

THE DEAD BODY

Myths, Rites and Superstitions*

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Abstract: This study is of a predominantly socio-anthropological nature, dealing with the traditions, beliefs, myths, rites and finally, how the human community imagines the post mortem and treats someone who has died. Thus, following a brief historical digression about death in the West, based on the works of Philippe Ariès (1975 and 1977), Louis-Vincent Thomas (1985), and Maria Manuel Oliveira (2007), my purpose is to focus primarily on contemporary practice, where the transformations wrought by technology on culture and the media throughout the twentieth century, have changed our sense of both life and death..

Key-words: death rituals, visual culture, tragedy, grotesque, baroque

1. The dead body is always what we are as a society

Domesticated death

My point of departure is the 9th century of Carlos Magno and traditional rural society. At this time, we knew we were going to die, and also when we would die. Ill or wounded, the Carolingian gentleman would lie down flat, join his hands, turn his head towards Jerusalem, lament elements of his life, ask forgiveness of friends for his wrongdoings, receive pardon and entrust his soul to God. His body would remain under the floor of a church, or in the surrounding cemetery.

This medieval practice, which puts the cemetery at the ecclesiastical centre of the village, exactly as death is at the centre of life, reflects a fissure from the ancient Roman traditions. Those traditions banished the corpses - which were considered taboo - far from the centre of the town, to the most distant outskirts, or even to graves which flanked the roads outside the town. The body of a gentleman, however, after a few decades in a tomb, under the floor of the sanctuary, would be transferred to a common trench...his soul would have been wandering in erring for some time, or would have 'returned' to join the living. But, it would not delay in returning to its repose, in which it would remain until the end of time, whereby it would awake to 'the sound of trumpets', on the Day of Judgement.

With regard to the elite, change happened rapidly. The twelfth century saw the first cultural change. This change saw the slow emergence of the individual and of individual

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biographies, which evokes the 'morte de si' (death of another). No longer was it 'all those that die' but 'myself that dies'. According to Philippe Ariès (1977), this type of individualism primarily affirms the new concept of judgement. It was no longer regarded as the end of time, but the final judgement. Christ, the Virgin Mary, St. John and the Angels are the royal judges, and also the mediators. Armed with enormous scales, it falls to them to separate the chosen on one side, and the condemned on the other. However, the process of preparation for those who individualised themselves to an even greater extent, is when the grand parade of justice, with its scales and all the paraphernalia of judgement is brought to the sick-room, and placed above the deathbed of the dying. This accounts for the abundance of medieval iconography. Those who are interested have time to make an almost commercial scale of this biography, with their deeds and gestures, whether good or bad. And whilst this takes place, the tomb is personalised, with prominent graves flanking the sanctuary of the church. The Roman use of the epitaph, which had been forgotten during the high Middle Ages, was reinstated, from the gothic era, whereas gravestones lost their status, becoming of little relevance.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, men of the upper social classes no longer considered their existence as destiny. They lay down to die, in terms of embarking on an inevitable journey, as did the Carolingian gentleman, but not in itself. The merchant of Flanders or of Paris, at the end of the Middle Ages, projects his life as a promise of happiness, although abruptly interrupted by death – a bitter taste which penetrates and destroys creative liberty. Death, in this undertaking, is in fact a frustrating and worrying event. Death bends and breaks. This inauspicious event is followed by the bitterness of defeat, the hour of the final judgement, and also the fascinating horror which is the decomposition of the corpse. We see this fascinated horror, for example, in the painting of the Low Middle Age, an era beleaguered by mass pestilence.

The seventeenth century saw the Baroque death, probably one of the greatest aesthetic exits which happened in the West, in terms of the art of dying and of being buried. The baroque inhumation unifies the individual and society; the macabre facts are accepted, but not their neurotic version, centred on putrefaction. The Baroque death responds to the worries which arise regarding the souls of the deceased. To the sound of the bells, the Baroque death reconstitutes social hierarchies, the social order of the city, the impoverished and the privileged (Oliveira, 2007). It is treated in an order which is pompously reset, in the course of a funereal procession which accompanies an extravagant burial, behind designs of death and of tears which are embroidered on cloth.

However, the doomed fowl, which to appear be so well domesticated, do not escape the cage. Again, this sinister owl was raised in flight. Aries noted that, in this respect, the nineteenth century began circa 1780, with the painter Jean-Baptiste Greuze and his tragic melodramas. Those times were thus the bearers of a type of romantic death, a vivid death, passionate, emotional and hysterical, with people arriving at their loss. In a word, it was no longer treated as the death of another, nor the death of the other, brother, companion, a loved one... Emotion preceded death, which could result in a macabre eroticism, an eroticism prepared by a tradition which came from the painter Hans Baldung Grien (16th Century) and the writer Marquis de Sade (18th/19th century).

Even before the Revolution of 1789, Greuze's works had set the tone. His paintings were bathed in tears. But, what came to pass, after 1850, was the establishment, in monumental cemeteries, of a fantastic familial and civil cult of death, which united Christians of all strains and the staunch Atheists. Death was showcased, converted by the aim of creating fabulous 'outdoor museums' (Oliveira, 2007). In France, the Père-Lachaise is an archetype of this kind of monumental cemetery. Monuments for those who fell during the world wars followed in the same vein.

