

# *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies*



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# Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies

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The current issue is the fourth of the eighth volume of the *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies (AJMS)*, published by the [Athens Institute for Education and Research](#).

Gregory T. Papanikos  
President  
ATINER





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### *A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

#### 16<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies

3-6 April 2023, Athens, Greece

The [Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs](https://www.atiner.gr/) organizes the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 3-6 April 2023, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies](https://www.atiner.gr/). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2023/FORM-MDT.doc>).

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- Submission of Paper: **21 February 2023**

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## A Mediterranean Participation in the Work of Pietro Bartolo and Lidia Tilotta

By Simonetta Milli Konewko\*

*Starting from a model introduced by Aristotle and successively elaborated by contemporary scholars, compassion is considered as the involvement in another individual's occurrence and is shown through a change in awareness or understanding, or an act to enhance the condition of another. Such compassion might be displayed as a positive word, a thoughtful conduct, or a helpful effort communicating that another individual is confronting an obstacle. The present study examines different representations of suffering and their related compassionate outcomes. The aim is to demonstrate the significance of offering caring attention to a mass of people perceived as unique individuals with an exclusive history, emotional experience, and self-awareness, rather than as undetectable individuals defined as a wave of refugees. This explanation is significant since the popular approach of the media tends to dehumanize the migrants, portray them as a group of individuals without specific needs, goals, rights, or responsibilities, and therefore associate them to a situation that is dangerously out of control. This study underlines the way in which the authors of the book utilize representations of suffering and compassion to recreate the migrants' identity and suggest a refreshed way of comprehending the flood of people landing in Lampedusa every day.*

**Keywords:** *theories of emotions, compassion, emotional proficiency, cultural competency, global communities, migration, autobiography*

### Introduction

*Tears of Salt* (2013) is a significant and compelling memoir by medical doctor, Pietro Bartolo, and journalist, Lidia Tilotta, that highlights a current world crisis taking place in Italy's southernmost island of Lampedusa. Located more than one hundred miles off Italy's southern coast, this island has become well known in recent years as the first port of call for the flow of hundreds of thousands of African and Middle Eastern refugees escaping civil war and terrorism and hoping to create a different life for themselves in Europe.

All through history and all around the world, individuals have always been relocating. They have been migrating from different countries and continents seeking better opportunities of life, and running away from natural disaster, political conflict, violence, oppression, wars, and poverty. As such, migration is a significant element expressing people's adjustment to environmental stress, social turmoil, and additional threats. But although migration is a global phenomenon, there is still no global understanding of how to manage it.

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\*Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA.

Studies demonstrate that our ancestors migrated from Africa and were moving around Eurasian grasslands and tundra migrating also herds of animals as mastodons. This process of spreading from Africa to Asia and then all over the world including the southernmost point of South America, took centuries (Bae et al. 2017).

During the Age of Exploration, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and European Colonialism, individuals started to migrate at a much quicker speed. According to the study by Eltis (1987) around 240,000 Europeans arrived in America ports and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, over fifty million individuals left Europe to resettle in America. The local populations, such as the Indigenous people in Canada, United States, Brazil, Argentina, and Australia were numerically overwhelmed by incoming colonizers and by those explorers' indentured laborers and slaves.

In recent years, migration practices became global progressions, thanks to technologies, developments in transportations and, for certain individuals, increased funds to migrate due to scarcity decrease. Global relocation has risen greatly generating complex conditions that impose a reexamination of our view of the world and resettlement (Ruist 2021). Nations today experience migration as country of origin, transit, and destination, and need to face changing demographics, evolving needs of labour markets and continued challenges posed by wars, shortages, human rights violations, and climate change.

This research aims to consider the representation of the mass migration arriving in Lampedusa proposed in *Tears of Salt* in order to grasp a different dimension of the migration phenomenon, give refugees a more authentic representation, and offer important skills for a global coexistence.

## Literature Review

*Tears of Salt* taps into the emerging trend of reconsidering migration as a form of people movement over long distances from one country to another, as well as internally, which has become the dominant form globally. The renewed interest in long distance migration has been demonstrated by the release of several significant movies and written works that depict a variety of immigrant experiences. Significant Italian films that have attracted the interest of the public for their authentic representation of the migrants include, among others, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti/Once You're Born You Can No Longer Hide* (2005) by Marco Tullio Giordana, which is inspired by the 2003 novel with the same title by Maria Pace Ottieri and focuses on undocumented migration to Italy via Mediterranean sea; *Terraferma* (2011) by Emanuele Crialese, depicts displaced individuals arriving in the Mediterranean island of Lino and facing the harsh reality that Italians are punished when attempting to save the refugees; *Ius Soli: The Right to Be Italian* (2011) by Fred Kuwornu centers on the experiences of men and women born in Italy who are denied the right to acquire the Italian citizenship by the *Ius Soli* law; Oscar nominated *Fuocoammare/Fire at Sea* (2016) inspired by *Tears of Salt* by Gianfranco Rosi, which documents the

lives of hundreds of thousands migrants arriving to Lampedusa from Africa and Middle Eastern countries; *La vita davanti a sé/ The Life Ahead* (2020) by Edoardo Ghebbi, screen adaptation of 1975 novel, *The Life before Us* by Romain Gary, which tells the story of a Jewish Holocaust woman survivor and former prostitute who offers a home to children of other women who work in the port of Bari and highlights the friendship between her and a Senegalese boy.

Among the numerous literary works focusing on the topic of migration, it is worth noticing, *Imbarazzismi* (2002) by the Italian-Togolese writer Komala-Ebri and translated into English by Marie Orton, *Embar-race-ments: Daily Embarrassments in Black and White...and Color* (2019), which demonstrates that although individuals start to change perspectives on citizenry, they still need to grow to create a society comprehensive of subgroups and people coming from different countries. Similarly, the plight of individuals longing to be socially recognized is the central theme of *Madre piccola* (2007) by Somali Italian poet, Christina Ali Farah and translated into English by Giovanna Bellisia-Contuzzi and Victoria Offredi Poletto, *Little Mother* (2011), which highlights the strength of women, family, and community and generates a strong desire for a native country that has been denied. Another work analyzing the effects of imperialism is *Regina di fiori e di perle* (2007) by Italo-Ethiopian writer and performer, Gabriella Ghermandi and translated into English by Giovanna Bellisia-Contuzzi and Victoria Offredi Poletto, *Queen of Flowers and Pearls* (2015). The novel focuses on the Italian occupation of Ethiopia and other individuals' stories who have experienced colonialism or have been expelled by force from their birthplaces.

It is significant to mention here the anthology, *Future: Il Domani Narrato dalle Voci di Oggi* (2019) by the African-Italian writer Igiaba Scego which comprises the works of eleven Afro-Italian authors who investigate the possibilities of fashioning a new sensibility, an innovative perspective, and an original language to create more cohesive global communities. Finally, another text focusing on characters who navigate between the cultural beliefs of their native country and their adopted home is *Dove mi trovo* (2018) by Jhumpa Lahiri and translated into English by the same author, *Whereabouts* (2021), which centers on the reflections of a woman examining her situation and vacillating between the necessity to fit and the rejection to develop permanent connections.

In the last ten years, scholars also offered significant critical investigations on the topic of individuals' relocations allowing a deeper understanding of this complex process. This body of works consists of *I migranti nel cinema italiano* (2009) and *Senza frontiere. L'immigrazione nel cinema italiano* (2012), by Sonia Cincinelli; *Media e immigrazione tra stereotipi e pregiudizi. La rappresentazione dello straniero nel racconto giornalistico* (2011) by Ernesto Calvanese; *Cinquanta sfumature di mare (per gli immigrati al largo del cinema italiano)* (2012), by Claudia Svampa; and *Racconti d'immigrazione nel cinema del reale* (2014) by Vincenzo Valentino.

## Methodology

*Tears of Salt* opens its narrative with the description of an autobiographical incident that happened to Pietro Bartolo as the doctor who runs the only medical clinic in his native island of Lampedusa and whose experience is being reported. At the age of sixteen, Pietro almost drowned in the Mediterranean after falling from his father's fishing boat unseen. In the opinion of some critics, this event was crucial to triggering Bartolo's empathy toward others in this respect: "The sensation of going under, gasping for breath and feeling left behind, provided him with a template for understanding the terror of countless others who have suffered the same fate – but without the happy ending of survival" (Morris 2020). In contrast, as clearly stated by Marjorie Kehe, what moved Bartolo was an emotion of anger toward the circumstances: "Bartolo is rightly angry about the conditions that created the suffering he encounters, but he is also deeply impressed by the courage and determination of many of the migrants" (Kehe 2018). In a similar way, the critic Adele Annesi underlined the emotional component of hope in Bartolo's writing and actions: "Throughout, Bartolo intersperses the miseries of human trafficking – rape, torture, disease, separation – and touches on attendant horrors, such as organ trafficking. Because he seeks to heal the body and inspire hope, he is a continual advocate for the refugees' plight beyond Lampedusa clinic."

The present study examines three increasingly intensified representations of suffering and their related compassionate reactions. The aim is to demonstrate the significance of offering caring attention to a mass of people perceived as unique individuals with an exclusive history, emotional experience, and self-awareness, rather than as imperceptible members of a flood of migrants. This clarification is important because, as will be specified later, the popular approach of the media is to depict migrants as a group of individuals without individual needs, goals, rights, or responsibilities.

Specifically, this analysis underlines the way in which the authors of *Tears of salt* utilize representations of suffering and compassion to reconstruct the migrants' identity and propose a renewed way of perceiving the flood of people arriving in Lampedusa every day. By doing so, the authors challenge the view that sees refugees as dangerous and threatening intruders. In order to investigate this emotional participation, I will utilize the work of several scholars that investigate the features and effects of emotions and in particular compassion such as, for instance, Martha Nussbaum, Maureen Whitebrook, and Miguel Noguerol.

## Discussion

The patterns of compassion considered here draw, among others, on the work of Martha Nussbaum who, as inspired by Aristotle in *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, claims that compassion is triggered by precise requisites: "the judgment of size (a serious bad event has befallen someone); the judgment of non-desert (this person did not bring the suffering on himself or herself); and the



eudemonistic judgment (this person, or creature, is a significant element in my scheme of goals and projects, an end whose good is to be promoted)” (321). Starting from this paradigm and expanding upon it, compassion is considered as the partaking in another individual’s experience and is revealed through a shift in awareness or insight, or a gesture to improve the state of another. Such compassion might be exhibited as a positive word, a caring behavior, or a thoughtful deed expressing that another human being is facing an impediment. However, two key questions to be asked are: How does the authors use representations of suffering to instigate compassion? Who are the subjects or conditions activating compassion?

### Compassionate Occurrences

Bartolo’s and Tilotta’s representation of suffering and compassion allows them to recount private and public stories and, at the same time, explore Dr. Bartolo’s emotional involvement. Reproducing a similar model already introduced in Italian literature through, for instance, Primo Levi, Pellegrino Artusi, or Clara Sereni, the authors insert another type of discourse within the immigrants’ experiences. First, they inform readers by means of an autobiographical narrative, including specific events and the emotional involvement associated with Bartolo’s life. Then, they complete their explanation with the narration of Bartolo’s encounter with the refugees, which becomes an integral part of the story and with which they explore and illustrate the emotion of compassion.

