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Honor Killing
A Study on Italy and Europe

edited by
Anna Cafaro

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www.lalibellulaitalianistica.it
info@lalibellulaitalianistica.it

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Secondo Quaderno

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Honor Killing. A Study on Italy and Europe

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Introduction. The Honor Killing on Stage and Screen

Anna Cafaro

The idea of a dossier/document focused on honor killing in Italy - and European countries in general - comes from the urgency of the topic and the complex discussion in a national and international context. We find that the academic world, of the Italianists in particular, does not treat the topic with the interest and analysis that it deserves. The abuse of human and civil rights and unjustified violence especially against women are issues that have existed historically. However, today, such issues are directly linked to the migrant communities who enter Western societies and bring with them their religious and social practices. We think it is important for the entire society to consider this problem not only through the media discourse but also through an artistic interdisciplinary perspective. In fact, theater and cinema, among the arts, offer a great opportunity to explore, analyze and reflect on the complex phenomenon of honor killing.

In an interview, Saverio La Ruina explains why he writes the play *Dissonorata*, in which he tells a story based on honor killing. He states:

I thought that if we could manage not to forget our own culture, which had been so deeply rooted in the South [of Italy] up until the sixties, then maybe we could also manage to look at this other culture of Islam that is arriving in Europe, with a more objective eye. In a global world, these cultures are close: they share the same roots.¹

Thinking about the above quote, I decided to contact various scholars and discovered that they too were interested in exploring the honor killing in Western Europe. Consequently, Gordana Yovanovich, Flavia Laviosa and I decided that we should look into the European culture of Southern Italy and of Southern Spain of the past, in order to analyze this phenomenon, and better understand the mechanisms of these terrible practices. We soon realized how much in common different cultures had, especially in valuing the concept of honor in their societies. Following that, I

analyzed La Ruina's *Dissonorata*, while Gordana Yovanovich analyzed Lorca's trilogy: *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *Yerma* and *Blood Wedding*. Flavia Laviosa contributed an extended reflection on the current immigrants arriving in Europe, as well as in America and in Canada, along with these extreme practices they bring with them. Through her analysis of movies and documentaries it is evident just how similar the practices are. According to Laviosa:

The patriarchal notion of honor has been re-introduced into Western societies through transnational migration and the import of family structures and belief systems which are incompatible with the values of gender equality, secularism and individual self-determination promoted in multi-religious and multi-cultural Western democratic nations. When families migrate to new countries, they also bring with them their traditional forms of punishment inflicted on women who are deemed to have stained their family's reputation.ⁱⁱ

We must wonder how Europeans react to these new social contexts or, more so, why they react with a dangerous *inertia*. Are they afraid? Have they forgotten their own old practices? When La Ruina suggests to looking at the new cultures "with a more objective eye" I do not think he means that Europeans should accept them passively, but rather, I believe he refers to understanding the problem, and trying to change it from the inside. Europeans, having had the same problem, and for the most part having solved it, should find ways to help the new communities do the same.

Honor killing is certainly not a simple phenomenon to understand and for this reason it has been going on for centuries all over the world. It may be compared to the land burial of nuclear waste, the legalization of smoking and drugs, or the corruption of politicians, etc., in that we all know it is wrong and yet accept it. In reality, the honor killing practice is a more complex phenomenon than what it appears to be. After all, man is not as perfect as we would like to think and, ultimately, justice is not easily attained. Life is full of oxymora!

At this point, another set of questions emerges: Why, when one says 'honor killing,' does it sound terrible? Probably because it recalls abhorrent acts such as acid being thrown on women's faces along with all other forms of abuses? What is it? Is it violence mostly on women or is it the

so-called domestic violence? Is it uxoricide, fratricide or filicide? Is it a surrogate of contraceptive methods, «a deterrent to young women to prevent birth of illegitimate children»? (G. Yovanovich) Or «a practice to protect women in a dangerous society or in a new and hostile environment like the host country of immigrants»? (F. Laviosa)

Undoubtedly, it is an extreme act of violence that goes beyond any form of justification. Despite what it is, though, as much as we think of honor killing as an inhumane practice to still be exerted in our contemporary society, what it is especially obnoxious and intolerable is that it is neither legally considered a crime, nor a form of violence. As a consequence, the perpetrators are left free with no or little punishment. This allows us to think that the complexity of this crime lies not in the practice itself - that is the outcome – but in its motivations that are deeply ingrained in the history of humankind and in patriarchal societal forms that provoke it. As Laviosa reports in her article,

Honor killings cross socio-economic classes and education boundaries, and are part of cultural practice, rather than of specific religious beliefs. While there is a general association of these crimes with Muslim communities ... there is in fact widespread incidence of such killings among Christian-majority groups in Latin America and South-East Europe, among Hindu and Sikh communities in India, and in several African nations.ⁱⁱⁱ