Finally, death in our times. Relegated to the hospital, bombarded with tubes, the dying person is evacuated from society, failing to preside over the enactment of his agony and of his death, contrary to the practice dating from the Carolingian period. The final moments, the funeral mass and the burial are social occasions which are enacted in haste, and some taken quite lightly. According to Thomas (1985:37), "the crisis of the ritual is closely associated with the key concepts of technical civilisation". All funerals are similar in their insignificance, with the exception of funerals for mass-media stars, regardless of their gender, such as: Princess Diana (1997), Pope John Paul II (2005), Ayrton Senna (1994), Niklas Fehér (a Hungarian footballer who played for Benfica, who died on the playing field, live on television, in 2004), Michael Jackson (2009). The last rites had been, at times, a solemn preparation for the afterlife. Today, there is no more than a simple "sacrament of the sick" – a spiritual antibiotic. Families continue to congregate around flowering graves, on All Saints Day. But society is secularised, and has become profane.

This secularisation has resulted in the development of new practices, such as that of funeral directors and funeral homes, which promote practices such as post-mortem hygiene and aesthetic treatments (Thomas, 1985: 98-101). These contemporary arts, of using make-up to hide the violence of death, both tame us and reassure us of its inevitability. Due to post-mortem hygiene and aesthetic treatments, death seems to be

the sleep of the just. The post-mortem aesthetic treatments have been justified, in effect, by the need to combat the macabre nature of death, especially violent deaths, for example as those a result of cerebral-vascular accidents, road accidents and cancers. Take 'The Godfather', for example - the film directed by Francis Coppola in 1972. Don Corleone asks the undertaker reconstruct the face of his son, Santino Sonny Corleone, after he was disfigured by the bomb which murdered him. The reason given was to prevent the mother being shocked by the sight of her son after his gruesome death.

However, despite the fact that this secular ritual of aesthetic treatment of corpses may also be regarded under the sign of hope and of comfort, though these cosmetic treatments do have a funereal character and taste in make-up is doubtful, we can equally consider it under the scope of the grotesque, as Bakhtin (1970: 29) characterized it, a transposition of "all rites and ceremonies into the material plane and body." According to Bakhtin (ibid.), all grotesque forms "degrade, lower and corporealize". The lowering of the sublime does not mean, however, according to Bakhtin (1970: 30), relativism, but is instead "approaching the earth, simultaneously understood as a principle of absorption, and of birth: by lowering, we bury, but at the same time we sow; we give death, and shortly after we give a better and more abundant life."

2. The vertigo, the crisis, the risk, the end

The feeling that our time is no longer expressed as a lucky or providential society is a contemporary sentiment. On one hand, the perception of risk, danger and crisis keeps us in constant fear and restlessness. On the other, society constantly flirts with death. Desecrated and secular society is effectively yoked by *eros* and *thanatos*.

Another feeling present in contemporary society is the shift from language to that of images and technology, leaving us "suffering in finality" (Lyotard, 1993: 93). In the West, language has always co-existed with feeling, from the genesis to the apocalypse. The regime of images and technology is one which is auto-telic, comprising profane and secular images.

Instead of being enlightened by the redemption of Christ on the Cross, we are now under the spotlights of media, which, when the power fails, we realise are artificial lights. Precipitated by imminence, we are effectively marked by instability and unrest. The pulse of life is in constant dialogue with death, and the spotlights are melancholy lights, as they are but shadows of a dead star.

In the regime of language, the ritual celebrations of death were rites of passage, mediating between this life and the other. These rites eased the journey, difficult as it was, because the journey had been written in the history of salvation. The narrative of the rites of passage is dramatic, as it is enlivened by redemption. Our passage imitated and repeated the burial of Christ, an earthly journey, which saw suffering, death and resurrection. Thus, the *Ars moriendi*, the Christian catechism literature, was written in the fifteenth century, to prepare for a good death, as the cross does not exist without resurrection.

However, in the regime of images produced by technology, which integrate the current media system, the rituals of celebrating death are no longer rites of passage, as they do not constitute the mediation of this sovereign event, that of the passage to the “kingdom of the just”. In this media age, we do not have passages; rather, through televised simulation, we can see death happening in front of us. All deaths are made equal - the deaths in collective tragedies, and also the deaths of all personalities, as well as the deaths of ordinary people, using their fifteen minutes of fame, as coined by Andy Warhol. As we directly witness and experience these deaths, the event is ours. The tragedy is also ours. The media narrative of death is, in truth, an inevitable threat to the human condition: always with death in our eyes, we live in constant tension.

As indicated, this narrative is not dramatic, but tragic, constituting a dangerous and uncontrollable journey. The story is always the same: there is no redemption. Fate imposes itself without escape, by the hand of Al Qaeda (terrorist attacks in New York, London, Madrid), by the hand of disease (Alzheimer's, in the case of Pope John Paul II), the paparazzi, in the case of Lady Di, a probable overdose, in the case of Michael Jackson. The tragedy is the empire of direct and immediate news, which imposes an eternal presence without offering hope of redemption.