After carefully illustrating Bartolo’s memories regarding his precious attachment to a pet piglet when he was a child, the authors introduce an encounter with a very young Sudanese girl carrying her black cat in a carrier when arriving in Lampedusa with a British navy ship along with another two hundred migrants. As normally occurs in these circumstances, Bartolo was asked to examine the migrants’ physical conditions. For practical reasons, the girl was asked to leave the cat or to provide proof of its vaccinations. Unable to satisfy this request, she started to cry so hard that she began convulsing. At this point, the authors describe Bartolo’s compassion toward the girl: “I managed to placate her by promising that we would treat her pet well and give it back to her as soon as possible. We then helped to gather her family and put them all onto a bus bound for the reception center” (77). Following the example illustrated by Nussbaum, Bartolo’s compassion is triggered by his awareness of a difficult situation that might also happen to him and that the girl is a significant individual in his scheme of values. The authors propose this model of compassionate involvement to demonstrate that, although the immigrants might have left very difficult circumstances at home and experienced tremendous adventures before reaching Lampedusa, they also witnessed open-mindedness that facilitates the association and understanding of the plight of others. By linking Bartolo’s autobiographical experience to that of the girl, the authors suggest a connection between the two individuals. In this way, they highlight the notion that, even if knowledge of cultural differences might help to correctly interpret and understand the behavior of others, the significance of discovering similarities might be a more productive way to proceed.

Bartolo's experience also includes extremely dramatic encounters that activate compassion and a desire to better the condition of others. The authors propose the story of Faduma, a thirty-seven-year-old Somali, who was brought to Lampedusa by helicopter in the spring of 2016. During a rescue operation, she was picked up among many other shipwreck victims: "She was in a serious condition. She appeared to be partially paralyzed, and they thought she might have suffered a stroke" (95). Bartolo realized the seriousness of the situation and acted immediately to save her life. He later learned Faduma's age and that she had had seven children and was travelling alone. During the birth of her third child, she had suffered an apoplexy and a consequent paresis. The woman spoke dispassionately since she needed help: "Six months ago, the militia came to the house in Mogadishu where I lived with my husband, my children, and my mother . . . the children were terrified – we all were . . . They shouted at us, insulted us, threatened us" (96). Then the woman confessed that they were all crouching on the floor to not provoke their fury, while her husband attempted to convince them to take him and let everyone else go. Unfortunately, as the authors recount, "They grabbed hold of him and forced him to kneel in the middle of the room. They decapitated him. They cut off his head in front of our children. They are animals, ferocious, bloodthirsty monsters" (96). Faduma's only chance to survive and help her family was to trust her children with her mother and leave to find a job. Moved by Faduma's dramatic existence, Bartolo realized that she would not be able to find any work because of her condition. He believed that the only solution would be for her to return to Somalia and allow her children to be adopted by donors abroad through a nonprofit organization. Bartolo promised Faduma that he would help her to find that kind of solution.

The representation of this model of compassion focusing on the condition of vulnerability experienced by Faduma sheds light on a different model of compassion. Differently from Nussbaum, Whitebrook (2002) emphasizes the importance of vulnerability as the primary reason underlying emotional participation. In her opinion, neither the suffering nor the judgment of its cause produces compassion; rather, it is the person that is the proper object of compassion: "The vulnerable are those who can be taken advantage of, against whom power is exercised to their disadvantage" (537). Accordingly, vulnerability is a condition that exposes individuals to emotional trauma or to situations in which their feelings or rights are ignored, thereby allowing other individuals or institutions to take advantage of them. In our example, Faduma's position of liability due to her weak physical and psychological conditions enables the activation of compassion and underscores the significance of knowing another individual's experience. With this example, the authors call attention to a less typical kind of migrant that highlights the strength, courage, and independence of women, while offering an expanded view of attitudes of women coming from third world countries.

Compassion is also activated to accentuate the uniqueness of each individual arriving on the island. It is important here to understand how this process contrasts the representations of migrants offered by the media. It is commonly accepted, that the means of communications are powerful instruments to shape an understanding

of the world that people subsequently develop. Several studies demonstrate that this depiction contributes to generate a climate of fear associated to the arrival of a considerable number of migrants. For instance, the investigation by Arcuri (2015) clarifies that the media provides a perception of living in a society where there is a prevalence of undocumented immigrants much superior than its real number and that they cause the greater part of crimes. This impression of overestimation is caused by what Esgate and Groome (2005) define availability heuristic, a mental shortcut that depends on standards that come to individuals' mind when assessing a particular subject, person, or situation. This process operates on the premise that if an individual remembers something, for instance a notion of danger, it means it is significant. According to Cavazza (1997), individuals calculate the number of migrants in the base of their capability of remembering the news associated to them. In his opinion, the reasoning connected to this process is simple, "se mi ricordo tante notizie su questo argomento allora vuol dire che ce ne sono tanti" (93) ["If I remember a lot of news on this topic then it means that there are many"].

Although the media often refer to expatriates as a "flood of refugees" or a "boatload of migrants" (Hansen and Poggioli 2011) and emphasize the danger they may represent for the host country, the authors of the book stress the importance of individual attention. This model of compassion is introduced with the tragic event of October 3, 2013, when Bartolo was called to help in the aftermath of a shipwreck. The authors illustrate this tragedy with a description of a typical night for a fisherman in Lampedusa. They explain that one night a fisherman took some visitors out to a pristine natural cove called Tabaccara. Tourists often spend the night there, sleeping on the boat and then coming back to harbor for breakfast. That night they heard a noise similar to seagulls but when they approached the area, a horrifying scene appeared: "The sea was full of people shouting for help. And lifeless bodies. There was no sign whatsoever of a boat. The migrants' barge had gone down right by the entrance to the harbor. More than five hundred people were panicking just yards from the shore" (188). The fisherman, who was an expert sailor and had faced death many times, declared that nothing like that had ever happened to him. He saved twenty people who, although extremely unwell, were able to climb in the boat: "His boat did not have a ladder to make it easier for survivors to climb aboard. To get the survivors onto the boat, he'd had the crew grip his legs while he leaned out to heave them by the arms" (189). The difficulty was compounded since their bodies were covered by diesel oil. The fisherman said: "Many of them slipped through my fingers because of all the diesel – they might as well have been covered in grease . . . They went underwater, and they never came back up . . . I tried to save them, but I couldn't. It was dreadful . . . The sea was full of bodies. . . Dead bodies floating everywhere" (189). Because of the magnitude of such a disaster and because he was used to observing the Law of the Sea in which it is unthinkable to leave a dying person in water, the fisherman is represented as vigorously and generously working to save as many individuals as possible. He is depicted as activating the most accepted meaning of compassion, namely, simply feeling for another or attempting to alleviate another's suffering (Lopez et al. 2019).

Although it is often stated that disasters may provoke chaotic self-interest and brutal survival competition, through the fisherman's compassionate action, the authors of the book choose to represent an altruistic quality that exalts the generous spirit of Lampedusa but also the uniqueness of all three hundred and sixty-eight victims of this tragedy. After several days of careful identification of the body and bone fragments of the victims, it was decided to honor them by holding a regular funeral with coffins and the presence of relatives coming from all over Europe for almost every victim. The authors use compassion to emphasize the importance of resisting the view that considers refugees as exploiters, perpetrators of crimes, and those who are responsible for increasing economic inequality in their host countries. They propose, instead, the need to understand the migrants' circumstances and to assume the responsibility for improving their conditions: "We want people to be moved by the migrants' plight, to understand that they are good people who are grateful for our help" (183).

## Conclusions

*Tears of Salt* is the autobiographical work depicting Dr. Bartolo's personal experience in trying to save the greatest number of refugees arriving on the island of Lampedusa.

In their book, Bartolo and Tilotta (2018) demonstrate how the representations of the suffering of the immigrants and the compassion of the associated witnesses highlight each refugee's uniqueness and specific circumstances. Through this renewed perspective, they challenge the view that disapprovingly considers immigrants as a flood of individuals representing a threat for the host country and preventing its economic advancement.

The representations of compassion associated with the migrants' suffering call attention to the need to develop both an emotional proficiency that generates a tolerance towards difficult circumstances and an openness towards understanding others' plights rather than outright rejection, as well as a culture aptitude that fosters an awareness of and respect for individuals' different life conditions.

In the past 30 years, scholars have agreed that there is a lot to gain from learning how to accurately cope with individuals' emotions. As demonstrated by Noguerol's (2016) widespread investigation has indicated that emotional education capability as well as building the appropriate emotional environment can impact leadership effectiveness and consequently produce positive effects generating superiority, improvement, and transformation. In a similar way, Mayer et al. (2008) affirm the constructive effect of emotional education. For them, emotional intelligence entails the capability to undertake a correct analysis about emotions and the skill to use emotions and emotional expertise to improve reflection. Also, Goleman (2019) affirms that emotional intelligence implies being able to acknowledge our own emotions and those of other individuals and to apply the knowledge gathered from this practice to offer a correct reaction to the circumstances. Thus, one could affirm that such emotional ability would greatly

serve our need to integrate large groups of individuals in different global communities.

With approximately one hundred and ninety countries on the Earth and seven billion people who progressively move in search of a better life for themselves and their families, there is an urgent need to develop a sensibility toward other cultural approaches. According to Craig (2014), cultural competency is “the ability to interact effectively with people from different cultures.” He identifies four stages of cultural competence: awareness, curiosity, learning, and participation. In his view, achieving cultural competence is a progression more than an end point. In fact, what is significant in mastering these skills is the ability to acquire congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies coming together in a system that works effectively in cross-cultural situations. In a similar way, Mayfield (2020), recognizes the need to address culturally implanted narratives about racial order and to dismantle the systems of privilege and the institutions that propagate them with understanding, engagement, and activism. Axner (1993) stresses the significance of caring for others since that mindset produces positive outcomes. Specifically, she believes that establishing associations with people from different backgrounds can be key in making meaningful changes in our neighborhoods (Axner 2020).

The need to develop a different emotional and cultural approach toward the migrants arriving in Lampedusa emerges in several moments in Bartolo’s experience. For instance, the authors acknowledge that when a few refugees started to reach the island, it was a new phenomenon and the inhabitants were unaware of their provenience: “When the first migrants arrived more than twenty years ago, the Lampedusans called them ‘Turks.’ They were mostly North Africans who landed on the beach in dinghies or on life rafts, having made their way without the help of the smugglers” (24). The epithet “Turks” utilized by the islanders expresses a sense of detachment, intimidation, and instability that the migrants’ arrival generated. In Italian popular culture, if someone is said to be speaking ‘Turkish’, it means speaking in an incomprehensible and impenetrable way. However, the authors of this book recognize that, after twenty years, the circumstances have changed drastically and that people have realized the significance of shifting attitudes: “But all at once, everything changed: many more refugees arrived, with many more reasons for fleeing home. And that is why I now need the support of the Lampedusans to do my job. When the despondencies threaten to get the better of me, they give me the strength to keep going” (24). *Tears of Salt* demonstrates that emotional and cultural abilities promote communication among individuals with diverse backgrounds, thus generating positive outcomes for peoples’ identity, assimilation, and development. These valuable approaches, far removed from assigning blame and provoking feelings of guilt, can lead to inclusiveness and practices for learning about differences and responding appropriately to them, which are imperative skills in our contemporary societies.

