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Alberto Breccia's Parody of Futurist Paintings in Modern *Bande Dessinée*: Resisting Transatlantic Fascism

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During wars, art and culture often develop a "culture of camouflage" (Ojeda 68) to invite the reader to decipher hidden meanings as a form of political subversion. In Argentina, the 'Golden Age' of comics emerged in the 1940s in response to the rise of Fascist sentiments originating from the Futurist leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's transatlantic propaganda and flourished in the following decades. During and following the 'Process of National Reorganisation' from 1976 onwards, illustrator Alberto Breccia used graphic narratives as a form of counter-censorship as he appropriated Futurist aesthetics and the conventions of the modern bande dessinée. *He considered this method as being able to allow "artistry and imagination [take] over from logical progressions" (Grove 25). Using this form, he encouraged the public to reflect on Argentina's changing transatlantic landscape.*

This paper examines to what extent Breccia's Le Coeur Révélateur: Et Autres Histoires Extraodinaires d' Edgar Poe *(1995) borrows Futurist visuality and makes use of the flexibility of the settings in Poe's stories. This is done to recreate the haunting figures of history as they "turn away from the original work" to "conceive new forms of storytelling that explore the medium-specific properties of the host medium" (Baetens 7). This paper employs an interdisciplinary approach as, in addition to reading Poe's original texts, this article also discusses Breccia's appropriation of Futurist techniques, including "Divisionism, the use of threadlike brush strokes," uniform application of colours according to their "precise tone and luminosity" (Rainey 9), and the dynamic sensation (Boccioni 46).*

While comics and graphic novels have been gaining more intellectual recognition beyond their popularity, like Art Spiegelman winning the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for *MAUS* (1980), comic art is still a subject overlooked by art historians (Sommerland and Wictorin 1). Critics like Sterling North, David Carrier, Karl E. Fortress, and many others do not see comics as art because they think that "the comic artist is not concerned with art problems, problems of form, spatial relationships, and the expressive movement of line" (Fortress qtd. in Beaty 19). Treated as a product of popular culture, comics are considered not to be artistic pursuits and as lacking engagement with aesthetic and social issues (Beaty 19). Even the comic artist Spiegelman admits that form in comics is below the critical radar (qtd. in Nybakken 71). However, as Roeder argues, the relationship between high art and low art in sequential art "provides ample ground for interrogating a range of issues including […] democracy and visual culture, [and] the political and ethical implications of humour" (Roeder 7). Bearing that in mind, scholars like Astrid von Rose have strived to apply cross-disciplinary approaches like

the activist methodology to graphic narratives, which specifically allows von Rose to examine how zines fit in the area of "'activist' art history" and offer a "space for unheard and marginalized voices, and engag[e] in societal, political and individual change with and through visual, embodied, hybrid and moving expressions" (6). In fact, the political dialogue between sequential art and the fine arts began as early as the modernist era; for example, newspaper cartoonist J.F. Griswold appropriates (see fig. 1) Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) (see fig. 2) to invite the public to reflect on the abstraction and scientific coldness (Duchamp 427) of modernity. Therefore, by exposing the artist's "private imagination" to the public (Ball 9) through wide and sometimes underground circulations, graphic narratives encourage the public's reflection on the changing political landscape of society.

Fig. 1. J.F. Griswold. *Rude Descending a Staircase*. 1913, The New York Evening Sun.

Fig. 2. Marcel Duchamp. *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. 1912, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

During wars, art and culture often develop a "culture of camouflage" (Ojeda 68) to invite the reader to decipher hidden meanings as a form of political subversion. Danné Ojeda elaborates that "a culture" that is "born out of and built around resistance to hegemonic domination would inevitably develop into a culture of camouflage. Ojeda argues also that this is commonly seen in Latin American culture (68). Underground comics are a popular medium of camouflage, particularly in the form of adaptations of popular literary texts. This is because such adaptations can be distinct in their own rights and they assume "a presupposed familiarity with the earlier text upon which it is supposedly based", and thus allow the reader to divert attention to the author of the original text, as if the views expressed in the adaptations are "not [the artist's] but those of some illustrious predecessor" (Rommens 318). In Argentina, the 'Golden Age' of comics in Argentina emerged in the 1940s in response to the Fascist sentiments supported by the Futurist leader Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's transatlantic propaganda and flourished in the following decades. During and following the 'Process of

National Reorganisation' from 1976 onwards, illustrator Alberto Breccia used graphic narratives as a form of counter-censorship as he appropriated Futurist aesthetics and the conventions of the modern *bande dessinée*. He considered this method as allowing "artistry and imagination [to] take over from logical progressions" (Grove 25).