Because it is a hybrid narrative, full of shadows, with a labyrinthine plot, enigmatic, and presided by pathos (feeling, emotion and passion), the media narrative no longer follows the classical canon, but is rather baroque and grotesque. The media stages a baroque narrative of death. The ritual of permanent repetition of the same images is monotonous, nothing is clear enough to enlighten the maze or to understand the enigma. Instead, there we fall into a kind of stupor that shocks and paralyzes us. This is an area filled with concavities, in which remains the mystery of our life.

The media narrative on death is effectively grotesque, due to the way in which values are inverted. For example, the morally monstrous terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York (2001), and the violent images of severed bodies, quartered and exposed,

without shame by the Atocha railway in Madrid (2004) are grotesque. Similarly, the images of bodies left to rot on the sand at the beach, following the Asian Tsunami in 2004. "What did you feel?" "And what are you feeling now?" insist the journalists. Their interviews are grotesque, due to the way in which they that undermine intimacy, encouraging victims to share their pain with "humanity", which is provided by television camera (Oliveira, 2005 and 2008). The death of Ramon Sampedro, who decided to film the practice of euthanasia that ended his life in 2004, is grotesque and now immortalised in images. On the screen, the gesture is repeated and prolonged for eternity.

In traditional narratives, the hour of death comes quietly and takes us in our truly solitary state. If this is shared, it is witnessed only by close family. It is not provocative. It is much less than a provocative act, that which repeats the transgression to eternity. But, the media narrative is no longer thus. There was nothing sublime about the suffering of Pope John Paul II, exposed on TV. On the contrary, it was a grotesque display of his agony - that of a dying man walking. And the colossal heap of flowers, following the death of Diana of Wales was equally grotesque in 1997, both at the Pont d'Alma in Paris, as at Kensington Palace in London. And similarly grotesque was the coverage of the grieving parents of Maddie McCann, the British girl who disappeared in the Algarve in 2007, who still do not know, even today, if she is kidnapped or dead, but their mourning was displayed in press conferences in Portugal and the UK for over two years.

Journalistic reports of death do, in fact, subvert journalistic codes of conduct. The exacerbation of emotions, putting logos and ethos under the rule of pathos, disqualifies journalism, which "eats the thought," as noted by Karl Kraus, a century ago.

In this context, it is important to consider the cultural alteration referred to by the philosopher and anthropologist Marcel Gauchet (1985), in which religion no longer structures life in contemporary societies, which are secular and profane in their functioning. This signifies that modern society no longer follow the analogous regime, with the cities of men corresponding to the city of God. Today, humans are precipitated in the world, in an eternal and labyrinthine journey, suffering the contingency, instability and unpredictability of the fate that afflicts human life. Called to face the dangers and take the risks that decide that inevitable journey, it is death which is always before our eyes.

Modern civilization has shifted "from atoms to bits" (Negroponte), from the word to the image, from the "*sun/bolé* to the *dia/bolé*", from the word to the number, "from the

stars to the screens" (Virilio, 2001: 135), from the unity to plurality. I broadly refer to the consequences of immersing our lives and bodies in technology, an immersion that gives rise to the displacement of ideology for sensology (ideas for emotions); the displacement of a society of universal purpose for a society of means without ends (with technology to superimpose teleological and eschatological principles in history and dismantle the end of a story with genesis and apocalypse, imposing on us presentism and instantaneism), and finally, I refer to the movement of history in the sense of their "infinite acceleration and total mobilisation of the human". (Virilio, 1995; Sloterdijk, 2000; Martins, 2010, 2011).

However, the idea of the human crisis should be highlighted, the way in which we have begun to speak of artificial life, of in vitro fertilisation, of surrogacy, of cloning, replicating and cyborgs, a farewell to the body and flesh, and a turn towards post-organicism and trans-humans. Also significant is the way in which human interaction has developed due to computers, from internet chat rooms, electronic games, social networking sites such as Second Life, Facebook and Twitter, which have destabilised and permanently reconfigured the traditional figures of family and of community. Above all, the complete immersion of technology in history and in our bodies has become problematic for humanity. This immersion is not only displayed by the development of cyberspace culture, but also in bio-technology and genetic engineering.

Under these circumstances, whereby *bios* and *techné* merge and where the very figure of the man becomes problematic, the word *logos* is also in crisis (Martins, 2009 and 2011). The man ceased to be an 'animal of promise', as Nietzsche had defined (1887, II, § 1), because his word is no longer able to promise. Where he is today is mainly revises the figures that accentuate its transient, groping, contingent, fragmentary, multi, imponderable, nomadic and solitary nature.

3. An imaginary with death in our eyes

High culture, literature, painting, sculpture and symphonic music, gave way to mass culture, a process that includes cultural industries and see the work of art becomes a commodity. This extensive process of civilization embraces fashion, film, tourism, vacations, and business media, particularly the press, radio, television, and Internet advertising, and includes, visual culture, such as the digital and electronic games.

