted me, looking very flustered. He made me promise not to say that at the hearing, or in front of the examining magistrate.

Meursault is sincere, he does not deny it, on the contrary, he even admits and expresses his murderous desires towards mother. These desires, the contradictory attitude towards the object of his love, really exist in everyone. But in Meursault, one could say, they are over-rationalised. This rationalisation and acceptance, in the current condition, fulfill what Theodor Reik (1967) called *Strafbedürfnis*, the need for expiation. The guilty's desire to confess "fits" very well with the desire for punishment and the need for retribution that motivates society: confession, under these circumstances, doesn't turn into a means for the achievement of pardon, as in the sacrament, rather only into a means for the justification of the enforcement of punishment.

Therefore, Meursault seems to treat the lawyer as a priest (or as a psychoanalyst!), apparently without understanding that at the trial, as the lawyer suggests, the testimonies of his detachment and his contradictory attitude will turn *against* him. But, in reality Meursault realises that by confessing those emotions he will have to pay: subconsciously he wishes to be punished for his unfair behaviour towards mother, not only for the committed crime.

And, in a reversal of the object, that is exactly the judge's point, the confession could help him punish and "save" a soul by submitting him to the sentence. Depicted as following the strictest tradition of the investigation's process, the inquisitor-judge-therapist is deeply interested in his "patient". He is interested neither in his action nor in the murder: these are things that have happened, have been proven and acknowledged. What is left to be ascertained is the motive, which lies in the soul. In this sense it is useful to

understand the particularities of the relationship between Meursault and his mother, but not with any kind of sympathy, tolerance or forgiveness.

After a short silence, he stood up and told me that he wanted to help me, that I interested him and that with God's help he would do something for me. But first, he wanted to ask me a few more questions. In the same breath, he asked me if I loved my mother. I said, "Yes, like everyone else", and the clerk, who until now had been tapping away regularly at his typewriter, must have hit the wrong key, because he got in a muddle and had to go back. Still without any apparent logic, the magistrate then asked me if I'd fired all five shots at once. I thought it over and specified that I'd only fired once to start with and then, a few seconds later, the other four shots. "Why did you pause between the first and the second shot?" he said.

As we can observe, the judge passes from the examination of the guilty to the examination of the event "without obvious reason". But a reason does exist and it may be expressed as follows: "if that filthy man didn't love his mother, then he could have committed the crime in cold blood, and in cold blood he finished his victim up after he was assured that he had hit him". Meursault gave up in the demonstration of the crime, he "recalls" and by recalling he distorts what has happened: it is not clear if he shot four or five times, nor if he shot them one after the other or if he stopped for a while between the first and the second shots.

Furthermore, Meursault doesn't know what to say and can satisfy the judge. The judge then, unmasking himself and resorts to religion, to the archetypal model of the inquisitor.

... in an almost trembling voice, he exclaimed, "Do you know who this is?" I said "Yes, naturally". Then he spoke very quickly and passionately, telling me that he believed in God, that he was convinced that no man was so guilty that God wouldn't pardon him, but that he must first repent and so become like a child whose soul is empty and ready to embrace everything. He was leaning right across the table, waving his crucifix almost directly over me. To tell the truth, I hadn't followed his argument at all well, firstly because I was hot and his office was full of huge flies which kept landing on my face, and also because he frightened me a bit. I realised at the same time that this was ridiculous because, after all, I was the criminal.

The judge becomes increasingly furious. In his anger, Meursault responds by showing his characteristic emotions: his confusion that resembles his state of emotion at the funeral, his lack of tolerance to the sensorial triggers (the flies, the heat) and his fear. The judge, however, continues his own

way, and brings forth a subtle pattern, the one of contrition and depression, targeting a man, who, in reality cannot understand his words, a man who is unable to understand him. Its nothing but a comedy of misunderstandings, the judge projects his own criminal, his internal “outsider” on Meursault and in the meantime, he could not see but the other, the one who should be in a position to understand and judge. Now, he evokes certain stereotypes, he is not himself anymore:

He told me that it was impossible, that all men believed in God, even those who wouldn't face up to Him. That was his belief, and if he should ever doubt it, his life would become meaningless. “Do you want my life to be meaningless?” he cried. As far as I was concerned, it had nothing to do with me and I told him so. But across the table, he was already thrusting the crucifix under my nose and exclaiming quite unreasonably, “I am a Christian. I ask Him to forgive your sins. How can you not believe that He suffered for your sake?”

If one is not a believer, if one by acting in this way becomes an outsider of society, of the society of believers in God and the state, then the judge becomes incapable of understanding this person, he can do no other but to remove this threat of the “non-meaning”, of the unknown, of psychosis. It is well shown here that society uses its punitive mechanisms in order to enforce the sense of identity and cohesion of its legitimate members. One can suppose that the penal judge, exactly because of his status (the “guardian” of the “frontiers” of legitimacy) has even more problems than others, than the common members of society that have the luxury to live neglecting the rules based on internal ethics. But the judge “wears” the rules as a shell, as a livery and he is, in this way, protected from his own insecurities, from “feeling” himself a criminal who punishes. Legal rules are reassuring, clear, neatly written: if uncertainties appear, even this will function as a point of reference. So, this blind judge, blinded by his own scotoma, screams to Meursault, in order to make him regret what happened, so as to be able to punish him “better”, to punish him and at the same time to save him. The Judge's desire is defence, because of and through which society is allowed to punish: the ideology of the rehabilitative punishment. Fitch (1972) pointed out that the institutional figures of the novel (judges, lawyers, priests) are presented in a satiric and theatrical way. In our opinion, it does not have to do with satyr. Camus simply sketches out the reality of a system that he knew very well during the years of his journalistic career as a crime reporter, experiencing personally the system's inhuman and mon-

strous sides. If we are looking here, somehow, for theatricality, then we should see the drama, the tragedy that forces a person to confront the penal system, and that, most of the time, ends with the classification of the criminal to the intellectual categories that characterise the judicial system: repentance, confession, plea for pardon.

Meursault, however, doesn't wish to place himself in the judge's maniac plan, he doesn't play his part in the comedy of repentance. Meursault wishes to be recognised as a person, he wishes to be self-confirmed and feel alive, the only terms that will allow him to love the others and feel that he is loved.

He looked very tired. For a moment he said nothing while the typewriter, which had followed the entire conversation, caught up with the last few sentences. Then he looked at me intently and rather sadly. He murmured, "I have never seen a soul as hardened as yours. The criminals that have come to me before have always wept at the sight of this symbol of suffering". I was about to reply that was precisely because they were criminals. But I realised that I was like them too. It was an idea I just couldn't get used to.

David Lopez (1972), a psychoanalyst who worked in the prisons with criminals, described in an excellent way the "pseudo-crisis of the mature criminal", the criminal who is addicted to the secondary benefits of their activities: indeed, the mature criminal immediately repents...in order to return to crime. Meursault is different, he is not such a criminal, he wants to live, he wants to be born: after his mother's death, he died internally himself. The killing action was useful so that he could discover himself, so that he could distance himself from the others and become their equal. According to Donald Woods Winnicott (1962), another psychoanalyst who worked with the problems of criminality:

This transition (from the creation of the relation to the use) means that the subject destroys the object. An armchair's philosopher could deduce from this that in praxis there is not such a thing as the use of an object, if it is an external object then, it is destroyed by the subject. But if the philosopher could stand up from his armchair in order to sit down on the floor with his patient, he could realise that there is an intermediate position. In other words, he could realise that after "the subject relates to the object", follows "the subject destroys the object" (when it becomes external) and then: "The *object survives* its destruction from the subject" may follow. However, this survival may or may not exist. So, a new element is added to the theory of entering a relation with the object. The subject may say to the object: "I destroyed you" and the object is there in order to receive the message. From

this moment, the subject states: “Hail object!”, “I destroyed you”, “I love you”.

In Meursault’s case, as in the majority of the murderers (who, essentially, cannot be recidivist), we come to the second phase: the subject destroys the object (the Arab, who is the symbol of the father and, at the same time, more significantly, of the mother), but the object does not survive.

The illusion of the survival of the object (that this time is not distinguished from the self to which it is part of) arises from the prison in which Meursault is put. The fact that prison concerns the most secret Meursault’s experiences, is proved indirectly by the declaration that “he wouldn’t wish to talk about it”, while it coincides with the investigation of himself.

Later on, I didn’t see any point in being so reluctant anymore. In actual fact I wasn’t actually in prison the first few days: I was vaguely waiting for something to happen. It was only after Maria’s first and only visit that it all started. From the day I got her letter (telling me that they wouldn’t let her come anymore because she wasn’t my wife), from that day on, I felt that my cell was my home and that my life was at a standstill.

Maria’s visit marks the beginning of pain and life (although it lies in the shadow of death). Maria tries to give him hope that he could still live outside, he could still get out and get married. But the relationship with Maria belongs from now on in another world and Meursault’s attention is disrupted by the dialogue of a couple next to him, a mother and a son, isolated in silence. The reference to Meursault’s “silent mother” and Camus’ himself is obvious here and idealised. The lack of communication becomes assimulative, words are not useful anymore.

The prisoner on my left, a small man with delicate hands, wasn’t saying anything. I noticed that he was standing opposite the little old lady and that they were gazing intently at each other. But I didn’t have to watch them for very long because Marie shouted at me that I must keep hoping. I said, “Yes”. At the same time I was looking at her and I wanted to squeeze her shoulders through her dress. I wanted to feel the soft material and I didn’t quite know what else I was supposed to keep hoping for. But that must have been what Marie meant because she was still smiling. All I could see was the flash of her teeth and the little creases round her eyes. She shouted again, “You’ll get out and we’ll get married!” I answered, “You think so?” but mainly to keep the conversation going. Then very quickly and still in a very loud voice she said yes, I’d be let off and we’d go swimming again. But the other woman was yelling across in her turn to say that she’d left a hamper in the clerk’s office. She was enumerating all the things she’d put in it. He must check them all because they cost a lot of money. The man on the

other side of me and his mother were still gazing at each other. The murmuring of the Arabs continued down below. Outside the light suddenly seemed to swell up against the bay-window.

I was feeling rather ill and I'd have liked to leave. I found the noise quite painful. But on the other hand, I wanted to make the most of having Marie there. I don't know how much time went by. Marie told me about her work and she never stopped smiling. The murmuring and the shouting and talking crossed backwards and forwards. The only oasis of silence was just next to me where the young man and the old lady were gazing at each other. One by one the Arabs were taken away. Almost everyone stopped talking as soon as the first one went out. The little old lady stepped up to the bars and, at the same moment, a warder beckoned to her son. He said, "Goodbye, mother", and she put her hand through the bars to give him a long, slow wave.

Meursault is now separated from his external mother, he is now thrown in the arms of prison, in the embrace of the dead mother.⁸ The relationship with Maria was fully unmasked. It was a relationship, destined to fail, a relationship of mutual deception. At this point, words are only useful in order to abuse and be abused, while the "real relationship" is the idealised relationship between the man next to him and his mother, not one of words, but one made of glances of love and a never-ending tenderness. But Meursault is even distanced from this too: indeed, the relationship with the "good" mother doesn't concern to him anymore; the Arab's figure is once again the protagonist.

Even also his relationship with Maria is a valediction. After her departure, his experience of "imprisonment" begins, which, paradoxically has a positive function for Meursault. He admits it:

And I managed quite well the rest of the time. I often thought in those days that even if I'd been made to live in a hollow tree trunk, with nothing to do but look up at the bit of sky overhead, I'd gradually have got used to it. I'd have looked forward to seeing my lawyer's curious ties and just as, in another world, I used to wait for Saturdays to embrace Marie's body. And come to think of it, I wasn't in a hollow tree. There were others unhappier than I was. Anyway it was an idea of mother's and she often used to repeat it, that you ended up getting used to everything.

Meursault soon gets used to life in prison, to its strangling and depressive character, helped by his relationship with the sergeant, the first "person" that he met in jail. If the institution is inhuman, if it is nothing but a chase,

⁸ The theme of the silent woman, if we think it over, recalls the mythological references between the woman and death, as they were described by Freud (1913) in *Il motivo della scelta degli scrigni*.

if it oppresses and smothers the inmates (and, subconsciously, that's exactly what Meursault "needs"), it, however, allows emotional contacts. Meursault, as we saw before, cannot stand much sentimentalism, that would drive him into confusion. On the contrary, in prison's misery and despair, human relations can be, in a sense, compressed and experienced step by step.

I'd ended up making friends with the chief warden who used to come round at meal times with the kitchen boy. He was the one who first talked to me about women. He told me that it was the first thing all the others complained about. I told him that I was like them and that I thought we were treated unfairly. "Yes", he said, "but that's precisely why you are put in prison". "What do you mean, that's why?" "Well, of course. Freedom, that's why. You're deprived of your freedom". I'd never thought of that. I agreed. "That's true", I said, "otherwise it wouldn't be punishment". "Right, you understand things, you do. The others don't. But they end up doing it by themselves". The warden left after that.

What then, does this deprivation of freedom consist of? Of the deprivation of women and cigarettes, of the inability, in other words, to satisfy impulses. The inmates are forced to dream, time loses its progressive character and turns into an enemy, an opponent that must be fought off.⁹ For a developed personality, this necessitates a total overhaul in one's manner of thought, but not for Meursault. The way he spent his time before imprisonment was stagnant. Actually, time's a progressive prospect, which means the succession of the events placed in the past and the prediction of the future that becomes present, is counted by the changes in emotional conditions and is connected with the experience of loss. Thus, in prison, Meursault's time begins to move with the rhythm of the continual change of dawn to darkness, a rhythm which chases its tail ceaselessly and circularly.

A way of passing time is to sleep: soon Meursault ends up sleeping up to eighteen hours a day. But there are six more hours left of the day to spend and the only solution – quite characteristic – is that of intense thinking, of the ceaseless inspection of the only friendly space, his room. It is obvious that the room substitutes the "inside" of the mother. Truly, in all the time that passed before her initiation into the nursing house, Meursault's mother used to observe Meursault silently without ever taking her eyes off him. When Meursault gets tired of looking at his cell, the alternative activity is

⁹ As Cohen and Taylor (1972) pointed out, the expression used by the convict during the imprisonment is "*servicing time*".

the continual, persistent reading of the same extract of an article that he found accidentally under the bed. The newspaper reports the “Czechoslovak’s story”:

A man left from a Czech village to go and make his fortune. Twenty-five years later he’d come back rich, with a wife and a child. His mother and his sister were running a hotel in his native village. In order to surprise them, he’d left his wife and child in another hotel and gone to see his mother who hadn’t recognised him when he walked in. Just for fun, he’d decided to book a room. He’d shown them his money. During the night his mother and his sister had clubbed him to death with a hammer to steal his money, and then thrown his body into the river. The next morning, the wife had come along and without realising revealed the traveller’s identity. The mother had hanged herself. The sister had thrown herself down as well. I must have read this story thousand times. On the one hand, it was improbable. On the other, it was quite natural. Anyway, I decided that the traveller had deserved it really and that you should never play around.

The story which would eventually become the plot of Camus’ play “The misunderstanding” (Camus, 1944), makes Meursault as well as the reader confront the fact that a mother doesn’t recognise her own child: for her, the child became an outsider that must be robbed and killed. That is, summarised, almost the parable of the book. This is an “Oresteian condition”, as it was described by Rossi and Matteini (1974): by approaching it from the terminology of these writers, the mother is here neither the favourable mother of the Oedipus complex, nor the idealised mother who encompasses and takes care of the young and helpless child. The mother is simply mean, because from the moment of birth onwards, she isn’t able to recognise that the child “inside” her is exactly the same one as the one she sees “outside” and now treats him as an enemy that must be killed. A situation like this, allows but only one solution; the child must return “inside” the mother, into prison, in order to be prepared for the ultimate union, the ultimate reunion; death. Meursault seems to say, through the writer’s pen, that whatever happened is the mother’s initial fault, her hate for the “son who is not him anymore”, for the child that has just been born.

If Meursault’s subconscious “plan” is to “return inside” his mother through death when he kills the Arab, the prison, as it was described, begins to fulfil another function. A function that, on the contrary, favours mentalisation and life. Up to this point, for Meursault, prison was literally his mother’s body: in other words what Rosenfeld (1950) called “the confusion between fantasy and reality” is verified here. Moreover, even time

was experienced as “circular time”, and according to Meltzer’s (1967) definition, this particular situation is also connected with the confusion between psychic and external reality. Thus, the residence in prison must be taken, not metaphorically, but as the actual return “inside” his mother’s body, in which, however, Meursault started learning how to repeat and tolerate, in the succession of dawn and darkness, the intolerable situation that he couldn’t handle before prison, the exhausting and circular rhythm of the infantile room, where “night” means separation, withdrawal, loss of loved objects.

And this continual repetition produces unpredictable results: Meursault begins to open himself to the sphere of emotions and feelings, as if prison, with its isolation and the poor personal relationships, gave him the chance to think, live and suffer. In other words, prison partially refutes the fantasy of the deadly embrace, it cares for Meursault and can end up being “therapeutic” to the degree that (as modern theories suggest) the “good environment” of community institutions for mental patients, progressively drive them to mentalisation. A very interesting example of this function of prison is mentioned in the moving essay of the Indian psychoanalyst M.Masud R.Kahn (1988), who describes a “new start”, in the sense that the psychoanalyst Michael Balint (1968) referred to the expression, which occurs inside the prison due to the safe surrounding, that in exceptional cases, it is able to offer. Of course it is not our intention to assert that prison is therapeutical, but some people, however, seem to be able, in the isolation offered in prison, to actualise the experience of discovering themselves. Let’s listen to what happens to Meursault:

When one day the warder told me that I’d been there five months, I believed it but I didn’t understand it. For me it was for ever the same day that I was spinning out in my cell and the same task that I was pursuing. That day, after the warder had left, I looked at myself in my tin plate. My reflection seemed to stay serious even when I tried to smile at it. I shook it up and down in front of me. I smiled and it still looked sad and severe. It was the end of the day, the part I don’t like talking about, the nameless part, when evening noises would rise up from every floor of the prison in a cortege of silence. I went up to the skylight and, in the fading light, I had another look at my reflection. It was still serious, and what was surprising about that when at that point I was serious too? But at the same moment, and for the first time in several months, I clearly heard the sound of my own voice. I recognised it as the one that had been ringing in my ears for days on end and I realised that all that time I’d been talking to myself. I then remembered what the nurse said at mother’s funeral. No, there was no way out and no one can imagine what the evenings in prison are like.