The parody of Futurist visualities aside, it was not coincidental that Breccia took an interest in adapting Poe's stories in underground comics. Throughout the 20th century, Poe's writing remained influential in the European culture of graphic and visual art and even "took new forms", transforming from illustrations to comics (Absalyamova 22). Breccia, Horacio Lalia, Richard Corben, and Dino Battaglia observed Poe's "inversion of forces", especially in "Red Death" (1842), and often appropriated his narrative trajectory of "small and weak, but daring characters" overthrowing political forces to fight for the freedom of thought. This reflected the work of the writer himself against those "who censor[ed] the writers" and "intend[ed] to control public opinion" (Absalyamova 24-33). Moreover, Poe's works focus "on the world within the human self rather than the outside world [focus of realist pieces]". This resembles modernist writing (Wang 83), even though Poe's short stories were written decades before the rise of modernism. Such modernist characteristics are reflected by Breccia, who integrates Futurist aesthetics into his graphic adaptations in terms of the spatial visuality of "mental self-fragmentation" (Wang 85). In other words, Breccia uses the Futurist experimental aesthetics to explore psychological anxieties about the fragmentation of society and the self due to war.

Extending from the framework of the modern *bande dessinée* and Breccia's shared tendency to challenge artistic censorship with Poe, this paper examines to what extent Breccia borrows Futurist visuality and makes use of the flexibility of the settings and spatiality in Poe's stories. I focus on how Breccia adapts *Le Coeur Révélateur: Et Autres Histoires Extraodinaires d' Edgar Poe* (1995) to recreate the haunting figures of history as they "turn away from the original work" to "conceive new forms of storytelling that explore the medium-specific properties of the host medium" (Baetens 7). In addition to that, I employ a transmedial approach, as I compare Futurist paintings with Breccia's appropriation of Futurist techniques and his use of literature as inspiration for his work. Such an approach allows me to gain a more comprehensive view of the art historical and political networks that fostered the form of underground comics in the then Argentina under Fascist influences. To make precise visual comparisons, this paper emphasises the aesthetics of "Divisionism, the use of threadlike brush

strokes", uniform application of colours according to their "precise tone and luminosity" (Rainey 9), and the dynamic sensation (Boccioni 46).

Transatlantic Fascism and Futurism: The *BD* as Underground Art

The relationship between Futurism and fascism can be easily traced: in "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" (1909), Marinetti establishes the Fascist ground of Futurism as he states that it is a "movement with national cultural and political goals at a critical historical juncture alongside and in direct connection with the rise of Italian Fascism" (Bowler 763). With leading Futurist painters Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, and Luigi Russolo, Marinetti positions Futurist art as a form of "tumbling and incendiary violence" that advocates the beauty of speed and destruction (42) essential to the new age of "Italian national grandeur" as it "overthrows all the cultural ideals and institutions of Italy's anachronistic, moribund past" (Bowler 767).

As Italy supported the Nacionalista Press and the Argentine Senate, and the formation of the Argentine Friends of Italy from the 1920s to the 1940s (Finchelstein 53), the bonds between Argentina and Fascist Italy were strengthened. Following Benito Mussolini's appointment of Marinetti as a member of the Royal Academy of Italy, Marinetti visited South America in 1926 and 1936 during the interwar period as the leader of "Fascist Italy's delegation to the XIV International Congress of P.E.N hosted in Buenos Aires" (Read 136). As a result, Italian Futurist right-wing ideologies indirectly gave rise to the continuous right-wing coups in Argentina over the twentieth century.

While artists of 'the high' like Carlos Alonso are more highly regarded in response to their condemnation of the traumatic phenomenon of the *desaparecido* during the coup in the 1970s, the modern *BD* gives political issues "immediacy and appeal that can persist even when our view on the subject matter has evolved" with specific text/image interchange (Grove 159) under the loose control of the Argentine authority. The combination of text and image is particularly important to Argentine underground comics as the "restrictions on the verbal" were well-defined, as stated by Breccia in his interview with *Imparato* in 2002: "[…] the dictatorship was already greatly weakened. Even so, if they would have found in my home a page where I had written 'State Butchery,' […] they would have executed me" (21). Besides, *BD* journals, in particular, have a closer relationship with politics throughout history, including its collaboration with Nazism as in *O Lo Lê* (1940–44) and popular post-war anachronist ideologies as in *Asterix* (1959–present). Thus, along with the political implications concealed

by "the marginal status of comics and their perception as harmless mass entertainment", the composites of images and words in which the image is predominant" have a certain political advantage "over exclusively verbal means of encryption" (Rommens 317) as in literature, which makes the *BD* 'serious' artistic responses to the coups. By considering the reception of Futurism's fascist ideologies in Breccia's *BD*, we should include popular circulations of underground art in the picture to give a more comprehensive view of Argentine 'coup art' by bridging the 'high' and the 'low.'

The Metaphysical State of Undeath in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"

Throughout his three adaptations of Poe's stories, including "William Wilson" (1839), "The Masque of the Red Death" (1842), and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), Breccia adopts the metaphysical dimension of Poe's original narratives to explore the unsettling event of the *desaparecido* as the captives were in the "liminal states between life and death" (O'Dell 229). Alongside the Futurist aesthetics that express a sense of horror, Poe's metaphysical theme allows Breccia to further capture "the dynamics that illustrate the uncertainties" (Royal 62). Therefore, since Breccia incorporates the historical context of Argentina into his adaptations with Futurist visual allusion to Fascism, his graphic narratives "reinterpret the original narratives in the light of more contemporary issues and contexts" according to Linda Hutcheon's "reception continuum" model (171), which refuses to see adaptations as inferior by-products.

