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REHABILITATION OF BARICCO'S AND JAPRISOT'S HEROES IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN CRITICISM

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Abstract. The paper observes the attempt to morally rehabilitate the soldiers executed in the First World War, which takes place on a literary level in the novels *Questa storia (This Story)* by Alessandro Baricco and *Un long dimanche de fiançailles (A Very Long Engagement)* by Sébastien Japrisot. The soldiers were punished twice: by taking their lives and by being stigmatized in the memory. A detailed analysis, relying on the theoretical propositions of Michel Foucault and René Girard, leads to the conclusion that the truth is exactly the opposite of what seems evident from the legal side. Through the prism of such a new and different view, the culprit and the victim change places; it is the state that represents the violent/punitive apparatus whose main motive of action is to acquire or maintain control and power, while the executed individuals are only its victims.

*Introduction*²

The paper presents a comparative analysis of the destinies of the main character of the novel *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (*A Very Long Engagement*) by the French author Sébastien Japrisot and one of the secondary characters of the novel *Questa storia* (*This Story*) by the Italian author Alessandro Baricco. We find the basis for the comparison in the similar life paths of the two heroes, who, as participants in the First World War, were sentenced to death by the military authorities for offenses committed at the front. Such judgments not only deprive them of their right to life, but also their honour and dignity, because they remain remembered as unworthy members of their nations.

The aim of this paper is to, relying on the theoretical propositions of Michel Foucault and René Girard, prove that there is no basis for condemning the actions of these characters and that in this way they are morally rehabilitated. The initial hypothesis about their guilt is refuted with arguments by Foucault's thesis on the manipulative character of the state apparatus and the legal system. Comparative and analytical-synthetic methods are used in the research; the paper itself consists of an introduction, six sections, and a conclusion.

In the first section, the situations in which the characters that are the subject of this analysis were found will be presented in detail, and the author's motivation to engage into the analysis of this topic will be explained. In the second and third parts, Foucault's view of the emergence of a new concept of management and supervision and the new function of punishment in a society is discussed. In the fourth and fifth parts, on the basis of Foucault's assumptions, a concrete analysis of the actions of the mentioned heroes and the circumstances under which those actions were carried out is approached. The results point to the conclusion that the heroes were unjustly convicted. After the sixth part, in which reader gains insight into Girard's comparative analysis of the legal system and customs of ritual sacrifice, and finds arguments for the transfer of

² The pagination of quotations is done according to the original sources, listed in the bibliography. The quoted parts were translated by the author of this article.

the hero from the status of the culprit to the status of the victim. Finally, in the conclusion, the results of the research are summarized.

Authors and Heroes

Baricco and Japrisot encountered the stories of the First World War in their childhood, because both of them had grandfathers with whom they grew up and who participated in the war (Petrović, 2021). The theme of the soldier being punished by his superiors is central to Japrisot's novel, but at the same time it is also the life story of his grandfather, who, after refusing to return from leave, was sent to the front in Verdun as punishment, where one of the bloodiest battles in the First World War took place in 1916. The writer recalls that every time the grandfather talked about that event, he was full of anger and bitterness (Bénévent, 2004).

Baricco's grandfather also fought in that war (Baricco, 2011) and he was a contemporary of the great defeat of the Italian army in the battle of Kobarid (1917), which was a taboo subject for years in the Italian public life, but not in Baricco's family. Apart from the large number of deserters, martyrs, and prisoners³, this battle will also be remembered for the large number of soldiers and lower-ranking officers who were executed for desertion on the spot or a few days after the disputed event, which, in that period, according to the Italian Military Criminal Code was practically legalized, and even directly recommended by some generals (Offenstadt, 2002). Through their heroes, the writers try to answer the questions they asked themselves in their childhood.

The main character of Japrisot's novel, eighteen-year-old Manech, is mobilized and sent to the front, from which he wants to return at all costs, because psychologically he cannot bear the reality he encounters there and because his fiancée, Mathilde, is waiting for him at home. Because of this, he stages self-mutilation and, after a trial conducted on that occasion before a military court, he is sentenced to death. The death penalty is carried out by throwing him and four other soldiers who committed the same offense into the cleared space between the trenches and leaving them to the enemy's volleys. At the end of the novel, after a long search, Mathilde finds out that her fiancée has survived and has amnesia.