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## Acts of Official Grief on the Berlin Museum “Trauerrelief” (AMP 12411)

By Heba Mahran\*

*Grief is a human feeling that accompanies sad events or the loss of dear ones. Acts of grief were represented in ancient Egyptian funerals for both males and females. Attendants of a funeral vary between family members, friends, professional mourners, official representatives - in case of high officials- and priests who were involved either in mummification or recitation of prayers. The current study is analyzing a scene of the funeral of the High Priest of Ptah, Ptahemhat-Ty. The relief came from Saqqara and is now a famous piece in Berlin Museum (AMP 12411). Grief on this relief came in two levels; the family level and the official level. The acts performed in the funeral vary between emotional acts and conservative acts. The sons of the deceased acted in distress and deep sadness while officials were sad in discreet and demure way. Both acts were expressed in gestures and facial features. Employing a descriptive analytical methodology it is deduced that official grief is conventional and conservative probably to maintain the image of the state with the exception of one or two officials turning the other way to hide their emotions of sadness from the public. Similar scenes of funerals of high officials show in most cases the same gestures represented on the Berlin Trauerrelief.*

**Keywords:** *mourners, funeral, official grief*

### Introduction

Representations of grief and mourning are depicted in tomb paintings and reliefs. Scenes of weeping and winning accompanied the funerary procession which was an important phase to transport the deceased from the earthly life into the afterlife (Colazilli 2018, Millward 2013).

The main attendants in the funeral were the deceased's family members among whom the son played an important part in performing funerary rites for the deceased acting like Horus did to his father Osiris. There were mainly two women acting like Isis and Nephtys lamenting the deceased as Osiris. Mourners were family members, relatives, friends, neighbours and sometimes professional mourners. They expressed sorrow and grief through gestures and spoken words. The participants included priests performing certain rituals and royal representatives in case of important funerals (Zeinelabdein 2016).

Both males and females were apparent in the funeral procession; though females acted in more affectionate performance: weeping, throwing dust on their heads or exposing their breasts in many cases, fainting, throwing themselves on the ground or gripping other mourners for support (Figure 1). Some of these

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gestures were natural others were just a requirement of the job (Riggs 2013, Millward 2013).

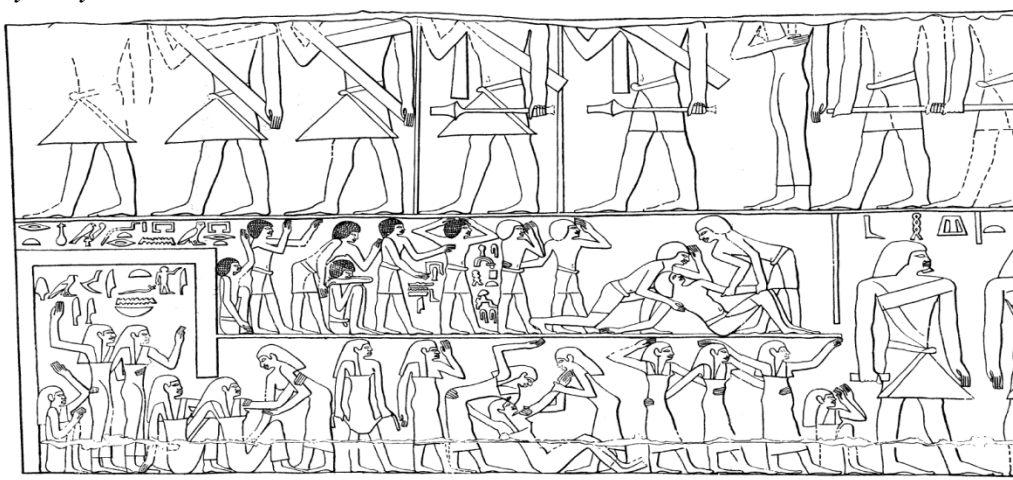
The expression of male grief was more conservative; they settle for just raising their hands over their heads in sorrow or close to their mouth or ears. In some scenes when they closely related to the deceased, they are shown falling on the ground out of despair as in the scene of Ankhmahor's funeral dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Figure 2).

**Figure 1.** *Female Mourners Wailing in Grief, Papyrus of Ani (British Museum EA. 10470.5), 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Budge 1913.

**Figure 2.** *Males and Females Grieving at the Funeral of Ankhmahor, Saqqara, 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Wilson 1944.

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Describing gestures of grief on the studied relief.
2. Clearing the idea of official attendees at funerals.
3. Studying similar scenes to identify similar and different gestures.

## Literature Review

A number of articles studied the famous relief known as Trauerrelief (Berlin 12411). Most of them were interested in the titles of the personnel attending the funeral. These works represented a starting point to study the scene and the details examined in the current study. Others discussed mourning as a practice in Egyptian funerals both for males and females.

Schulman (1965) focused on the officials represented in the relief trying to reveal the characters of the unnamed personnel.

Gressler-Löhr (2012) while describing the relief discussed the location of the deceased's tomb and his family members relating the relief to other findings of the family.

Barthelmess (1992) discussed the different episodes of the funeral through the scenes of the Theban Ramesside Tombs. This included scenes of both male and female mourners. Barthelmess pointed out some different gestures of male mourners.

## Methodology

The study employs a descriptive analytical methodology where the scene of the funeral is described and grief gestures are analyzed within context. Similar scenes are described as well to understand various gestures of mourning of similar officials attending funerals.

## Discussion and Results

### *Description of the Relief*

The Trauerrelief (Berlin 12411) dated to the Late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, reign of Tutankhamun-Ay; is representing the funeral procession of "The High Priest of Ptah", Ptahemhat-Ty (Figure 3) (Porter and Moss 1979, Berlandini-Grenier 1985, Maystre 1992, Raue 1999, Gressler-Löhr 2012). The scene comes in two registers. The first register represents various male and female grief gestures. The lady on the extreme right is wailing while kneeling raising her hands and bending her head backward. She is followed by the "chief of the retainers of the high priest, Neferhotep" who is bald and pouring libation (Schulman 1965).

Four men are raising their hands on their heads in sorrow while the fifth is crouching. The rest three men are holding funerary objects in the procession. Their baldness refers to their posts as priests. The names of these men are indicated without giving their titles; thus they are probably of lesser clergy of Ptah or priests conducting some ceremonies in the funeral (Erman 1895, Schulman 1965).

In the second register with a larger scale a number of officials and priests are as well represented mourning the deceased in different gestures. The first man from the right is bald, raising his hands and bending his body as if going to fall. He is raising his head with features of sorrow. He is followed by another bald priest

but this time he is putting his hands on his back-returned head in act of tragic grief. Those two personnel are most probably the sons of the deceased. The first is named Say (Gressler-Löhr 2012). The third person is Hormoheb. He is topped by the title “Hereditary prince and General *iry-p’t* and *imy-r3 mšc*”. He is followed by two doubled bald men. Both men following Hormoheb are titled “Overseer of the city and the Vizier” (*imy-r3 niwt T3ty*). Both viziers can be identified with the famous Nakhtmin and Maya (Schulman 1965). Following are nine persons interspersed by other bald men. The titles are inscribed above them (Raue 1999): the “Royal scribe and Overseer of the house, *sš nswt imy-r3pr*”, the “Royal scribe and Overseer of the Treasury, *sš nswt imy-r3 ḥtm.t/ sdw.t*” (Ward 1982), “Overseer of the Law-Court, *imy-rA rwy.t*” (Ward 1982), “Overseer of the Army, *imy-r3 mšc*”, “The Chamberlain, *imy-r3 ḥnw.ty*” (Ward 1982), “Overseer of the Treasury, *imy-r3 pr-ḥd*” (Faulkner 1991), the “High Priest of Heliopolis, *wr m3w*), probably Dja-Inheret (Raue 1999), “The High priest of Memphis, *Sm*, “the Mayor, *ḥ3ty-c3*”. Those are followed by a group of other men of a smaller scale of whom only the heads appear.

**Figure 3.** *The Trauerrelief (Berlin 12411) the Funeral Procession of “The High Priest of Ptah”, Ptahemhat-Ty, Late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Schulman 1965.

### *Official Representatives in Grief*

As the funeral was of a high priest; who was very important personnel in the ancient Egyptian state; a variety of posts appeared in the funeral ranging between military, civil and religious posts. They attended as representatives of the state participating in an important funeral just like in modern and contemporary periods.

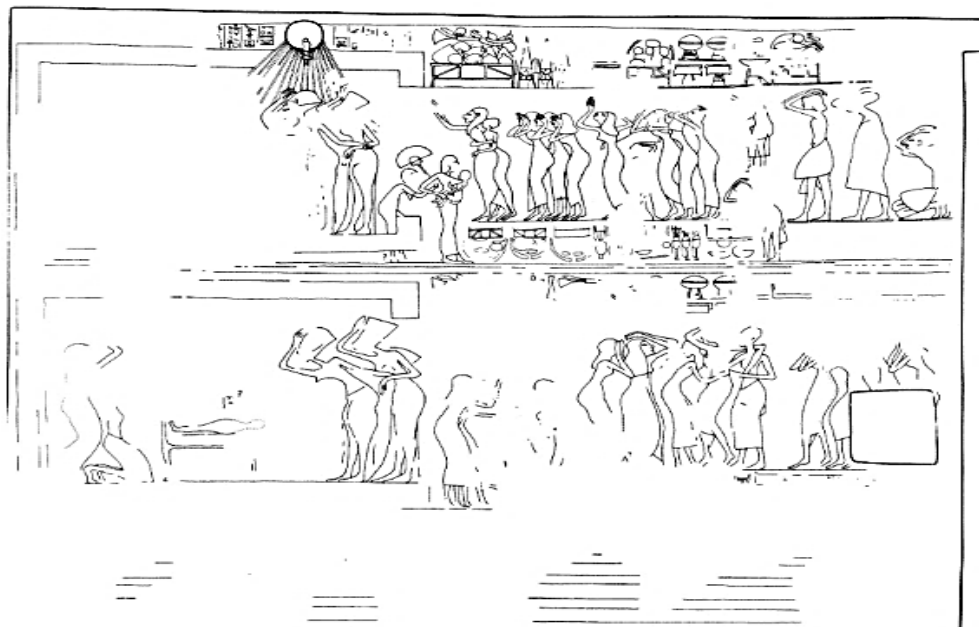
Hormoheb -probably here the chief of the official delegation at the funeral- is putting his right hand flat under the chin while his arm rests on the left. The overseer of the law court is making the same gesture with his left hand. This gesture is repeated by the overseer of the army though putting his chin on the back



of his hand. The chamberlain is turning back raising his hand to the back of his hair. The overseer of the treasury is approaching his hand to his chin. He seems to be chatting with the chamberlain. The sorrow of the rest of the officials is expressed through the looks in their eyes and the expressions of their faces. The mayor at the end is looking the other way raising his right hand near his eyes probably to hide his tears.

Showing official representatives in this manner is a kind of keeping the prestige of the state. Probably the only time when this was broken was in the scene of Akhenaten and Nefertiti mourning the death of their daughter from Amarna (Figure 4) (Martin 1989). It is their duty to attend but they have to be discreet in expressing their emotions in public.