As we will see throughout the articles presented in this work, the motivations of honor killing are linked to social values such as honor and dignity. One could think that defending the honor and the dignity of a person at the price of a life is positive, especially since they are values that so many communities have been sharing in space and time. But, if this is so, then why is honor killing such a reproachful act? We must question why is such great injustice still nowadays legitimate in several cultures of the world. Where does the paradox lie or probably the confusion in the concept of honor? Dealing with this issue, we should establish where we can draw the ethical line between the moral honor and the immoral killing. Why isn't 'honor killing' an oxymoron? Through a

deconstruction of this phenomenon, the three papers presented here try to analyze and explain this complex cultural mechanism.

In the attempt to answer these questions and to explore the complexity of honor killing in artistic representations in theater and cinema, I would like to reflect on the concept of 'honor' in its double meaning that we borrow from Spanish theater of Siglo de Oro. In her article, Yovanovich also addresses this issue in depth.

In describing his Don Juan, in *El Burlador de Sevilla*, Tirso de Molina shows very clearly the dichotomy between *honor* and *honra*. Both words are translated in English, and other languages, as 'honor' but in Spanish, still today, two words exist. *Honor* refers to inner virtue and personal dignity, while *honra* is the reputation one enjoys before society's eyes. If the first one is private, managed by the person, the second one is public and is assigned by the other members of the community according to the external behavior of the person. *Honra* can also be inherited or demanded by those who manage to show that they are powerful. When *honor* and *honra* do not correspond, the contrast between appearing and being follows with a consequent double standard of behavior, one public and one private. Don Juan, symbol of the seventeenth-century multidimensional Spanish aristocracy, challenges the code of honor embodying a paradox. On one hand, he is a deceiver, a person who breaks the code of honor in his private life by seducing many women and killing their men. On the other hand, he is a man of inherited high social status, or honor, who responds to Death's challenge and heroically accepts the statue's macabre dinner invitation.

This paradox explains itself through the two meanings of *honor* and *honra*. By breaking all of the promises made to the women, Don Juan dishonors them and their men (and families). However, he is honorable because he does not break the promises made to the statue of Don Gonzalo. If he would not had done so, he would dishonor himself publically and would be a coward. Don Gonzalo invites Don Juan for dinner although he doubts that Don Juan would go. But Don Juan specifies: "I am a man of honor and I will keep my word because I am a gentleman." At Don Juan's question "Do you think I am a coward?" Don Gonzalo answers: "Yes, since the night you killed me you run

away!” Don Juan justified himself by saying: “I run away in order not to be recognized but now I am before you.”^{iv} Don Juan is trapped in the public recognition and the honor’s cage and cannot escape. He must defend his name and his family’s name. Don Gonzalo knows it and will defeat Don Juan through the honor. The Commander will ask him to shake his hand as a man of honor would do and, through the touch, Don Juan will be dragged to hell. In light of what happens, is he an honorable or a dishonorable man?

We deduce that Don Juan attributes more value to his social reputation of a fearless and virtuous man than to his respect for the others that constitutes his essence. The statue challenges his pride and his *honra* but not his private honor. Appearance is more important than essence. Because Don Juan has inherited the *honor* from his family, he is sure he will never lose it. For this reason, he plays around with people and shows disrespect to women, his father, the king, and his friends. His only interest is in appearing honored and in defeating his enemies in duels. By accepting Death’s invitation, he accepts the challenge in order to be honored, and he publically defends his honor. Despite the public honor, he will obviously be damned and go to hell for not being honored in his private life. Don Gonzalo, in turn, through the death of Don Juan, will regain his public honor, *honra*, which he had lost due to the dishonor of his daughter. By killing Don Juan, Don Gonzalo’s honor and that of his daughter are re-established.

This international issue that we have been discussing in this work, is but the same concept of *honra*, or public honor, that, throughout the centuries and in different cultures, has reached extreme cases. The private honor, *honor*, is what is worth defending as that is what makes a person dignified and virtuous. García Márquez’s character synthesizes that «you cannot eat honour, but it nurtures you» (G. Yovanovich). However, when it is confused with the public honor, *honra*, family interests and individual interests can be in conflict. In a culture where man’s honor depends on sexual purity of women, female sexual behavior is controlled by men in her family and often leads to violence against women.