High culture was reifying and elitist, nurtured by the aura of creativity and the original act of creation. It was immortalised in a narrative between genesis and the apocalypse and declined the story of salvation. Its dramatic imagery, which contained a redemptive synthesis, gave meaning to life, including suffering and death: the kingdom of God,

supreme justice, a classless society, a theology of the cross that led to the resurrection. High culture also had an imaginary of classical forms with an enlightened reason and the ability to tame the demons and drive away the shadows, all the shadows, instead imposing straight lines and surfaces which were also clear and transparent. It also had a sublime imaginary of higher forms, which dreamed of unity and the totalisation of human existence.

Mass culture, however, which has erupted among us has neither genesis nor apocalypse, we live in the present, "on pain of purpose", to quote the words of Lyotard (1993: 93), which expresses the labyrinthine, enigmatic nature of the human, a condition which is fragmented, unstable, viscous, sinuous, finite and contingent.

Our current situation is largely a due to the fact that technology has been integrated into history and bodies, to the point where there is a fusion between *techné e bios* – hence, the conversion of existence to sensory experience.

Tragedy is a figure which we generally associate with literature – it is a literary form. Baroque is a term which we use to describe an era in the history of Western art forms. The grotesque expresses an aesthetic sensibility. These three forms are averse to the concept of totalisation of existence, as these forms are averse to the idea of perfection and harmony. These forms do not accept the idea of a destination which is destabilised by the marginal, the mundane and the profane, but rather provide a viscous character, which is sinuous and weaving, displaying the labyrinth of the human condition.

These forms of the imaginary can have an obvious impact on culture, or can be discreet or even secret. In the era of media, the tragic, the baroque and the grotesque, have – in my view – a blatant impact. Calabrese (1987) speaks of a "Neo-Baroque age"; Muniz Sodré and Raquel Paiva (2002), an "empire of the grotesque"; Maffesoli (2000), a "return of the tragic."

We have known, since Nietzsche, and also Roland Barthes (1942) and later Michel Maffesoli (2000), in this aspect, that the tragic opposes the dramatic (in one case, we have contradictions which overcomes the summary – the dramatic; in another, we have contradictions without resolving conflict – tragedy).

Henrich Wölfflin (1991), for his part, believed that the baroque opposes the classical. In one case, we have shapes with straight lines and flat surface – the classic; in the other, we have shapes with curved lines, with bends and concave surfaces – the baroque.

According to Mikhaïl Bakhtin (1970), the grotesque opposes the sublime. On one hand, we have forms of a higher world, balanced and harmonious – the sublime. On the other, we have forms which are disproportionate to a lower world, inverted and disharmonious – the grotesque.

These three forms of the imaginary, the tragic, the baroque and the grotesque are dynamic and share similar characteristics: in each, there is life and the world, are unstable, ambivalent, meandering, fragmentary, imperfect and ephemeral. However, differences can also be observed. Following the Counter-Reformation, Baroque rose to the heights of worldly turmoil of vaults and thrones, in its quest for the absolute. For its part, the grotesque is voracious and corrosive. Nothing in it is saved, or even absolute. The value system is subverted and mocking. The grotesque demeans everything that it contacts, and settles into the depths of existence. In the grotesque, the opening thus becomes hollow, a quavering, curved line. The tragic surrenders to a life of restlessness and melancholy - attitudes characteristic of beings who engage in an uncertain fate - with no promise of a happy ending. The tragic lives this contradiction: it feeds a certainty that remains elusive and is devoid of promoting impossibilities, which have been imagined for eternities.

We are thus, experiencing a melancholic imaginary, which is expressed by ill-being in society and by human suffering, which is also the suffering of finality, as previously stated.

In this era, which the philosopher Ernst Jünger (1990: 108) described as of “the machines and the masses”, death and pleasure exist side by side, in a permanent matrimony. It is this wedlock between *thanatos* and *eros* which broadly allows for an analysis for visual culture and contemporary media.

3.1 Representations of death in advertising

Oliviero Toscani, the photographer who shocked the world, working particularly with Benetton, published his emblematic book entitled “A publicidade é um cadáver que nos sorri” in 1996¹. Four of his creations are featured below, which focus on grotesque shapes demoted to hell, a world which impure, profane and secular, a world without redemption, in a process that creates an effect of disharmony and ambivalence.

Image 1: The advertising campaign for Benetton in February 1992 took AIDS as its theme. Family members surround the dying with a picture of the passion of Christ, or

¹ Author's translation: "Advertising is a corpse that smiles at us".

the Lord's death on the cross. This is an impure invocation, an invocation of grotesque Christian *ars moriendi*, descending into the hell of marketing.



Image 1. 'AIDS – David Kirb' - David Kirb' – Publicity campaign for Benetton on AIDS| February 1992. Oliviero Toscani.

Image 2: The Benetton advertising campaign from September 1992 takes the electric chair as its theme. The electric chair is a grotesque instrument of justice, because it is a lethal torture device.