Time, even “circular time” as pointed out in the beginning of the quotation, starts opening up to the recognition of the past. Meursault looks at his reflection, recognises himself; and the idol of the mirror slowly begins to harmonise with what he had subjectively experienced. Meursault knows that he’s the one who’s talking: is it excessive to consider that until now his words consisted of the kind of narration making up this book? Now Meursault remembers, recalls, relates and rethinks the nurse’s words at his mother funeral. The nurse had simply spoken over the problems caused by the weather conditions and the heat, and had said: “If you walk slowly, there is the danger of getting sunstroke. But if you walk too fast, you will sweat too much and, in the church you will catch a cold”. It is obvious here that Meursault refers to the relationship with the mother, an unhappy relationship, too warm or too cold, exactly as if the mother can’t manage to find “the right distance” from her little child and the child passes from the excessive heat of the close contact to the coldness of denial. A mother and a child who don’t meet, a mother who doesn’t manage, according to Winnicott’s (1956) definition to be “good enough”, who doesn’t have the ability, according to Bion’s (1962) definition, for *reverie* (dreaming). Within this prism, the only way out must come from outside; from the trail and the sentence. Thus, the trial fulfils a function of pursuit. At the beginning, Meursault is dazed and astonished at his contact with the institutional-theatrical mechanism of the judicial hall. It seems again, that all this don’t interest him, he is surprised by the unknown faces of the justice’s officers, he is afraid of the sense of familiarity and sometimes complicity between lawyers, policemen and journalists, he is upset by the atmosphere of repetition, in which what the reader understands very well as drama takes place. At the same time, however, he starts “seeing himself” from outside, he takes the position of the other: that of a young journalist with blue eyes and an interesting style, with whom he identifies almost another self.¹⁰ A more careful look reveals to us that his other self represents exactly the very first, the initial level of differentiation from the symbiotic sphere. Then the parade of witnesses starts: the nursing home’s director, the doorman and Tomazo Perez, the last, old-age love of his mother. The witnesses, directed by the prosecutor, soon expose Meursault to the “real” crime for which he is

¹⁰ Here it’s Camus himself who is represented in the novel: this shows once again the close relationships between the writer and his hero. In general, for a profound interpretation and a decipherment of the “games” related to the reflectiveness and otherness in Camus’ work. see Fitch (1982).

put on trial. The matricide. Indeed, Meursault, as Jacobi (1969) pointed out, is one of the last Orestes in the history of literature.

The perverse mechanism of the trial aims, in fact, to use all witnesses in order to prove that Meursault was in the position to kill the Arab premeditatedly (and now, all the details and whatever happened before crime, elements that are superficially unconnected, obtain an *ex post* meaning, as it happens in the reconstruction of the delirium of a paranoid, and one runs through the other in order to support the accusation of the premeditated murder), exactly *because* he was able to kill, symbolically, his mother. Confronted with the obvious sadism, the prosecutor's cruel behaviour, Meursault, for the first time, feels the need to cry, because he senses empathetically that the audience dislikes him. Before imprisonment, empathy simply wouldn't be feasible. But soon, added to the negative feelings are feelings of friendship and solidarity: the affection for the uneasy Celeste, the old restaurant owner, the respect for Salamano who testifies that Meursault was kind to his dog, the guilt for Maria who is degraded to a prostitute.

It's time already for the pleadings to begin. Meursault loses his personality again, it seems to him that the prosecutor as well as the defence speak for some other person. The trial doesn't belong to him, it doesn't serve him, it is nothing but a collective drama, which takes place, as if he didn't exist anymore.

The public prosecutor concludes his pleading: Meursault, as it is shown by the witnesses who shed light on his "psychology", is incapable of feeling, he is a cold hearted killer and he murdered premeditatedly. In addition, he never showed any signs of regret.

Of course. I couldn't help admitting that he was right. I didn't much regret what I'd done. But I was surprised that he was so furious about it. I'd have liked to have explained to him in a friendly way, almost affectionately, that I'd never really been able to regret anything. I was always preoccupied by what was about to happen, today or tomorrow.

Meursault says that he is a man without emotions, because he is busy evaluating persistently the external triggers, by emotionalising all things. That is what Winnicott (1954) defined as *catalogation of impingements*. Completely dominated by the present and the future, within a difficult relationship with a mother that doesn't know how to protect him and deal with all his painful experiences for him, Meursault, before the murder, was never able to use even his own aggression. Exactly, the same happens with

the senses of hate, sadness and guilt: he cannot use them. It is the others who must fulfil the function of superego, those who, according to Kohut's (1971) terminology, must take care as an object-self in the absence of an internal structure. Meursault's complaints which he didn't manage to express about his mother, now become accusations from outside: the public prosecutor represents the mother who exclaims: "My child, why did you kill me?" That's why Meursault can handle the trial so well, that's why he makes no effort to defend himself. The trial, in this sense, obtains a meaning for him, because it allows him to internalise, slowly, the persecutor. On the other hand, however, the trial constitutes the prelude to the certainty of prosecution and punishment, and if he confesses the crime, maybe even the sentence of guillotine. This is the real tragedy of the novel: those who start living through crime, trial and punishment, risk their own collapse from the mechanisms they set into action.

Thus, the public prosecutor's speech can be taken as the externalisation of the depressive self-accusation. The public prosecutor realises the truth, Meursault doesn't really have a "soul", doesn't have an autonomous and internalised superego. But the truth is perverted, because its endmost purpose is the need, not only Meursault's, but of the whole society, to punish and work off the collective guilt through the purifying ceremony of execution.

... the prosecutor started talking about my soul. He said he'd peered into it and found nothing, gentlemen of the jury. He said the truth was that I didn't have one, a soul, and that I had no access to any humanity nor to any of the moral principles which protect the human heart. "Of course", he added, "we can hardly reproach him for this. We can hardly complain that he lacks something that he was never able to acquire. But here in this court the wholly negative ethic of tolerance must give way to the stricter but loftier ethic of justice. Especially when we encounter a man whose heart is so empty that it forms a chasm which threatens to engulf society". That was when he started talking about my attitude towards mother. He repeated what he'd said in his opening speech. But he went on for much longer than when he was talking about my crime, so long in fact that in the end I was only conscious of the heat of the morning. That is until the prosecutor stopped and after a moment's silence, continued in a very deep and very earnest voice, "Tomorrow, gentlemen, this same court will judge the most abominable of all crimes: the murder of a father". According to him, the mind recoiled at the mere thought of such an atrocity. He ventured to hope that human justice would be unflinching in its condemnation. But he wasn't afraid to say that though this crime filled him with horror, he felt no less horror at my insensitivity. Again according to him, any man who was morally re-

sponsible for his mother's death thereby cut himself off from the society of men to no lesser extent than one who raised a murderous hand against the author of his days. In any case, the former paved the way for the latter, one act somehow heralded and legitimised the other.

Beneath every Oedipus there hides an Orestes, as Rossi and Matteini suggest. But in Meursault's case, who is the Orestes of the "discussion of the other", the subconscious, that is here turned into an external superego, into a public prosecutor, in that case there doesn't exist a Laios against whom the aggression must be driven in order to guard the relationship with the idealised mother. And here the Erinyes don't transform to Eumenides. Rossi and Matteini (1974) believe that this happens because ...

... maybe modern man cannot resort, as the ancient man, to the *deus ex machina* that changes the uncertain vote of the judges of the Supreme Court to his own benefit with an unselfish gesture of good will: maybe because modern man has led the consciousness of his liability to such a point, that suicide is the only thing that saves him: "We blew it up", as Fanon was saying.

The public prosecutor, closing his summation, asks for Meursault's head. They ask him if he wants to say something and Meursault answers again with the same clarity, that nobody can understand, that nobody wants to understand: he killed "because of the sun", the heat, the heartbreaking and destructive contact. An excellent, moving metaphor of the human condition: you have to accept death if you want to feel alive. Meursault, after his mother's death, cannot accept the deadly conviction of nature, he needs words. The words of the accusations stipulate his death. By killing the Arab, by killing the outsider, Meursault killed the enemy, but he also killed his mother, he killed him-self. It is the confusion between self and object, between good and evil, as Francia (1984) pointed out.

And now, the pleading of the defence, colourless like water, gives way to the infantile sensorial memories: the cream seller and his call, the evening sky, the smell of the summer, the laughter and the clothes of Maria. The judges take their seats again and announce that Meursault is convicted to die by the guillotine.

As Girard (1968) described and Fitch (1972) underlined, essentially the Arab's murder and the exemplary conviction for a *different, non-committed crime*, the mother's murder, are related in order to create the figure of the *meurtrier innocent*, the innocent murderer. But this, does not pose the slightest problem to the narrative structure, as the two researchers believe,

but it is the key to the novel. If we were thinking as Girard and Fitch did, then we would have to consider Kafka to be useless or lunatic. The problem posed by Camus is exactly this: how can a murderer be innocent? How can the murderer himself be a victim? We shall return to the problem in the conclusion.

Punishment: the machine, the suspense, the father

The never-ending machine, the “merciless mechanism” is now set into action. Here, we have entered the depressive field, where death is the ruler. Now Meursault hopes, like all convicts do, that for once, the dark mechanism, that was described by Kafka with great precision in his excellent metaphor *In der Strafkolonie* (1919) and of which the subjective aspect Dostoyevsky explored with mastery by personally living the creeps of an execution that never took place, Meursault hoped that it will stop; that it won’t work.

Willing as I was, I just couldn’t accept such an absolute certainty. Because after all, the actual sentence which had established was ridiculously out of proportion with its unshakeable persistence ever since the moment that sentence had been passed. The fact that the sentence had been read out at eight o’clock rather than at five o’clock, and the fact that it might have been completely different, and that it had been decided by men who change their underwear, and that it had been credited to so vague an entity as the French (or German, or Chinese) people, all these things really seemed to detract considerably from the seriousness of that decision. And yet I had to admit that from the very second it was taken, its consequences became just as certain, just as serious, as the fact that I was lying there flat against that wall.

In such an emotional state, following the conviction, towards the end of the prolonged monologue this book consists of, is the thread that is missing from the plot of Meursault’s life revealed: the father who hasn’t appeared until now. A father who is an unknown stranger for the son who has held onto the material relationship.

At times like this I remembered a story that mother used to tell me about father. I never met him. Perhaps the only thing I really knew about the man was this story that mother used to tell me: he’d gone to watch a murderer being executed. He’d felt ill at the thought of going. He had though and when he’d got back he’d been sick half the morning. My father disgusted a bit at the time. But now I understood, it was completely natural. I don’t know how I hadn’t realised before that nothing was more important than

executions and that, in actual fact, they were the only thing a man could really be interested in! if I ever got out of this prison, I'd go and watch all the executions there were. But I think I was wrong, even to consider the possibility. For at the thought of being a free man standing there early in the morning behind a police cordon, on the other side as it were, and of being one of the spectators who come and watch and can be sick afterwards, my heart would suddenly be poisoned by a great flood of joy. But it was irrational. I was wrong to let myself make these suppositions because the next second I'd feel so dreadfully cold that it would make me curl up inside my blanket. My teeth would be chattering uncontrollably.

It now becomes clear that the crime, the trial and the conviction were useful to prepare for this unique moment, the moment of meet the father, who Meursault imagines to be just another face in the crowd gathered at his execution. Meursault now seems able to take his father's place, to "replace" him: the cost is his own life. The father is distanced from this dark relationship, the mother that beheads him, the guillotine that, superficially symbolises his castration, but more significantly expresses the initial intolerable separation. His identification with father is what drives Meursault under the blade and thus, it recalls the sense of coldness and alienation. More than that, father is subjected to the shadow of the maternal image: the nausea he feels is a signal of female identification, the fantasy of pregnancy.

It is therefore obvious, that the death penalty represents for Meursault the fantasy of the initial scene in which, mother-guillotine beheads and kills father; and this beheading, as we said before, signifies the primal separation expressed here in death. Then, father becomes the "outsider", who was beheaded, who was removed from the life of the symbiotic couple: exactly as Meursault now.

So, Clytemnestra killed Agamemnon and Orestes was left to face the murderous mother all alone. Meursault, just like Orestes did, tries to escape from the Erinnyes that hunt the matricides, falling back once again on the father symbolised here by the lord who has the authority to grant his pardon: in his long days of waiting he imagines himself in the lord's place, he dreams of the possibility of saving himself although the desire for death reappears again.

It was a classified fact, a firmly fixed arrangement, a definite agreement on which there was no question of going back. In the unlikely event of something going wrong, they would just start again. Consequently, the annoying thing was that the condemned man had to hope the machine worked properly.

The days pass slowly and Meursault's only activity is the never-ending dreaming: Every time Meursault thinks that his plea for pardon has been overruled he begins taking his death for granted and falls in despair – only then does he allow himself to accept it and subsequently feels an unexpressed relief. What he cannot stand now is not the night anymore, it is the dawn: it is at dawn that they will come to execute him. Dawn symbolises the birth, but here, as Elliot (1943) says, “in my beginning is my end ...”, the begging is the end, the birth is the death.

One day while Meursault is day-dreaming the priest enters his cell. Meursault, who has just refused to request for a pardon, is not pleased to see him and thinks of Maria: maybe she was tired of being the loved one of a man sentenced to capital punishment, maybe she got sick, maybe she died. Here it is shown quite clearly how much separation and death look alike.

It was in the natural order of things. And how would I have known when, now that we were physically separated, there was nothing left to keep us together or to remind us of each other. Anyway, from that point on, Marie's memory would have meant nothing to me. I wasn't interested in her any more if she was dead. I found that quite normal just as I could quite well understand that people would forget about me once I was dead. They had nothing more to do with me. I couldn't even say that this was hard to accept.

Those are the mother's own words that Meursault has recently adopted, in the same way that, by setting aside the request for pardon, he had accepted the prosecutor's words that were symbolically also those of his mother. In this esoteric moment the priest entered, against Meursault's wishes. Meursault refuses to talk with him, but the priest goes on and sits next to him. Meursault notices that the priest has a “kind expression”.

The priest remains silent for some time and soon Meursault forgets his presence. He gets used to it, he is “alone” in the presence of someone else (see Winncott, 1958). Then, the priest starts talking, he asks why Meursault refuses to see him, why he does not believe in God although death should have brought him closer to God. Death predestines a conviction that everyone faces.

But now Meursault is scared of dying and does not accept what the priest says. The priest insists and expresses his pity for Meursault, who, although he feels bored, he starts paying some attention to the priest. The priest is another human being and tells him that all humans are sinners: Meursault is too, doesn't he want to redeem himself? But, Meursault cannot redeem himself,

he cannot ask for a pardon, he can only be accused and convicted, to reassure the execution takes effect. The big step was made when he had accepted the accusations coming from outside, from the public prosecutor, as his own self-accusations. One cannot expect too much from him. "I told him I didn't know what sin meant: the only thing they told me was that I was guilty. I was guilty, I was paying and nobody could ask anything more from me".

The priest answers back with a priest's speech: Christ's face can be seen everywhere, even on the old walls of this cell. Meursault responded that it was not Christ's face what he was looking for but a different one, a one that had "the colour of the sun and the flame of desire": Maria's face, his mother's face. But he didn't see that either. The priest turned towards the wall and remained silent. Then he exclaims he couldn't believe him, that surely Meursault must have had, sometime, wished for a different life. Yes, Meursault replied, a life in which "he could remember this one" and immediately adds that he is bored with this conversation and that he does not want to waste his time with God.

The priest, however, seems quite capable of handling Meursault's ambivalence and that causes, finally, a sensational emotional reaction in the pale murderer who killed without emotion, without feeling hate: "he tried to change the conversation by asking me why was I calling him sir instead of father. That made me nervous and I replied that he wasn't my father: he was like everybody else". The priest, after that, gave up the ecclesiastical and stereotypical "professional" invocations of God and started talking about himself: he told Meursault that he was touched by his manners and that, nevertheless, he considered him to be, symbolically, his own child:

"No, my son", he said, placing his hand on my shoulder. "I'm on your side. But you can't see because your heart is blind. I shall pray for you". Then, for some reason, something exploded inside me. I started shouting at the top of my voice and I insulted him and told him not to pray for me. I'd grabbed him by the collar of his cassock. I was pouring everything out at him from the bottom of my heart in a paroxysm of joy and anger. He seemed so certain of everything, didn't he? And yet none of his certainties was worth one hair on a woman's head. He couldn't even be sure he was alive because he was living like a dead man. I might seem to be empty-handed. But I was sure of myself, sure of everything, surer than he was, sure of my life and sure of the death that was coming to me. I'd been right, I was still right, I was always right.

A break of rage, an explosion of feelings, caused by the priest. Finally Meursault can shout out his anger, can denounce the injustice, can revolt to the accusations:

Didn't he understand? Everyone was privileged. There were only privileged people. The others too would be condemned one day. He too would be condemned. What did it matter if he was accused of murder and then executed for not crying at his mother's funeral? Salamano's dog was worth just as much as his wife. The little automatic woman was just as guilty as the Parisian woman Masson had married or as Marie who wanted me to marry her. What did it matter that Raymond was just as much my mate as Celeste who was worth more than him? What did it matter that Marie now had a new Meursault to kiss? Didn't he understand that he was condemned and that from the depths of my future ... I was choking with all this shouting. But already the chaplain was being wrested from me and the warders were threatening me. He calmed them though and looked at me for a moment in silence. His eyes were full of tears. Then he turned away and disappeared.

Finally. The priest, a man in woman's clothes (who represents the father who is born by the mother) is here touched, he has accepted Meursault's anger without dying, he answered to this pain with tears.

When the priest leaves, Meursault is left with his mother's memory, he can now begin (note well: begin) the elaboration of the mourning.

Once he was gone, I felt calm again. I was exhausted and I threw myself onto my bunk. I think I must have fallen asleep because I woke up with stars shining on my face. Sounds of the countryside were wafting in. The night air was cooling my temples with the smell of earth and salt. The wondrous peace of this sleeping summer flooded into me. At that point, on the verge of daybreak, there was a scream of sirens. They were announcing a departure to a world towards which I would now be forever indifferent. For the first time in a very long time I thought of mother. I felt that I understood why at the end of her life she'd taken a "fiancé" and why she'd pretended to start again. There at the home, where lives faded away, there too the evenings were a kind of melancholy truce. So close to death, mother must have felt liberated and ready to live her life again. No one, no one at all had any right to cry over her. And I too felt ready to live my life again. As if this great outburst of anger had purged all my ills, killed all my hopes, I looked up at the mass of signs and stars in the night sky and laid myself open for the first time to the benign indifference of the world. And finding it so much like myself, in fact so fraternal, I realised that I'd been happy, and that I was still happy. For the final consummation and for me to feel less lonely, my last wish was that there should be a crowd of spectators at my execution and that they should greet me with cries of hatred.