In Baricco's novel *Questa storia (This Story)*, the hero from whom the reader learns all the details of the battle near Kobarid is the father of the captain⁴ shot

³ The epilogue of the battle is as follows: 700,000 people were thrown out of the army: 10,000 killed, 30,000 wounded, 293,000 captured soldiers and 350,000 who fled into the interior of the country (Буришић и др., 1976, pp. 279–280).

⁴ There are many nameless heroes in the chapter *Memoriale di Caporetto*, Baricco's way of symbolically talking about the problem of depersonalization in the war.

for desertion. He does not believe in the short dispatch sent to him by the military authorities, in fact in that part of it that speaks of his son as a deserter, and therefore sets out in search of the truth, talks with the captain's war comrades to reconstruct the whole event, to record everything and thus rehabilitate the name and honour of his son.

Victim, punishment, justice, injustice and rehabilitation are the main pivots around which the stories by the two authors are woven.

The State as a Violent Apparatus

The theme of punishment and sacrifice, essential and formal justice and the role of the lever of power in social functioning is also dealt with by Michel Foucault (1975) in the work *Surveiller et punir – naissance de la prison (Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison)*. He recognizes the prototype of the state organization of government in the disciplinary structure of the prison, where a few guards successfully control the multitude of prisoners, owing to the spatial and technical organization in such a way that from the central prison tower the guards can see every prisoner at all times, while remaining invisible themselves. Such organization proves to be of essential importance for understanding the efficiency of the modern systems of government. Foucault calls the system of functioning of the social power machinery that monitors, controls, directs and disciplines the individual a panopticon⁵. The term itself and the entire concept was taken from the English reformer of the legal system from the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, Jeremy Bentham, who presented the panoptic system as a mandatory procedure that will enable the establishment of schools within institutions, workshops, prisons; the behaviour of individuals can be monitored, while the profitability and productivity of their activities are increasing. Towards the end of his life, in his project of general codification of English legislation, he presented this system as a mandatory formula for the entire government (Foucault, 2004).

Foucault (1975) evaluated the concept of management and supervision, which Bentham bequeathed to modern society, very negatively from a moral point of view because, according to him, it provides man with knowledge, first of all, about how to use and subjugate another man. Although it originated in prison conditions, the idea of the panopticon can easily be applied to other social circumstances, and always implies the existence of a higher controller

⁵ “Il est polyvalent dans ses applications; il sert à amender les prisonniers, mais aussi à soigner les malades, à instruire les écoliers, à garder les fous, à surveiller les ouvriers, à faire travailler les mendiants et les oisifs” (Foucault, 1975, p. 207). / “In its application, the Panopticon is polyvalent; it serves to punish prisoners, but also to treat the sick, to educate students, to intern lunatics, to supervise workers, to employ beggars and idlers.”

whose interests are opposite to those of the controlled. Wartime conditions are the right environment for the application of this concept, which, according to Foucault, is ideal in the case when “on aura affaire à une multiplicité d’individus auxquels il faudra imposer une tâche ou une conduite”⁶ (Foucault, 1975, p. 207).

Those who are visible can be organized, controlled, directed, and sanctioned for everything that does not fit the supervisor’s expectations. In this way, the maximum responsibility of the individual in relation to society is achieved, while in return the ruling structure remains anonymous, depersonalized, uncoded, and as such escapes any control and responsibility in relation to those it rules.

The presence of that invisible controller is clearly felt in the mentioned works, his invisible, menacing gaze follows almost all the hero’s actions, with an aspiration to direct them, and if he fails in this, he punishes. Japrisot’s hero Manech will be deprived of his right to life because, due to his psychological fragility, he failed to respond to the imperatively set tasks of the French state, while in Baricco’s work, the Italian military authorities easily decide to shoot the soldiers with the rank and transfer their own responsibility for the damage caused during withdrawal.