**Figure 4.** *The Funeral of Meketaten, the Royal Tomb, Amarna, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



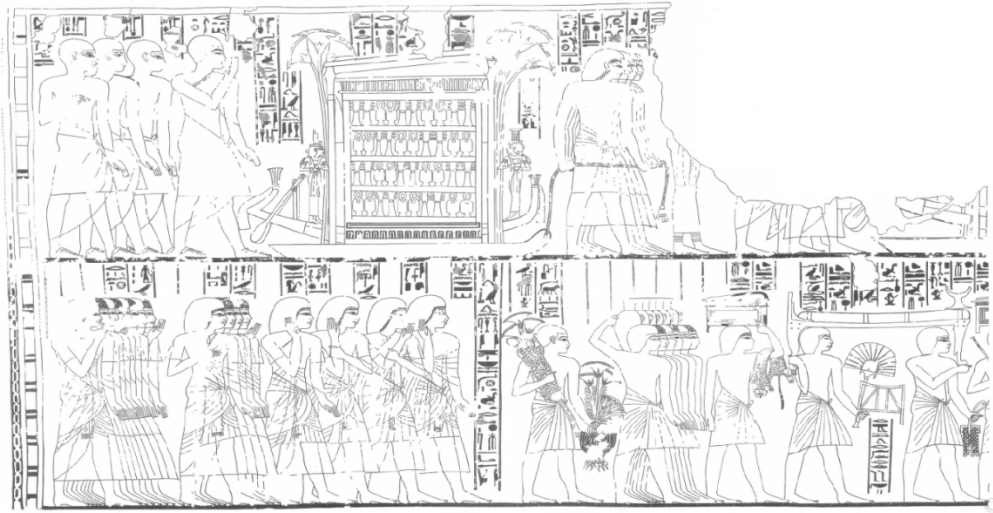
Source: Martin 1989.

The famous funeral procession of the vizier Ramose (TT55), 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty is followed -as referred in the text- by a group of fifteen officials (Figure 5). They are wearing mantels on top of regular clothes. Their titles appear on top of them as in the Berlin Tauerrelief (Figure 3). They are divided into groups; the first four each is assigned by a title: the King's son of Kush, the Chief messenger of the king, the Chief overseer of treasury, the Second messenger of the lord of the two lands. The second four are: the Companions (smrw) and the Greats of the palace. A group of seven officials described as: the noblemen (srw) and the greats of the city (Davies 1933).

Of the first group; three are raising their hands close to their ears perhaps in a final goodbye or perhaps reciting some prayers for the deceased, one of them is supporting his right hand with his left, and the fourth is raising his hands near his mouth. One of the second four is raising his hands near the mouth like the one in

the first group. Two of the last seven; the first and the last are making the same gesture. The rest of the fifteen are just walking in silent movements (Figure 5).

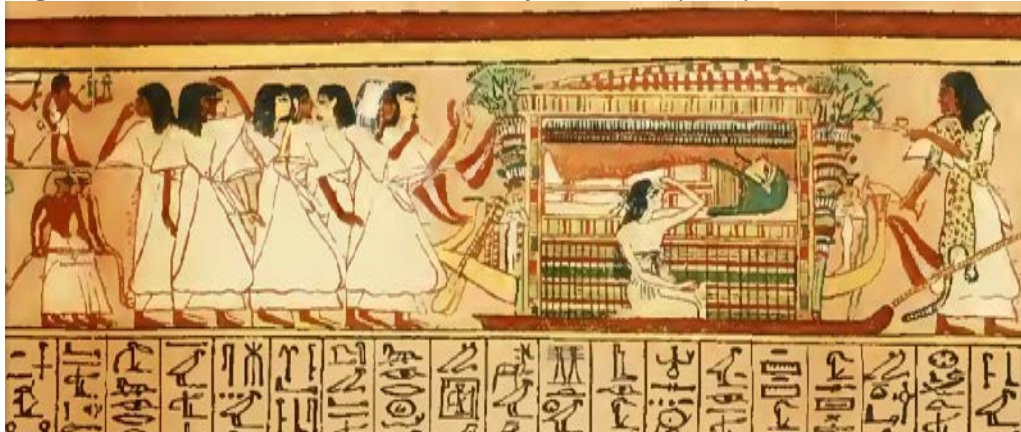
**Figure 5.** *Official Delegation in the Funeral of Ramose TT55, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Davies 1941.

On the papyrus of Ani is turning his head backward perhaps to hide his emotions (Figure 6) (Budge 1913). It is the same manner of the mayor on the studied relief (Figure 3). It looks like both men on Ani's papyrus and the Berlin Trauerleif are lamenting the departure of the deceased to his tomb but are trying to hide it from the public. It is a natural human gesture shown until nowadays by men who in some cultures not supposed to show their emotions and feelings.

**Figure 6.** *Male Mourners in the Funeral of Ani, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Budge 1913.

Ani was a royal scribe, assessor of divine offerings of all the gods, overseer of granaries of the lords of Abydos, scribe of the divine offerings of the lord of Thebes (Budge 1913). Perhaps he was not of a high rank like the high priest of Memphis, Ptahemhat-Ty, but sure he was considered as a high official. His body was followed by eight men wearing white long garments, the names and titles of

whom are not mentioned. They could be high officials following the funeral or members of his family. His wife Tutu is kneeling beside his dead body raising her left hand to her forehead with bare chest. The gestures in the funeral of Ani are conservative but different from that of the funeral of the High Priest of Memphis. Only one is raising his hand on his head in grief, while the frontal persons are raising their hands as if greeting Ani for the last time. One of them has a white hair probably from the perfumed grease used to cent hair (Figure 6). Others seem to chat together like in the Trauerleif.

The males following the funeral of Roy TT255 -the Royal scribe, Steward of the estates of Hormoheb and of Amun (Porter and Moss 1927)- are expressing different levels of sorrow (Figure 7). The first three men are showing deep sadness with their arms raised to their head to express sense of loss; the same gestures of the following group of female mourners. Another group of men are making similar gestures to Hormoheb (Figure 3) with their hands under their chins as an expression of sadness. The person in the middle has his hair whitened just like Ani's funeral (Figure 6). The expression of mourning men here is different from another group of officials following the same funeral (Figure 10).

**Figure 7.** *The Funeral from the Tomb of Roy TT255, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Foucart et al. 1928.

Almost the same gestures of the Tauerrleif with hands under the chin and the last person turning the other way raising his hands close to his face to hide his tears (Figure 8) appeared in the tomb of Amonmos TT 19, the First prophet of Amenophis of the court.



**Figure 8.** *A Funeral Scene, Tomb of Amonmos TT 19, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*

Source: Foucart 1935.

Male mourners attended the boat funeral procession of Nefer-Hotep (TT49), the Divine father of Amun-Ra (Porter and Moss 1927) (Figure 9). Their gestures of lamentation are more compassionate with their arms raised in wailing. One of them looks like beating on his head. They are mostly bare chest and bold except two. From their expression of severe sadness they seem to be his family members (Zienelabdein 2016).

**Figure 9.** *Male Mourners in a Boat Funeral Procession, Tomb of Nefer-hotep TT49, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*

Source: Davies 1933.

In the boat procession during the funeral of Nedjemger TT138, the Overseer of the Ramesseum garden on the estate of Amun, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty; two groups of mourning men appear (Zienelabdein 2016, Barthelmess 1992, Feucht 2006). The first group are approaching the coffin in intimate gestures while one of them

wailing by putting his hand on his forehead. Those seem to be closely related to the deceased probably his sons. The other group is waiting ashore raising their hands on their foreheads. They seem to have a group gesture of the traditional act of sorrow (Figure 10).

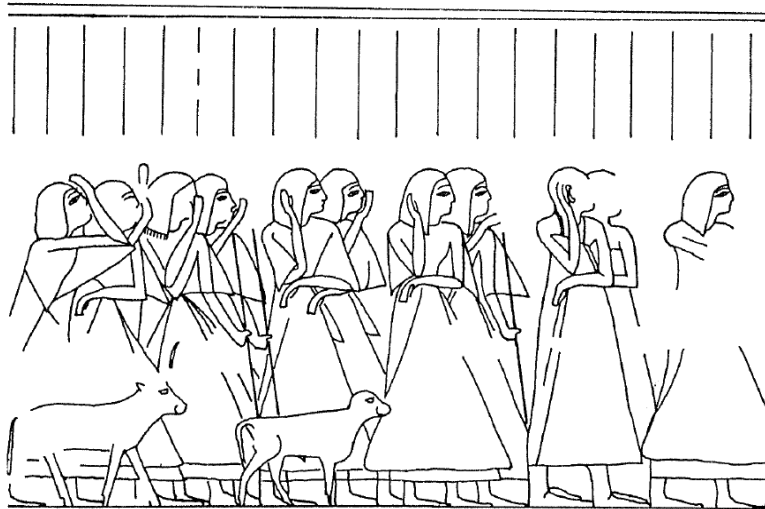
**Figure 10.** *Two Groups of Male Mourners, Tomb of Nedjemger TT138, 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Barthelmess 1992. *Der Übergang ins Jenseits in den thebanischen Beamtengräbern der Ramessidenzeit*, p.18, Abb. 2, Taf. 3

From the tomb of Thay called also To (TT 23), 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty -royal scribe of the dispatches of the lord of the two lands- came his funeral scene (Figure 11). A group of men are following the funeral. Two viziers are attending the funeral, and the rest of male mourners are his colleagues (Porter and Moss 1927, Barthelmess 1992). Two of the mourners seem to be priests from their bald heads; one of them is resting his right arm on his left while putting on the ear with the same attitude in the scenes of Ramose (Figure 5). He is followed by two men making the same gestures. Others are putting their hands on their mouths; the last one is raising his right hand to the forehead.

**Figure 11.** *Male Mourners in the Funeral of Thay (TT23), 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Barthelmess 1992.

Conservative people escorting funerals in some scenes are called the “Nine Smrw”. Srw or Smrw, official nobles/royal companions/courtiers or friends (Erman and Grapaw 1930). They wore extensive mantels holding sticks (Figure 12). Their attitude of walking in dignity holding their sticks is a reminder of modern military funerals where officials walk in a systematic way in a line. They were probably friends of the deceased, colleagues or official representatives as can be seen in the tomb of Huy TT 54, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Porter and Moss 1927), the tombs of Haremhab TT78, Late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Porter and Moss 1927), the tomb of Roy TT255, Late 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Porter and Moss 1927, Foucart et al. 1928). They first appeared during the Old Kingdom but appeared more during the New Kingdom. The Smrw usually followed the coffin and carried out some rites as carrying the statue to the shrine prepared for purification (Zeinelabdein 2016). But they were not always nine in number, sometimes less or more than nine as can be seen from the previously discussed scenes. They were two groups of four and seven men in the tomb of Ramose TT55 (Figure 5).

**Figure 12.** *The Smrw, Tomb of Roy TT255, 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty*



Source: Zeinelabdein 2016.

## Conclusion

Women are more emotional than men in showing their grief and pain for their beloved ones. Males were shown grieving in different phases of the funeral either on land or on boats used to transfer the corpse to the tomb. It seems that grief gestures of males following the funerals are divided in the scenes into three categories; relatives and close friends who grieve their beloved ones in an expressive way, colleagues and official representatives who show their grief in almost repeated expressions and finally the Smrw who probably are official representatives as well but with special outfit walking in homages and perhaps reciting some prayers.