Breccia's "M. Valdemar" parodies the Futurists' interest in "x-rays, [...] a means of capturing invisible reality" (Henderson 323) and takes on the literary performance of 'undeath' in Poe's tale in a medical setting. Using the x-ray-inspired Divisionist technique of "*complementarismo congenito*" (Boccioni 67), such a parody mocks the Futurist disbelief in "the opacity of bodies" (Kern 147) and thus the right-wing Futurist act of playing God – the attempt of pinning down "the spiritual level of reality" (Chessa 5). Before moving on to visual analyses, it is important to note that while Breccia borrows the medical settings, the ambiguous atmosphere of the inconclusive ending, and metaphysical themes from Poe's original text to make intertextual allusions to Futurist aesthetics, he keeps his use of *lettrages*[i] to the minimum and leaves out any information related to time and places such as Poe's setting in "Harlem, N.Y., since the year 1839" ("FCMV" 1) to make recontextualisation possible in an Argentine context.
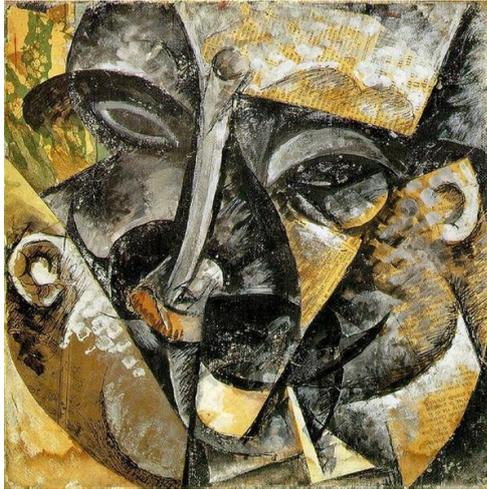
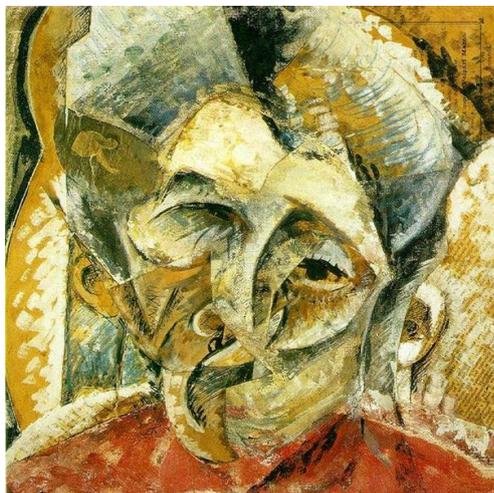Fig. 3. Umberto Boccioni. *Dynamism of a Man's Head.* 1913, Civico Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan.

Fig. 4. Umberto Boccioni. *Dynamism of a Woman's Head.* 1914, Museo del Novecento, Milan.

Breccia first alludes to the metaphysical 'living dead' state of the *desaparecido* by adopting the Futurist technique of *complementarismo congenito* to show "deformed, dissembled and reconfigured" facial features (Barth 39). Such 'overlapping' images can be observed in the portrayal of Mr Valdemar, which parallels with Boccioni's representation of human faces in *Dynamism of a Man's Head* (1913) (see fig. 3) and *Dynamism of a Woman's Head* (1914) (see fig. 4). While Boccioni achieves the visual effect of overlapping on the same canvas, Breccia scatters the 'motions' of Mr Valdemar's dissolving face across *planches*[ii] with gradual changes of facial expressions from numbness to horror, the intensity of colours from low to high, and closer *gros plan*[iii] across twenty-one *cases*[iv] (see fig. 5). Both of Boccioni's and Breccia's works highlight "a mental structure […] rooted in the radical shaking of the sensorial foundations of psychic life, which grows from the simultaneous flow of nonhomogeneous, diverse, contrasting stimuli" (Boccioni 129). As a result, the form of the human body becomes disconnected from the anatomical structure.

In Breccia's Argentine context, the metaphysical state alludes to that of a *desaparecido*: a missing political criminal "whose absence one doesn't want to be made an accomplice to […] it's the uncertainty of death, the question that there's no exact proof, no ashes, no bones. This makes the disappeared person into a type of living-dead" (Saavedra 46-7).
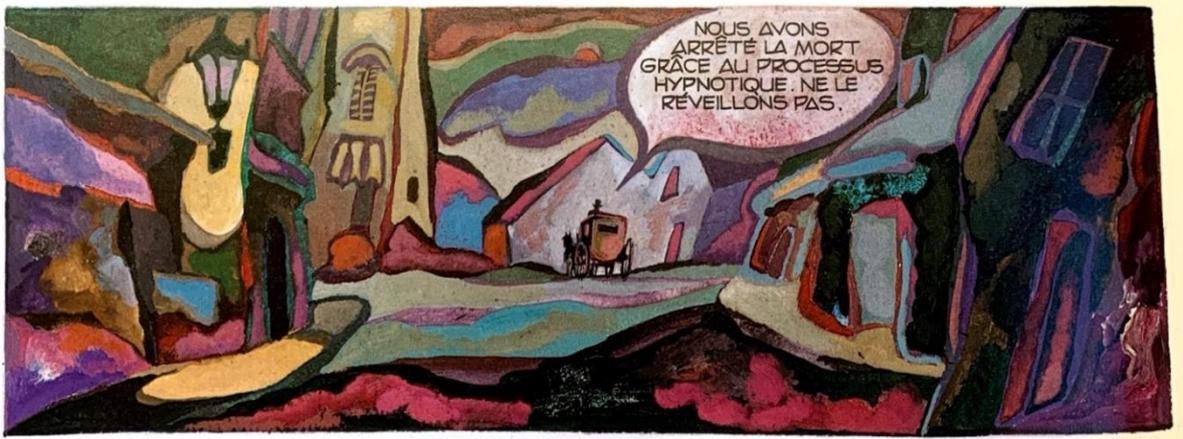