We, Yovanovich, Laviosa, and I, do not intend to offer solutions, but we hope that this project will help reflect upon honor killing as a crime primarily against women, as well as inform and educate our readers. We invite scholars to continue studying and writing about this topic, for a lot still needs to be done to resolve the issue. We agree with Dr. Phyllis Chesler who states: “[Any] human rights violation cannot be justified in the name of cultural relativism, tolerance, anti-racism, diversity, or political correctness [...].”^v

I would like to conclude with a citation of the Roman historian Cornelius Nepos (100 BC-27 BC). He writes about Timoleon of Corinth^{vi} who had the chance to reign over his country sharing the role with his brother Timophanes. But, because his brother had won against the enemies thanks to mercenary troops, Timoleon decided to kill his brother for the way he had come to power. However, his action has not been recognized as noble as it was intentionally meant to. His fellow citizens would disdain him and his own mother would neither admit him into her house, nor look upon him, but, uttering imprecations against him, called him a fratricide. The public dishonor affected him so much that he did not want to live any more. He spent the last twenty years of his life in exile, alone.^{vii}



i See Cafaro’s article, p.1

ii See Laviosa’s article, p.3

iii See Laviosa’s article, p.2. I would like to report what Dr. Phyllis Chesler says regarding this aspect: “It is particularly alarming to note that in Europe 96 percent of the honor killing perpetrators are Muslims.” To be found in: Phyllis Chesler, *Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings*, in *Middle East Quarterly* Spring 2010, pp. 3-11
<<http://www.meforum.org/2646/worldwide-trends-in-honor-killings>>

iv T. de Molina, *El Burlador de Sevilla*, Matthew D. Stroud’s edition based on the J.T. Abrams y Vern Williamsen’s online text available in the collection of the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, Inc., <<http://www.trinity.edu/mstroud/comedia/bursev1a.html>> (The translation is mine)

v P. Chesler, cit.

vi Cornelio Nepote, text excerpted from “Liber de excellentibus ducibus exterarum gentium, Timoleon, XX, 1.
<<http://archive.org/stream/corneliusnepos00nepouoft#page/82/mode/2up>>

Original text: Nam quum frater ejus Timophanes,... tyrannidem per milites mercenarios occupasset, particepsque regni posset esse: tantum abfuit a societate sceleris, ut antetulerit suorum civium libertatem fratris salutem, et parere legibus,

quam imperare patriae, satius duxerit. Hac mente per haruspices, ... fratrem tyrannum interficiendum curavit. ... Hoc praeclarissimum ejus factum non pari modo probatum est ab omnibus. Nonnulli enim laesam ab eo pietatem putabant, et invidia laudem virtutis obtinebant. Mater vero post id factum neque domum ad se filium admisit, neque adspexit, quin eum fratricidam impiumque detestans compellaret. Quibus rebus adeo ille est commotus, ut nonnumquam vitae finem facere voluerit, atque ex ingratorum hominum conspectu morte decedere.

vii This is a summary from the translation made by the Rev. John Selby Watson, MA, in Cornelius Nepos: Lives of Eminent Commanders, 1886, pp. 305-450 <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/nepos.htm#Timoleon>.



An Imploding or Exploding Society? The Honor Killing in Saverio La Ruina's Theater

Anna Cafaro

In La Ruina's *Dissonorata, un delitto d'onore in Calabria*, Pasqualinaⁱ is a 19 year old girl who falls in love with one of her neighbors. The young man seduces her with the promise of marriage, but then abandons her and disappears when she gets pregnant. At this point, her family decides to have her killed in order to wash away the disgrace of dishonor with blood. The honorable task of covering her with gasoline and burning her alive is given to her brother. However, the young girl manages to escape, and with the help of an aunt she finds a stable where she can give birth.

This crime of honor happened in a mountain village, between Calabria and Basilicata, in Southern Italy in the sixties. It is a familiar event, very similar to those that happen today in many countries, under the label of honor killing. Indeed, the above description contains much more than a simple, everyday news story. It contains a tragic reality of violence and abuse of human rights, not just civil rights. It reveals a culture with a primitive mentality that is part of our recent and contemporary history.

In an interview, La Ruina explains how the initial idea came from stories of Muslim women who were victims of crimes of honor.ⁱⁱ In particular, he refers to the book *Burned Alive*, written by Suad,ⁱⁱⁱ a Muslim woman from the West Bank, whose body was brutally injured by her own family. Suad's book came out in 2003 concurrently with the news of a boy from southern Italy who had tried to kill his sister for similar reasons, to rectify the disgrace of a dishonorable pregnancy. These similarities brought La Ruina to investigate stories from his past in Calabria, in traditionally Catholic communities. He affirms:

I thought that if we could manage not to forget our own culture, which had been so deeply rooted in the South up until the sixties, then maybe we could also manage to look at this other culture of Islam that is arriving in Europe with a more objective eye. In

a global world, these cultures are close: they share the same roots.^{iv}

It is a story that we all know too well, an unsettling piece of news that reminds us of the millions of women around the world whose rights are systematically violated every day. Human rights groups suspect that nearly 20,000 honor killings occur across the world per year, although it is impossible to estimate a precise number (R. Fisk). It is enough for a woman to refuse to enter into an arranged marriage, be the victim of a sexual assault or an abusive husband, seek a divorce or (allegedly) commit adultery to be killed or tortured by a man from the same family.