Meursault now wishes to die, he doesn't hope to be pardoned anymore. After reflecting on his mother's memory, on the malicious understandings of her emotions in the nursing house, on her last old-age love, he now feels close to her and only now recognises that he is happy. Of course, he hopes

that he will die: These are the suicidal fantasies of a melancholic. Although he is in the cell of a man sentenced to death, he is now alive.

What will happen to him? The book ends in a way that leaves it up to our imagination. The machine could continue with its motion and Meursault could die; or it could stop and Meursault could receive a pardon. It's not up to him anymore, it depends now on others. Will the others be able to provide this "unselfish gesture of love" about which Rossi and Matteini have spoken?

The innocent murderer

The subject of these conclusive observations is the analysis of the great value of the novel for the psychological study of the social reaction and the relationship between the criminal and the society that punishes him, focusing on the notion of the *meurtrier innocent*.

If capital punishment is a priori eliminating, this elimination and the "setting aside" are characteristics, only partially masked, of every kind of punishment. As the sociologist Erikson (1966) suggests in his study about deviation in puritan societies of New England, the enforcement of punishment is "useful" in order to draw the line of what is legal, to distinguish social "inside" from "outside". From retribution, to deportation, to marginalization, to prison, punishment has always included meanings related to separation. It is as if society activates a subconscious fantasy: everyone who is recognised as criminal, is set "aside", because he is set "outside" the legality, he abandoned the symbolic embracement of law.

The implicated subconscious imagining is probably one of the social "body", of the society as a "body" that embraces and protects its citizens, by providing shelter, safety and protection for them. It is from this protected space that the criminal is thrown out. The "internal" enemy becomes "external" enemy. Symbolically, this relation refers to the primordial maternal relationship: society is like a mother who keeps inside her, in her womb or in her hands, the citizen-children. But when the citizens breaks the law, another version of the subconscious fantasy arises; the aggressive version. The citizen-child inside the mother-society turns into a monster, into a carcinoma that must be expelled in order to be saved from evil and threat.

It is amazing that this idea is not very widespread between criminologists and penologists. Let's listen, among those few, to Colin and Hochmann (1963), clinical criminologists of the School of Lyon:

By eliminating even the memory of the one who was considered to be the only responsible for the crisis of group, all problems are solved. Then one of the two protagonists of the drama, the one who “started” it, disappears, triturates and the drama concludes. His burial is forbidden. Antigone cannot offer the deadly honours to the dangerous brother. The curtain falls, the tragedy is over, the social machine can silently start turning again. The spectators return to their everyday occupations, to the safety of a rule, the only value of which is that it caused a holocaust. In the empty scene, the super-numeraries wash the blood off the bodies ... and the good citizens remain indifferent. The other, to whom he charged all crimes, including his, is strictly an outsider, definitely different: he is dead. The good citizen sleeps with a clear consciousness.

Another clinical criminologist, Debuyst (1985) expressed, although in a different framework, similar views:

In our analysis, what we think is important is that a reaction of this kind (social reaction) results in the transformation of the deviant to an “outsider”, to a “profane”, to a “defector”, to a human being for whom every idea of participation to the group has lost its meaning, and thus, a sanction of exclusion or rejection results naturally from this situation.

The most famous theoretical “apologist” of nazism admitted it clearly, pointing out that the distinction between the “friend” and the “enemy” consists the key of the “politician’s” category. Here is how Schmitt describes the “enemy”:

He is simply the alien, the outsider, and essentially it’s sufficient that existentially, in a particular context, he is the other and the outsider, so that, in an extreme case, the conflicts with him are possible and cannot be decided neither through a system of predefined rules nor through the mediation of a third “non-concerning” and thus “detached” party.

We believe that the meaning of “political” in Schmitt applies to the area that’s regulated by penal law, the effort of which historically coincides with the attempt to embody the judge with characteristics of a “third” person, of detachment and legality and, in a final analysis, to transform the internal war which climaxes with the exclusion of the criminal through penalty, into a series of predefined actions that are regulated by rules.¹¹ It’s true that, the

¹¹ The nature of this faddish “war”, was analysed in a splendid way by Colin and Dagonnet (1963), in the decision of the Supreme Court, that consisted simultaneously “... a little war and a little ceremony: they include attack and defence, the rules of the game, the ceremonial character of the battle, the seriousness, the gravity and the hate, the code of offences that magnify human disdain, so that they can allow a moral gesture”.

fundamental problem of penal law, as was greatly shown by Cordero (1985), has always been the institutionalisation of limits in the master's power; that is "the provision of guaranties" for the rights of the accused, a special characteristic of the *civil law* system.

But Schmitt, who adjusted law to the willing of the tyrant turning it into an instrument of prosecution, will recognise the truth only when he suffers from the captivity imposed by the allies. In prison, in "the devastated infinitude of a depressing cell", together with Benito Cereno and Max Striner, Schmitt wrote these moving words (Schmitt, 1950), that signalise the recognition that the "outsider" is a part of the self:

Who, then, can I recognise as my enemy? Obviously, only the one who can doubt me. By recognising him as an enemy, I recognise his ability to doubt me. And who can really doubt me but myself or my brother? Behold. The Other is my brother. The Other ends up my brother and my brother is my enemy. Adam and Eve had two children, Cain and Avel. This is how the history of humanity starts. This is the face of the father of all things. This is the dialectical tension that keeps in motion the history of the world, and the history of the world hasn't yet reach its end.

After mammy's death, Meursault, the outsider and enemy of his own self, without a womb anymore, without the embrace that holds him and warms him, kills the Arab and attempts to confine himself in the symbolic cocoon of law, to the maternal embrace of prison.

The drama, in this sense, consists of the fact that Meursault manages to captivate his mother's words, the society's; but, in a final analysis, they are the same words that expel him one last time; they are the reason for the verdict, that sentenced him to death because he killed mother, whom in reality he didn't kill. The paradox, the real tragic dilemma expressed by Camus' hero, can be described as follows: "only by killing the Arab and, in my imagination, mother, only by making myself guilty and by driving myself to death, can I transform the untold blame which I always saw in her eyes, to a death penalty made by words, without which I cannot live".

And it is exactly from this inconsistency between the crime committed by Meursault and a crime for which he is convicted, that the theme of the "innocent murderer" originates. Under this structure Camus discovered that society needs victims, monsters that must be expelled, so that cohesion and peace to be sustained.

Girard (1972) presented the hypothesis that the penal system is the inheritor of the sacrificial system, by choosing a collective victim in order to

put an end to epidemic violence, the vicious circle of revenge. The emergence of the penal systems protects society from individual revenge (like that taking place between Raymond and the group of the Arabs) and assigns it to a third party, that represents public authority. Many generations of rationalisations and justifications have prompted us to believe that the criminal is punished *because* he committed a crime.

In reality, by reversing this perception for a moment, it would seem more attractive to suppose that crime is also a useful justification that allows us to punish somebody and thus reinforce the group against something that is “external”. Not punishment as the result of crime, but the need for victims, for members of society that must dedicate themselves to divinity (the ancient, contradictory holiness) and then, by throwing them to the coldness of the prison and the erebus of death, to make them wrecks, to make them “outsiders”, necessitating an “inversion” of the classification of crimes. It is not that “he committed a crime, thus, he is being punished”, but rather “we need a victim, we must find a criminal in order to expel the evil, to imprison the criminal, to enclose all the lunatics in asylums: now we can sleep in peace”

The concept of *meurtrier innocent* enlightens the paradox of the penal system that punishes the guilty, but puts the character in such a situation that he can only be characterised as “innocent”. Initially, society demands retribution, then an instrument of society undertakes the responsibility to follow out the retribution: as Jacques (1966) describes, the feelings of revenge are being projected on him. And, to this point, society is redeemed from the aggression against him and is able to sympathise with the criminal, who is now turned into a “victim”. It can sympathise him, because the victim represents, to this point, the “guilty” side of society itself, and when walking to the guillotine, the criminal serves the sentence of everyone.¹² Consequently, the one who is being punished is noneother than the faceless representative of the collective “evil”. According to Colin and Dagoguet (1963), who studied psychologically inmates convicted to death, this conviction signals a triple break of the inmate with his previous leaving: a break in time, in the time sequence of the self – a break with emotional life, that results from the demand on the convict for passiveness and stagnancy – and at the end, the moral disruption, because it’s not allowed that

¹² All we do here, is set forth in two continual moments, the two grand collective needs (the need for revenge and the need for atonement), showed by Alexander and Staub (1929), as the base of the punitive action of society.

the convict express any feeling of guilt, any remorse about his victim – and that’s because the convict, in his turn, has become the victim:

The prosecutor will say: “we never recognize him when we wake him up in the morning”. It is not that he became a different man, but that he is not a human being anymore. They brought him to such a great passiveness and humiliation, they grab him his human substance and now he identifies himself with the “expiatory victim”, he is ready to be *tied up* and throw himself into the machine, just like the ram that is ready to be sacrificed.

According to Girard (1978), that is only a partial leftover of the primitive movement, according to which the victim, who was expelled to death and had been hated, was, then, glorified and adored, because the members of society were recognising subconsciously that exactly because of his own sacrifice, it was made possible to cast out the danger of an uncontrolled spread of violence, of the “fundamental violence”.¹³

Camus reproduces the mechanism in a short of way that leads the reader to feel something of the ancient ambivalence (too much hate, followed by emotions of respect and compassion), because of the wise division of the narration in at least three parts:

- the mother’s death and the crime
- the pursuit of truth and the exploration of the soul (the discovery of the imaginary crime, matricide)
- the exemplary sentence that punishes the imaginary crime, to a moment when society is very sensitive to the issue of patricide (the day after Meursault’s trial, a man will be trailed because he killed his father).

In the first part, Meursault solves the dilemma of his inability to elaborate the mourning for his mother’s death, by killing the Arab, by turning himself into a *candidate* for the role of the target of collective aggression (Francia, 1984). It’s impossible for the reader to feel empathy for this cruel and impervious figure.

In the second part, Meursault finds out who is interested in his inner world, the judge-inquisitor-therapist, who “stands over” his soul and prepares the arsenal of accusations, having firstly discovered the imaginary crime (actually, the investigator tells him “see you, mister Antichrist” and the public prosecutor insists on accusing him of “burying his mother with a criminal’s heart”).

¹³ See Bergeret (1984).

In the third and final part, Meursault will experience feelings such as empathy of the others (guards, priest, defence witnesses) and he will undertake the absurd role of the innocent victim, free from social bonds.

Therefore, Camus wanted to underline, through the distinction between the crime that Meursault really committed and the one for which he's being convicted, that the crime that draws the revenge of society, is different from the committed one. Another crime, most importantly, committed by *everyone*. Who has never wished the death of one of his parents? And, in regards to this crime, Meursault is innocent in at least two senses: firstly because although he imagined it, he never actually committed it and, secondly, because even if Meursault was guilty because he imagined it, then who wouldn't have been so? "*Use every man after his desert, and who shall scape whipping?*"¹⁴ And Meursault carried the guilt of everybody's matricide on his shoulders, carrying the collective weight of the primordial separation, carrying his cross, "the only Jesus that we are worth of".

It could, thus, be attributed to Camus' anti-hero, what Freud (1927) states as it concerns Dostoyevsky: like the latter, Camus asks us to lower ourselves in front of the murderer. All our brothers are guilty, even those who just desired our father's death: and thus Starec, who "realised, through the discussion with Dmitriij, that he had inside of him the tendency for patricide, lowers himself in front of him". Freud continues (1927):

It is not but an expression of admiration: it should mean that the holy man takes distance from his own self, the temptation to condemn or to feel revulsion for the murderer and for that reason he lowers himself in front of him. Dostoyevsky's compassion for the criminal is essentially unlimited, it surpasses by far the limits of compassion that the poor man is entitled to, it reveals the sacred fear of the ancient world for the epileptic and the lunatic. For Dostoyevsky, the criminal is almost a saviour, who carries the sins that all the others would have to carry otherwise. It is not necessary to kill him, in this sense, when he has already committed the crime, but rather we should be grateful to him or else we would have to kill ourselves.

In a story by Borges named "Three versions of Judas", God, by wanting to become a full human being, was not incarnated into Christ but into Juda, so as to commit the most horrible of crimes and to repay for all of us, once and for all, the original sin, the primary sin. It is exactly from this conver-

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, second part, second scene. It is indicative that Freud chooses these verses, in order to reproduce the "justified" character of the melancholic's self-accusations.

gence, from the cum-venire between the perpetrator and the society that the different functions of the punishing moment originate. Camus has employed all of them, distinguished between them and threw light on them, one by one, so as to show us how this *outsider* is in all of us.

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Criminological Pursuits in Arkas' *The Lifer**

ADOLFO FRANCIA**

I should state from the outset that I have never been a keen reader of comics. My knowledge in the field of illustrated stories is confined to children's readings and to those of early adolescence, a period in which the characters of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck were replaced by the occasional occupation with Tex Willer and Pecos Bill.

I should admit that I read Arkas' *Lifer* to please my friend and colleague A. Koukoutsaki, rather than out of real interest.

The reading of Arkas' books (*Perpette, Mauvais fréquentations, Un rat dans ma soupe, Docteur, j'ai cafard..., Il y a un Dieu pour les voleurs*),¹ besides coming as a pleasant surprise, offered unexpected amusement and brought back a mixture of emotions that I had not experienced in a long time.

A criminologist could not fail to be touched by a comic strip series which depicts the adventures of a convict sentenced to life imprisonment, that is, the adventures of the Lifer. In the same manner that he cannot remain indifferent to the despairing perversion of Montecristo, the amiable rat which helps the Lifer to survive.

I would like to examine the work of Arkas from a psychodynamic point of view, in light of associations that spontaneously come to mind when we

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¹ The author used the French translation of the series, Glenat, 1992. An English translation of the Greek titles would be: *Bad Company, A mouse in my soup, Doctor I feel a burden, God loves the thief*. All references are to the Greek edition (Nea Synora, Livani, 1991).

read such rich and stimulating material. My approach, thus, will be characterised more by free thoughts, a technique that suits better the type of the work at hand, than by a kind of systematic analysis, which is certainly less suitable for the liveliness of this object of research.

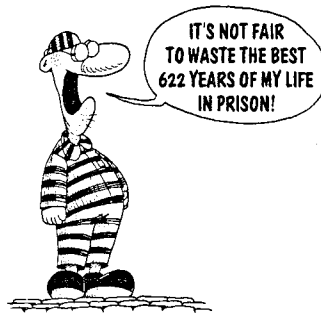
I open the hard cover of the first volume (*Bad Company*) and I find the first strip.

The comic figure of a convict wearing a striped cap, with characteristics that stress a tragi-comic fate, is depicted, framed by the bricks of a small, railed window. The “bubble”, as we can read, states: “But how can they sentence a human being to 622 years in prison?! ...”

The next page, which, in contrast to the first, places us inside the prison cell and shows us the whole body of the hero, depicted from the back, wearing the prisoners uniform, reiterates his sorrowful condition, moderated, however, by the caption that turns pity into a comic exaggeration: “... and I am still young! In the prime of my life ...”

The third page portrays the hero alone, with no other details, almost as if confirming his uniqueness, his completeness, his solitude. The stone floor is the only element that gives the character material substance.

Here it is also the caption that, stressed by the bold print and the paradoxicality of the words, underlines the bizarreness of the situation: “It is not fair to waste the best 622 years of my life in prison!”



Bad Company, 3

Thus, the manner in which Arkas proceeds is evident from the first lines. He turns into a comic situation, into a witticism, that which has nothing witty on its own, by means of a process of accentuation of situations that, if expressed in milder terms, would cause completely different emotions.

Similarly to what Bonvi² does in his *Sturm Truppen* or Paolo Villaggio³ with the figure of *Fantozzi*.

In other words, it is as if laughing in a cemetery.

Although the hero is named *Perpette* (*Lifer*), which in the prison slang means convict sentenced to life imprisonment, he has been convicted to an endless sentence, which no one would be able to serve.

Arkas himself clarifies the matter, in the very first strips. The inmate is standing totally alone with himself and is pondering.

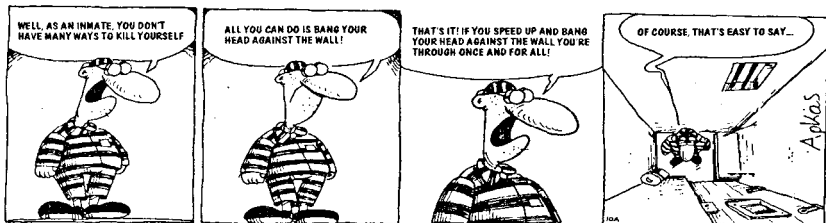
Firstly, he expresses his despair by transferring the present nature of the problem to the moment of a hypothetical release: "622 years in prison! ... Just imagine how high the rent will be when I come out!".

Then, always in the same spirit, rather blunted this time by a healthy realism, he estimates that it is preferable for him to be sentenced to 622 years in prison and not to life imprisonment, because it is certain that in fifty years he will have died and therefore he will have "robbed" them of 570 years.

Finally, facing the infinite time that lies ahead of him, he fantasises about committing suicide.

"I'm afraid I won't make it! Some time I'll kill myself! But I'll leave behind a shocking letter! I'm dying expecting a different life, fairer, more... What if there is another life? I hope not! They will force me to serve the rest of my time!".

He is not even allowed to commit suicide. The cramped cell and the exhausting surveillance do not allow him to distinguish himself, to separate himself from the place which contains him, a place of projection of an internal object coated with ambivalence, charged with catastrophe.



Bad Company, 10a

² Italian cartoonist and comic strips writer.

³ Popular Italian comedian, who created and played the role of *Fantozzi*, a tragi-comic and grotesque character.

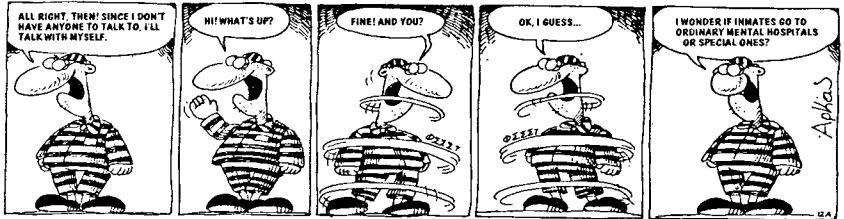
The picture of the extremely cramped cell that does not allow you to hit your head on the walls, a picture that Arkas sketches from the viewpoint of the ceiling, is the graphic representation of an impasse. The Lifer must cohabit with the internal object, united with it for life, or rather beyond life. The representation of the internal psychological condition of the Lifer is complemented by the appearance, at times, of the projection of a primordial super-ego, which has a paralysing effect: the head of a warder with a stern look that forbids, suspends, strikes off.

Any initiative, any place is forbidden for him.