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6

   In addition to the play of repetitions and motions, Breccia also adopts the *BD* convention of *colourisation* under the combination of *quadrichromie* (Grove 27) even though he paints with watercolours, which resonates with the Futurists' emphasis on the dynamics of colour to create a metaphysical atmosphere. While white is the dominant colour in the *cases* featuring Mr Valdemar's face, Breccia contours the face with blue, and shades with yellow, and he uses a red tone for the cheek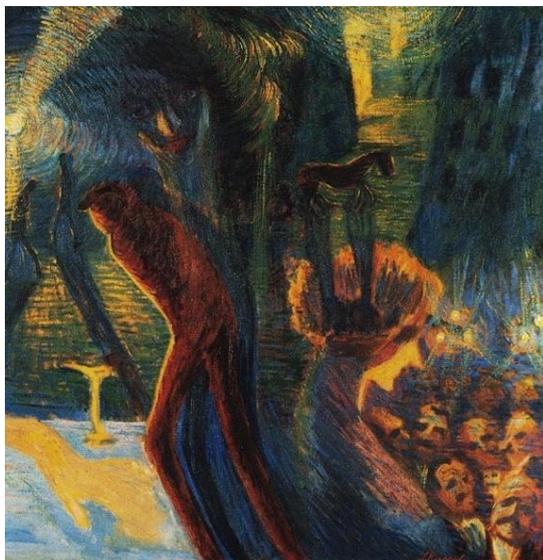s and mouth. His illustration of the unnamed city, contrary to Poe's precise location, further gives the readers a sense of hyperreality with strong contrasting planes of colours (see fig. 6). The interactions between these colours parallel Luigi Russolo's *Memories of a Night* (1911) (see fig. 7), which make both works show a certain "psychic duration" that indicates "the flux of spiritual states" (Bergson 226) in a metaphysical sense. However, along with the consideration of the *quadrichromie* as a representation of anti-conformism in 1970s *BD*, Mr Valdemar 'melts' and becomes "a nearly liquid mass of loathsome – of detestable putridity" (Poe

1Fig. 7. Luigi Russolo. *Memories of a Night.* 1991, private collection.

"FCMV" 7) like a mass of grotesque and dark painted in a mixture of brown and green (see fig. 8, below) in the last two *planches*. Instead of citing Poe's original narrative, Breccia makes

use of colours to show the grotesque product to achieve the process of "recontextualization" to allude to the imagery of the coup (Rommens 336). Breccia's use of colours can be interpreted as recontextualising because the sudden shift from the dynamic combination of shades to a dark mixture is a statement against the Futurists' dismissal of history and the past through rejecting the "low tones" that are "suffocated and [keep] the painting in a state of silence and immobility" (Boccioni 132). Therefore, taking the history of *colourisation* in modern *BD* and Futurist political implications into account, Breccia condemns the Futurists' fascist resistance by evoking the haunting traumatic past of Argentina under the camouflage of 'graphic adaptations' as a "counter-censorial" tactic (Rommens 316).
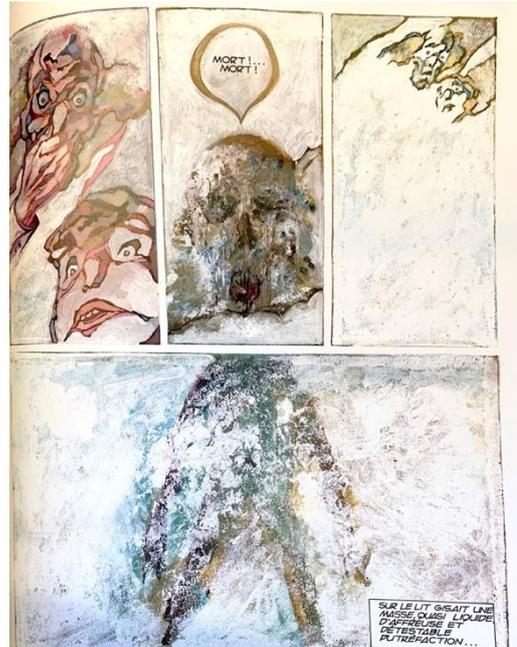