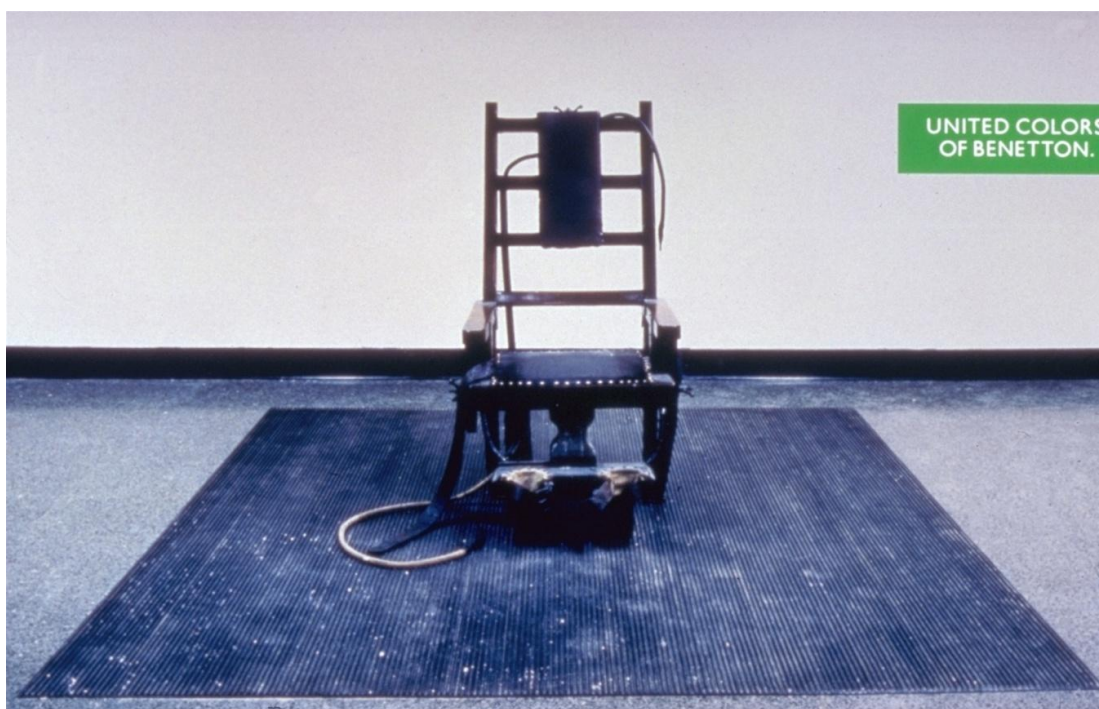


Image 2. 'Electric Chair' -The publicity campaign for Benetton, focusing on the violence of death by electric chair | September 1992. Oliviero Toscani.

Image 3: This advertising campaign for Benetton focused on the theme of war and violence. "The Bosnian soldier," February 1994, combines the camouflage pants of a soldier with a bloody t-shirt, printed in blood, is the face of a young girl. Romanticism is, grotesquely, soaked in blood, an unclean invocation that combines love with suffering and death in war.

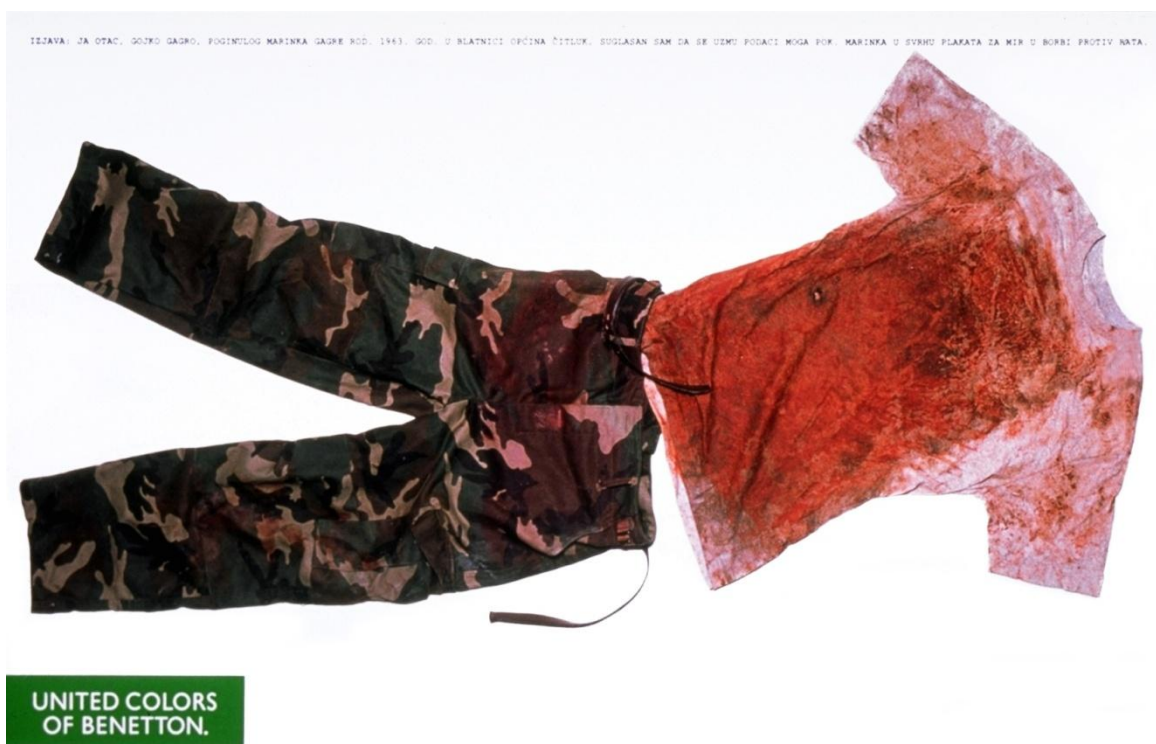


Imagem 3. 'Bosnian soldier' - Publicity campaign for Benetton on the theme of war | February 1994.