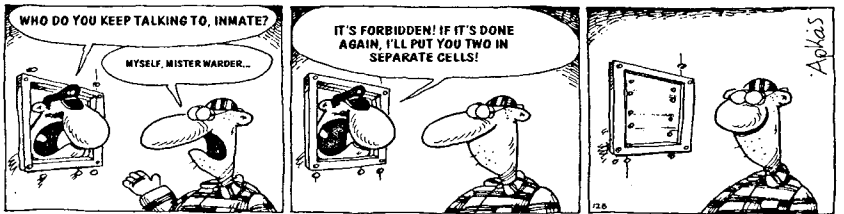
Since the solution of suicide, of the elimination, that is, of the loathed and catastrophic side of the internal object has been rendered unfeasible, he attempts the solution of madness, of the negation of reality, through the activation of extremely retrogressive defence mechanisms, as the split, using another self as companion in conversation, due to his absolute inability to exist as a unified individual.

“All right, then! Since I don’t have anyone to talk to, I’ll talk with myself!”

However, not even this is allowed. The warder warns him: if he continues talking to himself, he will put them “in separate cells”.



Bad Company, 12a



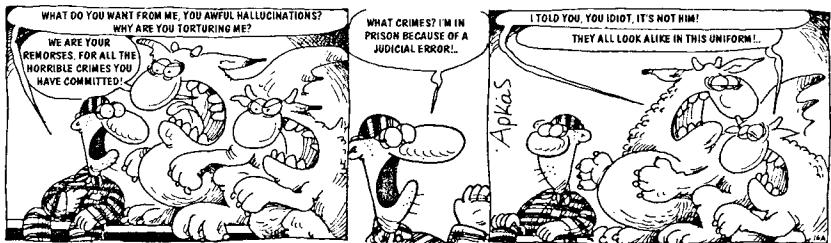
Bad Company, 12b

The Lifer will also try to escape from the condition of the convict by activating psychotic defence mechanisms, externalising the terrifying experi-

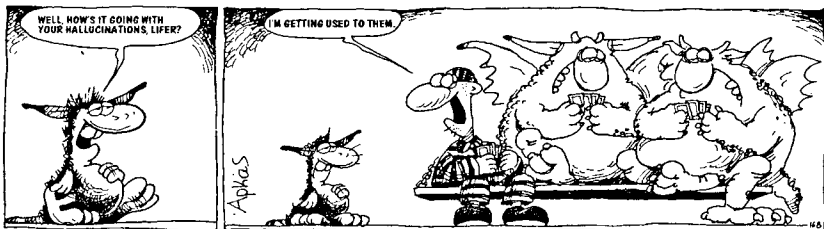
ences of his inner world in the shape of hallucinations. Yet, once again, obstacles are raised in front of him: he is impelled to compromise with the monsters that his unconscious creates.



God loves the thief, 14b



God loves the thief, 16a



God loves the thief, 16b

The Lifer, like Job, according to the desire of a primordial deity that lies in him and whose wishes he is not aware of, endures the sentence despite being “innocent”; he endures the result of “a miscarriage of justice”. This is the most typical excuse that every prisoner gives to his existential condition. Arkas purposefully never clarifies the crime the Lifer has committed, and with this detail he leads us towards a “diagnosis” of the deeper psy-

chological structure of his Lifer. From a psychodynamic point of view, the Lifer must be considered a subject attached to the cohabitation period of the relationship with the primordial mother, prey to the delusions that are associated with what Melanie Klein calls schizo-paranoid position. He did not succeed in dealing with the separation in the sensitive period of his life that, according to Margaret Mahler, is called process of detachment-individualisation, a process which leads to the recognition and acceptance of the detachment from the primary object. The guilt, from which we cannot escape, linked to the extremely strong catastrophic aggression towards a partial internal object of split, entails the creation of a terrifying internal condition that is projected out of the self, on a world where persecution prevails. A limitless sense of guilt that, as a result, entails an equally limitless punishment, imposed by an internal merciless court, which prosecutes even after death and therefore has no end. A sense of guilt that has not yet found the “fair” limit in the law of some Athena, in the session of some Supreme Court.

The prison of the Lifer is presented, precisely due to the accentuation of the themes of persecution that create the comic element, as a place of execution of the death penalty, of extremely harsh arbitrary punishments (the condemned, the *cachot*⁴). In any case, the prison of the Lifer represents the tragi-comic version of the reality of correctional institutions, in which, beyond the official fundamental declarations (the penalty as correction, the penalty as reform), society recreates the world of cohabitation ambivalence.

The criminal, every criminal, is guilty from the beginning and his crime represents *an alternative solution to the depression that can't be dealt with*, to the unfeasible individualisation.

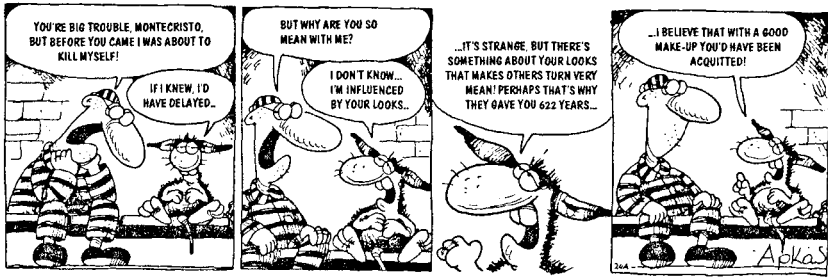
Isn't criminology, with the continuous creation of theories explaining the genesis of criminal behaviour, the “locus” where the attempt to provide a “name” to this sense of guilt occurs?

Arkas himself proposes an evocative hypothesis, which is certainly presented in a comic style, in relation to the genesis of the guilt of the Lifer. A hypothesis, which, in the words of Montecristo, the real criminal of the events narrated in the episodes, echoes as faintly “Lombrosian”.

The “quality” of the criminal, the condition of the convict is certainly due to the manner in which he is “presented”, in which he appears as he is.

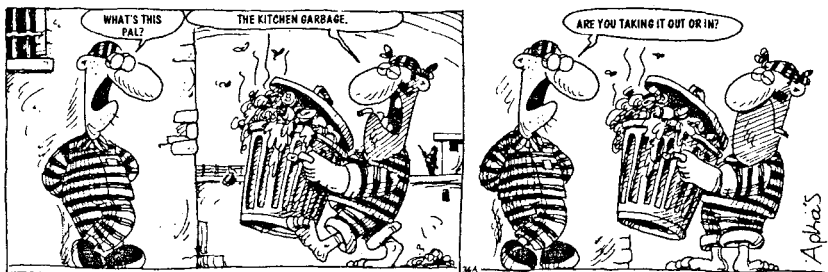
In the beginning, thus, there was cohabitation.

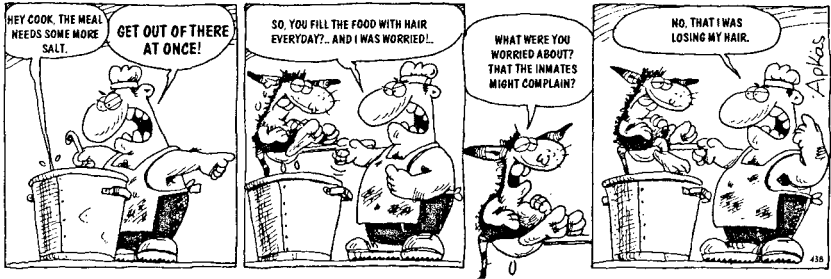
⁴ The isolation.

*Bad Company, 24a*

The maternal cohabitation element takes the centre of the stage and is embedded in almost every episode. By definition charged with ambivalence, this condition is represented both by a place from which you never exit, which keeps you in forever, and by a series of persons who alternate periodically on stage, as it happens in the best tradition of comics.

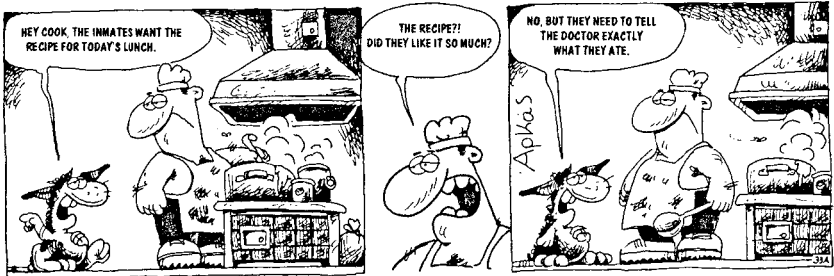
One of the elements which characteristically demonstrates the primordial maternal facets, the feeding mother, that appears rather frequently and has a volume of its own in the metaphor, is certainly the cook, who, in the French edition that I used, takes the indicative name of *Cuistot* (cook quickly). Along with the priest that stands by the condemned and the rat Montecristo, for whom we shall have the opportunity to talk about shortly, the cook, in contrast to the warders that appear identical to the head of the Mermaid through the aperture of the cell door, is in close contact with the inmates, without any barrier. The prisoner often stands in front of him waiting for the meagre food that the filthy cook manages to prepare. The stinking and inadequate food is always full of insects, rat hairs or is made of recycled garbage from the kitchen itself.

*Doctor I feel a burden, 36a*



Bad Company, 43b

A mixture of filthy things, in which food and excrement are blended. Cuistot is the image of the mother who does not look after, who neglects. The child is not capable of distinguishing between what he devours and what he excretes. Food is presented as a substance full of dual meanings: it can nourish but it can also kill. Therefore, the ability to distinguish between what is good and what is bad confines itself to distinguishing between what “saves me” and what “kills me”.

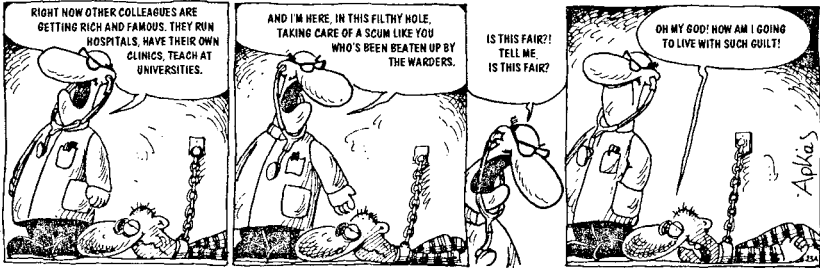


Doctor I feel a burden, 33a

Another character that incarnates the fixation at the stage of the maternal cohabitation ambivalence is the doctor. He, as the cook Cuistot, directly approaches the inmates almost as if to confirm the characteristics of close proximity. Once again, the episodes offer a wide range of examples.

“What’s wrong with you again, prisoner?” “My glasses have broken, Doctor, and without glasses I can’t see beyond half a metre.” “Ok, I’ll take care of it!... There you are, take this.” “What is it? A prescription for a new pair?”, “No, a sketch of the cell, so that you don’t stumble on the walls”.

Often, the doctor, who should attempt to moderate the stress caused by the threat against the health or the life itself of the prisoner, reflects instead on his own agonies, as the mother who neglects the function of *rêverie* (reverie) that Bion described.



Doctor I feel a burden, 23a

The doctor, often an accessory or actor of the persecution, acts with absolute vagueness.



Doctor I feel a burden, 22a

On other occasions he represents the threat of abandonment.

"I must tell you, prisoner, that I belong to the category of doctors who feel that the patient should know the whole truth...". "Ok doctor" responds the prisoner lying in bed exhausted, "I am ready to hear it". "I learned that your wife cheats on you" (*Doctor, I feel a burden*, p. 75:b).

At other times, he represents the cruel facets of confinement, as is excellently demonstrated in the episodes of the Lifer's hunger strike in the volume *Doctor, I feel a burden*.

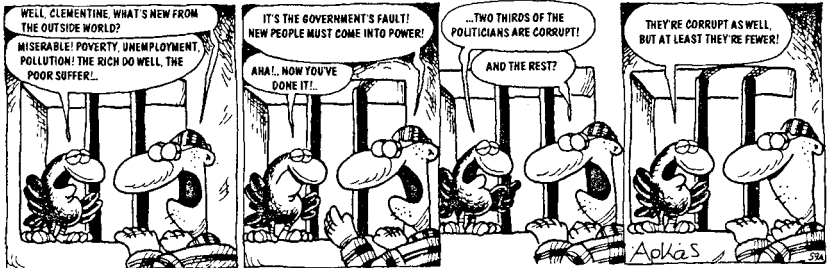
The feminine element is represented in the prison of Arkas by two distinct, but absorbable heroes: the wife, who visits the inmate and Clementine, the sparrow.

The latter represents, as does the doctor, the facets of the mother that is incapable of intermediating, “metabolising” the stress caused to the child by the outside world, bringing instead forward its negative dimensions.

Clementine always answers the questions that the Lifer asks about the outside world by describing disasters.



A mouse in my soup, 36a



A mouse in my soup, 59a

The world, thus, is dangerous, corrupted, full of stress: this is the message that the inmate receives. “What can you do without me? Why do you want to face it alone?”

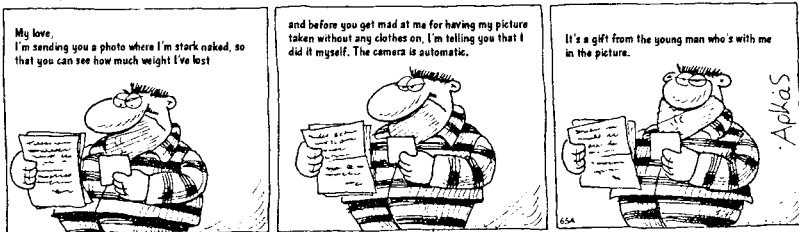
The criminal accepts his situation, because in the hands of the police and inside the prison walls, he is more secure and he does not need to disguise himself as a canary, like Clementine. The world of the prison is that which, oddly enough, protects him, mainly from his own self, through an act of retrogression to the stage of cohabitation.

The other feminine element is the wife of the prisoner, who represents the most sophisticated facets of the mother-child relationship, the eroticized Oedipal elements.

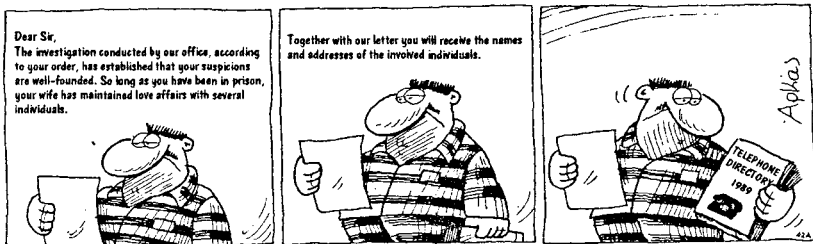
A mother-woman, imbued with seductive elements. Yet, the object of love is not himself, but some adversary, someone else who always has something more than he does.

A father who, indeed, does not appear as a just and saving distinguishing element, as the guardian of a rule that you can learn through a direct relationship.

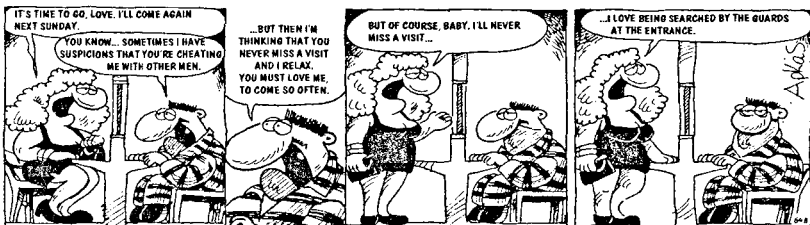
This father, to the same degree as the mother, is presented to us here only with his primordial pursuit facets. He does not separate, but he distances. The mother simply abandons, without conceding anything in exchange for the libidinous sacrifice. A mere traitor. Some random examples:



Bad Company, 65a



A mouse in my soup, 42a



Bad Company, 64b

Up to this point, I have failed to talk about the most significant character of the comic strip series, as I was interested in revealing how the fundamental psychological condition of the Lifer was characterised precisely by the fixation in the cohabitation relationship with the mother, a genetically primordial relationship which is characterised by very strong ambivalence.

I, thus, devoted space to the description of those characters of the comic strip series that, in my opinion, could substantiate my view.

However, the character that is of the greatest significance from a criminological point of view is, without doubt, Montecristo, the rat, who emerges mysteriously from the depths of the prison. A rat that talks and is the best representative of the human element that resides in this place.

For the Lifer, Montecristo represents the alternative solution to depression; he becomes the relief from the unbearable sense of guilt.

Montecristo never feels any guilt, because he is the product of the perverted defence mechanisms, which are used exactly in order to disavow, to distance it. A medley of projections, secondary benefits, manic conditions.

The name itself is reminiscent of the image of revenge, of the manic and paranoid destructive aggression. The Count of Monte Cristo, indeed, is the person that, despite being innocent, has been unfairly sent to prison, but escapes and is transformed into a savage killer who eliminates all his enemies mercilessly.

The Lifer explains it to us and the rat confirms it. "Why are you called Montecristo?" asks the Lifer. "A convict gave me this name. He thought I was the reincarnation of some Count Montecristo" "That's strange!" exclaims the Lifer. "Why? Who was that Count Montecristo?" "He is the hero of a novel, who unfairly spent many years in prison, but he ran away and took revenge from those that had treated him unfairly". "I served them right!" replies the rat maliciously (*Bad Company*, p.58:a).

Arkas, of course, takes advantage of the situation for comic purposes, giving this terrible nickname to an innocent rat of the prison. A grey moulted rat, with outstanding ears, a protruding belly and a dragging tail, he passes his time hanging out with the poor and lonely prisoners. The black soul of solitude, the twisted companion of their criminality, real or imaginary. A likeable, suspicious character, that takes advantage of the slightest difficulty of the prisoners to profiteer.

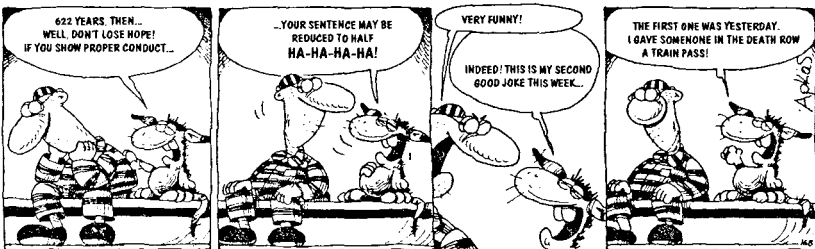
There are too many examples relating to this case, a fact that renders it difficult to mention them all.

Montecristo is malicious and does not hesitate to cause punishment to the poor Lifer, by revealing his wrong-doings insidiously. In this case, he incarnates the projection of the criminal side of the Lifer himself, who, in order to bear the endless guilt, must continuously give it a real dimension, in a manner similar to the one that Freud attributes to the "criminal by guilt".