Fig. 8

Extending from the mutual visual effect of overlapping 'faces' of *complementarismo congenito* in Breccia's and the Futurists' works, these works all demonstrate a certain metaphysical dimension to the viewer beyond their perceived reality but with different political agendas that can be differentiated by their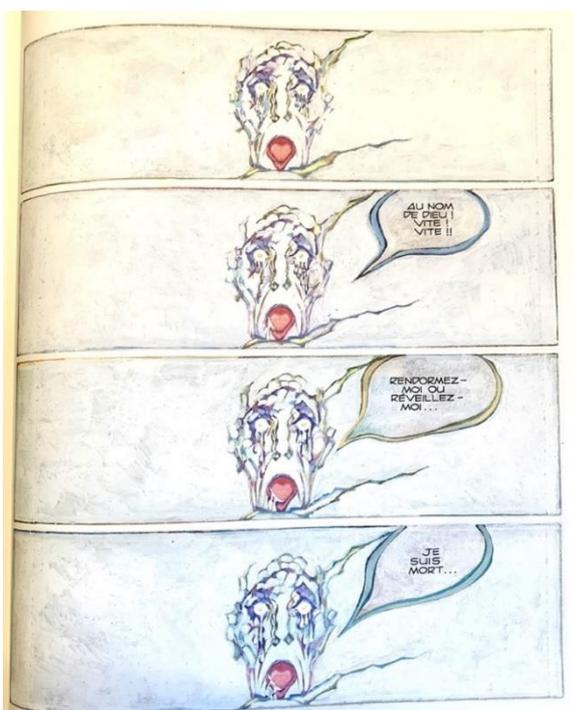 medium: one single canvas and sequential art. On the one hand, Boccioni makes use of planes and lines to construct a certain nationalist conception of the then-fascist Italy that "freely increases and circulates" individual liberty under a sort of "unitary discipline" that strengthens "a nation's unity" (131). On the other hand, as I noted that the 'changing motions' of Mr Valdemar in Breccia's adaptation spread across *planches* and *cases*, the "intrinsic nature of the *planche*" gives his *BD* "an element of suspense" (Grove 25). The suspenseful atmosphere then haunts the readers like the ghosts of the disappeared during the coup in Argentine history, thus breaking down the binary logic of life/death as Mr Valdemar oscillates between the

Fig. 9.

states of awake, sleep, and death in various *cases* in the *bulles*[v]: "Make me sleep again! […] Wake me up! […] I am dead…"[vi] (see fig. 9, above). With the frequent repetition of the *lettrages* of "wake", "sleep", and "dead" in contrast to Poe's mere description of "[…] amid ejaculations of 'Dead! Dead!' absolutely bursting from the tongue and not from the lips of the sufferer" (7), the haunting nature of the disappeared is emphasised by Breccia's loose adaptation process from literature to *BD*.

"The Masque of the Red Death": The Space of Guilt

Poe's original narrative of "Red Death" allows even more flexibility than "M. Valdemar" does for Breccia's adaptation process, with its lack of time frame and the fictional nature of the disease. Making use of the idea of plague and the spatial division between the "happy and dauntless and sagacious" abbey and the "external one" that "could take care of itself" (Poe "MRD" 3), the "Red Death" can be read as an allusion to people falsifying "history to deny the affect of guilt and stigmatise the suspects as sickness or death" during the *desaparecido* as they refuse to support openly the out-spoken

Fig. 10

ones to save their own lives. However, Breccia does not merely make use of such an allusion but also further intensifies the sense of horror with his own inventive *lettrages* on repeat, which is not observed in Poe's tale: "And outside, the people…"[vii] (see fig. 10). Therefore, like the recurring image of M. Valdemar's face in his adaption of "M. Valdemar", Breccia brings back the haunting *desaparecido* with both his textual and visual repetitions.
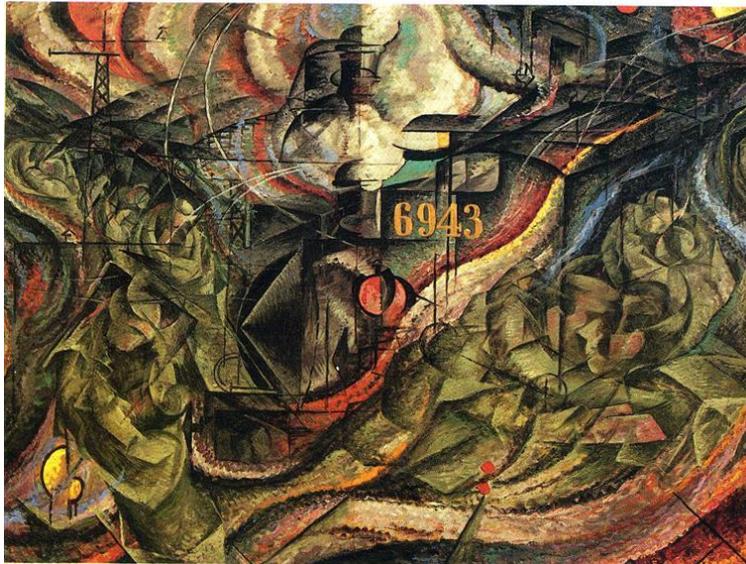
Fig. 11. Umberto Boccioni. *States of Mind I: The Farewells*. 1911, MoMA, New York.

