

## PERFORMANCE AND THE SACRED

An artist doesn't need or have to explain a work or its meaning, unless it's a male artist, which then makes this act necessary to cover the fact it's a contradiction in terms. Once the work, or non-work, is completed, it stands on its own. But unfortunately, since it's a message, the meaning is provided on the receiving end and not the giving one. This, dear Chiara, has disturbed me for some weeks now, due to the string of new age, psychological words that downgrade your latest performance to a crime report. I'd like to fill a gap in meaning attributed to you "in this elegant beach for swingers called art," at least as regards aesthetic consequences.

This involves an order of things that is completely different from what has been miserably described. A more original and direct order, in which the laws of nature have no value. After all, this entails an actual minor event, so minor that maybe it never took place, even though appearing in the press. Almost no one saw what happened, but everyone picked up on the image of a voluntary hanging inside an art gallery. The virtual makes it a pure event that gives rise to comments and comparisons of other events that fall under the same name.

You erased all traces around you, eliminating all the books thrown on the shattered mirrors and trodden upon by the Star of the East, Miss Zalumma Agra, in the Moral Exhibition House which she lived in with Mrs. Annie Jones, the most famous bearded lady in the Victorian age. That house was based on the home of Margaret and Kate Fox, but not many knew this because you removed the plaque with this information in an act of rage. At Hydesville the Fox sisters began hearing strange knocking sounds coming from the walls in their rooms and playing with the invisible agent making those noises. It was the mid-1800s, an age of romantic sensibility, when Socialism and Darwinism were also born. In the previous century in Europe, "Bal-tazar Becker, Thomasius, and a few others, with the good intention of forever shutting down the horrendous witch hunts," believed there was no magic at all (Arthur Schopenhauer, *Animal Magnetism and Magic*). Evidently, something eluded their desire for moral control, when in 1852 news reached Italy about table-turning, which triggered a strange infatuation among Catholics. In the late 19th century, mediumship was born when materialist theory shattered the mythical view of the constant relationship between the living and the dead, thus nullifying shared faith. In Western Europe, Italy included, spiritism was mainly scientific, reincarnation-oriented, and without religiousness.

Even the national poem, the *Divine Comedy*, is a journey of hope in which the master poet travels through the afterlife and speaks with the deceased. Instead, today, there are many heated debates on the existence (or not) of life beyond the grave. These assumptions included in a technological and post-modern materialistic world led to the birth of an interest in mediums, automatic writing, and magicians who in some way certify this existence with tangible proof (cassettes, printers).

The different fatalistic descriptions of individual existence, allegorical expressions of a single root of need and causality, are misleading in describing a practical path in which pacification with other Selves is required. After downgrading a love for the Sun and the stars, unaffected by everything except universal Truths, you made it so that the "Doctrine of the Heart" did not become exclusively the "Doctrine of the Eye," that is, empty exoteric ritualism. And continuing into the dark realm, dear Iphigenia, did you find an initiate (or scientific) death?

In 1857, Allan Kardec wrote *The Spirits Book* in which he stated that spiritism was not a religion or blind faith but an experimental science based on facts of which the Fox sisters invented the phenomenal foundations.

Another woman, Roman, like you, found an "initiate" death. It was July 11, 2005 when the anthropologist Cecilia Trocchi Gatto's body was found, from an apparent suicide, at the bottom of a stairwell at her house in Rome, on the ground floor of a building with five floors on Via Eusebio Chini 69.

Cecilia Trocchi Gatto had devoted her entire life to studying faith. In 2001 she published *Storia esoterica di Italia*, a text in which she, with documents, presented the history of Italy in relation to magic: Giuseppe Garibaldi as President of a Spiritualist society; Giuseppe Mazzini as prophet of reincarnation; Massimo D'Azeglio who conjured up the ghost of Camillo Benso.

She wrote that Italy is a country of Catholic traditions with popular and lay-Marxist tendencies as far as the intellectual elite is concerned, and this latter context, beginning in the 1970s, gave rise to a large number of new religious sects. In Italy, a fiefdom of Catholicism, these sects are a post-modern phenomenon.