Robert Fisk asks «how should one react to a man who rapes his own daughter and then, when she becomes pregnant, kills her to save the ‘honor’ of his family?» (R. Fisk). This is the story of many women in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, disfigured by men with sulfuric acid. It is the story of Indian women being burned alive on the stovetops of their homes by their husbands so that these men can take hold of their dowries. It is the story of adulterous Muslim women who are either subjected to violence or stoned to death. It is the story of Hina Saleem, a 20 years old Pakistani girl in Brescia, whose throat was slit by her father in 2006, because she had been accused of having committed the crime of *zina*, allegedly having sexual relations before marriage.^v On August 13, 2012, a 13 years old girl was sold by her family for three thousand euros while still living in Macedonia, and then brought to Italy to the 17 year old she was meant to marry by his mother. Once in Italy, she tried to rebel against the arrangement but was raped, isolated and tortured.^{vi} Every year in Italy the number of forced marriages increases although it is impossible to know the precise figures due to the lack of an official survey. The only information we have is from the local non-governmental organizations’ (NGO) investigation. They offer invaluable support to Italian and immigrant women in danger.^{vii}

The issue of honor killings has gained prominence in Europe in recent years, especially in Britain, France, Germany and lately in Italy within migrant communities. Often cases cannot be resolved due to the unwillingness of family, relatives and communities to testify. It also happens that the police in Western countries do not intervene for fear of being accused of racism or islamophobia. After reading of these monstrosities, one can only wonder what happens to humans. How do we allow this? And above all, who does this? And why?

To trace the roots of this practice we must go back - as Matthew Goldstein suggests - to the ancient Rome where «the honor killings were accepted as a noble act» and «men who did not punish the women accused of adultery were hounded» (M. Goldstein). But it is definitely a practice that travels in time and «goes across cultures and across religions» as Widney Brown, the advocacy director of Human Rights Watch, affirms (H. Mayell). In most of the countries involved, such as Syria, Jordan or Iran, the punishment for crimes of honor, especially those committed against women, is minimal. This reminds us of the Article 587 of the Italian Penal Code, the so-called Rocco Code, in force in Italy until 1981 and according to which those who killed their wife, daughter, or sister in order to defend their honor or the honor of their family should be given a reduced sentence.^{viii}

What is really hard to understand is why honor crimes are not considered an abuse of human rights. Why is there such a secrecy when it comes to denouncing them? What is the real nature of honor crimes? Is it just domestic violence or is it womicide (killing a woman because she is a woman)? I do believe that until there is a separation between honor crimes and violence against women, this horrible phenomenon will not get the necessary attention by the institutions. Actually, what I find more horrifying is not the killings themselves but the fact that these crimes are «perceived as excusable or understandable» as Widney Brown affirms (H. Mayell). No one is held responsible and no one is punished, especially when the agents of the crimes are minors. But if there are no criminals then there are no crimes, and this implies that there are no victims. I consider this an insult to women and to humanity. More specifically, Dr. Chesler adds that

to combat the epidemic of honor killings requires understanding what makes these murders unique. They differ from plain and psychopathic homicides, serial killings, crimes of passion, revenge killings, and domestic violence. Their motivation is different and based on codes of morality and behavior that typify some cultures, often reinforced by fundamentalist religious dictates.^{ix}

Obviously, the end does not justify the means. For Brown the rationale of honor killings is connected with a primitive idea of self-defense in a society where the state did not exist or was not able to protect its citizens. In these cultures, as Brown affirms,

women are considered the property of the males in their family irrespective of their class, ethnic, or religious group. The owner of the property has the right to decide its fate. The concept of ownership has turned women into a commodity, which can be exchanged, bought and sold (H. Mayell).

We can see that honor killing is a complex issue that is addressed and approached from different points of view by several scholars. While it is not my intention to analyze the topic here, what I would like to reflect upon is, instead, the dynamics of the society that promotes the honor killings, as revealed in La Ruina's play. In particular, I would like to show how the consequences of such social dynamics lead to an inescapable implosion of the same society.