In order to incorporate the Futurist aesthetic again, to link to the right-wing coup, Breccia appropriates the Futurists' use of "directional lines to represent emotion" (Bozzolla and Tisdall 44) to create a space void of time. Breccia's intention is to allow the *desaparecido* to 'live' in the present, instead of allowing the "vortex" (Martin 180-1) of the automobile to turn human space into a mechanised world. Breccia blends the figures of the *desaparecido* with the houses using the Futurist Divisionist technique to express a "depressed condition and their (the corpses') infinite sadness dragging everything down towards the earth" (Breccia), as Boccioni's *States of Mind I: The Farewells* (1911) (fig. 11) does. Such a visual effect is manifested by Breccia's five-time repetition of the scene of the haunting 'piles' of corpses that died from the 'Red Death', which shows the dead in Futurist "liquid forms" (Martin 181) that blend into the background of houses but 'separated' by planes of light (see fig. 10). Such arrangements of planes and repetitions parallel Boccioni's Divisionist portrayal of "spiritualised silhouettes" that "render the distressing melancholy of the souls of those who are left behind" (Bozzolla and Tisdall 44). As Scott McCloud states, such a "distorted background" produces a "physiological effect in the viewer" (132) and makes the viewer uncomfortable, revealing how the past still haunts the living in Argentina. To make evident the haunting of present Argentina with the medium of *BD*, Breccia focalises the story through the perspective of an unknown person who is exposed to the disease. This allows him to immerse the reader in the experience, as the first-person narration emphasises the sadness with various shots of *plan general* and *gros plan*. Thus, the closing-up and repetitive nature of the scene remind the viewer of the effect of guilt on the Argentine people who pretended not to remember the disappeared as the recurring image keeps reminding them of the 'ghosts,' who loom in their minds.

However, instead of using machines as the subjects of his futurist paintings, Breccia chooses humans as the centre of his artistic experience, making use of the Futurist aesthetic of

spatial methods but not the machine aesthetic. While the 'blending force' of the people and the background in Boccioni's *Those* (1911) primarily comes from a train, Breccia's force of distortion is 'powered' by the effect of guilt as it transports the observer to the space occupied by the *desaparecido* with reference to the allusion of sickness. Therefore, along with the lack of hints of any technology, Breccia resists the Fascist Fut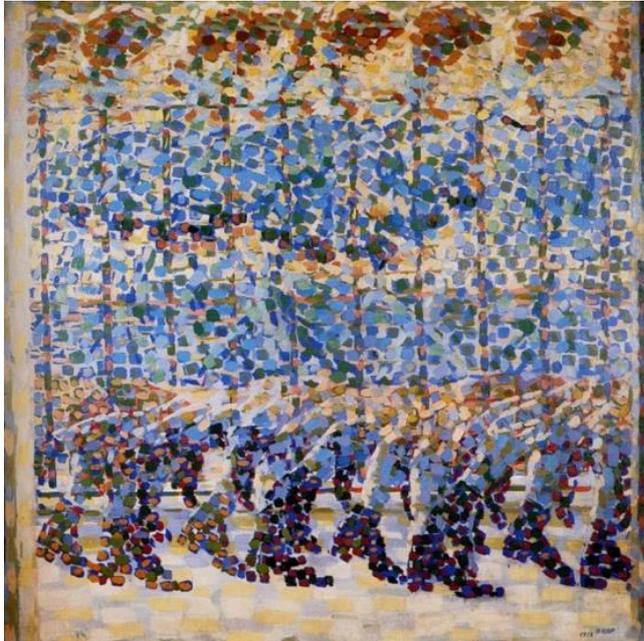urist advocation of the transformation of the nation into supreme power through "the creation of an elite cadre of virile 'new man,' who would lead the masses in revolt against the deliberating constraint of the past" (Poggi 305) and vision of a non-human future (Boccioni 47) as he constructs his *BD* with human subjects.

Fig. 12. Giacomo Balla. *Girl Running on a Balcony.* 1912, Museo del Novecento, Milan.

Moreover, although scholars rarely make comparisons between art history and sequential art in detail, Scott McCloud acknowledges that Futurist art and comics share the idea of moving motion that can be seen in "systematic decomposition of moving images in a static medium" (108) in Giacomo Balla's *Girl Running on a Balcony* (1912) (see fig. 12). Breccia's depiction of movements of a character resembles that of Balla's *Girl Running* as the composition of the backgrounds and characters in each *case* remain static over the two *planches* (see fig. 13). The consecutive depictions of motions indicated by colour and 'moving' background highlights the sense of "anguished immobility" (Breccia) (see fig. 14, below) without citing Poe's long description of the suspension of time with the music "ceased" (Poe 7). Breccia adopts the Divisionist principle of heightening

Fig. 13

...UNE
IMMOBILITÉ
ANGOISSANTE
PARALYSA
TOUT
LE
MONDE...