Punishment to Set an Example

Analysing the ways of punishment throughout history, Foucault notes that the 18th century represents a turning point in this sense. It was then that the creation of a new punishment strategy and a series of reforms, which will cover all of Europe and the USA by the end of the century, appeared: new theories of law and crime were created; traditional justice was anathematized; old regulations were abolished and customary laws were erased; and also, a new moral or political justification for the state’s right to punish was created.

One of the significant novelties brought about by these reforms is the effort to “inverser tout le champ temporel de l’action pénale”⁷ (Foucault, 1975, p. 96), that is, the function of setting an example, which punishment has always had, now becomes dominant in relation to others. Punishment to set an example becomes an important item of social functioning because it aims to maintain the order and structure of the established relationship between the controller and the controlled; penal methods represent one of the basic principles of the governance techniques.

The motive for reforming the penal system was the alleged need for its humanization; Foucault, however, notes that in many segments the exact opposite is happening. In the case of public punishment, for example, there was a risk that the very cruelty of the scene would evoke empathy in the audience,

⁶ “a certain task or some behaviour needs to be imposed on a multitude of individuals”

⁷ “reverse the temporal field of the effect of punishment”

and that the culprit in their eyes would cease to be a culprit and become a martyr and a hero. The modern legal system, having abolished public executions, excludes any possibility for the condemned to change his status, he is branded unequivocally negative by the court verdict. Thus, the penal system only seems to become more humane, while in essence it becomes more cruel. Since there are no more public executions and carrying of prisoners through the public, the execution of the sentence is ultimately reduced to only a procedural or administrative act, which results in the fact that “l'exemple n'est plus un rituel qui manifeste, c'est un signe qui fait obstacle”⁸ (Foucault, 1975, p. 96).

The fact that punishments in modern society are designed and implemented not so much for the sake of the guilty themselves, as to intimidate those who have not yet broken the law, reveals that in the penal calculation the least interesting element is the culprit himself.⁹ The intervention of power, according to Foucault, occurs in those moments when it feels threatened. The state has its own interest for which it entered the war and for which it survives; any subversive behaviour in this sense threatens its interests and is sanctioned.

In particular, the heroes of *Baricco* and *Japrisot* were not punished so much because of the gravity of their acts, as out of fear that the act could become a mass occurrence. It is unlikely that the self-mutilation of a fragile and lovesick young man and four of his friends could fundamentally threaten the French state and its military position, but if the act were to become repeated on a massive scale, then it would represent a serious problem. The state reacts, not because of what happened, but to prevent what could happen. Not even the shooting of *Baricco's* hero can change the situation at the front, but if it intimidates others and stops further desertion of the army, then the goal has been achieved.

Thus, it turns out that the culprit in the aforementioned novels is the most unimportant element in the process of punishment, just as Foucault claims. This implies the possibility for the culprit to be viewed in a completely new and different vision, he now ceases to be only and exclusively the culprit, but at the same time becomes a victim placed on the altar of the system, so that the system could continue to function smoothly and safely.

⁸ “the example is no longer a ritual that shows the committed act, but a sign which prevents a future act”

⁹ “La peine doit prendre ses effets les plus intenses chez ceux qui n'ont pas commis la faute; à la limite, si on pouvait être sûr que le coupable ne puisse pas recommencer, il suffirait de faire croire aux autres qu'il a été puni. Intensification centrifuge des effets, qui conduit à ce paradoxe que, dans le calcul des peines, l'élément le moins intéressant, c'est encore le coupable” (Foucault, 1975, p. 97). / “Punishment should have the strongest effect on those who have not broken the law; in the last case, if it could be taken with certainty that the culprit could not repeat the act, it would be enough for the others to just believe that he was punished. Such centrifugal intensification of the effect leads to the paradox that, in the penal calculation, the most uninteresting element is the culprit himself.”

From Culprit to Victim: The Case of Baricco

Just as in Foucault's analysis the concepts of crime, punishment, justice and injustice are relativized, so do the boundaries between patriotism and desertion, courage and cowardice become unclear in Baricco's work, the individual is "perduto in uno scenario senza coordinate dove viltà e coraggio, dovere e diritto, erano categorie polverizzate"¹⁰ (Baricco, 2007, p. 102).