The irrational diffusion of power, rituals, satanic masses during the DC and P2 years is part of "a long trend

of those in Italy who went from Marxism to the esoteric, that is, from a positivist and materialist vision of life to a spiritualistic-energetic one in an attempt to evoke from evil forces further knowledge, wisdom, and influence upon the world. Caronte brought these people (and these politics) from laicism/materialism to an esoteric gnostic world tinged with occultism, as if these energies existed and were permeable and manageable". These "pacts with the devil come from deviated freemasonry, the first that legitimized Satan. In mixed, androgynous lodges, the Hymn to Satan by Carducci is read. It is believed that the devil did a great favor to humans by letting them eat the fruit of knowledge. The devil is thus legitimized and considered a great ally of humanity. It's a contra-gnosis. A vision that is spiritualist yet opposed to Christian ideas".

Those engaged in art – in a country that insists on displaying works as if they were to be read – must be aware and informed of the history of Christianity. A process of translating Christianity into a form of contemporary philosophy sees every work of art in relation to a certain "sacred" text.

Hordes of contemporary artists are quite unaware of their duty in art, that is, promoting a project that supports the British protectorate (Italy is not only a colony of the United States and the Holy See).

Post-war American abstract painting caught the attention of the CIA in the 1950s and 1960s for its disengagement, so much so that the Agency used it as an exemplary weapon during the Cold War in an operation called "Long Leash". Numerous works were brought from the US to Europe since they embodied the artistic freedom of American culture, thus activating the political tactic of delay, of the "Made-Ready", the same that even today allows artists in Italy to copy the copies of the copies of Anglo-Saxon works.

In any event, it's clear that Italy's contemporary context is a punishment and a sign of primitive magic. There's esoteric dust scattered across the culture. It's mediated by the radio, TV, press. During the Democrazia Cristiana years and afterwards, various Freemason references appear in the works of two Italian artists: Mario Merz, who constantly refers to the gradual growth of form and physical/mental energy based on the Fibonacci sequence, and Vettor Pisani, whose work is rich in allusions to the esoteric, to the symbology of the Rosicrucian and Freemason orders.

In the make-believe Garamond publishing house narrated by Umberto Eco in 1988 in Foucault's Pendulum, dreams are sold. Even today, while looking for esoteric texts of different kinds, you get the feeling of having stumbled upon one of these houses. The doubt arises from the modest preparation of the writers, by texts that are blank pages, almost curtains to cover parlors frequented by illustrious representatives of the Italian colony. The pens of these girls transpire personalities decidedly less combative than yours, and maybe respectable women were the ones who put them there (the prisms through which Occultism appears to the uninitiated are multicolored and varied and among the innate misunderstandings there's unacknowledged altruism). There's a kind of censure regarding certain types of sororities – and you called them killers. Since August I've been thinking about the Priestesses of Isis, but it's like playing ping pong alone with a wall. Only good orators can convince that real Occultism means renouncing the Self, absolute and unconditioned, both in thought and action. It's altruism that places the practitioner above all men. Eco's novel, as you probably know, ends with a macabre representation of the pendulum itself.

Every esoteric group has an initiation ritual: these are inner processes of de-culturalization. Sects are crypto-totalitarian microsystems whose doctrines are parceled systems of knowledge.

Theosophy, for example, teaches that the soul follows a constant process of return and even Madame Blavatsky herself had spirit guides who revealed to her both the modalities of behavior within the sect and the most hidden truths.

In the Satanic quagmire similar to Theosophy the ritual proceeds au rebours all ceremonial acts. Lucifer is rebellion against God and heir to the pagan divinities.

Among those who evoke him there's also the beast, Aleister Crowley. Crowley's magic is a reproduction of the famous "gnostic mass", often seen, with strong sexual content and kitsch embellishment, in Italy in two branches of the Ordo Templi Orientis, one in Bologna and the other in Milan. For Crowley the ultimate mystery lay in the cult of the phallus and in sexual magic where "the priestess must act like a priest".

Among the traces left behind by this image (not the result of a pathetic option), I jotted down the names of two secret orders in Italy with a feminist background: the Ierodule di Iside and the Figlie di Mat. These are surely girls who take delight in occult sciences and cosmic conspiracies. When I encountered some in the hallway at the Academy, early in the morning, with stale make-up exiting cold and long hallways embellished with ancient statues, I never thought that one day I'd start taking them seriously.

On the two entrance columns of this complex 18th-century allegory disguised as post-modern, I see the words CONDOLEO ET CONGRATULATOR sculpted. Not a mystery but rather the entrance to a secret passageway into the sneaky Italian colony.

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