I agree with La Ruina that it is important for a social integration to find a common denominator among the cultures that already cohabit in Europe and Italy, different only apparently but very similar in essence. My reflection starts from La Ruina's work and extends to those communities that have been arriving in Europe in the last decades. As we saw, they seem to bring with them a problem that our society fought against and partially solved only a few decades ago. Is it the same history that keeps coming back or is it just we the ones who don't do enough to stop this phenomenon? Is it the atavistic destiny of women, which Dacia Maraini speaks about in her plays, or is it just indifference and a lack of recognition and responsibility in society as a whole?

My reflection concerns the relationship between the protagonist of the story and the community in which the protagonist herself lives. The crime that washes away the disgrace of dishonor with blood is not simply a social event, nor is it a legal matter. Rather, it is the tip of an iceberg that hides, and at the same time reveals, a whole underground world made up of tight interrelations among members of the community, of social responsibilities based on laws which are

more often than not unwritten. In this primitive form of society the crime against Pasqualina becomes a crime committed by the entire community. It is society that kills itself, like a monster.

Seen in this light, the boundaries between homicide and suicide are blurred and the questioned behavior is neither that of the father nor that of the brother towards the girl, but rather the behavior of the entire community towards women in general. The core of the story is not Pasqualina's mistake, or lapse, but the actions of the entire community to mold its citizens in body and spirit from a young age, on the one hand pushing men to act as masters-owners and on the other encouraging women to be consenting slaves or suicides. In this tight-knit network, individual rights do not exist. A person's right to live is decided by the community. I argue that a community based on such dynamics is destined to explode or implode - as we will see later - for a lack of balanced forces: it does not equally and freely recognize its own members, nor their dignity.

The structure of La Ruina's work coincides with the content of the work itself, and the naïve but sincere comments of the protagonist uncover the monstrous way in which this society functions. Those comments reveal the way this type of mentality impacts on the bodies and spirits of the poor girls before it forces them to kill themselves. The crime of honor in this case shows itself to be more suicide than homicide. Behind the lines of La Ruina's story we can read the mechanisms on which a culture like this is based, and through Pasqualina's thoughts we can perfectly understand the context in which her life is inscribed. The author does this by constructing, throughout the course of the story, the reasons behind Pasqualina's 'sin', why she chooses not to respect the rules but rather accepts the man's advances three times. But why does Pasqualina consent to the will of her supposed beloved? In order to understand her, we must listen to the story from her point of view.

It is worth noting that the character Pasqualina is represented on stage by the same playwright and actor Saverio La Ruina. It was his choice to perform a woman on stage in order to feel closer to what a woman must have experienced. Therefore, when I speak about Pasqualina, I will often refer to La Ruina's body and voice that express her. In the third minute of the performance, after a brief prologue which draws the audience into the emotional context of the story, the character begins to describe the bitter daily life she - and in turn all girls of a marriage age - lived as a young girl. We quickly discover, for example, that an unmarried girl was to walk with her head down, so as not to

meet the gaze of a man. She would count the stones on the ground. She was not to go out alone, even to do the grocery shopping. If she turned 18 and was still unmarried, she was quickly labeled a 'spinster.' At that time, women married according to birth order, and therefore Pasqualina had to wait for her two older sisters to get married before she could have the possibility of doing so herself. Her life, and the lives of many women like her, was one of hardship and fear, humiliation and punishment.

In the wonderful description of her falling in love, we find a contrast between her life before and after meeting the young man. After recounting the discovery of all the new emotions that accompany falling in love, she drifts back in time to a description of her world before that moment. She says:

Before then I couldn't even say if what I was doing was good or bad, I had to do it and that's it. I would take the sheep out to pasture because my father would tell me that I had to take the sheep out to pasture; I would work in the vegetable garden because my father would tell me to work in the vegetable garden; I would stay home because my father would tell me to stay home; I would eat when I was hungry, I would drink when I was thirsty, I would be afraid when I made mistakes, I was afraid... I was always afraid. I couldn't have even said if I was beautiful or ugly, if my face was beautiful or ugly. I had never thought about it before. I couldn't have even said if I liked the world or not. I know only now that the world is a special place.

This description testifies to a human being who was deprived of freedom and both physical and psychological awareness. That which she could or could not do was dictated by rules that were unwritten but inscribed on every corner of the town and on each and every one of its citizens.