Image 4: The advertising campaign for Nolita, a well known Italian brand of women's clothing, scandalously used an anorexic model in September 2007. Reminiscent of Baudelair's "Flowers of Evil", the anorexic model embodies the polarity between aesthetics and established codes of beauty, an aesthetic that combines, grotesquely, with the ruin of the body, suffering and death.



Image 4: Publicity campaign with an anorexic model, for the brand Nolita, in September 2007. Oliviero Toscani.

3.2. Representations of death in fashion

Alexander McQueen, the British fashion designer who committed suicide in February 2010, was a designer of fetish, funereal fashion shows. Below is a set of images from his fashion shows.

Baroquism and the disharmony of forms, in addition to a predilection for dark environments and gloom, feature in all the following images. The catwalk is black and the dominant colours are black and red. We associate this dark environment, and the shadows, with death and blood. The contrast of baroque and grotesque forms with sublime, classical forms and classical, referred to by clarity, harmony and straight lines

is strongly manifested, to the extent that death is a constant suggestion in practically all of them.



Image 5. Alexander McQueen. www.alexandermcqueen.com/

This first image summons a world of baroque and grotesque shapes, spectres of humans wrapped in feathers and pleats, reminiscent of made-up corpses, or decaying bodies, vampirized bodies. To add to the macabre nature of the silhouettes is their enigmatic character. All silhouettes are strangely trapped, grabbed them by the head with their faces almost being swallowed. It suggested a reality of transformation, but in an unknown direction, in one case, augured by bizarre forms of birds printed on a dress, in another example, a cage which turns the head into a strange imprisoned bird; yet another case whereby the folds resemble crusty scales of a mermaid's body, and finally, by the combination of a bat shaped with the human form. That is, the human form is mixed with the nonhuman forms of unusual animals: bat, mermaid and bird. The colours are always gloomy, nocturnal in their own way, painted black and faded red. They conjure images of blood-stained, black rags. The featured faces are alike in their ugliness; frowning or with funereal masks. All these spectres roam the catwalk as zombies or the living dead, with mouths which seem to have been touched by the kiss of death. The models are tall and slender, but their presence is multiplied by suggestions dense cobwebs in their hair, bat wings, demonic brimstone and viscous, rotting bodies.



Image 6. Alexander McQueen. www.alexandermcqueen.com/

The grim colour palette of black and red is also used in this second image, but is now even more garish and demonic. The dense swathes of material remain, frequently with pleats; the hair is covered with a mixture of grotesque, baroque forms. The eyes are shrouded in darkness, black holes, as if they were skulls. The rouged lips all seem to have been kissed by death. The faces and skin on the arms and shoulders, emerging from beneath generous ruffles and folds of material, are of an unhealthy pallor.



Image 7. Alexander McQueen. www.alexandermcqueen.com/

In this third image, the two models on the left retain the unhealthy skin pallor, the black eyes, and the kiss of death on their lips, the ruffles and shades of black and faded red, particularly the first model, who appears somewhat satanic. The third model resembles a mummy, swathed in white, as though ready for burial. The three models maintain grotesque, if ambiguous characteristics, with the second and third models suggesting an enigmatic stage of transformation.



Image 8. Steve McQueen. www.alexandermcqueen.com/

The fourth image comprises three models, each with the same characteristics of the previously analyzed images. The models further testify to Oliver Toscani's title about publicity: in fashion, we may also say that fashion is a corpse that smiles at us. These models manifest a grotesque character, emphasizing the lowering of aesthetic canons: the excessive pallor of the skin, the lank hair, the cadaverous face, or the two tufts of hair which serve to accentuate the ugliness of the bloodless face; and finally, the use of purple and black in addition to red, the bloodstain. The baroque character can also be observed in the ruffled, frilled clothing.



Image 9. Alexander McQueen. www.alexandermcqueen.com/

The model in the foreground is melancholic and enigmatic, grotesquely baroque in style and character. The face is excessively pale, almost ghostly, contrasting with the darkness of the lips. Bakhtin, would describe this model as the "transfer to the material plane and body", which is the plane of earth and body in their indissoluble unity of all that is elevated, spiritual, ideal and abstract (Bakhtin, 1970: 29). That is, the human figure represented in this silhouette is covered by the idea of ambivalence and the ideal of beauty is demoted, as in this model, grotesque realism is assumed. Along with the suggestion of ambivalence, the idea of relegation, "the world turned upside down" by "parody of ordinary life" (Bakhtin, 1970: 19), is the grotesque realism, the main characteristics constituting both ambivalence and relegation. As noted by Bakhtin (1970: 33), "The image features a grotesque phenomenon in a state of transformation, a still incomplete metamorphosis, a state of death and birth, growth and evolution." In the above image, the human is transformed into something indefinable. The face seems captive to something that will come to swallow it. It is this suggestion of imprisonment of human forms, though they possess inhuman shapes, or are a mixture of human and

inhuman forms, which results in disharmony, exaggeration, hyperbolism and profusion, "characteristic signs of the grotesque" (Bakhtin, 1970: 302).