Bad Company, 24b

Montecristo is a sadist, capable of bursting into laughter in the most tragic situations. He is an authentic representative of black humour.

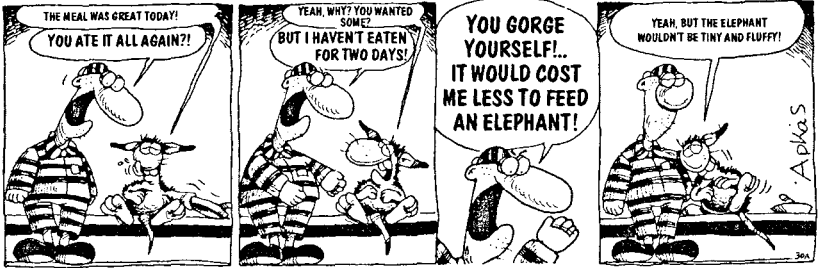


Bad Company, 16b

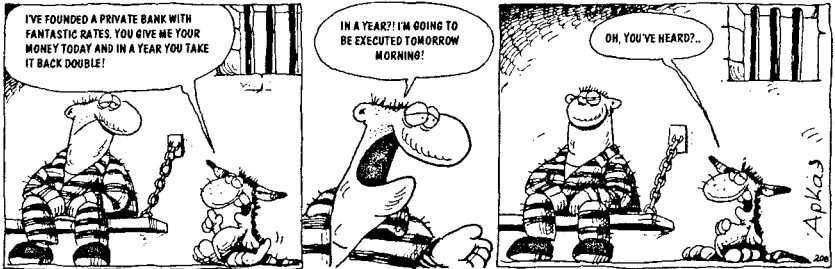
Montecristo is the one that perversely takes advantage of any addiction and always finds a way to gain profit out of other people's difficulties.



Bad Company, 29b



Bad Company, 30a



Bad Company, 20b

Montecristo represents the manner in which the persecution is externalised and transformed into affectionate indifference, into egocentrism, into the organic use of the other. It is the solution for survival.

The criminal is that one who is incapable of overcoming a cohabitation dependence, charged with catastrophic aggression, since he is not able to face the prospect of a depressive handling of the individualisation.

The catastrophic aggression, that is innate in the relationship with the abandoning mother, creates a penetrating and particularly harsh condition of super-egoist control, similar to that of the depressive.

However, while the depressive experiences the hardships through the persecuting delusions that are often translated in the retirement, in the agonising admission of guilt and which culminate in the suicide, the criminal lives the adversities in the field of action.

He identifies with this cruel condition, transforming himself into its agent: under the condition of persecution, he himself becomes the persecutor, inflicting in reality or symbolically, people and things, as far as the confrontation with the social reality allows him.

The analysis of prison, in the sense of space- of the social and personal psychological space- helps us understand these dynamics better.

The prison, with its quality of an object coated with ambivalence, represents both the externalisation of sorrow and persecution, and the ultimate place of emotional confinement: a cohabitation mum that guides the fantasies of the catastrophic aggression, but who also, finally, embraces.

This metaphor of the Lifer, in light of the routes I attempted to analyse is, in my view, most useful in order to understand, in the manner that only a work of art can make us understand.

The narrative reconstruction that Arkas produces by means of the comic exaggeration and the concise effectiveness of the dual technique of image and text is, in my opinion, one of the finest examples that may be used to broaden one's knowledge in this field.

Crime is a subject that is often used in literature, theatre and cinema. Comics have also often portrayed crimes and criminals. There are countless examples. No one, however, to the best of my knowledge, has attempted to describe the adversities of prison and of its inmates using comic means.

Arkas has achieved this and has given us pages of fascinating material, including metaphors that can be read by means of various interpretive methods, as I have attempted to do in this paper.

Societal Representations of the Prison and Comics

The Case of Arkas' *The Lifer**

AFRODITI KOUKOUTSAKI**

In the academic year 1995/6, a particularly interesting but also rather controversial type of material was introduced as the subject of academic teaching in the Sociology Department of Panteion University. The material was comics.

I should, of course, point out that an introduction formulated in this manner could be misleading. The comics did not constitute an autonomous object of study, but were integrated, as factual material, in the frame of a criminological seminar on the prison,¹ with all the limitations that both its contents and the capacities of the participants entail.² Consequently, the

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¹ Several undergraduate students of the Sociology and Psychology Departments participated in the seminar. I. Karatza, a doctoral candidate at the Department of Sociology, also assisted in the first semester. Also a presentation of the topic took place in May 1999, in the Postgraduate Criminological Seminar of the Department, organised by Professor A. Chaidou. An elaborated version of a paper written by Sociology students V. Karakoltsidou, E. Panagiotou and Ch. Tataridou was published in the journal *Do-kimes* (1997), while a paper written by Psychology student X. Varvaressou is to be published in the *Hellenic Review of Criminology*.

² I would like to thank the dear colleague and friend P. Martinidis for his invaluable assistance and for his willingness to come from Thessaloniki so as to give the introductory lecture.

endeavour was not a theoretical approach to comics in general but a discussion about the prison, triggered off by the comic strip series *The Lifer* by Arkas.³ It was, in other words, a methodological experimentation, in which we attempted to combine the analysis of a theoretical discourse on the prison with the analysis of the discourse of a comic strip series which refers to prison.

The Lifer is the only Greek series of comic strips which takes place entirely in prison. In addition, it is a series that has been completed, and therefore can be used in its entirety. These factors alone would suffice to justify the selection of *The Lifer* from amongst the other various mass culture products as a "vehicle" for the analysis of the social representations of the prison. In reality, however, the decisive factor and starting-point of the endeavour has been the material itself. It was, thus, a personal reading that enabled us to see in this work of Arkas an ingenious comment on the improvement-resocialisation model, on which the contemporary correctional codes are based. And this is due to the fact that its humour does not limit itself on a mere mockery of the correctional community and the condition of the prison, but ends up being about the quintessence of the correctional ideal, the ideology of treatment.

The Lifer, like all comics, has the ability to publicise messages, systems of values and attitudes etc. to a wide audience.⁴ The particularly interesting aspects of the series, however, lies in the fact that the ideological content which it publicises, as we shall attempt to demonstrate, not only does not reproduce the dominant ideologies about the penalty and the criminals, but, on the contrary, undermines their very foundations. On the other hand, a similar representation of the prison cannot be found in any other socialisation mechanism, while other mass communication products signify it in an entirely different manner. For example, if one observes the structuring of the ideological message in the bulk of the film production that deals with the prison, one will realise that rarely is the inflexibility of the punitive apparatus pointed out, since the plot is, usually, based on the flexibilities incarnated by a kind Warden or to those that are revealed through the juxtaposition of good and bad characters. In contrast, the principal element of

³ Arkas (1991), *The Lifer (Bad company, A mouse in my soup, Doctor I feel a burden, God loves the thief)*, Athens: Nea Synora/ Livanis.

⁴ For the ideological content of comics, see among others U. Eco (1990), A. Mattelart & A. Dorfman (1986), M. Barker (1989).

the representation of prison in *The Lifer* is an inflexible structure, with no visible cracks.⁵

Making its entrance in the academic field, *The Lifer* was, thus, read as a comic strip series which talks about the prison. This is one of its possible readings, since the prison could be considered simply as a convention for references to other categories of reality.⁶ In this sense, the prison of *The Lifer* was not read simply as one of the “confined spaces”, the “isolated places” in the work of Arkas, like “the farmstead for the pig and the rooster, the closed community of the cast in show business, the rail fenced zoo of Pantelis and the lion”*. “The isolated island with no hope of escape” (Martinidis 1996:14-15), was studied, then, as a form of social organisation with institutional particularities, as these are shaped and codified in this series.

The prison of *The Lifer* does not refer to a specific prison, although its depiction is at times reminiscent of specific building or organisational forms (e.g. Alcatraz). By using a changing building structure, it constitutes a lucid representation not of specific situations but of the condition of incarceration in general.⁷ As we shall argue, what is primarily represented is

⁵ It would be of particular interest to examine if the messages publicised by a comic strip series of similar content would dominate over others. For instance, the ending of the publication of *The Lifer* in the newspaper *Proti* almost coincided temporally with the occurrence of perhaps the greatest revolts in the history of the Greek prisons. These events, which were particularly interesting from a journalistic viewpoint, inspired numerous front pages in the newspapers and special features on television, which by means of combining discourse and images, publicised and reinforced very specific definitions of reality. I am sceptical, therefore, whether the reading of a comic strip series like *The Lifer* could cause a crack in the ideological structuring of these messages about the blazing prisons and the revolted prisoners, despite the fact that *The Lifer* became a best-seller. However, the comments of Umberto Eco on the stories of Feifer (Umberto Eco 1990: 330) might hold true for the stories of *The Lifer* too, which, also, once published cannot be exorcised and once read remain in the back of the head and work silently.

⁶ *The Lifer* has become the object of other analyses too, in which a similar identification of the place of action does not constitute the principal element. See P. Martinidis (1992, 1996).

* These are all heroes of other popular comic strip series by Arkas.

⁷ It is indicative that in none of the episodes is reference made (through narratives etc.) to the conditions that exist in other prisons. As Martinidis states (1997: 238), “The Lifer is presented imprisoned in a cell, in a place which is the epitome of many prisons. Not, however, of the prisons that the scientific or journalistic analyses refer to, but of the ‘prisons’ which have already been mythicized by various narrative techniques”.

an inflexible punitive structure, an apparatus of “circular confinement” (Foucault 1992:8): the place is hermetically sealed, with no exits and no way out; the time of incarceration is a period of physical and psychological torture but, simultaneously, it is a stagnant period, a period without grading, without “before” and without “after”. Therefore time is without expiry date, a fact that renders the incarceration a lifelong condition, from which not even death can offer a way out. The heroes of *Arkas* are, in this sense, all lifers, constructing in this way the representation of the recycling penal population, making a reference to the myth of social reintegration.

Upon this representation we constructed a theoretical commentary on the prison, using as a point of reference the critical approaches to the institution located in the frame of the historical-social sciences and Critical Criminology. A commentary, in other words, founded on a theoretical discourse where the failure of the correctional, improvement model (which is based on the notion of treatment) is demonstrated and it is argued that this failure does not constitute an accidental, an undesirable deviation, but an outcome predetermined by the very structural characteristics of the dominant punitive institution: the prison is not organised for the treatment, for the preparation of social reintegration, but for the management of the social marginalizing of the penal population.⁸

Consequently, the analysis of our theoretical and factual material was based on the construction of a relationship between two symbolic systems of reference to reality. Namely, a relationship between the theoretical discourse on the prison and the “discourse” of a comic strip series which refers to the prison: the prison, as the field of action of *The Lifer* and the decoding of the ideological content of the series determined not only the field from which the categories for the analysis of the series derived (the prison), but also the specific content of the theoretical discourse (critical approaches to the institution). The juxtaposition between the reality of prison, the historically confirmed functions of the institution and what constitutes its principal legitimising ideology (reform of the criminal, control of the criminality), determined the shaping of the particular thematic fields.⁹ Finally, the notion of the treatment of the criminal constituted the central pil-

⁸ See E. Daskalakis (1988), A. Baratta (1989). For the relevant bibliography see also A. Koukoutsaki (1996/ 7).

⁹ The thematic fields were: Building and organisational structure of the prison, Social organisation of the correctional community, Treatment of the criminal, Relation between the prison and the social structure.

lar of the analysis, as it comprises all the structural contradictions and impasses of the correctional system.

The analysis of the comic strip series did not focus on the plot, the narrative model; and the plot itself facilitated this. Instead, we made use of the existence of certain constant, recurrent elements or characters¹⁰ and attempted a combination of semiotic analysis and content analysis. This is why we formed thematic fields for the analysis of the comics, which corresponded to those of the analysis of the theoretical discourse (see the relevant footnote). However, since the model of the thematic fields would violate the economy of a short text, for this presentation of the subject we shall integrate the various remarks in the categories which derive from certain key-notions, on which the analysis of the dominant representation of the prison and its relation to society was based. These notions are space, time, authority, discipline, society (relation to the), which we did not approach as self-contained categories but in their interweaving and interaction.

Space

According to existing legal framework and international conventions, the sentence, which entails the deprivation of freedom, does not deprive the prisoner of the protection of the law. The incarceration entails the deprivation of only one constitutionally secured freedom, the capacity of moving in space.¹¹

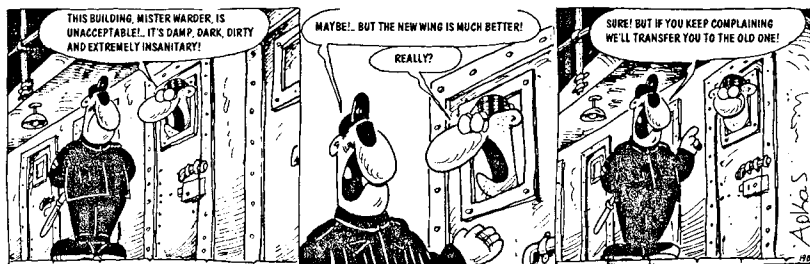
The prison of *The Lifer* constitutes a more “realistic” reference to reality, than that of the legal framework. Through the representation of the prison-warehouse, *The Lifer* comments on the view that the prisoner continues to bear all the rights and liberties which are not included in the content of the freedom depriving sentence.

¹⁰ As Umberto Eco maintains, referring to the case of the *Peanuts*, usually the comics which are of the greatest value or aesthetic and ideological maturity, are not those that take place in continuations but the ones that conclude their story in the frame of one strip. This is also the case of *The Lifer*, where, as Eco continues, always referring to the *Peanuts*, each episode does not simply conclude one story, but the “myth” on the whole acquires value precisely through the system of repetition by means of which the various completed stories accumulate. This system of repetition, on the one hand leads certain constant elements to the extreme and on the other, plays precisely with the familiarity of these constant elements, which are not used as tricks to co-ordinate the memory of the reader, but as real objects of a conscious irony (Umberto Eco 1990: 209- 210).

¹¹ See, among others, A. Manidakis (1989).

Space is of particular significance both in the prison and in the comics.

In the comics, it constitutes a fundamental component of the narrative, equally decisive as the text in placing the heroes, giving a meaning to their actions and giving an order to the events. The spatial depictions in the comics “integrate”, in a sense, a complete world, a “universality” (Martiniadis 1992:57).



God loves the thief, 19b

Thus, in a first attempt to combine the theoretical discourse with the discourse of *The Lifer* about space, we could observe:

Simultaneously, however, the square itself constitutes the “prison” of the Lifer. He, being a figment of the cartoonist’s imagination, is confined in a small square from which he has no way out [...] Whatever surrounds him, at the same time restrains him in and forbids the relations with the nearby square- cells. It is the perfect isolation in space and in time, in the will and the self- determination, since his predetermined actions are essential for the flow of the narrative (Karakoltsidou et al. 1997:144- 145)

The element of space constitutes, at the same time, one of the principal components for the reconstruction of the history and the commentary on the prison, mainly due to the fact that throughout the history of the institution, the building structure of the prisons has never been merely a technical matter.¹² For instance, the use of the circular architecture in Bentham’s *Panopticon* offers an excellent method of surveillance and control of all the prisoners at a glance. Simultaneously, it materialises the expression of authority for the exercise of which no persons are necessary. In essence, what it depicted behind the attempt to combine multiple functions (control, guard, intimidation, parallel to the moral reform through labour and isola-

¹² On this subject, see W. Reeb (1988), Ch. Stavropoulou (1990: 53), E. Paparidou (1989:22).

tion) was what has always been the dominant function of the prison: securing by means of supervision the maintenance of discipline (Melossi, Pavarini 1977: 69).

In general, new architectural and organisational patterns were created according to the prison's ideal functions of the time (discipline, use of labour force in a specific labour structure, grading of the security measures etc.).¹³

The architecture of the prisons, as Foucault (1977: 170ff.)* demonstrates, contributes to the transformation of the individuals, it constitutes a training factor. This does not only hold true for the "sterilised" environment of the execution of the sentence-treatment. Since the prison survives as a purely repressive apparatus, which negates the ideology of treatment, the ideological representation of a space intended for the guard of dangerous individuals is constructed; the new forms of managing the inmates demand not only a particular organisational but also a particular architectural structure and specifically the construction of places that can, at any moment, be turned into a trench.

Although the prison of *The Lifer* is, as we shall demonstrate, totally inflexible as far as the organisation is concerned, it shows a particular flexibility with regard to the building construction. Thus, as Karakoltsidou et al. point out, it appears to be facing no structural or functional problem, as on certain occasions a "prison- skyscraper" is depicted, placed on a tiny island surrounded by sharks, or in other instances the island is expanded or the entire prison is transferred to the shore and is transformed into a building

¹³ For example, the isolation system reproduces the ideal organisation model of the class and production relations in the very beginnings of capitalism, when the production was still of workshop type: in prison, the production is organised by the administration, labour is not paid and it takes the character of training, while the isolation does not only respond to the chaotic organisation of the first institutions but, mainly, to the possibility of association, of the formation of collectivities, of the diffusion of alternative value systems. With the industrialisation of the production in the free market, the Augburn system transforms the prison into a factory with the entrance of the private investor. The inmate is turned into an automatic, a disciplined machine tuned in a collective activity which corresponds to the dominant production model. Thus, the discipline which was based on isolation is replaced by the internal discipline of the organisation of the production, reinforced by the "law of silence" (Melossi, Pavarini, 1977: 190 et seq.).

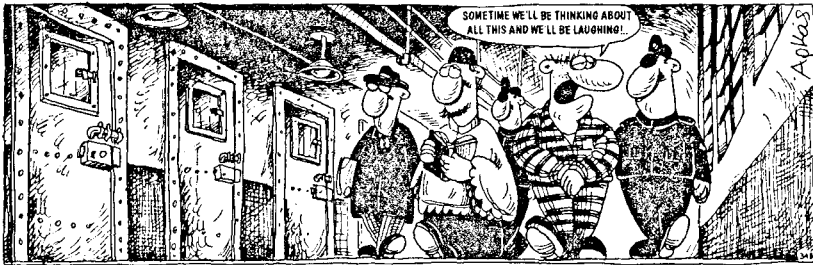
* All references to Foucault (1977) are to the English edition: Foucault M., *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage Books.

complex of the *courtyard* type (Karakoltsidou et al. 1997: 148). In this flexibility we identified a kind of correspondence to the evolution of the architecture of the real prison: with references to real architectural shapes, its building structure is constantly transformed to serve the needs of development of the episodes, by analogy to the real transformations that the alternating goals of the punishment imposed throughout the history of the institution. Thus, Arkas seems to consolidate all the punitive systems that have appeared historically in a kind of multi-prison (Karakoltsidou et al., 1997: 147). In all the depictions, however, the morphotype which refers to the “old simple schema of confinement and enclosure – thick walls, a heavy gate that prevents entering or leaving” (Foucault, 1977: 172) is strictly sustained, representing an unbreakable, threatening and suffocating place.