Suddenly, after describing her suffering through somber expressions and stiff gestures, the actor in Pasqualina's clothes, begins to smile; his voice relaxes and his shoulders straighten, signaling the description of a happy, life-changing moment for Pasqualina. The girl, through the actor's body, now illuminated by the spotlight, shares her expectations for the wedding and her

hopes for a better life. Pasqualina confesses, «We women have but one wish, and it is to find a husband!» The physical change of the actor represents a fundamental transformation, which lies at the heart of the play: A young girl moves from a dark reality to a world of dreams, or better yet, of life. The belief that this is possible is Pasqualina's downfall and the cause of her eventual transformation into a victim. And the beautiful, longed-for moment finally arrives: Pasqualina, from her terrace, sees a neighbor and falls in love. The power of falling in love makes her open her eyes and compare the dark of her past with the light of her future. Pasqualina states:

Only when I get married can I look at the world in front of me, enter into a shop to buy sugar and salt and wear a wedding ring and earrings. (...) I can't wait to marry him, so that I can walk alone through the streets, enter into shops, get in that car with him and drive around the nearby towns, and no one can call me a whore because I bow my head and walk with my eyes downcast, but this time without counting the stones on the ground, and in town they can't say anything to me because I am MARRIED.

La Ruina masterfully performs the word 'MARRIED' with the body and soul in their entirety, as if to underline the fact that, for Pasqualina, getting married is not only a dream but life itself. The satisfaction of this moment and the desire to have it all as quickly as possible are revealed in the actor's smile and happy tone of voice. Pasqualina yearns for the freedom to live, to be and to do it all with dignity. Like all the other girls Pasqualina believes that, through this union, she will acquire independence, freedom of movement and action (like going into a shop alone and deciding what to buy), the freedom to wear jewelry, etc. However, if we apply this society's rules of the game, we know that the union guarantees not independence but rather another form of enslavement, this time with her husband as master rather than her father. And immediately after, another revelation:

My sister, I don't know why no one wants her, but if she ends up a spinster it is a shame for both of us. ... But I can't wait for Teresa, I don't want to end up a young woman having to stay home like an old lady, I don't want to end up a spinster who moans and groans all day and especially at night, I don't want to jump off the balcony onto the rocks below for the shame that aches in my chest.

In the above five lines, the word ‘shame’ is repeated twice, and many other times throughout the course of the monologue. In all occurrences, the actor expresses the word with gestures and a tone of voice that reveal the fundamental value of dignity. Pasqualina does not want to feel the shame of ending up a spinster because such a status would represent the greatest dishonor for a woman. She consents to have sex with the man because her fear is stronger than her respect for her own life: «I am afraid that he will leave, I am afraid that he will leave me here amongst the sheep, I am afraid that he will leave me to become old and unmarried, trapped inside this house ... I just don’t want him to get angry.»

To summarize Pasqualina’s psychological process we can identify three moments: First, Pasqualina reveals her dream of marriage. Second, she reveals why she wants to get married. Third, she gives herself to her suitor because she is afraid that he will not wait for her and that he will no longer want to marry her.

From this we can infer that, in this culture, a woman has dignity only in the role of wife, while spinsters have no rights and no value, destined to stay home and become invisible to the entire community. It is, in a sense, death by reclusion and submission to the family for life. By creating this model, society pushes girls to risk everything, including their own honor and lives, just to get married. It is not about breaking the rules of the community out of defiance, or to be different, but about survival. At the age of 19, and with an older sister who is still unmarried, Pasqualina has no chance of getting married, which is why she has to risk everything with the first and only man who approaches her. If all goes well he will marry her, and if her plan fails her family will kill her, which is exactly what will happen. Pasqualina takes a risk, and this show of strength is what transforms her from victim to heroine.

Furthermore, her fear of shame is so strong that it makes her a prisoner of diabolic, labyrinthine mechanisms. After her first sexual encounter, she says «I am afraid if we do it and also if we don’t, because if we do it, it seems like he no longer cares,» which is true, because even if he

is her lover, he is also a man and in keeping with the famous rules of the game, men do not marry dishonorable women. She goes on to say:

and if we don't do it he gets angry [and he leaves]. And so we do it a second time and it still hurts. I don't care about what he does to my body, I only care if he comes back, if he stays here. I don't care what he does to my body [she repeats], I don't feel what he does to my body, he is not inside my body but inside my head, in my thoughts, in my soul, and I'm afraid because I can physically take him away from my body but not from my soul, from my soul I cannot remove him, I only grasp at air...

We can surmise that what this story describes is not only an abuse of rights at a physical level, but also violations of a psychological and moral nature. Pasqualina is unable to untangle herself from these doubts and identify what is right. This monologue, then, denounces not a woman but an entire community: The men, the absent church, the absent government, the absent school system and all those structures and infrastructures that should be in place to protect the rights of citizens.