Official representatives in funerals are more conservative than family members and friends. Their gestures and movements perhaps are being observed by the public, so they are required to behave in a kind of protocolled manner being an image of the state. The ancient Egyptian artist was able to show various degrees of sorrow and grief that one can tell who is an official or a colleague attending the funeral out of duty or a son, a relative or a close friend saddened by the death of his loved one. This was clear in the gestures of hands and expressions of the face.

On the Trauerrelief (Berlin 12411) being a general -an extremely high official- Hormoheb who headed the official delegation in the funeral of the high priest of Memphis had to balance his grief over a deceased that he may have known at the court and being a representative of the state. Together with his colleagues; they were able to well represent their king and offices. Though the mayor failed somehow to control his tears as the funeral was taking the deceased away.

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## Why the World Needs Futures Studies: A Social and Methodological Challenge

By Carolina Facioni\*

*This work<sup>1</sup> aims to focus on the absolute need that the world has today of Futures Studies. Thanks to this discipline's historical and methodological specificities in human sciences' context, Futures Studies can help humankind to manage the critical issues that are threatening it. The topic will be discussed through an exclusively theoretical approach, also describing the Italian contribution to Futures Studies: e.g., Eleonora Barbieri Masini's work, or Aurelio Peccei's, who (as early as the 1960s) was among the first to emphasize (in a complex approach) the risks the Earth would run. Nowadays, the delay in the actions that could have been taken many years ago places the world in front of previously unthinkable scenarios. New migrations caused by climate changes, possible criticalities due to the lack of demographic balance in the world population, our own survival as a living species at risk. In this sense, the new challenges that Futures Studies have to face are both socio-cultural and (in a particular approach) methodological. In the present times, many situations at the international level seem to have reached their limits. There is very little time to eventually refine (or change) the tools both of analysis and problem solving. As Aurelio Peccei pointed out in his time, phenomena (and problems) interact with each other in a very complex way. So, Futures Studies can help in the search for a possible solution by giving their particular multidisciplinary and overall look.*

**Keywords:** *Futures Studies, Italian contribution, world criticalities, methodological issues*

### The Role of Futures Studies in “Interesting Times”

In 2019, the 58<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Biennale of Art in Venice's title recalled a well-known Chinese anathema: “May you live in interesting times”. As it often happens, art is ahead of its time, and seems to feel first the coming changes. The following two years were, in fact, particularly “interesting” for all mankind. There was the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, which the world has not yet completely emerged from. To worsen the general context of crisis, in these days the whole world is witnessing the increasing deterioration of the delicate international balances due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In this devastating framework, the problems linked to climate change still remain unsolved, and interact with the other criticalities, in a very uncertain context (Maggino and Facioni 2015). In such a complex situation, all scientific disciplines are called

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<sup>1</sup>This work is the result of the author's intellectual work, which she is totally responsible for. None of the ideas here expressed necessarily correspond to the position of the Institution she belongs to.

upon to make their own contribution to restore balance and peace: elements without which well-being is impossible anywhere in the world. A very hard, very difficult, but necessary job. A job made even more complicated by the difficulties that the different disciplines sometimes encounter in communicating with each other (Barbieri Masini 1993). Indeed, interesting times can be perceived as hard, but they are, at the same time, an opportunity to grow materially and intellectually for those who experience them. Interesting times are difficult, and sometimes cruel, but they can give to humankind<sup>2</sup> the opportunity to change for the better, albeit with great effort. In such an uncertainty, future has a role. It can be a starting point for searching a resolution (Gidley 2017). Futures Studies are well aware of the difficulties of this kind: they were born after the World War II, to face the challenge of a world to be rebuilt. A world which was going to divide itself again into two opposing fronts. World War II was just over, but the world was already ravaged by the Cold War and feared by its possible consequences.

A situation whose possible developments was necessary to study, to prevent and face. The Rand Corporation in the USA developed techniques of investigation and analysis: e.g., Delphi Method (Dalkey 1969), scenarios – a technique developed by Herman Kahn, the strategist who inspired the Doctor Strangelove character. In the same period, Europe provided the theoretical bases, the epistemic foundations (Barbieri Masini 1993). Thus, Futures Studies were born to develop strategies in order to avoid (in the future, or, better, in the possible futures) problems, or anyway to improve the conditions found in the present times. A task of *enormous responsibility*, taking up the concept formulated by Heller (1988), especially when Futures Studies are not only extrapolating data (forecasting), or imagining possible futures (foresighting), but making the complex work of *anticipating* the future, that means to create in present times the premises for future results (Poli 2011, 2018, 2019, Paura 2022). The risk of colonizing the future, and consequently the life of people in the future, is one of the paramount and controversial topics in the discipline (Barbieri Masini 1993).

In Futures Studies the relationship between humankind and the possible futures is a core topic (De Jouvenel 1964, Bell and Mau 1973, Barbieri Masini 1986, 1993, 2000, Bell 2003, 2004), a real epistemic principle. The concept that the future is not just one is a fundamental principle. Future is considered (and must be faced) as a range of almost infinite possibilities: it is the only multiple space for actions and decisions. The reflection on the hypotheses of possible futures is an essential moment of the work carried out in this specific research context, where the most daring development hypotheses are not excluded, if necessary. It is not a mere exercise in “sociological imagination” (Wright Mills 1959); in the field of Futures Studies the heuristic potentials of the imagination are, if anything, enhanced, constituting an essential moment of the research work. So, there is space for Utopia (Rüsen et al. 2005), which helps to imagine desirable futures; so as for Dystopia, which helps to imagine the worst possible future’s developments. Of course, the most complex step at an ethical level is the one in which the discipline goes from a descriptive (forecasting, foresighting) to a normative

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<sup>2</sup>I choose to use “humankind” in spite of “mankind” because the word mankind is too gender characterized.

outlook (anticipation), and deals with medium, or long-term strategies (Poli 2019). Another aspect we must consider is the *transformative* component underlying Futures Studies (Hebinck et al. 2018). Especially in times of systemic crisis like the present ones, the utopian tension towards a radical transformation of the social system finds its *raison d'être* in the conception of transformative futures, which inevitably calls into question, once again, the theme of responsibility.

## Futures Studies and Science

Are Futures Studies a science? Can we consider a science a discipline whose asserts are verifiable only *ex post*? Not only that: also if verified as true, there is no certainty that the predicted event occurred exactly because of the reasons previously adduced as the event's possible cause. This aspect - the link between forecast and the "received view" models of scientific explanation - has clearly to be explored. The model of scientific explanation was formulated in 1948 by Hempel and Oppenheim (Hempel 1965) and it is maybe the most famous model of scientific explanation and, undoubtedly, the one that gave rise to one of the most interesting debates in epistemology (Salmon 1989). A reference to it can however appear forced and, in many respects, it certainly is. The (not only apparent) stiffness of the model, and in particular the determinism that characterizes its nomological-deductive version, seems incompatible with the idea of "futures". However, according to this, the social forecast is based on an acquired theoretical level which, together with the environmental and circumstantial conditions (the elements of which are usually investigated using specific research techniques), can constitute the *Praedicens* from which the *Praedicendum* will be predicted. Anyway, it should be emphasized how an interpretation of the social forecast in this key can be better acceptable only considering the Inductive-Statistic version of the scientific explanation model. Anyway, even if the topic of forecast had a part in the debate on scientific explanation, there is certainly a "qualitative leap" in forecasting, especially when it is conceived as a design of a future, even more so of alternative futures. A different point of view of the relationship between forecasting studies and explanatory models comes from the reflection of Bas Van Fraassen (Van Fraassen 1980), that considers how much, in the design of the futures, the image of these can be conditioned by the meaning given by the context, and how much therefore the pragmatic element ends up acquiring a decisive weight.

A further element comes from Merton's theorization. In his work *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Merton 1949) he clarified how a prediction can affect its own results: in particular, he highlights the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies and the suicide prophecies<sup>3</sup> concept. Merton's reflection effectively eliminates any possibility of tracing the forecast back into a received-view model, but this does not necessarily mean excluding Futures Studies from the science

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<sup>3</sup>The concept-term "prophecy" Robert K. Merton used must be accepted. In fact, the theorization of Futures Studies was carried out years after Merton's work, and so was the terminological reflection on the differences between the concept of forecasting, prophecy, foresighting, extrapolation, etc.

context. Instead, it means that it is necessary to shift the focus of the scientificity of futures studies *from the context of the arguments to the context of the process* by which a forecast is reached.

### **Futures Studies, Sociology, and the Contemporary Methodological Issue**

This inevitably leads to a reflection on the method. Indeed, a theoretical approach about the methodological challenges that characterize Futures Studies in the contemporary historical context requires a fundamental focus on the terminological choices. In this context, the concept-term “method” is meant not as “research technique”<sup>4</sup>, but as “research process” as a whole (Campelli 1994, Marradi 2007). Thus, the use of the term “methodology” – and, consequently, of “methodological” – is not only related to the context of the choice and of the use of any kind of research technique<sup>5</sup>. The concept of “method” is here used in its Cartesian<sup>6</sup> meaning (1637), and it takes its origin in the ancient Greek etymology of the word μέθοδος, a word that indicates the path, the way to reach a goal.

Thus, focusing the term “method” in its Greek etymology of “path” means considering scientific only what is produced with accuracy and rigor at every step of the research process. And the need to follow a correct scientific method unites all sciences, whether they are more structured (such as chemistry) than of a humanistic nature, such as Sociology. In effect, there is a special and strong link between Futures Studies and Sociology. First of all, Eleonora Barbieri Masini, the mother of Futures Studies, the one who first gave to the discipline a solid theoretical structure in its complex – and who led for many years the World Futures Studies Federation – was a sociologist<sup>7</sup>. The two disciplines have many aspects in common: e.g., a multidisciplinary outlook, and the sensitivity to the multiple signs of change that society produces. Both Futures Studies and Sociology are characterized by a constant reflection on the human being, on social dynamics, on their possible causes, and on their possible consequences. Indeed, the epistemic approach of Futures Studies implies a dense reflection which, if introjected in all its nuances, necessarily involves the way the social researcher conceives the meaning itself of the sociological work. In Futures Studies, in all its theoretical and practical difficulty, the sense of the role of the social scientist in society is inevitably redefined. In a certain sense, this role is exalted. Futures Studies approach close an ideal circle between the image of the sociologist in contemporaneity (post-industrial, post-modern, post-everything), as emerging

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<sup>4</sup>In this approach, the Delphi “Method” is meant as a technique of research on Futures.

<sup>5</sup>The choice and the use of the research techniques is a fundamental part of the process, of course. Anyway, it is an important part of the larger context of the research path, who starts from the conceptualization of the research object (and its dimensions) and ends with the reflection on the results of the research itself (Campelli 1994).

<sup>6</sup>René Descartes first published anonymously his “Discours de la méthode – pour bien conduire la raison & chercher la vérité dans le sciences” in 1637 in Leiden.