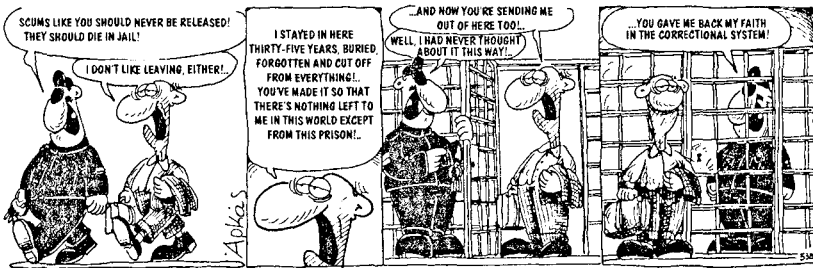
It suffices to observe the cells and the corridors of the building, which had initially functioned as a hospital. Each square-cell or other place of the prison has intense shading, a “blackness” hovering in the ceiling, which creates the sense of a heavy and suffocating atmosphere (Karakoltsidou et al. 1997:149).

In this prison the capacity of moving around is extremely restricted and, as we have stated, so is every kind of way out. In one of the first episodes of the series (*Bad company* 10: a), the Lifer, completely desperate, is considering suicide as a solution. “That’s it”, he says to himself. “If you run and hit your head on the wall, you’re finished once and for all”. But in the last part of strip, the deadlock becomes obvious: the space in his cell hardly allows him to make one step from one wall to the other. The Lifer confirms the deadlock by saying: “To run is just a figure of speech”.

Thus, the principal representation is that of a closed prison, with no exits. This effect is not only created by the spatial depictions. One of the very interesting elements of this comic strip series, which continues throughout the short self-concluded stories, is that none of the heroes are ever released from prison. The escape attempts always fail and in the episodes which portray the rituals leading to the execution of death penalty, a twist always postpones the time of the execution, leading the condemned man to a self-sarcastic mercy. The only hero whose sentence expires after 35 years is depicted in the relevant episodes standing in the exit of the prison, hesitant to walk away, while the warder's comment consolidates the commentary on the goals of the punitive apparatus.



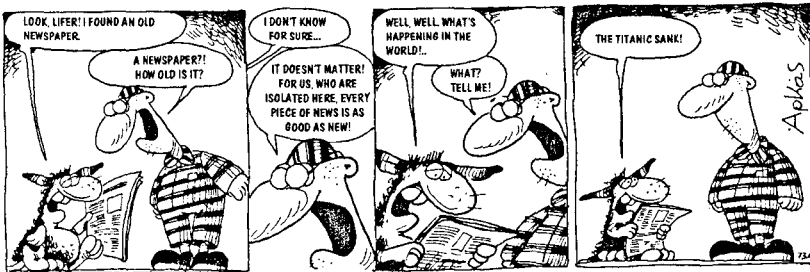
God loves the thief, 34b



God loves the thief, 53b

Time

The protagonist is convicted to a sentence of 622 years. This exaggeration but also the precision in the determination of the duration of the sentence (622 years, not 600, nor 650) constitutes certainly a comic occasion, but it also points to the representation of time in the comics. This time has a dimension of its own in relation to real time.



Bad Company, 73a

In addition, it frames the representation of the stagnation that characterises the prison of the Lifer, since the “events” and the developments which indicate his passage to the outer society, do not seem to concern this prison. Indicative of this divergence between the time that passes in and out of the prison are not only the episodes with the elections, but also the entire handling of the category “time” in the comic strip series.¹⁴

Varvaressou selects the notion of retrogression as the central pillar for the analysis of *The Lifer*, maintaining that it condenses in a wider sense the notion of regression and stagnation:

Undoubtedly, the official discourse maintains that the evolution of the punitive systems is perceived in terms of progress and improving modifications. However, the arguments which will be presented in the following, tend to claim that the prison, as an institution and as a form of organisation, can be interpreted by means of the notion of entropy: through constant frictions and modifications, it succeeds in proving itself invulnerable as far as its ideological core is concerned and therefore nailed in primary stages of its organisation. (X. Varvaressou, *forthcoming*).

The other representation of time in *The Lifer* regards the singular handling of the category “time of sentence”. *The Lifer* is not convicted to imprisonment for life, but for 622 years. At the same time, however, from the very first episodes of the series, we are informed that the hero is innocent, a victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Should we surmise a comment on the manner in which Justice is served? In the comic strip series on the whole, however, the type of the offence rarely constitutes an element of the plot and therefore, the duration of the incarceration seems to be autonomous from the reasons that imposed it, since it is not connected to specific offences as retribution. Thus, the representation of “time-sentence” is not founded on the existence of a relation between the crime and the sentence, but, it is, on the contrary, based on the deconstruction of this relation: the time of incarceration is not represented as punishment (just or unjust, strict or less strict) for committing a specific act. This element does not derive only from the information related to the basic hero, but lies latent in all the episodes through the ambiguity of the references to the category “crime”.

The notion, however, of time constitutes a structural element of both the sentence/retribution and the penalty/reform. The prison sentence, as an

¹⁴ As the real prison itself. See S. Cohen, “Il sistema carcerario futuro”, in F. Basaglia & F. Basaglia Ongarò (eds.) (1975: 443).

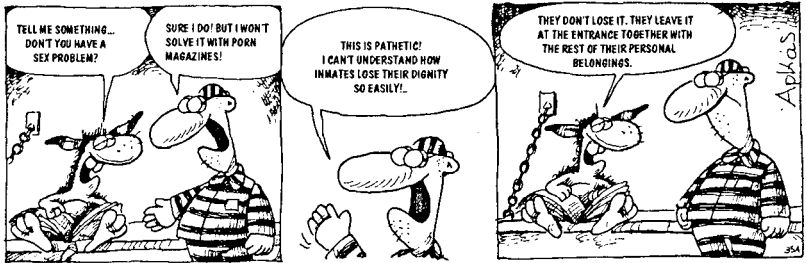
autonomous penalty, is based on the existence of an analogy, since it consists in the deprivation of a *quantum* of time of freedom as retribution for the committed offence. In contrast, the issue of the prison as an instrument of reform is based on a “temporal modulation”: the penalty cannot be endless because then it would not function. The role of the duration must be integrated in the function of the penalty in order to allow for the penalty to be effective (Foucault 1977: 107).

Could we claim that through this specific representation of time, the two, equally strong, goals of the penalty are both undermined? The overall aesthetics of the comic strip series dictates other interpretations, which do not restrict themselves to the “blatant” discovery that the punitive apparatus does not serve justice and that the prison does not reform the inmate.

In addition, the references do not exhaust themselves on the portrayal of violence “on the corporal level”. On closer observation, it is evident that the time of incarceration is not only represented as time of torture (in the frame of a platitudinous treatment of the relevant stereotypes) but mainly as time of de-education, of depersonalisation, of erosion.¹⁵ The plot of several episodes is founded precisely on the issue of oblivion that is caused by this “life” imprisonment. Oblivion which does not concern only the simple, everyday habits and pleasures, but also the crime itself which led to prison, making in this way one additional comment on the functions which are attributed to the penalty. One of the most characteristic episodes is included in the volume *A mouse in my soup* (p. 29: a): Montecristo is asking the elderly inmate, who has been in prison since he was eighteen years old, what crime he was convicted for. And he receives the answer: “I don’t remember anymore! ... I killed someone ... Someone very important, but I don’t remember whom”. An answer which gives Montecristo the opportunity to surmise sarcastically: “Julius Caesar maybe! ...” Time is shown once again in its differentiation from real time.

The changes that time causes on the corporal level are also portrayed excellently in the episode where the Lifer is trying to get a suntan, using the few sun rays which break through the railed window of his cell. This causes Montecristo to burst out laughing sardonically as he sees the “striped” reality of the prison being imprinted on the half-naked body of the unsuspecting Lifer (*A mouse in my soup*, 74:b) In addition:

¹⁵ Here, as well, the Lifer converses with another theoretical discourse, that of E. Goffman (1994).



Bad Company, 35a

Thus, the discussion is not only about the physical wearing off. In short, time in prison is time of desocialisation. This would not have been particularly significant on its own, since it would reproduce the well-known stereotypical views which are encountered in the dominant discourse on prison. However, its significance is revealed when placed in the context of the two previous observations, namely the correspondence between the “prison without exits” and the “sentence with no temporal grading and expiry date”.

This constant element of the dissociation of the incarceration from specific forms of illegal conduct, in combination with the notion of “circular” time, which begins at and returns to the incarceration, and the title of the series itself (*The Lifer*), strengthen the representation of the condition of incarceration as a life condition and relate to a very specific theoretical discourse on the prison as a “circular mechanism of exclusion”. The heroes of *the Lifer* constitute a representation of the recycling penal population and the prison comprises the irrevocable exclusion from society:

Nowadays we know, and the administration is fully aware, that no such thing [as virtuous people] is produced. That absolutely nothing is produced. That it is only a matter of skilful jugglery, a peculiar mechanism of circular exclusion: society excludes, sending to prison people that the incarceration disintegrates, shatters, and exterminates physically. And then, as soon as they are disintegrated, the prison excludes them by “setting them free” and sending them back to society. And there, their life in prison, the manner in which they were treated, their condition when they were let out, guarantees that society will once again exclude them, sending them back to prison, which in its turn ... (Foucault 1992: 8).

Authority

The representation of authority is also constructed on the basis of constant, recurrent elements of the comic strip series. The prison Administration

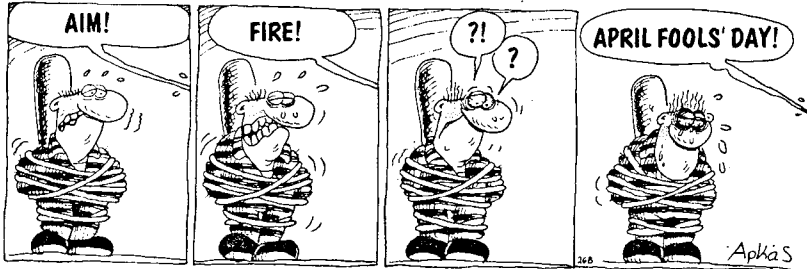
does not appear in any of the episodes and is only heard through the loudspeakers (*Bad Company* 26:a). It is therefore never personalised; it does not acquire specific attributes. This obscurity, however, is not translated as non-presence, since through the overall treatment of this element; a constant suffocating presence is underlined. Yet in *the Lifer*, authority does not reside in persons, it is rather embodied by an apparatus. The portrayal of the warders contributes to this representation, as they are numerous and participate in the plot of the episodes but do not consist of individual heroes or distinct characters. They are portrayed as identical, faceless under the caps and glasses which cover their characteristics, generally without variation or any nuances which could “blur” the clarity of an invisible and impersonal but panoptic authority.

This authority is, thus, omnipresent to apply the regulations, which “become all the more telepathic” (*Bad Company* 11:a), although being strict in the implementation of the “chastising supplements” of the penalty. These chastising supplements do not include only the isolation and the torturing, but also other means such as the lack of heating, for example, which is due to the fact that being cold constitutes part of the punishment (*God loves the thief* 23:a, b).

While during the evolution of the correctional systems authority ended up functioning mechanically and independently without requiring the physical presence of its bearers, the representation of the panoptic authority in *The Lifer* is, however, founded precisely, as it was mentioned, on the constant suffocating presence of numerous warders, that leave no room for escape. The warder who supervises *The Lifer*'s loneliness appears at least ten times a day at the aperture of the cell-door, with the result of “so much social life being tiring” (*Bad Company* 10:b). The total control that the punitive apparatus exerts on the life and death of those who get caught in its cogs is also represented in a particularly lucid manner in the execution rituals of the death penalty (see strip on the next page).

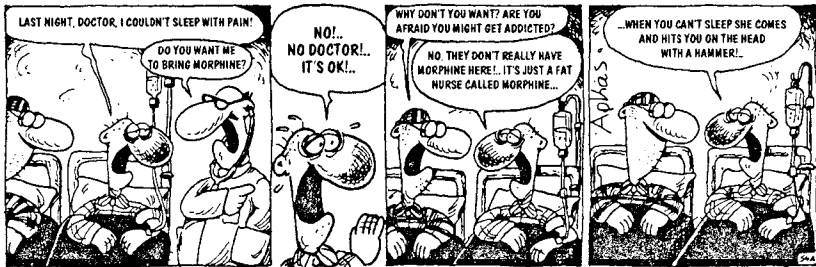
The second element of interest in the representation of authority is the dearth of references to the army of specialists, who undertake, using refined methods, the disciplining of the inmate (psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, criminologists).

We could claim that since the principal representation refers to a purely repressive apparatus, the “technicians” and the “techniques” of treatment do not conduce to the ideological structuring of the message: the punitive violence is represented in its primary and “clearest” form when the object

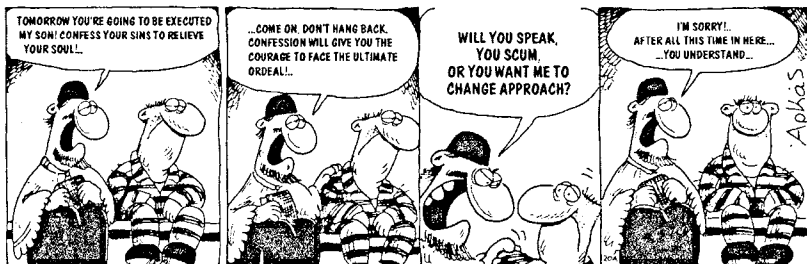


A mouse in my soup, 26b

of punishment was the inmate's body and the authority engaged in an “un-wise, exaggerated waste of bodies and forces”, to borrow the Foucauldian terminology. However, once more, by means of a theatrical gesture, of a kind of *coup de théâtre*, Arkas reverses the situation by introducing two very interesting characters: the priest and the doctor, who constitute the only reference to the personnel of treatment, but, as a rule, appropriate the roles of the warders.



A mouse in my soup, 54a

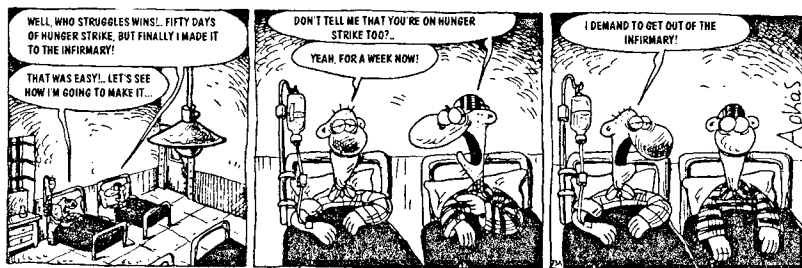


Bad company, 20a

Thus, neither this element seems at first sight, to constitute a break in the representation of an inflexible punitive structure. An interpretation of this kind, however, would completely invalidate the presence of these two characters, who, on the contrary, are very significant.

First of all, the numerical excess of warders could be interpreted as a reference to the real deficit of the correctional institutions (and not only the Greek ones) as regards the treatment personnel, a fact which indicates the real goal that the organisational structuring of the prison serves.¹⁶

Besides this, however, the reference could concern the violence itself, in “material” or symbolic terms, which the goal of the reforming intervention to the personality of the law offender includes and entails, in a structurally pathological and desocialising environment, as that of the prison. It could concern what is described as “scientification of the repression”, which translates the techniques of treatment to techniques of “manipulation” and is summarised in S. Cohen's remark (1975: 456 et seq.) that the technicians of treatment, and especially the doctors, have become very efficient guardians of order since the environment of prison is suitable for medical abuse.¹⁷ Foucault, in the *Visit to the Attica Prisons*, characterises the psychiatric ward as the “exclusion of exclusions” or “exclusion in the second degree”. How do the inmates react to this violence?



Doctor I feel a burden, 73a

But they were also revolts against model prisons, tranquillisers, isolation, the medical or educational services. [...] [There were] contradictory revolts: against the obsolete, but also against comfort; against the warders, but also

¹⁶ E. Daskalakis (1988: 45) states figures from US statistics, according to which: one social worker corresponds to 846 inmates, one psychologist corresponds to 4282 inmates, while the ratio of warders to inmates is one to nine.

¹⁷ A significant relevant testimony is the one of Sofia Argiriou- Kyritsi (1986).

against the psychiatrists [...] In fact, they were revolts, at the level of the body, against the very body of the prison. What was at issue was [...] its very materiality as an instrument and vector of authority; it is this whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the "soul"- that of the educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists- fails either to conceal or to compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools (Foucault 1977: 30).

Discipline

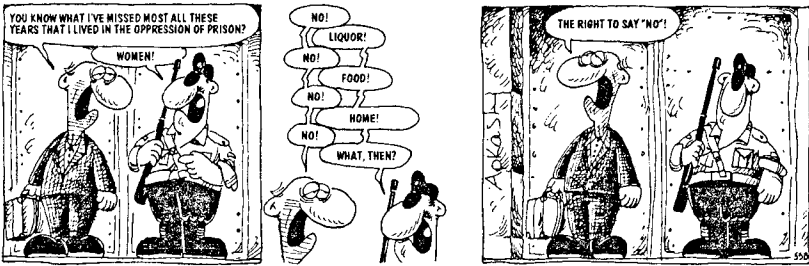
Related to the aforesaid are also the observations concerning the representation of discipline in *the Lifer*. In the prison of *the Lifer*, discipline is enforced with tortures of medieval character. Simultaneously, obedience is secured with more "refined" methods as well, such as the endless time spent in the dark in isolation, where time passes with "a little reading, a little needlework" (*Bad Company*, 25:b), while the wretched building and living conditions constitute additional facets of the inmate's "training".

Seeking once again references to the real, we could claim that an old maxim, which never ceased to hold true, is represented in an excessive manner: while the body is being replaced by the soul as the object of the punitive apparatus, the corporal torturing loses its real and symbolic value but does not cease to exist in the physical dimension of the incarceration conditions and of the enforcement of discipline as "chastising supplement" to the penalty imposed.