In a conversation with the participants of the battle of Kobarid, the captain's father learns that the main reason for the defeat of the Italian army lies in the change of the warfare strategy. The guerrilla strategy, which was applied by the enemy soldiers, completely confused the leaders in the Italian army, accustomed only to trench warfare, small groups penetrated deep into the Italian territory, while the main Austro-Hungarian forces were still on the front line. The Italians found themselves in a trap and the order to retreat was issued: "così più di un milione di soldati italiani si trovarono a scendere per la pianura, con alle spalle un esercito che li inseguiva e, davanti, le termiti¹¹ che li aspettavano"¹² (Baricco, 2007, p. 104). The retreat, however, did not go according to plan, but turned into a mass flight from the front: "Alcuni di loro (soldati) ancora marciavano nell'intima convinzione di obbedire a un ordine, quello di ritirarsi, ma i più, innegabilmente seguivano l'inerzia delle strade sentendosi semplicemente liberi, alleggeriti dal peso della Guerra"¹³ (Baricco, 2007, p. 115). At one point, word spread that the war was over, there was a general commotion, the soldiers threw down their weapons and began to surrender to the enemy.

In that mass of fugitives, the captain was one of the few who tried to resist the inertia of the crowd, he retreated together with the other soldiers, because there was no other option, but, unlike many, he refused to throw down his weapon and change his military uniform for civilian clothes.

"La guerra è finita.

Lo credevano un po' tutti, ma spiegò Cabiria, e ancora adesso devo capire come poteva esser passata una follia del genere. Gettavano le armi e andavano incontro al nemico, tutto lì, non c'era niente di complicato, e neanche di

¹⁰ "lost in a scenario without coordinates, where cowardice and courage, duty and right are outdated categories"

¹¹ Baricco calls the German soldiers who were sent to help the Austro-Hungarian army termites because, just as termites collapse a tree from the inside, they managed to break the Italian army by penetrating its positions.

¹² "and so more than a million Italian soldiers began to descend into the valley, with the enemy army behind them, while termites were waiting in front."

¹³ "Some of them (soldiers) still marched in the deepest belief that they were obeying some order, the order of retreat, but the largest number inevitably followed the inertia of the roads feeling simply *free*, relieved of the burden of war."

triste. Sembrava tutto molto naturale. C'era così tanta gente che si arrendeva che non c'erano abbastanza austriaci per tenerli a bada, e loro rimanevano lì, come animali al pascolo, mansueti. A pensarla diversamente erano in pochi. Il capitano era uno di quelli, e anche Ultimo. Loro dicevano che le armi non bisognava mollarle. Se la guerra è finita, dicevano, perchè non le mollano gli austriaci, le armi?"¹⁴ (Baricco, 2007, pp. 103–104)

Along the way, he and his two comrades-in-arms came across groups celebrating and who again advised them to drop their weapons, to which the captain responded by calling to continue the retreat. He maintained composure and dignity at all times and tried to influence others to regain control over themselves.

“Arrivammo in una piccola piazza e lì era pieno di soldati italiani, ma tutti seduti, e nessuno che avesse un'arma, niente, avresti detto che erano in licenza, o non so cosa. E il bello è che non c'erano austriaci, intorno, neanche l'ombra, avevano fatto come quando si va a legna, avevano fatto le fascine e poi le avevano lasciate lì, per poi tornarci, quando avevano tempo. Il capitano chiese se la città era in mano al nemico e allora un ufficiale gli urlò che era tutto in mano ai nemici, e lo dice alzando un fiasco di vino, tenuto per il collo, come a brindare, mentre gli altri ci gridavano che la guerra era finita, e che era meglio se lasciavamo le armi, che se gli austriaci ci beccavano con le armi ci avrebbero fatti fuori. Dobbiamo ripiegare al Tagliamento, gli urlò allora il capitano. Ma nessuno rispose, o fece niente, non era una cosa che li riguardava più.”¹⁵ (Baricco, 2007, pp. 105–106)

¹⁴ “The war is over.