<sup>7</sup>In the in the long interview she granted to me in 2009 (Facioni 2011), Eleonora Barbieri Masini explained to me that she dealt with Futures Studies because they focused, in a different, future-oriented way respect to Sociology, on one of her most beloved research subjects: the social change.

from the social criticism of Beck (1986) or of Bauman (2000) - just to name two of the most important theorists in recent years - and the way in which this role was conceived, at the dawn of the discipline, by Comte (1830-1842). A problematic closure of the circle, that cannot be accomplished painlessly: it passes, in fact, through the theorization of Weber (1917/1919), and inevitably touches an “epistemic nerve” (not only in Sociology or in Futures Studies, but in all Human Sciences): the scientist's *Wertfreiheit*, which Weber theorized since 1904, in *The cognitive objectivity of social science and social policy*.

It is impossible to escape this criticality (Appadurai 2013) in the practice of the research on futures, and in particular in the anticipation step. Each social scientist who is about to embody images of possible futures must necessarily deal with it, not only, taking up De Jouvenel's (1964) theorization considering the possible futures, but (inevitably) the desirable, and the utopian ones. In what does the “desirability” of the futures to be built consist of? How many non-scientific aspects the scientists' vision of “desirable” futures consists of? Foresighting futures, building futures, anticipating futures, transforming futures, is something very similar to a process of creation. It is the result of a collective work, of a collective stipulation of sense, and there is a very strong creative element in.

Thus, how long a single researcher, or a research group, can maintain firm the fundamental principle of transparency, the Weberian *Wertfreiheit*, having the possibility of building up a possible future? A future which inevitably will reflect his/her/their personal idea of a “right” society - and, consequently, his/her/their own personal system of values. Furthermore, the role played by the scientists' tacit knowledge in such contexts should not be forgotten (Polanyi 1966). Of course, this work is not questioning the scientists' ethical correctness: it only stresses on the *impossibility* of building up futures without referring to some value system. In this specific context, the ethical problem cannot be only solved by a scientist's open declaration of the scientists' own opinions, or of the scientists' own system of values, or of their personal (religious, political, of any other kind) beliefs, proposing not to be influenced by these aspects in the making of the research work - as it happens in the sociological context and in the sociological research work, both theoretical and on field. Indeed, in an anticipatory context, the consequences of the today's decisions will affect the people of tomorrow. Thus, the *Wertfreiheit* principle is impossible to practice, having a research group the task of deciding today what will be the best for tomorrow.

Even when all possible interest groups are represented, it is clear that deciding today for tomorrow requires a choice related to values. For this reason, the anticipations must be made, when possible, on highly specific situations, or contrarywise on aspects that certainly cannot fail to be valid also for the human beings in any possible future. UN SDGs are a typical example of very broad-spectrum anticipation field: there is no doubt that humanity will have, in 2030 and in subsequent years, the need for a healthy environment, good quality of water and food, education, and so on (United Nations 2015). Compared to the more traditional human sciences, Futures Studies are more open to experimentation, to listening to the signals of change. Although, it should not be forgotten that there is a huge, enormous responsibility on the shoulders of the Futurists. Above all, the Futurists

themselves (Marien 2002) should not forget it. Therefore, based on what has been said so far, the difficulties the world is going through involve Futures Studies not only from an ethical, but also a methodological point of view, considering how the theme of *choice* is central to the discipline. Futures Studies aim at a sensitive change, if not a desirable transformation of the possible futures in the world.

In these days, the complex dynamics at the international level are rapidly changing the balance of power - economic, political, financial, etc. - and this cannot fail to have repercussions in the everyday life of the many societies of the world. For example, it is no longer so certain that the SDGs will be reached within the set time frame: in 2015, the year of the UN document on SDGs, the hypothesis of a war between Russia and Ukraine, and the consequent energy crisis, was probably not considered as a possible event. In order to act in time, the analysis and the search for solutions must be accelerated - and now it is very difficult. Here a very close link between Sociology and Futures Studies is evident: both disciplines need to analyze the emerging criticalities at different levels. However, for Futures Studies these analyzes - be they at a micro, macro, or medium-range level - are the essential prerequisite for making any type of choice about the possible futures. Understanding the needs of social communities - which is a fundamental research object of many participatory techniques used in Futures Studies (Di Zio and Pacinelli 2011) - is extremely difficult, in times of uncertainty.

Thus, the today's Futures Studies methodological challenge is in paradoxes: the less time we have to analyze a rapidly changing situation, the stronger is the need to find solutions even in the long term. And the stronger the need to find solutions in a very short time, the easier the risk of colonizing the future, taking away from it that characteristic of plurality which is one of the epistemic foundations of Futures Studies themselves. Last but not least, there is a great difficulty in disseminating awareness of the future in social contexts affected by critical issues - and developing the Futures Literacy (Karlsen 2021) is, according to me, probably the essential prerequisite for positively acting on possible futures. In times of crisis, where the present itself is under discussion, it is not an easy-to-achieve goal. However, it is desirable that as many people as possible be sensitive to the idea of building together the future. Unfortunately, this is much more feasible in times of peace and economic equilibrium, in which there are no excessively conflicting ideas of the future.

Thus, if the methodological goal of Futures Studies is to work on possible futures that are better than the present time, the goal is now rapidly changing. Nowadays, it is maybe a question of guaranteeing the existence of futures.

### **The Former Italian Contribution to the Contemporary Debate on Futures**

From the beginning of this work we mentioned the extreme difficulty of the times that the world is currently experiencing, especially since the Covid-19 emergency in 2020, and with the recent worsening of the international situation due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. A crisis situation that is grafted onto an environmental imbalance whose possible consequences cannot be



underestimated. Less well known is how much of the current debates on the risks facing the planet if the imbalances that afflict it are not eliminated were introduced internationally by an Italian manager, Aurelio Peccei (Facioni and Paura 2022). Indeed, Italy gave a great impulse to Futures Studies and to reflection on issues and problems that are still unresolved and increasingly urgent today.

Also in Italy everything starts after the end of World War II. In those years, there is a fundamental philosophical contribution to underline. That is, the theorization of Nicola Abbagnano, who in the 40s of the XXth century formulated his personal idea of existentialism, or positive existentialism (Abbagnano 1948). Abbagnano's particular approach to existentialism is not characterized by alienation as in other authors, but restores to the individuals their place in history, their capability to act and interact in history. It is equally important that this theory be formulated, exactly in this period, in Turin. It is important because at this very moment in Turin - and in the wider context of Piedmont - an impressive amount of brilliant and innovative personalities was concentrated, in the most varied disciplines and fields. All people united by a vision capacity that goes beyond their time. Innovators. Future makers. Some names of theirs: Franco Ferrarotti, Cesare Pavese, Elio Vittorini, Norberto Bobbio, Renato Treves, Rita Levi Montalcini, Renato Dulbecco, Adriano Olivetti. Between them, in this extraordinary and vivid socio-cultural context, we have to include Aurelio Peccei, who worked in FIAT as a manager and put his work experience at an international level in the environmental cause, and then broaden his interests in other fields, but always looking at possible futures. From this point of view, there were three fundamental encounters in his life. The first one was the meeting with Julian Huxley, first director of UNESCO and co-founder of the WWF. Huxley sensitized Peccei on the issue of the link between the exponential population growth and the erosion of the natural resources. All the initiatives that Peccei carried out in the following years were inspired by their intellectual synergy, starting with the conferences on environmental risks held in South America (and then in the rest of the world) in the 1960s. The second meeting was with the Scottish scientist Alexander King in 1968. King and Peccei were the co-founder of the Club of Rome in the same year. In 1972 the Club of Rome produced its first Report, edited by the MIT: "The Limits to Growth", maybe the most controversial scientific report in history (Meadows et al. 1972). The third meeting was in 1970, with Eleonora Barbieri Masini, one of the very first women to join the Club of Rome. Peccei was not the only Italian manager sensitive to the theme of the future at the times. We must also remember Pietro Ferraro, who founded the journal "Futuribili" as an Italian version of the French journal "Futuribles", directed by Bertrand de Jouvenel, who was, together with Gaston Berger, one of the leading European theorists of Futures Studies (De Jouvenel, 1964). Anyway, Peccei gave an international imprint, a world level, to his experience, making use of the network of contacts he had created in his work experience. In the many works he wrote over the years (Peccei 1969, 1974, 1976, 1981, 1984, Peccei and Ikeda 1984), Peccei emphasized how human beings were sinning with ὑβρις towards the world they lived in, of which they were nothing but the latest arrivals. This is a short quote from "The chasm ahead" (Peccei 1976):

Since man has opened the Pandora's box of new technologies, which escaped out of

his hands, any change anywhere affects almost everywhere. Dynamics, speed, effort, and complexity of our artificial world have orders of magnitude without comparison in the past, and the same applies to our problems. These, today, are at the same time psychological, social, economic, political, and technical, and cannot therefore be dealt with and resolved one at a time, because they interfere and interact with one another, each having roots and ramifications intricate in all others

It is clear that we could read all this in terms of complexity (Bocchi and Ceruti 1985). Peccei realized that there was not the possibility of analysing the problems, so as their possible causes, one at a time, but only in their dynamism and interconnectedness. And also that the possible solutions had to be analysed in the same way. So considering the population growth, the growth of pollution and the resources erosion, he identified the containment of the population as a possible way to slow down the destruction of the natural environment. In the first Report the Club of Rome commissioned to MIT, "The limits to growth" (Meadows et al. 1972), the data projections (up to the year 2100) are not optimistic about a possible solution. Furthermore, the heavy emphasis given by the MIT report on the need for birth control sparked huge controversy around the world (Barbieri Masini 2001). It must also be said that nowadays not in all societies in the world there is a need to control the birth rate. Indeed, in the Western countries there are very few children. In this regard, Italy is actually facing a true criticality. Starting from the 2021 data on Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Italy, equal to 1.25, together with the data related to life expectancy – 86.5 years for men and 89.5 years for women at birth, as expected in 2070 - the Italian Institute of Statistics demographic forecasts (ISTAT 2021) highlights that in 2070 for each young individual there will be three seniors – and it is the middle scenario: it is not a good perspective. In effect, the TFR is decreasing, albeit at different speeds, in the various socio-geographic contexts all over the world. The ideal TFR, both for humankind and for the natural environment as a whole, is 2.1; neither higher nor lower. It is not an easy target to obtain anyway, considering the different socio-economic contexts in the world.

In the environmental studies field, it should be remembered, with regard to the Italian contribution, also Giorgio Nebbia, one of the co-founders of Italia Nostra. As a training Nebbia was a commodity scientist. He sensed the risks due to waste and excessive consumption of resources, e.g., drinking water, as early as the early 1960s. He dedicated to the topic of sustainable development very important reflections, many years before some topics became the common heritage of the international debate (Nebbia 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1971).

As mentioned in the introduction, between the most important theorists of Futures Studies there is an Italian sociologist, Eleonora Barbieri Masini. Together with the Italian manager Aurelio Peccei, she was for many years the protagonist of an intense activity on futures at a mondial level. Eleonora Barbieri Masini's life is the singular story of an intellectual passion for a research object, the future, that she translated into a tireless action. She dedicated her entire life to building up Futures Studies as a discipline. Without exaggeration or rhetoric, her contribution can be described in terms of *beruf*, in the Weberian sense of the term. Magda Cordell McHale called her "the mother of futures studies", attributing much of the credit for the existence of the World Futures Studies Federation to her energy and

enthusiasm (Stevenson 2006). Born in Guatemala in 1927, she returned to Italy in 1933 with her family, and she graduated in Constitutional Law (with a specialization in Comparative Law). Subsequently, she also graduated in Sociology. Around the end of the 1960s, Eleonora Barbieri Masini was at Irades (Institute for Applied Documentation Research and Studies), a Catholic institute founded by Pietro Pace, who requested her to set up for the Institute a center for foresight studies, the first of its kind in Italy. Until then, Irades had exclusively dealt with the topic of pastoral care in Italy from a sociological point of view.