Fig. 14

colour contrast again to "enhance unmediated juxtaposition and collision as the bases of formal and material innovation" (Poggi 308): as the Prince and the haunting figures reach the sixth room in the colour of violet in the sixth *case*, readers enter the state of suspense as they have to physically "turn the page in order to find out what happens next" (Poggi 308) in the final mysterious and dangerous room which Poe describes as a "still-frozen" dream (6) that produces "a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances" (5). As in "M. Valdemar", Breccia divides the 'motions' across "seven rooms of seven colours" (Breccia) (see fig. 15) except the last 'unconceivable' one in twelve *cases* instead of in one frame like Futurist oil paintings, which achieves spatial and temporal suspension with the same fantastic quality observed in Poe's tale. Breccia's suspension further conveys the idea of something uncanny, which implies the "return" of "nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (Freud 13). In Breccia's national context then, the uncanny again evokes the haunting figure of the *desaparecido* as it returns to make the "gay company" (Poe "MRD" 5) suffer from guilt. Therefore, while the convention of *BD* of the two *planches* allows Breccia to create a key moment in the bottom-right (Grove 25) to intensify Poe's fantastic atmosphere, Breccia also once again appropriates the performativity of movements in Futurist paintings to "provoke their viewers into Futurist states of mind" and visualise
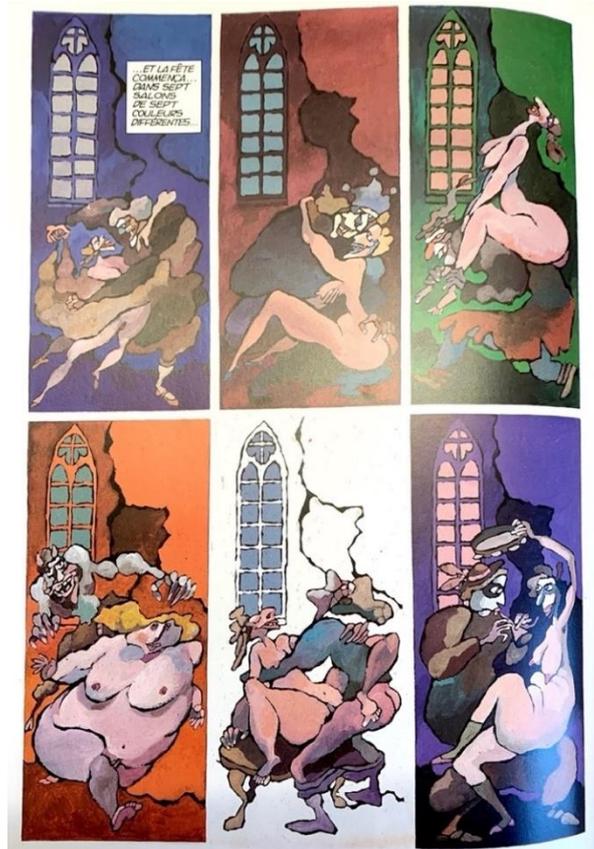

Fig. 15

the horror brought by the Futurist incitation of violence (Poggi 306) in a transnational sense with the allusion to Poe's fictional plague.

The Subversive Carnival in "William Wilson"

Among Breccia's three graphic adaptations studied in this paper, "William Wilson" is the one that gives the readers the clearest visual hints of the previously right-wing Argentina. Breccia begins narrating the story *in media res* during the carnival in which William Wilson kills his doubled 'imposter'. However, while Poe's carnival is set in "Rome […] of 1835 […] in the great house of the Duke Di Broglio" (20), Breccia's is set in Argentina in the 1930s. The altered setting can be identified with the *Mataderos* – the Argentine "poor, working-class suburb, or barrio, of the slaughterhouse district", and a family "waiting to resume the social ritual of drinking mate, Argentina's bitter native tea" (Rommens 321) (see fig. 16).
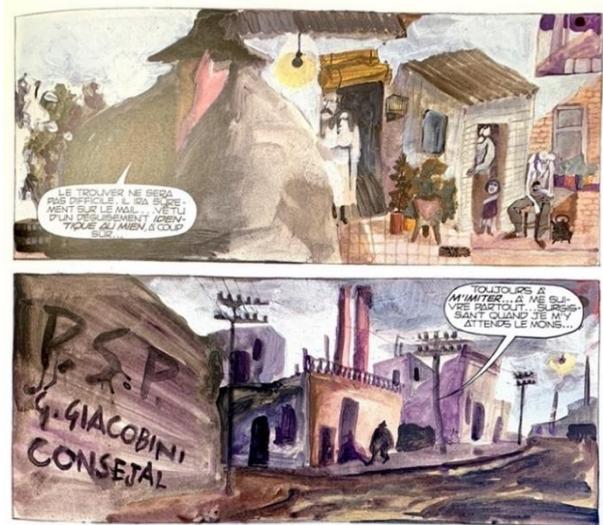

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

The features of the house match well with Breccia's description of his childhood home in an interview with Carlos Trillo in 1980: "I was […] from the Slaughterhouse district. *Mataderos* was a district that got under my skin very much. Those brick walls, those mud streets". By adapting his childhood memories into Poe's tale, Breccia makes use of the unreliability of memory to create "a doubly exotic country, by its switch with reality, with unreality even" (Muñoz 17) like his contemporary Argentine comic artist José Muñoz, which achieves a carnivalesque atmosphere (see fig. 17) in "William Wilson."