Almost everyone believed it, Kabiria explained to me, and I'm still trying to understand how something so insane could have happened. They threw down their weapons and went to meet the enemy, well, there was nothing complicated or sad about that. Everything seemed very natural. So many people surrendered that there were not enough Austrians to guard them, and they would stay where they found themselves, like animals on pasture, tame. Only a few thoughts otherwise. The captain was one of them, and so was Ultimo. They argued that the weapons should not be discarded. If the war is over, they said, why don't the Austrians lay down their arms?”

¹⁵ “We went out to a small square that was full of Italian soldiers, but they were all sitting, and no one had a weapon, or anything, one would say they were on leave, or something like that. The strangest thing was that there were no Austrians anywhere around, not even to move heaven and earth to find them, they applied a system like when wood is collected, they made bundles, and then left them there, so as to come back later, when they had time. The captain asked if the town was in the hands of the enemy, and then an officer shouted to him that everything was in the hands of the enemy, and he said this by raising a bottle of wine, holding it by the neck, as if making a toast, while the rest shouted to us that the war was over, and that we had better throw away our weapons, because if the Austrians caught us with weapons, they would kill us all. We should retreat to Tilmont, the captain then called out to them. But no one answered or did anything, it didn't matter anymore.”

When at the end the captain's father asks a specific question "se gli pareva quell'andare smarrito, una cosa per cui si potesse essere fucilati"¹⁶, the answer of one of the participants in the battle is "onestamente, non so rispondere"¹⁷ (Baricco, 2007, p. 106). Although Baricco does not answer this question, it is clear to the reader that the captain did not want to desert. His last words of goodbye to Ultimo, who is also the last witness of his life and war drama, were: "Io voglio tornare a combattere".¹⁸ The author very cynically comments on the whole situation through the character of the narrator, the captain's father:

"No, prigioniero no, disse il capitano. E poi disse: Io voglio tornare a combattere (...) – mio figlio. E scappò, ancora una volta, gentili signori degli Alti Comandi, scappò come faceva da giorni, non per paura, ma per coraggio, non per salvarsi, ma per dannarsi, incontro al piombo che si immaginava nemico, e che fu invece il vostro, egregi gustizieri di merda."¹⁹ (Baricco, 2007, p. 127)

Eight days after Kobarid, the captain was sentenced to death for desertion and shot. Although lost and wandering like that he might have resembled a deserter, Baricco's hero was found guilty of an act which, not only he did not commit, but he was one of the few who tried to prevent the desertion of others. None of those who punished him wanted to deal with the question of whether the fact that they had found him in a mass of retreating soldiers, or fleeing (these two terms could not be distinguished at a given moment) necessarily meant that he was a deserter, nobody was really interested, it was necessary to scare and warn the others, lest by some miracle they returned to the army. It was not possible to shoot all the fleeing soldiers, they were countless, but one captain to warn others, that was both possible and desirable.

From Culprit to Victim: The Case of Japrisot

And while Baricco's captain had no intention of carrying out the disputable act, although it remains open whether, taking the facts into consideration, he did it or not, the situation of Japrisot's hero, Manech, is exactly the opposite—he

¹⁶ "if it seemed that this aimless wandering was something for which one could be shot"

¹⁷ "to be honest, I can't reply to your question"

¹⁸ "I want to return to the fight."

¹⁹ "No, I will not go into captivity, said the captain. And then he added: I want to return to the fight (...) – my son. And he ran away, once again, dear gentlemen from the High Command, he ran away as he had done for days, not out of fear but out of bravery, not to save himself but to condemn himself, to meet the bullets that he thought were hostile, and which were actually yours, respected shit of judges."

wants to leave the front at all costs. He is beyond moral dilemmas related to patriotism and desertion, bravery and cowardice, his youth, purity and naivety leave no room for any such calculations, he just wants to leave the evil in which he finds himself and see Mathilde. The first time he tried to simulate jaundice, however, it was not difficult to see through his intention, considering that this often happened at the front, so he was brought before a military court and sentenced to two months of probation without the possibility of leave. Another time, Manech raised his fist above the trench and lit it with a cigarette, so that one of the enemy soldiers, attracted by the light, shot and wounded him. Although he had the opportunity to change his mind, because he failed to fulfil his intention twice, he remained firm and in the end was left without a fist:

“Une nuit qu’il était de guet dans la tranchée, la canonnade loin, le ciel noyé, il avait allumé, lui qui ne fumait pas, une cigarette anglaise, parce qu’elle s’éteint moins bêtement qu’une brune, et il avait élevé sa main droite au-dessus du parapet, protégeant, sous ses doigts une petite lueur rouge, et il était resté ainsi longtemps, le bras en l’air, la figure contre la terre trempée, priant Dieu, s’il existait encore, de lui accorder la fine blessure. La pluie avait eu raison de la petite lueur rouge et il avait recommencé avec une autre cigarette et encore une autre, jusqu’à ce qu’un bougre d’en face, dans ses jumelles, comprenne enfin ce qu’il demandait. Il avait eu affaire à un bon tireur, ou alors les Allemands, tout aussi compréhensifs que les Français en ces cas-là, étaient allés en chercher un, car il avait suffi d’une balle. Elle lui avait arraché la moitié de la main, le chirurgien avait coupé le reste.”²⁰ (Japrisot, 2004, pp. 24–25)

The author communicates the whole event to the reader with a lot of irony, as if, by establishing a distance in this way, he shields himself from the tragedy of the event, and, at the same time, avoids any possibility of falling into pathos. Given that the offender is a returnee, there was no mercy for him in the military court because it was “un exemple si pernicieux qu’il pouvait contaminer toutes les jeunes recrues dans une division”²¹ (Japrisot, 2004, p. 24). At the same time, as Mathilde observes, the same society that declared him mature and responsible

²⁰ “One night while on guard in the trench, cannon fire in the distance, the sky flooded, he, who did not smoke, lit an English cigarette, because it goes out less suddenly than a brown one, and he raised his right hand above the breastplate, protecting under his fingers a small red light, and he remained like that for quite a long time, with his hand in the air, his face against the soaked earth, begging God, if he still existed, to grant him a fine wound. The rain overpowered the small red light and he repeated the whole thing with another cigarette and another, until a thug on the other side, seeing him in binoculars, finally understood what he was asking for. He was dealing with a good marksman, or the Germans, in such cases as sensible as the French, went to look for one, because one bullet was enough for him. It tore out half of his hand, the surgeon cut off the rest.”

²¹ “such a dangerous example that could infect all the young recruits in the division”

enough to send him to war and there sentence him to death for a crime, did not consider him mature enough to make his own decision about his marriage²² (Japrisot, 2004, p. 81). The society is absolutely indifferent to Manech as an individual, his life and death, happiness and unhappiness. Manech and others like him were sentenced to death without much ethical consideration. When the shot that blew off Manech's hand echoed and it became clear to everyone what had happened, the soldiers begged the sergeant not to report the incident, to which he replied with tears of rage in his eyes: "Et si tout le monde fait comme ce petit salaud, qui va défendre? Qui va défendre?"²³ (Japrisot, 2004, p. 25). It becomes clear that Foucault was profoundly right when he claimed that punishment in the new system of justice was conceived in such a way that it was above all turned towards the future. For from the sergeant's point of view the problem was not what Manech had done, but the consequences that would have followed if the others had done the same. This is how he and his four comrades were punished in the first place.

The question is what part of the formal legal guilt remains in Manech's case, because he did intentionally provoke the reaction of an enemy soldier, but still, he did not commit self-mutilation. According to some unfathomable law of reciprocity, in the same way in which he committed the transgression, the punishment intended for him will be carried out; as he did not wound himself, but induced somebody else to do so, so the French soldiers will not shoot him, but will induce somebody elser to shoot him. If the heroes were intentionally executed, and were not guilty, it leads to the conclusion that they were sacrificed.