A further opportunity to understand what had been done in the world regarding the futures was offered to her by the invitation of Hidetoshi Kato to participate, in October 1970, in the Kyoto Meeting “Challenges from the Future”, the second meeting of what, shortly thereafter, would become the World Futures Studies Federation, in 1973. Unfortunately, Italy was probably not ready for the worldwide opening of Masini’s research activity in the 1970s. Virtually overnight, her Institute in Irades, and the related library, was closed without any explanation or warning, and she could continue teaching and practicing the Futures Studies discipline only thanks to the Pontifical Gregorian University – which technically is not in Italian territory, but in the Vatican. Returning to how the Italian contribution to Futures Studies has touched on issues that are still fundamental today, Eleonora Barbieri Masini gave a fundamental contribution on the topic of women empowerment. If the condition of women has made great strides, especially in developing countries, it is also due to the historical research project “Household, gender, and age” she conducted between for UN University during the period 1981-1991 (Barbieri Masini and Stratigos 1991). It was the results of that impressive research work, carried out in eight developing countries at the time, that convinced the United Nations of the importance of promoting female entrepreneurship in the poorest countries.

## Conclusions - Futures Studies and the Human Quality

Speaking of “Italian” Futures Studies is probably misleading: these studies have always been characterized from the outset by a world-class perspective, by an international perspective, by a sense of “network and exchange of knowledge” that never had or wanted any boundary, even in the middle of the Cold War<sup>8</sup>. The paradox of these studies is that many of the topics they dealt with seem to have been at the forefront of general attention only for a very short time: e.g., the waste of food resources, or the waste of water, or the aquifers’ depletion, or the sustainable development. It is enough to reread Giorgio Nebbia’s works (Nebbia 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1971, 1991), or Peccei’s, to have a precious testimony that makes us understand how much time has been lost without finding a solution. Each of these topics – we only recalled a few among the most widespread in the mass media today, have been the subject of Futures Studies for several decades. It

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<sup>8</sup>The strategic position of Italy on the international chessboard was probably the reason why these studies were often opposed in Italy during the Cold War and in 1970s. This was probably due to the Futures Studies vocation of putting the Eastern part of the world in contact with the Western.

is certainly good that these issues are now under everyone's attention. Although, reading the very first issues of the journal *Futuribili* makes it clear that these topics were already under the attention of almost a part of the scientific community in the mid-1960s. Unfortunately, at the times this happened without the political decision makers attempted to any adequate solutions, in Italy as elsewhere.

Nemo propheta in patria, it is maybe true: but if the homeland is the world, perhaps society has lost precious time, up to now, by not listening to the arguments of many passionate scholars. They tried to tell that for all human beings there is only one Earth, a small planet with limited resources - and that this planet must be respected, even in the name of those who will inhabit it tomorrow. That means, for everyone, a fundamental thing: responsibility. Or, taking up a topic which was so dear to Aurelio Peccei, it means the need of working on human quality (Peccei 1976). In a world that at the moment seems to be going in a totally different direction, perhaps it is necessary to look again at Futures Studies. And it is necessary to make it with the attention due to a precious instrument of human promotion. Certainly, there are significant differences in interpretations of the way to reach a kind of human promotion, even in Future Studies' context. I am thinking, for example, about the critical issues inherent in the transhumanist theories (Campa 2010), which are widespread in part of the Futurists' community. In my opinion, transhumanism, at least in its most extreme forms, which theorize a passage from *homo faber* to *homo creator* (Pepperell 2003) must deal with one of the basic principle of Futures Studies, maybe "the" basic principle, which is to avoid colonizing the future. This can have very dangerous, maybe unimaginable consequences. I am not sure transhumanist theories can be re-directed to an "only" human promotion. Anyway, in a world that has still not eliminated the war, or any other form of non-constructive pain, where humanity still use the scientific and technological development to destroy, I think the world as a whole needs a more responsible humankind. I am also sure that it needs humankind finds a common agreement on the meaning of what is ethical and what is not. I am sure Futures Studies can help for this – anyway, they should try to do. We have still to work a lot on values like peace and reciprocal respect; the same work is still required to the care of the only planet we can still live in. This is my idea of what human quality should be also today. It does not mean improving the performance of the human being as if it were a machine, but to work seriously on the culture of respect and mutual responsibility dissemination. Anyway, I am sure that working on human quality is still the only way to use science and technology in a positive and durable way. In this historical moment, in which the risk of the disappearance of mankind from the earth seems sometimes tangible, Futures Studies is needed more than ever. They will allow us to look forward to possible futures.

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## Recover Old Geographical Materialities in Rural Areas: Key Politics and Processes of (Dis)assemblages

By Angel Paniagua\*

*The current rural geography is at a crossroads of theoretical options. Geographical studies on processes of rural change usually have a social perspective, based on the loss of traditional populations and the immigration of new populations, and on the analysis of social-territorial conflicts between the locals and the newcomers. Rematerializing rural studies through experimental materiality is an interesting option to revitalize rural geography. The experimental process of recovering rural houses generates a fluid hybridization process between human-materiality realities, but it can also lead to a disassemblage process between people and materiality (rural house). In this contribution, various types of disassemblage processes of recovered material realities (rural houses) and the people who carried out the experimental recovery of the house are reviewed. The methodology is qualitative and is based on the examination of six case studies in rural areas of Spain. The disassemblage process generates new pluralities and material realities in peripheral rural communities.*

**Keywords:** materiality, rural, geography, artifacts

### Introduction

Current rural geography is at a crossroads of theoretical and methodological options that reflect the current complexity of the academic debate on human geography itself. (Re)Incorporating materiality back into the study of rural spaces is an option that can help revitalize geographic analysis (Paniagua 2021a, 2021b). Geographical studies on rural change have usually focused on a socio-cultural perspective with little attention to the role of old materialities. In this analytical context, recovering the study of old materialities in a new context of change can have multiple possibilities (Paniagua 2021a). One of these options is to integrate the processes of renewal and recovery of the rural house in the processes of assemblages and disassemblages of heterogeneous geographic realities (Murdoch 2006).

This contribution suggests different processes of encounters and assemblages and disencounters and disassemblages associated with the recovery of traditional rural housing. With this perspective, it is intended to analyze the multiplicity of human-material encounters in the same rural community that generate disparate processes of assemblages and disassemblages.

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**Assemblages and Disassemblages in (New) Material Rural Geography**

Deconstruct binary nature/society relations include non-human and other objects. Materialist approaches clearly recognize nature as a heterogeneous achievement of people and objects (Meehan and Rice 2011). The materiality recovery process usually ends with a hybrid human-non-human materiality experience. The new hybrid subjectivities are intimate relationships among social and material dimensions (Del Casino 2009). A new reality reconstructed after the recovery process, where there is usually a remarkable care in taking care of old materials and traditional material expressions, even reinforcing them as a sign of identity. Generating (new) materials in multiple ways (Whatmore 2003) produce a renewed plasticity in rural houses. The individual new buildings and the recovery of traditional materials suggest a selective vision of the rural past (Butler-Warke and Warke 2021). Making sense is a creative process where telling materials (Crang 2003) as an individual experience. As suggest Harvey “The material practices from with our concepts of space and time flow are a varied as the range of individual experiences” (Harvey 1989, p. 211). Individualized day-to-day lives, do not make sense of the world by way of abstractions, people make their own interpretations, by lay or expressive constructions of reality (Cloke et al. 2006). The rural experience combines realism, actuality and empirical dimensions, but also adds a postmodern vision of architecture and buildings, in the form of individualized homes associated with a certain new plasticity and vital differences that incorporate the geographical impacts of the new middle class in rural areas. The subjectivities between human and non-human artifacts are produced through situated encounters and reproduced daily (Meehan and Rice 2011, p. 60). The encounter human and new materiality (of rural house) is dominated by the feeling of rural idyll. The assemblage process originates a new politics of encounter where might experiment with new modalities of resistance in form of subjectivities of socio-environmental conflict and localized politics of human-material resistances are configured. Multiple and miniaturized (micro) urban-rural relations coincide with many forms inside the (rural) house.

But this process of recovering traditional materiality also ends in many cases with a process of (dis)assemblage between human desires and the new recovered materiality. There are three stages: (1) the first stage of experimental recovery of the new materiality, (2) the second stage of accommodation and hybridization with the rehabilitated house, (3) the third stage of disassemblage between people and the rural house. This process of assemblage to disassemblage generates feelings and emotions of rejection of the place and of the recovered house, in a vital process of tiredness and imbalance between dynamic emotions and a new reality that becomes rigid and finally causes a feeling of disenchantment (mutual) with the place and with the rural house. The place is associated with routines, obligations, rules, duties and finally monotony. The pleasure of the hybrid experience of the recovery of the rural house has disappeared and the monotony of the (small) place appears with the same daily faces and the slow pace of social life. The lure of peace, security and tranquility turns into individual suffocation and the anti-rural idyll appears (Bell 1997).

The initial attractiveness of the known community takes on a negative dimension (Willians 2016). On the contrary, the anonymity and animation of urban life are longed for. The views of individual heritage can coexist in the same community, but they can also have a change of meaning in the vital experience of individuals (Paniagua 2019). This makes it possible to revisit the idea of new materiality based on life experience. The individual production of a new materiality incorporates a process of cultural production of popular icons and values. The experimental histories of disassemblage are produced in a multitude of different ways, with a notable disparity of elements and components (Deleuze 1994) and with different rhythms. The process concludes with the sale of the new house to another owner who inherits and reinvents the process but on the material basis of a rehabilitated rural house. The new people-materiality encounter has a variable rhythm but can be long, which causes a period of abandonment in the use of the house. There are localized and latent politics of resistance to the new materiality with disparity of elements (Deleuze 1994, Zielinska 2020). The new owner has to adapt to the rustic style of the previous experience. An old house is no longer acquired, a rehabilitated old house is acquired and the possibilities of the new human-materiality experience are reduced to conservation and use. The renewal process of the new materiality has a cumulative essence. Disjunctions and contradictions usually occur between different moments of (material) place construction (Harvey 1996). Multiple and parallel encounters in the rural house reproduce the binary relations urban-rural and material-immaterial. As Philo (2011) suggests, “the material geography of the street (...) is made by (...) the largely immaterial geography of the words...” (Philo 2011, p. 365).

The process of (dis)assemblage of the place and the renovated rural house has different phases that are described as a process: (1) Intimate hybrid human-material (artifact) relations. An initial phase of normalization in the place where the (new) owner settles or goes seasonally and an accommodation with the new materiality and with the place is produced (Cloke et al. 1995). (2) Break hybrid. A second phase where dominates the feeling of obligation for the permanence and the seasonal movement to the place and the obligations of maintenance of the renovated house. (3) Latent hybrid. Finally a third phase of progressive disengagement between human and new materiality that ends with abandonment and sale. “We just want to get back what we invested” or “we’re almost gone” are the words that summarize the end of the disengagement process that materializes in the sale of the new materiality and the beginning of a new cycle of enrichment “others” human and “new” materiality. Connections and divisions reproduce the experimental life of human-materiality relations (Herman 2015). The dis-encounters relationship would have a circular character in the form of unstable relations characterized by the encounter/assemblage or dis-encounter/dis-assemblage.