This lack of harmony and proportion is particularly visible in the centre of the scene, consisting of a set of elements crammed, untidily, as if they had been placed there at random, causing surprise and provoking questions for the observer.



Image 10. Alexander McQueen. www.alexandermcqueen.com/

In these last figures, the trait which is most accentuated is that of human hybridity with objects and animals. Furthermore, it can be described as "fundamental to grotesque images is the particular concept of the whole body and its limits. The boundaries between the body and the world, and between different bodies, are traced in a completely different manner to those of classical and naturalistic images" (Bakhtin, 1970: 314). The grotesque character of these forms is manifested by the way in which the animal invades the human, to the point of merging with it, creating monstrous

figures. In the first figure, the head of the model is swallowed by a flock of butterflies. And when the mouth of the model coincides with the dotted edge of butterfly wings, the teeth of a skull are suggested. But, we can also say that this dotted figure signifies the transformation into new life due to the adult butterflies with the suggestion of pupa on the edge of their wings. In turn, the second model reminds us a Minotaur, with the antlers of a stag adorning the head. The cloak and dress make us, however, imagine tangled cobwebs. The grotesque nature of these forms, while misshapen and hideous, can generate feelings of discomfort and of melancholy. The transformation of the human, in the sense of hybridity with the animal expresses its inconsistency and permanent bleeding further propose the notion that death is frightening figure.

3.3. *The television series Bones*

In the television series *Bones*, the City is a corpse that science inspects carefully. A reprise of Gilbert Durand's plot and operating a myth analysis of the narrative, *Bones* develops between the nightly element of crime, comprising suffering and death, and the daily regime of science and criminal investigators the brightness of science and criminal investigators, a blessing which pacifies us, dispelling our shadows and doubts. *Bones* contributes to a bright, day-time imaginary, because there we find the solar hero, who identifies the culprits and throws them in jail. The hero is an angel who judges in truth and is our mediator in resolving the crimes that produce suffering and death. This hero is infallible in solving – through logical, deductive reasoning – the most complex and dangerous situations. All that overshadows the scene of a crime, or a prostitute's room, or even a charred corpse, is the darkness of a night that should be returned to the order of discourse of solar distinction.

Nietzsche points out, in his *Second Untimely View*, that historical science should not clarify what is given to us in a state of confusion. What Science has to do is to respect it. However, in *Bones*, for both scientists and police officers, all of intellectual and moral rectitude, the clarification and distinction of daytime represent purification, almost a purge: it is the clear and distinct uniqueness of objects, which are cleared of any ambiguity, subjectivity or relativity. The clarity and distinction of the analysis aim to overcome the multiple and plentiful impurity that is characteristic of the nocturnal regime of crime, which is of suffering and death. However, the discourse of science is not the speech of ordinary language. It is so profusely laid with technical terms that it became somewhat magical, a coded language, which plays the same role as Latin in Christian liturgies of other times. Nowadays, the technical-scientific language is, in effect, a soteriological discourse, the discourse of the only messianism we have left, a messianism without *telos* - technology.

3.4. Representations of death in television programming

Confirming the results of the more comprehensive study conducted Felisbela Lopes et al. (2009), research by Nuno Brandão (2010) concludes that the category "Accidents and disasters" is hegemonic in the opening headlines of news broadcasts (2000/2001), on the three private general interest channels on Portuguese television, representing about 20% of which comprises a series of ten categories for each of the three channels (see Table 1 below).

	RTP 1 (%)	SIC (%)	TVI (%)
Accidents and Catastrophes	20,88	20,33	18,68
Social Issues	7,14	14,84	16,48
State / International Politics	18,68	13,19	12,09
Sports	9,89	9,34	12,64
Health and Science	5,49	8,24	7,69
Courts	5,49	8,24	9,34
Military and Police Issues	12,09	5,49	8,24
Wars and Protests	6,04	4,4	3,85
Political Parties	2,75	1,1	2,2
Others	11,54	14,84	8,79
Total	100	100	100

Table 1 - Results of a study conducted by Nuno Brandão (2010), regarding the opening headlines of Portuguese news broadcasts.

3.5. Representations of death in news reports about children

News about childhood represents only about 3% of the news media. But 65% of these reports relate to risk situations. Consequently, the nature of these reports always feature suffering, and often death, abuse, maltreatment (physical, psychological, sexual, etc.), abandonment, lawsuits, accidents and safety problems, kidnapping, mugging, robbery and paedophilia. 15% of stories about children at risk make the front page. A study conducted on representations of childhood on Portuguese TV, related to 2008, found that 4% of news reports featured in the main headlines (Oliveira et al., 2010).