In the history of the prison, this chastising supplement is the evolution of the principle of *less eligibility* which underlies the English legislation for the poor (Poor Laws 1834), namely that the welfare status should not be preferable to the employment status, even under particularly onerous terms. This principle was extended to determine the condition of the correctional institutions of the time as well, since the living standard of the inmates could not be better than that of the low strata of the population.¹⁸

¹⁸ G. Rusche, O. Kirchheimer (1978) correlate this principle to the conditions that are formed in the labour market, integrating it in their principal hypothesis that the punitive systems perform a significant economic function as regulator of the labour market. See also D. Melossi, *Mercato del lavoro, disciplina, controllo sociale. Una discussione del testo di Rusche e Kirchheimer*. Introduction to the Italian edition of the work by Rusche and Kirkheimer (1978:12), D. Melossi, M. Pavarini (1977: 81-82). Foucault, finally, refers to the maxim by saying that "it is just that a condemned man should suffer physically more than the other men [...] It is difficult to dissociate punishment from additional physical pain. What would a non-corporal punishment be?" (1977: 16).

The only condition of survival in the face of the exhausting discipline apparatus of the Lifer's prison seems to be submission to a violent and arbitrary authority, which does not seek consensus but merely compliance. In the literature, there is a description of the process of transformation to a "good inmate", which replaces the process of transformation to a "good citizen" and which consists of the gradual adoption of behaviours that show passive and opportunistic compliance to the formal and informal rules of the prison. Behaviours of submission and not of consensus, since they are determined by an attitude of hostility and distrust towards the personnel that enforces compliance to these rules (A. Baratta 1982: 187-188).



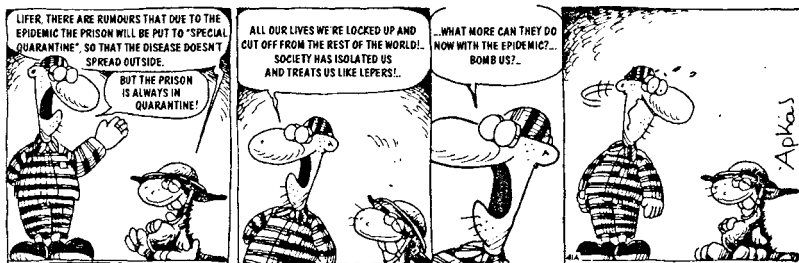
God loves the thief, 55b

The question "where is Justice?" itself, which the Lifer poses to a fellow inmate of his, takes the form of a riddle. And his fellow inmate, who is always depicted being chained in the isolation cell, has all the more reasons to answer: "I don't know it! ... My turn now. What runs about all day and lies under the bed at night?" (*Doctor I feel a burden, 20:a*).

But the achievement of socially beneficial goals through the execution of the penalty also poses an additional question: when the condemned man asks the warder, who, while supervising the corridor, steps out of his cell, "in a few days they will execute me! ... Tell me then, why? ... What will society gain from my death?"; the warder, puzzled (in the "bubble" of the next square, where he is portrayed alone, there is a big question mark), is scratching his chin and answers as if participating in a TV quiz: "Can you help me a little? ..." (*God loves the thief 28:b*).

This de-legitimised institutional (but, inevitably, also informal) violence causes reactions on the part of the prisoners. We interpreted the forms of reaction, which are represented in the episodes of the revolt, of the hunger strike or of the attempts to publicise the conditions of imprisonment, as the

occasions used to emphasise the comment on the social exclusion, by means of the representation of prison as being constantly under “quarantine”.



Doctor I feel a burden, 41a

Society

If we consider the prison as the ultimate stage of a process of social exclusion, which, for the vast majority of the inmates, has been activated in the frame of other institutions before even coming into contact with the system of administration of justice (A. Koukoutsaki 1997: 55), the “image” of the quarantine does not indicate the distancing of the prison from the society, but the irrevocable character of the exclusion. Consequently, it does not represent a breach in the prison- society relation, but in contrast, it is founded precisely on this, on the relation, that is, between the excluding and the excluded.

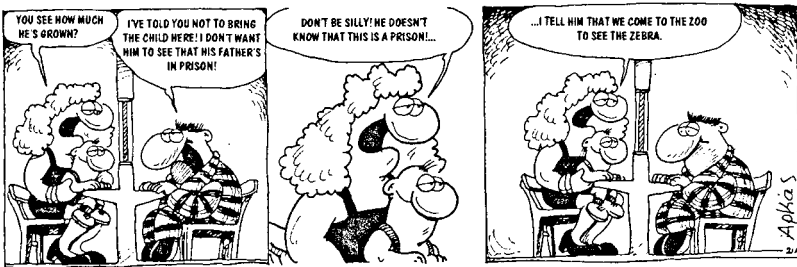
In the prison of the Lifer, society is not absent. On a first level, it is (re)-presented by a representative, “on its behalf”: Clementine, the sparrow, “a kind of journalist with wings”, which brings the news from the outside world (*A mouse in my soup* 59:b), always stands on the railed window and never flatters in the prison except for an isolated incident with the condemned man, intermediating and filtering the portrayal of both sides (of the prison, of the society). A social scientist can study this intermediating role of the mass media, which filter and reconstruct the reality; they represent it through specific “images”, contributing, in this manner, to the shaping of this relation between the prison and the society. He could, however, become a hero of the comic strip series himself, with a morphotype which would refer to his authority, since by means of his discourse as well (one additional symbolic system of reproduction of the reality), equally strong

images and representations are produced – for what else is the scientific discourse on the singularity of the criminal and the resocialising function of the prison?

However, society participates in the life of the prison represented by other external heroes too, like the lawyer and the adulteress wife.

The element, which is reiterated constantly in all episodes that the lawyer participates in, is that the legal means exist to be rejected, so that the prolongation of the incarceration is institutionally ratified. The outcome is always and for everyone the same: in the simplest of words, “we’ve been had!” (*Doctor I feel a burden*, 43:a).

The adulteress wife, the only female figure in the entire comic strip series, incarnates the fantasies of the inmates but also of the other component of the correctional community, of the warders. In all the episodes in which she either participates, or reference is made to her, the plot is structured in juxtaposition to the inmate husband. Thus, we integrated the element of her presence in the framework of the principal representation and, specifically, we thought that she represents the breach with the past; the stripping of the inmate of his other social roles.



A mouse in my soup, 21a

Society is further represented by characters which organically belong to the correctional community. Thus, apart from the doctor and the priest, the society is represented by the guarding personnel. For the analysis of this element we made use of an artificial shaping of pairs¹⁹ of warders and inmates, since the specific characterisation of the warders, as we have men-

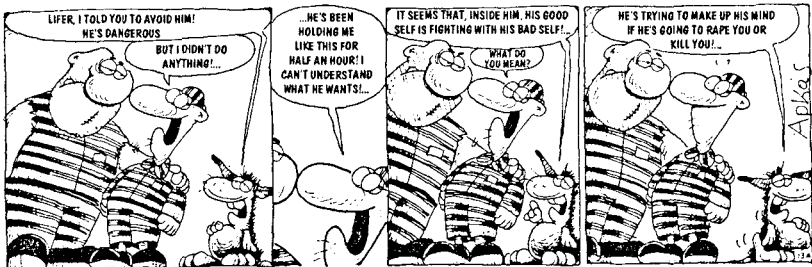
¹⁹ An alternative reading of the Lifer's prison was based on the inter-crossing of pairs of “internal” and “external” heroes, from which we drew the pattern that follows (P. Martinidis 1997).

tioned above, derives from the plot of the episodes; they are not, in other words, distinct characters.

Thus, in the frame of basic reference to the irreversible character of the condition of incarceration, the warders-prosecutors are intersected with the fugitive-prisoners, in a series of episodes that represent the inevitability of escape but also, the warder of the external gate is intersected with the released man in the episodes that comment on the ideal of resocialisation.

Finally, one further intersection, which P. Martinidis (1997: 245) also points out as one of the very apt remarks of the comic strip series, concerns the two faceless heroes; the one who fantasises images of freedom behind the door of his cell without acquiring a specific face in any of the episodes and the faceless Administration of the prison, which is not one specific warden, but a reference to the impersonal repressive apparatus; this is how the juxtaposition of the condition of incarceration vis-à-vis the condition of freedom is structured. These heroes never intersect, but their invisibility itself founds a form of correlation (see the relevant indicative episodes in *A mouse in my soup*).

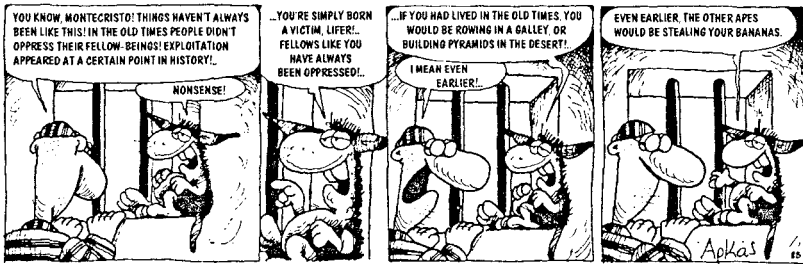
Finally, Society does not only participate through representatives. It also participates through classifications and categorisations:



Doctor I feel a burden, 13a

The relationship between the characterising and the characterised is also part of the relationship between the excluding and the excluded, on the basis that characteristics assigned exclusionary status, structure the stereotype of the criminal. However, if the theoretical foundation of the incarceration creates and exploits the stereotype in order to use it as a pretext for the operation of “dressing” the penal population in relation to the correctional treatment, *the Lifer’s* episodes are structured both on the basis of the stereotype of the inmate-criminal, and on its reversal.

The most indicative example is the “construction” of the main characters and of their confrontations, where the references to characters and situations, pertinent not only to the prison but also to the wider society are obvious.

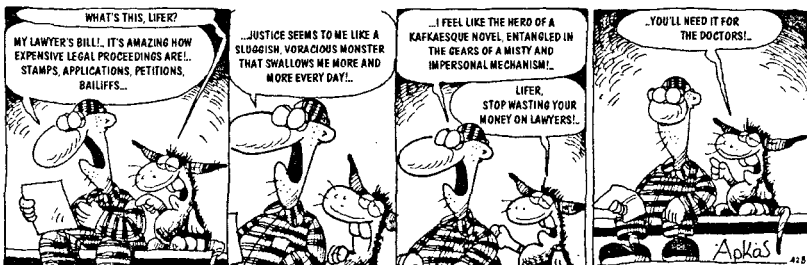


Doctor I feel a burden, 8b

We could, perhaps, see *The Lifer* as incarnating, for the most part, the stereotype of the maladjusted (to the prison or society) intellectual and, secondarily, of the prisoner who suffers the tribulations of the incarceration.

Reversely, Montecristo is represented as more than an institutionalised prisoner, as “oversocialised”, since his characteristics would allow him to survive with equal ease not only in prison, but also in society.

Thus, the reference to the dominant ideologies on the singularity of the criminal-inmate simultaneously constitutes their criticism, and the relation between the excluding and the excluded is represented in its most lucid form which does not hide any kind of legitimation: the prison does not re-socialise, the punitive apparatus does not serve justice, the character of the exclusion is irreversible.



Doctor I feel a burden, 42b

To sum up our observations, we shall point out one particularity of the approach we attempted, which tends to appear as a contradiction to the entire endeavour.

The prison, as an autonomous punitive institution is born under specific historical and economic conditions,²⁰ while the development of these conditions determines its functional purpose each time. The notion of treatment itself, which has been the central axis of our analysis, refers to one such historical moment. Consequently, one could maintain that the handling of the discourse on the prison presupposes and entails a historical approach, the investigation of its historical role.

Thus, an endeavour of this kind, where the (a-historical) discourse of a comic strip series converses not with the reality, but with a critical discourse on the object to which it refers, could be perceived as contradictory. However, we made use of this contradiction and integrated it in our analysis, tracing in certain constant (a-temporal, in a sense) categories, a diachronic commentary on the prison.

The Lifer is not, of course, a theoretical discourse. As a consequence, it would be certainly exaggerated if, in the representation of the methods of the inmate's disciplining, for example, we sought references to the expediences, which, in every specific historical conjuncture, the "body", which tends to become "docile" should serve.

The violence of the punitive apparatus, however, in its material and symbolic version, is a diachronic element, which acquires specific historical substance since the specific characteristics and its functionality are integrated and depend on the structure of the social relations at the time. In the analysis of the representation of violence in *the Lifer*, thus, we pointed

²⁰ The deprivation of freedom as an autonomous penalty appears only in capitalism. The idea of depriving freedom in terms of time, determined in an abstract manner, can be materialised only in the capitalist system of production, that is, in this economic process where all the forms of social wealth are reduced to the most simple and abstract form of human labour which is measured in time (D. Melossi, M. Pavarini 1979: 242-243). We refer to the very significant Soviet law theorist E. Pasukanis (*General Theory of Law and marxism*, first edition, Moscow 1924), according to whom the complete development of the Law exists only in the commodified society and mostly in the society of generalised production of commodities, that is in the capitalist society. The measuring, thus, of the penalty in temporal terms is possible only in a system where the notion of the human labour measured in time (salaried labour) is completed, while it is connected to the notion of exchange of equivalents, as the (temporary) deprivation of freedom represents the simplest and most absolute exchange value, the value of salaried labour.

out an analogy with the “reality” of the violence in the prison, since its constant presence shows the diachronic character of this element, which is endemic in the material reality of the incarceration itself. What is interesting, moreover, is that this “squandering” violence does not constitute merely the “easily digested” part of the representation, the element that will cause laughter by means of an often cynical kind of humour. In complete harmony, this violence is related to the image of time. The time in prison is not only time of torturing but, as we have mentioned, it is primarily time of desocialisation. Consequently, it is related to the idea of a “time of circular exclusion”. Through this particular treatment, time emerges as one of the principal components of the representation of a prison, which does not re-socialise but, in contrast, raises extremely strong opposition to this objective. In short, the representation of an inflexible desocialising structure, without exits, by analogy to the pattern of exclusion/rehabilitation, which also lacks exits because it is structurally contradictory. In this sense, we traced in *the Lifer* a commentary on the prison, which can hold true both for the period of hegemony and for the period of crisis of the institution, since it concerns precisely these characteristics that render the history of the prison the history of an impossible reform.

Epilogue

Since not only the method and the conclusions are presented in the present paper, but there are also latent references to the living experience of our work with the *Lifer*, we should, finally, point out one additional, almost schizophrenic, antinomy. This antinomy lies in our attempt to extract *The Lifer* from its natural environment, that of the mass culture media, and to place it in a conversation with a confined public of “specialists”, to constrain its humour in the obligation to be only critical and to comment with precision on the object to which it refers.

For two semesters we made an effort to function with consistency as Administration and warders of an academic status quo that determined the rules of the game, rejecting the “game”, but, often, going beyond ourselves in the effort to resist its charm.

The Lifer did not betray himself on his part: always maladjusted, he broke the rules and every so often drew us to spontaneous outbursts of laughter, which were not accompanied by the obligation to refer to theoretical discourse.

Maintaining until the end the advantage of being the occasion (that is, much more than just the object) of a criminological Seminar on the prison, withstanding our intention to contain him in an academic framework. As inflexible as that of his prison, the Lifer, in our final meeting in June 1997, said goodbye to the exhausted students, who had just completed the presentation of their papers, telling them, somewhat conspiratorially:

Sometime we'll be thinking about all this and we'll be laughing!...

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The Tale of ‘Correctional Redemption’

MASSIMO PAVARINI*

1. An opportunity for reflection

In 1994, my friend Alberto di Lazzaro and I were entrusted by the Italian Justice Ministry with the cataloguing of the photograph archives of Italian prisons. Only a part of this heritage of approximately 5000 photographs was edited. Though they were taken over a period of one hundred years, the most substantial sources are restricted to three different periods historically closest to us. The first occurred at the end of the Forties; the photographic documents that reached us – a percentage of which are still on plates – were commissioned by Minister of Justice Dino Grandi to celebrate the decennial of the Fascist Penal Reform, but only a part of these did he use in his work *“La bonifica umana”* (*“The Human Reclamation”*). The second substantial unused batch of photographs were taken in the Fifties; this iconographic documentation, which deals exclusively with juvenile institutions, was required as informative material for the International Congress on Juvenile Delinquency held in Rome in 1950 and organised by UNO. Finally, there is a more limited quantity of pictures of the Seventies portraying criminal mental hospitals, probably commissioned by the General Board of Directors of the Prisons for internal use, with the aim of bearing witness to the level to which these institutes had degraded. Besides these three considerable sources, the photographic archives of Italian prisons are also made up of many other pictures that are difficult to date, some of which go back to the end of the 19th century.

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From these precious but unknown archives, I have then selected a conspicuous number of pictures (about 500) which I published – along with a relevant comment and essays by numerous authors – in 1994 in a volume entitled *“Immagini dal carcere. L’archivio fotografico delle prigioni italiane”* (*“Pictures from Gaol. The Photographic Archives of Italian Prisons”*), which today remains one of the most significant works at an international level on the theme of penitentiary iconography. The scientific target of this voluminous publication was to put forward a discourse on penitentiary ideology through a choice of images of gaol that others had requested at different historical times, for purposes very distant from my own, in which the representation of prison intermingles with the way others wanted to portray it and in my view, with the way it was represented by the prison administration. In short, a representation of a representation.

While flipping through this “representation of a representation” almost half a decade later, I receive the impression that the need to satisfy the documentary profile has partially obscured – or at least muddled up – the critical endeavour (which I personally care more about) to construct a discourse on the correctional ideology by means of the representation that the Italian Prison Administration somehow wanted to give through that iconographic staging. I have therefore thought that the opportunity given to me by my friend Afroditi Koukoutsaki to make a contribution to this editorial enterprise could be a propitious and useful occasion to delve deeper into a discourse which was suspended, but never interrupted. Obviously, in these circumstances, as it is impossible to reproduce the entire iconographic material, I feel obliged to pick out but a few of these photos, namely those that seem to pertain most to the reconstruction of the iconographic representation of the correctional ideology.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, however, let me make two preliminary remarks: the first regards the nature of the penitentiary photograph itself; the second instead concerns my own point of view on prison.

2. The improper picture: true and false in the iconographic representation of punishment

The case of prison photography is typical of indecorous photography that has been excluded right up to the present day, except in very rare insignificant cases, even from the field of so-called “committed” photography. Yet a socially widespread prejudice prevails according to which photographs of

“social evils” help find a remedy. Still, this pathetic “social” utopia has not worked for the prison scourge: this is probably due to the fact that the guilty feelings over the prison condition are truer and more profound than those felt for other conditions of social affliction.

Amongst the old slogans of the editorial publicity of the historical texts on photography, the most insidious, which television has now inherited, states that its images constitute new “undeniable” evidence when the photo is “taken from life”, in which case it represents and simulates it. Apart from the overly profuse emphasis placed on this “miraculous” invention, this statement does not actually even apply to scientific photography, as for instance that of medicine. The comparison between medical photography and penitentiary and social photography in general can still be useful for us as a metaphor to clarify with what terms the optical mark formed by light can be explained. The X-ray of a tumour does not “represent” the disease, which only the poor patient can do; but it can help diagnose it.