As explain Meehan and Rice: “Cases as sites: distinct socio-spatial places when relations between actors and objects, non humans and humans are continually made and remade in everyday encounters” (Meehan and Rice 2011, p. 65). In the case of politics of new materiality in peripheral environmentality, where vernacular cultures and fragile heritage ecologies coexist, natural and cultural heritage struggle to dominate an original vernacular and popular heritage. The cultural heritage is

usually ignored in favor of attention of natural landscape in marginal communities and places. Sustainable and unsustainable assemblages of heterogeneous materialities coincide in the rural environment (Murdoch 2006). Close urban-rural connections are reproduced in the rural house.

## **Methodology**

Some rural geographical literature suggests the need for local geographic-based studies, so that certain key human and non-human voices may be heard and narratives can be described (Elwood and Martin 2000, Crang 2003, Hoelcher 2011). Only intensive qualitative research, based on selected and representative cases, can adequately identify relationships of individuals and objects and artifacts (Cloke et al. 2006). This contribution use qualitative methods able to analyze key micro cases of study with a geo-ethnographical approach (Elwood and Martin 2000, Hoggart et al. 2002, Hay 2003, Crang 2007, Riley and Harvey 2007). With this methodological design, the research carried out is of a qualitative and geo-ethnographic type (Dunn 2003, Crang 2007, Cloke et al. 2000). The geo-ethnographical approach attempts from an experimental vision of the individual (Hay, 2003), to establish the process of encounter with the new materiality (rural house). Encounters are always relational (Leitner 2012). Consequently, it is accepted that encounters can generate a constellation of multiple identities, depending on the mutual interaction between self and other (a new materiality). As Leitner (2012) suggests narrations habitually present strong emotions associated with the complexities of fluid encounters in the contexts of socio-spatial positionality of individuals. The rural house expresses assemblages and dis- assemblages of life course.

As Hoggart et al. (2002) indicate the aim is to achieve a close encounter through intensive qualitative methodology. Ultimately, this is to establish and define the explanatory value of each case. The encounter has been used in the sphere of rural geography to analyze the micro experience of relations between humans and non-humans in the sphere of rural communities (Holloway, 2002). In the area of the geography of (rural) tourism, the micro-analysis of encounters has been used to understand the ways that morality mediates the touristic encounter with places (Mostafanezhad and Hannam 2014).

The methodology has consisted of contacting owners who sold their property through “idealista”, a real estate portal, between spring 2021 and spring 2022 and selecting the most significant cases of experimental histories in representative peripheral areas in the north of Caceres province, North of Guadalajara province, “Sierra Norte” of Madrid province or in the Southwest of Soria province (Figure 1). The representativeness of the case studies is due to the meaning as a variant of the case study according to the personal characteristics of the owners, the process of encounter-disagreement with the rural house, the location of the rural house and its history in the town and the sale process (Hoggart et al. 2002, Dunn 2003).

**Figure 1.** Study Cases (Left to Right): V. Plasencia, Cáceres; Cencencia, Madrid; Medranda, Guadalajara; C. Henares, Guadalajara; P. S. Esteban, Soria; Atauta, Soria



Constructed from key cases, the stories attempt to exemplify various types of encounters. Six stories, conducted in a particular year, have been considered from a narrative and geo-ethnographical perspective. As Dunn (2003) explains research using case histories might typically involve 5 or 6 carefully-selected types. Geo-ethnographical studies do not attempt to be representative but to explore and discuss ideas for the academic progress of geographical studies through the study of cases. In some previous studies, this is achieved through the highly intensive analysis of contrasting the cases of only three farmers (Holloway 2002).

It is possible to speak of unstable circular processes of micro assemblages-disassemblages-assemblages-disassemblages..., with cumulative and consolidate effects in new materialities. In a village there would be a multiplicity of circles of dis and assemblages associated with a singular and particular heterogeneity of a locality.

### Study Cases: The Politics of (Dis)encounters

Cloke (2006) suggests that rural geography is at a crossroads between a return to the material (place) perspective or a continuation of the socio-cultural thinking. The relational encounters can contribute to rematerialize the analysis of rural spaces (Cloke 2006, p. 25). The hybrid relations can help revitalize human-non-human (material) encounters (Whatmore 2002). Less relevance has been granted in rural and human geography to the analysis and relevance of (dis) encounters and their

implications in the hybrid politics of (rural) places. Constructed and deconstructed spaces are expressed through successive encounters and dis-encounters. As suggest Harvey “places are constructed and experienced as material ecological artifacts” (Harvey 1996, p. 316).

Living in rural areas is an individual experience mainly associated with different socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of place (Woods 2011). International rural geography has progressively shifted towards micro-focuses that are more concerned with providing new typological orientations on research than an overall representatively.

Type 1. One type is the family house that is rehabilitated to dedicate it to its own use or to a rural tourism business but that is sold due to family reasons or due to the inefficiency of the business activity. There would be two subtypes: the owners who reside in the town in another house and the owners who reside in an urban nucleus. The owners manage the sale of the house directly to maintain control in the disassemblage process.

Disassemblage 1. (January 2022). The Lanchuela in Villar of Plasencia on real street 18 (north of Cáceres), is a historic house dating from 1855 and recently restored, preserving the traditional architecture and the traditional wooden framework in order to dedicate it to a rural tourism business with a grant of CEDER Caparra. It is an old farmhouse with two floors, a patio, 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 2 storage rooms and two living rooms. Its start-up process is due to the cessation of the business after the mandatory opening period for the collection of the public subsidy. The family resides in Madrid and they go very little to the town now due to the lack of attractiveness they see in the rural area. “Going up to town is an obligation”, in addition to the expenses of keeping the house open. The house is owned by the elderly mother and managed by the children who reside in Madrid. It has no mortgage charges and the sale is set at 130 thousand euros, little more than the real cost of rehabilitation.

Disassemblage 2. (February and July 2021). A renovated vernacular house in Canencia, a small village in the north of the province of Madrid. It is a rustic stone house rehabilitated for 10 years by the owners, after an inheritance adjudication process. There was a feeling of recovering the family heritage, the mother's house, the family home of all life, where the current owner spent her childhood. The owners live in another house in the same town and the son has decided to emigrate and live in an urban area, so they decide to put it up for sale as they do not need two houses in the same town and need to support the son financially. At the end of the rehabilitation of the house of 220 m<sup>2</sup> with two floors and under roof, with 4 bedrooms and a living room, they decide to sell it for 175 thousand euros. The house is not registered property which makes it difficult to sell. The charm lies in the experience of the rehabilitation process that lasted for 10 years and that has helped prevent the disappearance of the original family building.

Type 2. Another type of orientation is made up of those who came from outside and leave the place again. The sale is usually managed by local real estate agencies. There are two subtypes: upper new comers ex-urban class and lower new comers ex-urban class. There are examples in neighboring municipalities:

Disassemblage 3. (January 2022). The case of upper new middle class is in the main street of Medranda, a town located in the north of the province of Guadalajara. It is a traditional house of the rehabilitated area of 191 m<sup>2</sup>, with two floors with an attic and an upper terrace of more than 20 m<sup>2</sup>. The popular house is originally built in 1815. The owners are selling it due to poor use and disenchantment with the initial romanticism due to the rehabilitation of the house, which preserves stone elements characteristic of the area on the façade. It is sold for 90 thousand euros, a price with which it is simply intended to recover the amount invested in the new rural house, completely renovated inside with an urban taste and decoration.

Disassemblage 4. (January 2022). Low class new comers. It is a town house for sale in the town of Castilblanco de Henares, located on Mayor Street 11. This town is located in the north of the province of Caceres. The house is sold for 37 thousand euros, a price that includes the cost of the reform. The house is distributed on two floors of 80 m<sup>2</sup> total, with two bathrooms. It is completely renovated and maintains a storage room-“fresquera” in the basement. It is a good example of popular architecture from Alcarria region. The rehabilitation was carried out to have a house in a town, but then there was a progressive disenchantment, and the need to recover the investment made: 'we need the money'. The town does not have any public services, not even a bar, and it was an obligation to go there.

Disassemblage 5. (March 2021). Upper class new comers. It is a rustic house in Piquera of San Esteban, a district of the municipality of San Esteban de Gormaz in the southwest of Soria, on Subida to the Iglesia street. It is a set of two houses representative of the traditional architecture of the area converted into two dwellings, a main one for the owners and a secondary one for the guests. The main house has an area of 245 m<sup>2</sup>, 3 bedrooms, and is being sold for 170,000 euros. It was rehabilitated in 2015, respecting the exterior structure of stone and adobe brick. The two-bedroom secondary home is sold for 98 thousand euros, with 151 m<sup>2</sup>, with a shared patio of 80 m<sup>2</sup>. They are sold separately due to the limited use that is granted to the houses. The owners reside in a high-level town in the Madrid metropolitan area (Majadahonda).

Disassemblage 6. (March 2021). Middle/low class newcomers. Popular house in Platerías street in Atauta, district of San Esteban de Gormaz in the south of Soria. The owner, who lives in Madrid, completely renovated it inside, maintaining the traditional exterior style, to have a quiet place to go with relationships, but then she hardly uses it: “it’s too lazy to go...”. It is sold in total for 100 thousand euros, practically the cost of the rehabilitation, with an area of 180 m<sup>2</sup>, distributed over two floors and 3 rooms. The interior rehabilitation maintains an urban style that contrasts with the rural exterior.

## Conclusion

It is possible to conceive of “space as a simultaneity of multiple trajectories” (Massey 2005, p. 61) dominated by the micro spatial politics of specificity. Understanding rural localities as hybrid assemblages (Woods 2011, p. 42) in a complex network of heterogeneous relations (Murdoch 1997) where constellations

of trajectories, encounters and histories (co)exist (Massey 2005). Encounters change in nature on a daily and mundane basis. In this perspective it is possible to place the process of experimental recovery of the new rural house. The politics of hybrid tensions in rural houses suggests a permanent becoming, where transgressive politics of new materiality in rural (external side) and urban (internal face) are situated. With a continuous exchange between immaterial to material. Different houses reflect different micro-tactics of resistance in fluid processes of exclusion and inclusion.

The experimental process of creating the new materiality can conclude with a permanent human-materiality hybridization process, but also with a dis-assemblage process driven by a differential subjectivity. Geographical studies have usually insisted more on assemblage processes than on disassemblage processes of recovered or restructured realities. It is also possible to situate this process in heterogeneous dynamic realities, which would have a cumulative character. Consequently, the processes of disassemblages would constitute expressions of an unstable hybrid reality where relations are in permanent negotiation. They would be particular or individual rearticulation processes in the context of plural hybrid rural communities.

The rural houses express old singularities and new singularities in the form of successive changes in the idea and functionality of artifacts (rural houses). The rural houses are hybrid entities that bring together materiality and spatial divisions (topographies) and new society(ies) and spatial relations (topology).

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