In his book, *Individualism and the Mystery of the Social Self*, Wayne Booth argues that torturing and killing a person is not acting on an individual but rather on an entire community. In fact, Booth, like sociologists Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere, defends the concept of a person as a social individual, a network of connections, which contrasts with the idea of a person as an independent, indivisible atomic nucleus. Furthermore, each human being is but a knot in the network of life, and therefore each of us is tied to his or her past, present and future. Each of us contains a community made up of real and imaginary people, past and present. By virtue of these considerations, Pasqualina is a member who contains the whole community, with its deceptions, fears, respect, honor, roles, judgments, morals, customs and habits. She is a fractal, a part that represents the whole. She is the product of the community who, in the second play of La Ruina, *La Borto*, will be absolved by Jesus for her sins, since she is not guilty of her social status.

We might wonder whether men are really defending their power in the family and their reputation in the social group or whether the migrants arriving in Europe are really afraid to lose their identity and their traditional values. Or is it just a question of maintaining power over the

family group to delimit their space like animals do? The problem is that such a control entails a choice: in order to defend one value they lose sight of another value, and the question at stake is the priority given to these two values: social value vs. personal value. It seems that in a patriarchal society a man's life without honor is not worth living. So men choose to suppress the dignity of their women, or even kill them, to defend a social value.

At this point, allow me a diversion into science: If in a system two forces are in action, they both have to balance themselves in order to maintain the system in equilibrium, alive. Similarly, what we observe here is a society under two forces: On one side an eternal social pressure on the family nucleus, on the other the dignity of each member of the family, with human desires and dreams of accomplishments. As it happens in physics, an ideal social system would maintain these forces in equilibrium through a social structure that balances the needs and desires of the family members and guarantees protection to each of them in case of danger. When one of these forces prevails, the system breaks down. If the internal force exerts a stronger pressure, the system explodes, pushing the matter towards the outside. That is the case of individual members who become very independent, break the unity of the family and flee into the society. On the other hand, if the external force prevails on the family group, this one implodes, attracting the matter inside. Specifically, the family will destroy itself by collapsing towards the center without showing any sign on the outside of it. The problems have to be solved within the family. As a consequence of this process, the family disappears and melts into the community.

In Pasqualina's community we can easily recognize the signs of implosion, and I would like to borrow some more elements from science in order to better understand the consequences of a similar phenomenon and predict eventual events. As we said, implosion means a sudden collapse of an object under the external pressure that prevails on the internal one, and if we keep observing what happens in physics, we find that the boundaries of the object simply disintegrate or disappear. The object that was perfectly delineated is now fused, melded. Both the object and the space that contained it become one, "indifferent," as opposed to different. The object becomes space and thus they are equal.

If we transpose this concept to our societal system, we can infer that the disintegration of the family provokes a fusion between the community and the family itself. In other words, individual values disappear and only social values prevail. The entire community becomes a large family in which each member lives by virtue of all of the others and the opinions of the others constitute those of the individual. So the community's values equal the family's values. These micro communities are able to destroy families without leaving a trace. In them, the individuals lose their values, and people like Pasqualina are just objects, considered less valuable than animals. Only the father, who represents the family, becomes important in the community, while the wife and the other members, including sons, are just puppets, functional elements with the purpose of maintaining the father's honor. Like in physics, the community and the single families are "indifferent." They act as a carnivorous plant, beautiful to see but dangerous to touch, honorable but fatal.

Similarly, we can compare the external and the internal forces to past and present. While the external force of society is compared to the tradition of the past, the internal force of the family represents the present. For instance, in most cases, young daughters, or young wives in immigrant societies resist arranged marriages, the burqa and the veil; they would want the right to divorce. These are examples of individual forces of the present that oppose the community force of the past, in vain.

The problem occurs when those communities exert their pressure in the larger context of the Western society that hosts them. If Western people act with indifference, as disinterested and unconcerned, and with fear of these violent groups, then the latter will prevail. They will continue to kill young women and will grow as communities (they will perform explosions). Only if the local societies exert a stronger force on them, through their laws, information and education, will they eventually implode and disappear.

While in their native countries indifference is a tool used to equal the values between family and community, in Europe and Western countries in general, indifference has an opposite function. The indifference of Western people towards immigrants is a weapon that kills more people than it

does in their countries, for it marks the difference between communities and keeps identities separated. On the European soil, indifference is an enemy of integration. In the face of honor killings, actions must happen from within the community: it is inside the group that the actors of crimes should be recognized as perpetrators and should eventually be isolated by all of the members of the same community. If recognition, isolation and public accountability do not occur, these crimes will never stop. In order to recognize the crime and the perpetrator, people have to be educated about these concepts, and the combined action of governments, schools and society is needed. Fighting indifference means recognizing dissimilarities and therefore understanding the differences, and learning how to communicate with different people.