4. From a peaceful state to a tormented state

When looking at the myths, rituals, iconography and beliefs that we have about the dead body, we speak of a tribute to the dead. That is, the ceremony is always indispensable to ensure that the dead have a post mortem future, a future that allows the dead to escape into nothing. But its main function is therapeutic. If not curative, it

is without a doubt palliative, or rather, comforting. Through symbolism, we seek to be cured, or to prevent the anguish of the survivors, the still living, who thus take comfort and are able negotiate a sense of death. Symbolism is a feature of a society organized by word. The myths, rites and icons are the symbols of a community. Myths are speeches, narratives that sustainably organize community practices, expressing and living their beliefs. Similarly, rites are gestures which constitute structured gestures which correspond to the myths, embodying and expressing their beliefs and also organized the same way, over time. The beliefs and superstitions, which are expressed by myths, rites and icons, are symbolic acts, totalling the life of a community. The beliefs are to the community what superstitions are for individuals.

The traditional symbolic practices, typical of traditional societies, which occur at birth and at death (in the case of the Christian community, for example baptism and funeral), correspond to a primary anthropology of these cultures. However, with the abolition of the Dies irae and black ornaments, and the focus of the ties that bind the living to the dead, the symbolic death was a sign of hope and peace.

Representations of death in contemporary visual culture, as secular waking rituals for the dead body, decline above all our current vertigo, concomitantly with the current movement of civilization of translation to the number, image, emotion and multiple. They are, therefore, more organized by the *dia/bolé* (images that separate) than by the *sun/bolé* (images that unite).

In conclusion, we may wonder, however, how we moved from the idea of harmony, presided by the identity theory (harmony of the individual), on the one hand, and the idea of citizenship (civic harmony), on the other hand, the conception of a multiple entity (hybrid), which is fragmented, an entity with multiple IDs, and not definitive but rather unsteady, viscous, labyrinthine, enigmatic. We can ask ourselves how we came to this perception of the human as hostile to any definitive stable or serious knowledge. Referring again to Bakhtin (1970: 19), we can say that this perception, "hostile to everything that is done and finished, hostile to any claim to the unchangeable and eternal, needs to assert itself through forms of expression which are changeable, fluctuating and portable." Thus, dramatic forms, classical and sublime become, as already pointed out, tragic, baroque and grotesque.

The idea of harmony in the Western tradition had a logos, of ideas spoken in truth, a pathos, ordered by the redeeming synthesis of logos and ethos, consisting of higher forms and higher values defined by logos, which guided the action. In turn, the media

and technical civilizations, desecrated and secular, has a dominant pathos, whereby sensations, emotions and passions disable the centrality of logos and ethos.

1. In traditional society, the logos was identified with the classic style of forms of thought, which are smooth, logical forms, of premises which are clear, right and true. The idea of time as a straight line is predominant in traditional society due to the principle teleological orientation to an end, so the story develops between an origin and an apocalypse, which guarantees us a solid foundation, a known territory and a stable identity.

Logos means existence and creates unity. Imagination is the "folle du logis," which creates disorder, as according to Descartes and Malebranche.

In a technological and media society, *logos* is Baroque. The forms are exuberant, rough and confusing, conforming to the nature of a hybrid entity, ambivalent and uneasy. Predominate in the technological and media society, are the curved lines of time, its folds and concave surfaces, full of shadows.

The baroque imposes a regime of flux, which expresses the fragmentation of existence, the multiplicity and ambivalence of the individual.

Imagination is now "fée du logis," as stated by Gilbert Durand.

2. In traditional society, *pathos* is dramatic – it assumes a redemptive synthesis. Thus, logos, which is the last instance and sovereign decision, controls and directs pathos. In contrast, in the technological, media society is tragic pathos. As this is converted into sensation, emotion and passion, tragedy is now the dominant form of imagery.

This dialectic is passionate and terse, due to the lack of a redeeming synthesis. Furthermore, here identify does not exist; thus, the dialectical tension summons several identifications. Hence, the non-logic of the human erupts, and tragedy disregards logos.

3. In traditional society, *ethos* is wedded with sublime ways: signifying higher, superior values, at the service of an absolute, what must-be. In traditional society, the ethics of citizenship serve the human community, opposed to individualism.

In a technological, media society, *ethos* is grotesque: inverting the hierarchy of values, lowering traditional values, making all categories equalling – relativism is imposed, i.e., the "polytheism of values" (Weber), against the dogmatism of what must-be. In these

new times, the death of Diana of Wales, Mother Teresa, John Paul II, Ayrton Sena, Miklos Fehér, Michael Jackson, are equal and exchangeable.

Ethos is governed by pathos (the feeling, the emotion and passion). Thus, it implies "ethics of aesthetics" (*aesthesis* means emotion), as referred to by Michel Maffesoli (1990), and tribalism, which is an emotional community. Hence, the present, i.e. daily life, is the place where the man decides. In this sense, the instant eternity is realized, reassuming the beautiful formula as defined by Maffesoli (2000).

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