Sacrifice and the legal system

The concept of sacrifice is very broad and it seems that the fates of Baricco's and Japrisot's heroes cannot be connected in any way with the ritual sacrifice in primitive societies, however, René Girard in the work *La violence et le sacré* (*Violence and the Sacred*) equates the purpose of sacrifice in primitive communities and the legal system in a modern society: "Le système judiciaire et le sacrifice ont donc en fin de compte la même fonction mais le système judiciaire est infiniment plus efficace. Il ne peut exister qu'associé à un pouvoir politique vraiment fort"²⁴ (Girard, 1972, p. 41).

²² Before going to war, Manech wanted to marry Mathilde, but he did not get permission because he was underage.

²³ "If everyone does like this little bastard, who is to defend? Who is to defend?"

²⁴ "The legal system and sacrifice, in the last case, have the same function, only the legal system is incomparably more efficient. It can survive only in conjunction with a really strong political power."

According to him, the basic common components of the sacrificial rite and the modern legal system are the preventive function of punishment and violence, open and obvious in the first case, hidden in the second. Girard's analysis has much in common with Foucault. He, like Foucault, perceives the state as a violent apparatus and adds that there is no essential difference between the legal system, on which the state as an institution rests, and revenge, "les décisions de l'autorité judiciaire s'affirment toujours comme le dernier mot de la vengeance"²⁵ (Girard, 1972, p. 32). The violence that occurs during the process of punishment through the legal system is the same as any other violence, but unlike personally motivated and carried out in case of a private revenge, violence carried out through the legal system represents public revenge, and as such is legalized and final.²⁶ Both the sacrificial rite and the legal system prevent the chain of revenge from starting, in the first case because the victim is not the right one, while in the second case the victim is the right one, but the force of retribution and the strength of the authority behind it prevent the very thought of further revenge.²⁷

Conclusion

The judgments pronounced for desertion in the case of the captain in Baricco's novel and for self-mutilation in the case of Japrisot's hero Manech are undisputable, irrevocable and as such executed. The first level of relativizing the guilt of the convicted heroes is the fact that in one case there was no intention to commit the crime for which the hero was convicted, while in the other case there was intent, but the hero, formally speaking, did not commit the crime for

²⁵ "decisions of legal authority are always pronounced as the last word of revenge"

²⁶ "Il n'y a pas de différence de principe entre vengeance privée et vengeance publique, mais il y a une différence énorme sur le plan social: la vengeance n'est plus vengée; le processus est fini; le danger d'escalade est écarté" (Girard, 1972, p. 32). / "There is no immutable difference between private and public revenge, but at the social level the difference is huge: public revenge does not lead to new revenge; the process is complete; the danger of escalation was eliminated."

²⁷ "De même que le sacrifice, il dissimule – même si en même temps il révèle – ce qui fait de lui la même chose que la vengeance, une vengeance semblable à toutes les autres, déferente seulement en ceci qu'elle n'aura pas de suites, qu'elle-même ne sera pas vengée. Dans le premier cas, c'est parce que la victime n'est pas la « bonne » qu'elle n'est pas vengée; dans le second cas, c'est bien sur la « bonne » victime que s'abat la violence, mais elle s'abat avec une telle force et une autorité tellement massive qu'aucune riposte n'est possible" (Girard, 1972, p. 40). / "Like sacrifice before it, the legal system conceals – though at the same time reveals – that it is the same as revenge, revenge like any other, different only in that it does not continue, that it will not be damaged. In the first case, the victim is not 'the right one' and therefore no one will avenge him; in the second case, violence is aimed at the 'the right' victim, but with such force and authority that no objection is possible."

which he was convicted, but led another person to do so. Foucault's analysis of the state apparatus and the legal system, as well as Girard's comparative analysis of the legal system and sacrifice and, within it, the separation of the preventive function of punishment and violence as the basic common postulates, are valid tools in the process of further dissolving the guilt of the analysed heroes.