If this is true of the optical image “taken from” a fact and a concrete object such as a tumour, it applies even more to the picture “taken from” social events and cases. Prison photography is a minimum optical sign, and thus a natural sign, almost a footprint of the shape of the guilt, of the punishment, of the subject and of the place where the event was experienced. Anything else that is deduced is not found in the sign, but belongs to the experience of the person who took the photo and of the person who sees it at a later time and elsewhere.

The photographic time-exposure of the human event, like any other real event, is an imperceptible segment of its entire duration. The event obviously has a three-dimensional shape, plus a fourth dimension, namely that of time, which can be represented and described in some code or other. This shape, however, is not that of the morals of the human case; it is not that of social relations and circumstances. Thus, the proclaimed syllogism of the photographic document “taken from life” does not work at all, even though we could pretend to believe that the optical image could represent the second term of an equation, the first of which is reality, even truth itself. And if we honestly do believe in the equation, instead of pretending to do so, then we are victims to one of the most dangerous forms of alienation.

What the photograph actually proves – and can evoke much more effectively than images manufactured with other processes, are instead the social customs, intentions and purposes for which it was taken, whether it was

later disseminated or not. For instance, in the Photograph Archives of the Italian Prisons there are photos of gaols which were edited and propagated as postcards, which is as if to say that they were offered for a special type of consumption with its own social history, motives and characteristics which can be quite clearly defined in time and space. The profound significance of a particular kind of postcard does not lie in what is written on the back, but in the quality of the choices, both the editor's and the consumer's. The sorts of things from which the choices of this product derive are well known to us all: flowers, sanctuaries, pretty animals and children etc. Adding the prison "monument" to this repertoire obviously bears a meaning, and the meaning of this choice relates to the image represented in order to represent "something else". But what "else"?

This is the point: penitentiary photography does not objectify prison, i.e. what it actually is. And it could not do so even if it wanted to. Nor does it bear witness to an aspect of the complex phenomenon it represents, such as the way it arranges the room, its furniture, the occupants etc. We can acquiesce that prison images, whether they are taken one by one or as a whole, are a fiction of the represented object. Yet, in as much as they are fiction, they bear witness to – in the sense that they account for – the intention of the person who produced a virtual reality making us believe it was true. The pictures of prison are to prison – we would be tempted to say, wrongly so – as Fellini's *fiction* "Rome" is to the city of Rome. But Fellini's genius is sincere: to make "his" Rome appear truer, the great film director did not use a single shot from life: he reconstructed his very own and thus true "Rome" in the theatre with papier mâché and lights. Whilst the prison photographs, in as much as they are images of "real" penitentiary life, are false. They would like to give us the illusion that they are telling the truth, while they are actually saying something else. And this "something else" is extremely far from the "being" of the gaol, in as much as they are a representation of its "should be". Prison is therefore always represented in its ideal dimension and, in this respect, the images are true, in the sense that they faithfully tell us something not only about the capability in the production of this staging, but also and foremost about the idea they intended to give of the punishment and of its execution at that particular historical time.

The great social mystification of prison (i.e. concealing what gaol actually is) necessarily ensues from one of the great promises of modernity: namely that this modality of punishing is mild and useful. It does not mat-

ter much that it is actually neither mild nor useful; indeed the need to justify it, as if it really were or at least could be so, is perceived even more stubbornly. At all costs: even if not foremost by lying. And what is the rhetoric of correction or of redemption otherwise?

3. Obscene prison, or of sufferance of the flesh

Let us thus ask ourselves questions concerning the Western value of the great promise of modern penalty: the "moderation and usefulness of punishment". And who on earth could doubt that the affliction of the soul is radically different from the physical pain caused by flogging the flesh? Furthermore, who could deny that modern punishment chastises to redeem, correct, re-educate, re-socialise and not for the pleasure of inflicting pain?

I shall quote from memory Gonin ("*La santé incarcérée. Médecine et conditions de vie en détention*", 1991), the penitentiary doctor who, focusing his attention solely to the prisoner's body, described the symptoms of the transformation of the senses of the "imprisoned flesh" as follows: approximately half of those who are sent to prison suffer from dizziness from the very first days; in 30% of the cases, the sense of smell is first upset, and later destroyed; within the first four months, the eye-sight of a third of those who have arrived from a state of freedom deteriorates, and in time they become "short eye-sighted shadows" because their glance progressively loses the support of the word, the eye no longer communicates with the mouth; 60% of prisoners start suffering from hearing troubles within the first eight months due to morbid states of hyper-acuteness; 60% experience, from the very first days, a feeling of "lack of energy"; 28% feel cold even in summer. Yet that is not the end of the merciless list of ailments of the martyred body: three pathologies are over-represented among those who have been deprived of their freedom in relation to a reference sample of free human beings: dental, dermatological and digestive disorders. On entering the prison, the digestive indisposition ("the prisoner is an alimentary canal, indeed a hole") directly follows the dental troubles, level with the otorhinolaryngological and pulmonary diseases; six months later, the number of skin affections decreases, whilst the alimentary canal complaints increase hand in hand with disorders of the respiratory organs, thus coming second only to dental pathologies. And the torment of the imprisoned body does not end here. Gonin takes us down to visit other lower circles of the prison hell: he talks about "swallowers" who use their intestines as a store-

room (up to three kilograms of various types of materials are extracted surgically); a diffuse vocation for the toothless mouth even after an obsessive request to extract teeth, instead of curing them; wild projections on the skin: red spots, rashes, perspiration, allergies and self-inflicted torture: lips and eyelids sewed with string; disfiguring tattoos; self-amputated fingers and ears; the risk of suicide and of contagious diseases, such as AIDS, ten times higher than amongst the free population; a drastic reduction in the life-expectation for mid-term and long-term prisoners; and, finally, a devastated and unrecognisable sexuality, including impotence, onanism and homosexuality. At the end of this route endured in/on the prisoner's body – not to mention the mental distress – we feel like shouting: "If this is a man".

No doubt, imprisonment as a punishment is – "*de facto*" – still and above all a corporeal punishment, something that causes physical pain, disease and even death. Essentially, though not always intentionally, it is a cruel form of punishment.

From this point of view, chastising by the privation of liberty for a certain judicially determined period of time leads to an insoluble paradox (incidentally, only one of the many in which the debate on prison has been entangled): this sort of sufferance is qualitatively the opposite of the deliberately corporeal one, metaphysically wanted to make the soul suffer (to regenerate and correct it in penance; to reform it in discipline; to educate it in sacrifice), and certainly not the body, but in its material execution it is, and still remains – beyond all good intentions and sometimes precisely owing to these – , torture of the body and limbs of the condemned.

I believe that the most enlightening work on this arcanum is Victor Brombert's "*La prison romantique. Essai sur l'imaginaire*": the culture of the 19th century – prison's golden century – saw penitentiary confinement as a typical dimension of the new Romantic sensitivity. What was understood in literature – from Stendhal to Hugo, from Neval to Dostoyevsky – as a symbolical locus of the dream and of poetry, was appreciated in the most widespread culture as it suited to the new sensitivity of the spirit: the punishment of confinement was opposed to the unpleasant spectacle of agony; it reacted to the light of the scaffold with the discreet twilight of an almost monastic cell; it replaced the condemned person's heart-rending cries with the prisoner's melancholy feelings. In "*Process of Civilisation*" illustrated by Norbert Elias, even the penitentiary invention seems to be a significant stage in the slackening of customs. In short: prison prevailed

over all other forms of penalty on account of good manners, if not also due to reasons which would nowadays be called aesthetic. Yet the loss of freedom is still a corporal punishment.

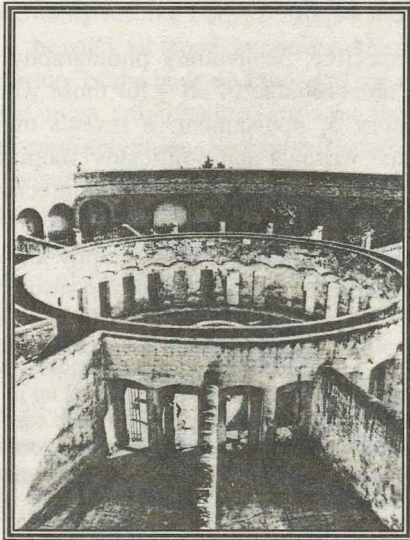
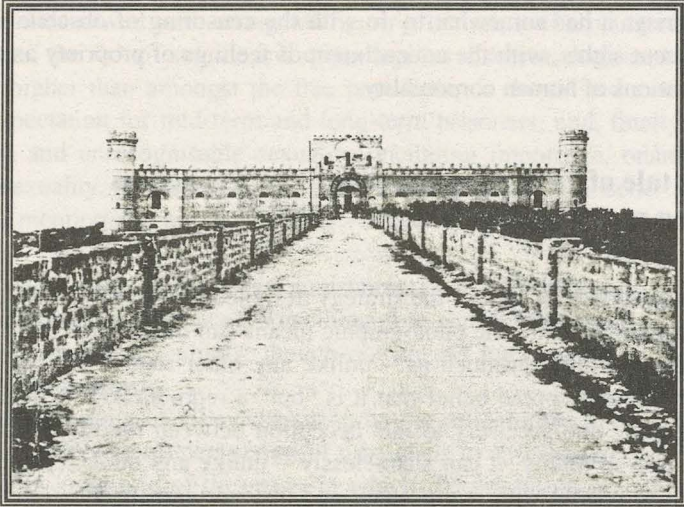
Therefore, the history of prison ends up being part of the broader history of hypocrisy: it has somewhat to do with the censoring of obscene words and indecent sights, with the concealment of feelings of propriety as to the manifestations of human corporeality.

4. The tale of “prison redemption”, in five scenes and a moral epilogue

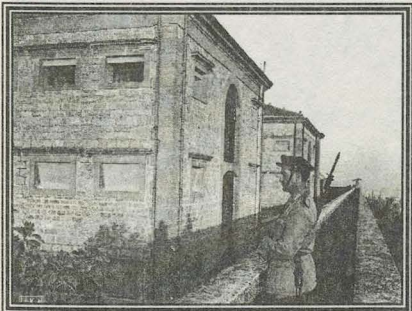
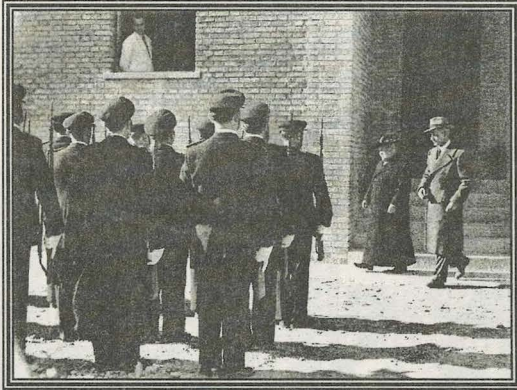
Prison photography is part of the strategy designed to conceal the obscenity of modern punishment; the photographic means can thus enhance its innate force of conviction inasmuch as – unlike any other representation – it is based on the widespread belief that it is “but” a reproduction of reality. In the meantime, due precisely to this deception between representation and reproduction of reality, it can shamelessly – unlike any other representation – omit to reckon with reality itself and instead limit its attention exclusively to the social construction of an “idea” of reality. By definition, therefore, penitentiary photography is, at all times and in all cases, “ideological” *par excellence*, in its twofold acceptance of the “vision” and “mystification” of reality.

In a historical perspective, penitentiary photography is thus a reliable source – perhaps the most reliable of all – for those who are interested in the “ideological” history of punishment: it reveals more about philosophers’ thoughts, jurists’ writings and politicians’ utopias, and in so much better a manner. It faithfully bears witness to lies precisely inasmuch as it reproduces a kind of reality unfaithfully. And if it holds good that nothing could be further from truth than an autobiography and nothing could be closer to truth than a tale, let us read the following story:

Once upon a time, in a faraway country, over the mountains and the seas, there was a country where bad men were kept locked up in a palace called Prison; and in that building, lots of magic spells were cast, the greatest of which being the transformation of those bad men into good ones. But children, pay attention: now I will tell you the tale of Penitentiary Redemption, in pictures, like a comic strip. Take a careful look at the photographs that follow.

the enchanted castle

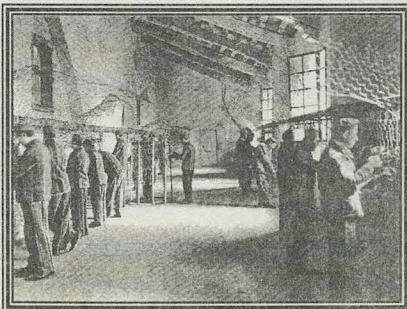
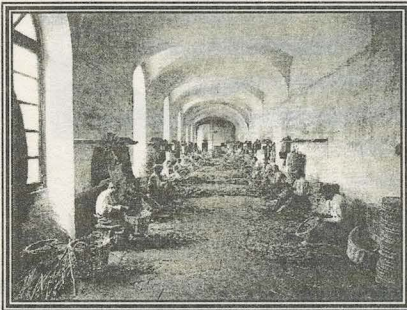
the wardens of the castle



the first spell

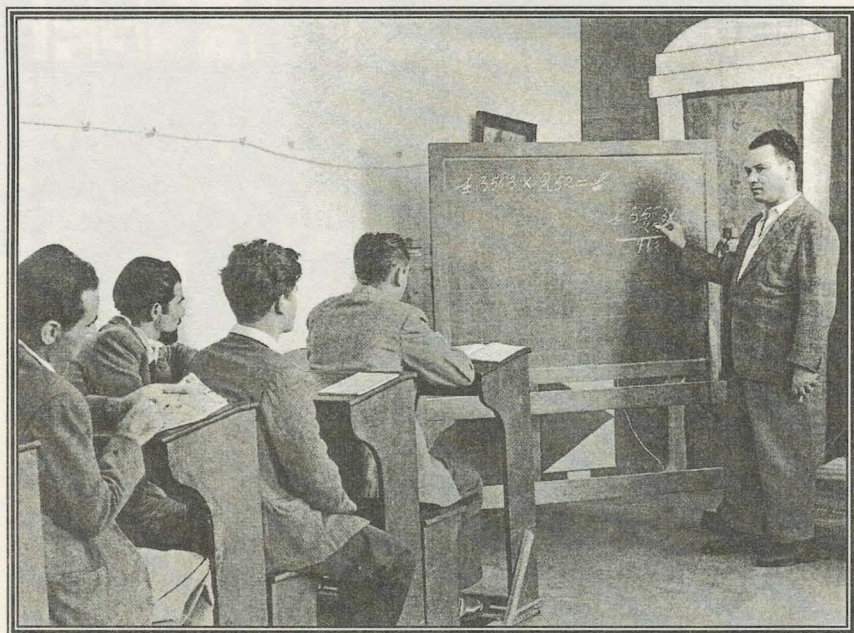
*educating to the
discipline of work*

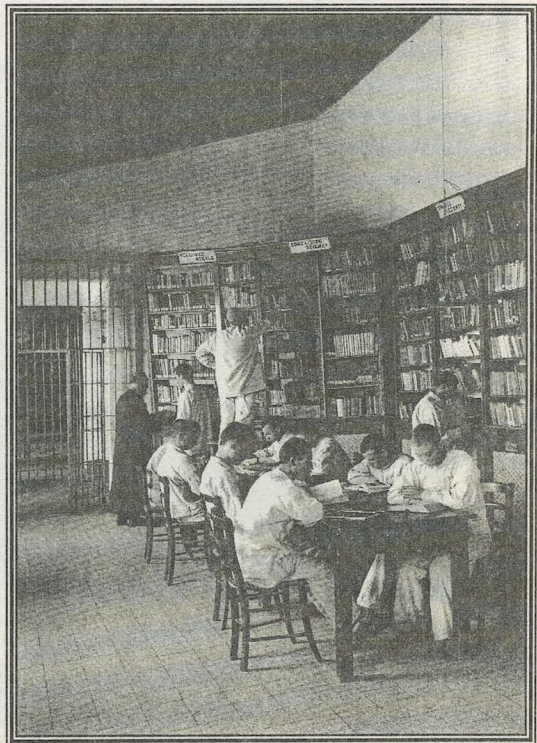




the second spell

*learning how to read
and write and do
sums*





the third spell

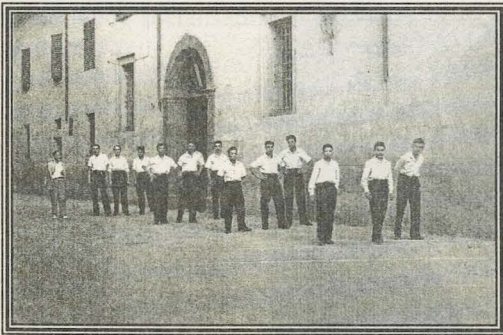
*praying to the good Lord and
recreating body and soul*

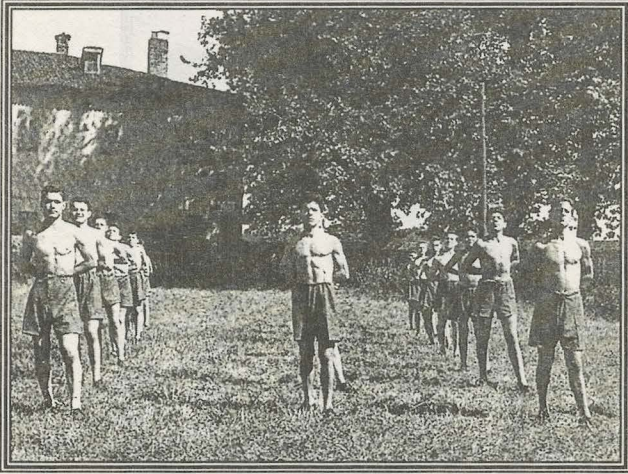


moral epilogue

finally they are all good!







the end

5. The morphology of the tale of "Penitentiary Redemption", or of the criticism of correctional ideology

Penitentiary iconography – which, in our example, was simplified, from the point of view of didactic narrative, according to a plot structure suggested by Vladimir Propp – plays a leading role in staging correctional ideology.

The idea that prison re-educates (or better: should re-educate), as emerges from these pictures, might of course make you laugh. Still, if you think about it carefully, any comic effect you may find is not due to the awkward iconographic staging of the idea, but rather to the idea itself. It is indeed simply and foremost ridiculous to even imagine that human beings could be made better and socially more useful by suffering a sentence to prison. Unfortunately, the comedy turns into tragedy when you think that this merciful, pitiful and ridiculous lie was used to conceal what happened, and still does, behind those thick walls. At the entrances to the Nazi extermination camps there was a signpost saying «Arbeit macht frei». In the same cynical way, our penal laws read as follows: «Prisons must tend toward the re-socialisation of the convict».

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