Breccia's carnivalesque aesthetics can be compared to the blurring between the stage and the street in Futurist art performances. Performances such as Francesco Cangiullo's reading of his poem "Piedigrotta" in 1914 is named after "an annual festival" in Naples that "satirized plebeian social life [...] on moving stages, accompanied by bizarre instruments", and Futurist artists like Balla often painted over Neapolitan instruments and designed costumes (see fig. 18) to heighten "the carnivalesque space that blurred the boundaries between [...] art and life, intensifying its psychic, visual, and auditory dimension" (Rainey 21).
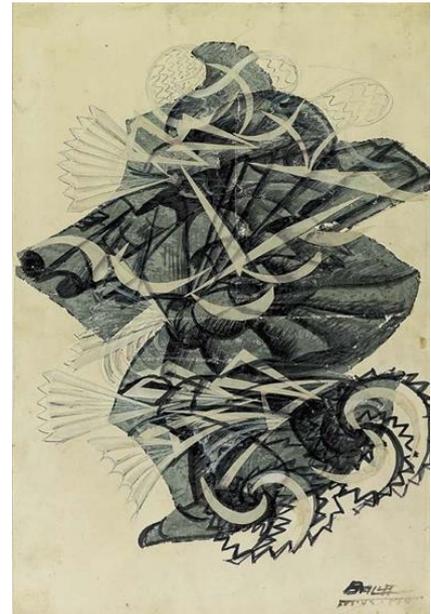

Fig. 18. Giacomo Balla. Costume Design For the Ballet *Piedigrotta*. 1915, private collection.

Fig. 19

The disorienting colours of red, orange, and yellow of the carnivalesque sky (see fig. 19) echo not only Balla's *The Antineutral Suit: Futurist Manifesto* (1914) (see fig. 20), but also the costumes of Breccia's performers (see the first tier in fig. 17) share the carnivalesque touch of Balla's *Suit* in terms of their use of "raucous colors and radical shapes" (Braun 38). The Futurist aesthetics here displays the idea of "anarchic individualism" (Braun 35) as the carnival opens up the possibility of a "complete withdrawal from the present" (Bakhtin 275) by denouncing "humble colours" and

Fig. 20. Giacomo Balla. *The Antineutral Suit: Futurist Manifesto.* 1914, Guggenheim Online Collection.

symmetrical forms (Balla 39), and thus questions authority and gives the viewer a sense of "joyous anarchy" (Lachmann 118). However, it is important to note that Breccia does not

convey a "strident nationalism […], a belief in the cultural superiority of the Italian race, […] a rejuvenated, modern nation" (Braun 35) as he leaves out the 'essential' Futurist "Italian hat" that "propagated the beauty of the race" as inspired by Mussolini (Marinetti et al. 41). Instead, Breccia alludes to a military-controlled Argentina in 1930 earlier on, which makes the subversive space of carnival here a counter-revolution that undermines the prevailing 'normal space' of the coup.

Conclusion

Reading Breccia's *Le Coeur Révélateur* as a whole, it can be seen that the *BD*'s form of an *album* gives "a far greater number of pages to an individual *BD*", which gives a space for Breccia to cover a more comprehensive historical ground and makes the form of his adaptations "closest to the novel" (Grove 22, 41). Therefore, his work is considered more serious because of the form's historical interrelation with non-graphic literature. Moreover, as Laurence Grove notes, under the historical perception of the *BD* as a 'serious' form, graphic artists like Didier Daeninckx make use of the form of the *album* to create "political" cover-ups as in the allusion to "the slaughter of Russian mutineers in 1917" (43) in *Le Der des ders* (1984). Therefore, as mentioned, the form of the *BD* gives Breccia the capacity to present Argentine political contexts in his *album* as an 'appropriate' medium for camouflage under the era of censorship. Along with Breccia's adaptation of Poe's "obsession with death, murder, torture, insanity, guilt, loss" (Thompson 9), the metaphysical framework easily fits political *BD*s as such an ambiguity blurs the boundary between reality and imagination to allow adaptations of "intellectual" (Royal 53) ideas.

As we can conclude from the above observations, Breccia's *album* is a sophisticated adaptation of Poe's tales that touches on the horror of the right-wing dictatorship in Argentina by incorporating ideas from high art. From appropriating the Futurist aesthetics of the planes of colours to the precise visual allusion to his childhood memories of Argentina in the 1930s, Breccia utilises the partnership between the "fast-moving narrative" and "a graphic precision" to evoke the "static atmosphere of historical places" (Grove 160) and to confront the readers with images of the *desaparecido* and Fascist imageries. In this sense, *Le Coeur Révélateur* should be read as a work that responds to the Italian history of fascism and covers the Argentine history of coups. This is done to remind the nation of its own troubled history and to warn the reader of the danger of right-wing ideologies on a transatlantic level. Taking Breccia's *album* as a lesson, we must "fill in the blanks" in graphic narratives during the era

of dictatorship (Trillo) to unveil the hidden political implications and carnivalesque subversive space by treating the *BD* as a 'serious' art form.

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Notes

[i] The French term for lettering in *BD*.

[ii] The French term for pages in *BD*.

[iii] The French term for 'close-up' in *BD*.

[iv] The French term for panels in *BD*.

[v] The French term for speech bubbles in *BD*.

[vi] Breccia's adaptation of "M. Valdemar" is translated by my fellow student Ms Simona Montella at the University.

[vii] Breccia's adaptation of "The Masque of the Red Death" is translated by Dr Justine Seran.