If we take a deeper look at Manech's guilt, we see, on the one hand, a young man who is mentally unable to respond to the demands the society places before him, specifically participation in trench warfare at the front, and, on the other hand, the society that is not interested in the young man's capacities to fulfil the task he was assigned. The state's lack of interest in genuine and fundamental justice is evident as it prioritizes formal and superficial justice that serves its own interests. When it comes to the interaction between the state and the individual, only the state's interests are considered, leaving no room for justifications for failing to fulfil assigned tasks. Even when faced with the impossible and without receiving any guidance on how to proceed, the individual is still expected to meet expectations.

This situation is illuminated by Foucault's analysis. He sees the state as a violent apparatus, as an instrument of brute coercion that organizes, directs, controls and, if necessary, punishes the members of its community and has interests, in essence, in conflict with the interests of the individual who is the subject of the control. Manech was punished by death, formally for self-mutilation, essentially because he did not have the strength to bear the psychological pressure at the front. It was clear to the superiors at the time of the sentencing because they witnessed his mental breakdown. Nevertheless, he was sentenced to death, not for some sadistic reasons, but to warn others not to repeat the act he committed, not because of what had happened, but because of what might happen.

In the case of Baricco's hero, the situation is clear and transparent and no in-depth analysis is needed to prove his innocence. The mass withdrawal of the Italian army followed the order of the military authorities, the captain and all the others who were there were only fulfilling the task assigned to them. Due to other circumstances, the retreat turned into dispersal and flight. Since it was not possible to punish all the soldiers who, disobeying any order, left the battle lines, it was necessary to make a selection, to find a criterion by which to narrow the circle of potential culprits who could be punished so as to set an example and restrain chaos. The captain, because of his rank, found himself in the inner circle. The mere fact that he found himself in that crowd was no evidence of desertion, and if they wanted, the Italian military authorities could have easily determined whether he was a deserter or not, just as the captain's father determined 20 years after the battle. If the court process had been conducted, if witnesses had been called, the same ones who testified to the captain's father for the writing of his memorial, the real intentions of the captain would have been revealed quickly and easily. But justice was not what

the Italian military authorities needed at the given moment, it was necessary to prevent further desertion of the army as soon as possible and by all means, and this, they believed, could be achieved by intimidation.

The captain's case is more drastic than Manech's, because the French military authorities do not go beyond formal legal guilt, they do not go into the reasons and motivation the crime was committed for. In the captain's case, they do not even go into proving that the crime was actually committed, there is no court process, there are no witnesses, there is no hearing, and the exclusive position of the culprit, in the case of the aforementioned heroes, proves to be unsustainable.

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Департман за соло певање

Рехабилитација Бариковог и Жапризоовог
јунака у светлу савремене критике

Резиме

Драма јунака који су осуђени на смрт због дезертерства или саморањавања заједничка је тема романа *Ова њрича* Алесандра Барика и *Веригда је гуио њрајала* Себастијана Жапризоа. Детаљном анализом ликова и спорних ситуација, а на основу теоријских поставки Мишела Фукоа и Рене Жирара, релативизује се позиција кривца коју им изречене пресуде недвосмислено додељују. У основи оваквих пресуда је правни систем у коме Фуко види најважнију полугу владања у савременом друштву, док државу доживљава искључиво као насилнички апарат, који захваљујући злоупотреби техничких средстава, надзире, усмерава и по потреби санкционише понашање појединца. У случају Бариковог и Жапризоовог јунака упитно је да ли је дело за које су окривљени уопште почињено, а под претпоставком и да јесте, не испитују се разлози због којих је до тога дошло, нити се улази у доказивање намере. Испоставља се да су поменути јунаци тако строго кажњени да би се дао пример осталим војницима и на тај начин омогућило неометано функционисање државног апарата у ратним условима, а не да би се утврдила права истина и да би се задовољила правда, односно да су војници у конкретной ситуацији свесно и намерно жртвовани. Механизам једног оваквог жртвовања није суштински много различит од оног у примитивним друштвима, тврди Жирар, јер примитивно приношење жртве и савремени правни систем имају две кључне заједничке одлике: превентивну функцију кажњавања и насиље, које је у првом случају прикривено, а у другом отворено и очигледно.

Кључне речи: кривац; жртва; казна; друштво; погубљење; контрола; моћ.



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