In conclusion, I consider La Ruina's theater work as aesthetically and artistically intriguing as well as socially important. It not only enlightens us about the delicate and complex dynamics of a young woman's feelings but also reveals the mechanisms of a patriarchal society of the 60s that has not disappeared, the concept of honor and the inhumane practice of honor killings. In the words of Katia Ippaso, «We do not know whether or not to call it a show. Saverio La Ruina's piece of art is worth more than a thousand books of investigation, political discourses, and many other works of an expressly civil nature» (K. Ippaso).



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- i *Dissonorata, un delitto d’onore in Calabria* was written in 2007 by S. La Ruina, a young playwright who has already made a name for himself in contemporary Italian theater. He is the founder of the company Scena Verticale, which is based in Castrovillari, Cosenza and recipient of several awards. With *Dissonorata*, in 2007, he won the UBU Prize for best script and best Italian actor, was nominated for best interpreter of a monologue for the ‘ETI Olimpici del Teatro’ award, nomination at the Premio Matteotti, and Special Nomination at the Drammaturgia Premio Ugo Betti, in 2008. He also won another UBU award for his festival ‘Primavera dei Teatri’ in Castrovillari, and, in 2010 with *La Borto* he claimed a fourth UBU award for best script.
- ii A. Monteverdi, *Dissonorata*, 2007
- iii The original book was written in France. Souad, *Brulée vive*, Pochet, 2003. Piemme, 2007.
- iv Original version in Italian: “Ho pensato che se riusciamo a non dimenticare la nostra cultura, quella cosa radicata al Sud fino agli anni Sessanta, forse riusciamo anche a guardare con un occhio più obiettivo questa altra cultura dell’Islam che arriva in Europa. In un mondo globale queste culture sono vicine, le radici stesse sono comuni.” Cit. in A. Monteverdi. The translation in English is mine.
- v Event reported by S. La Ruina when interviewed by A. Monteverdi.
- vi <http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/english/2012/08/13/Police-rescue-13-year-old-girl-sold-marriage_7338784.html>

vii As Stefania Prandi reports, the NGO *Trama di terre*, based in Emilia Romagna, denounced in the last year 33 cases of forced marriages in Italy, while the British governmental unit FMU intervened in 1500 cases in Great Britain.

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viii The penal code, known as Codice Rocco, on behalf of former Minister of Justice Alfredo Rocco, or fascist code, was promulgated in 1931 and remained in force until 1981.

ix P. Chesler, *Worldwide Trends in Honor Killings*, 2010, pp. 3-11. For more details about the controversy see also: *A Civilized Dialogue about Islam and Honor Killing: When Feminist Heroes Disagree*, 2009.



Honor Killing in Federico Garcia Lorca's Trilogy. *Blood Wedding, Yerma and House of Bernarda Alba*

Gordana Yovanovich

Honour culture has been associated with the patriarchal social order and has been viewed in recent decades as a tool of oppression and exploitation, which must be reformed. Extensive coverage of honour killings and subsequent international discussions and calls for action have made honour culture detested in the West. Loss of life in honour killings is one reason for concern, but the more infuriating one, it seems, comes from the fact that we do not tolerate the idea of control. Both men and women are pressured to behave according to prescribed social codes, but the control of women lies at the essence of the honour culture. James Bowman points out in his *Honor: A History* (2006) that in Europe and North America, “we have arrived almost at the extreme, where there is only morality and law for us to rely on and the honor culture is despised as an offense to individual autonomy and moral progressivism” (p. 38). Western anti-honour culture sentiment was felt in the worldwide internet drive to save a Nigerian woman sentenced to death by stoning for having a child outside of wedlock, and in the primetime TV and newspaper coverage of young Muslim girls who were beaten to death for wanting to assimilate in Canada, thus disobeying their father and brothers and dishonoring the entire family. Stories regarding ‘accidents’ with cooking oil in which daughters-in-law are burned usually by mothers-in-law in India or Pakistan infuriate and impel Western viewers to approve foreign interventions to seek international justice and liberation of women.

Honour killing is a serious crime and women are its main victims. However, the problem is more complex and more widespread than it is often presented. In her article “Rationalizing patriarchy: Gender, domestic violence and law in Mexico,” Ana Maria Alonso points out that in the modern Western world the North (or the modern world) is depicted as “the site of reason” and the South (or traditional world) as “the site of irrational male violence and female passivity,”¹ but these are only stereotypes. “Family Killing Fields: Honor Rationales in the Murder of Women” argues

that “honor systems are an integral part of the process of killing women by their families or their mates, regardless of where the woman lives” (N. Baker, p.164).ⁱⁱ The only difference between the North and the South or the West and the East is that in the United States, the locus of honor has shifted from the traditional extended family to the individual man. The community participation in North America has been decreased if not lost, but the struggle for control in sexual and emotional involvement is very much present in the nuclear setting. In traditional societies, the male members of a woman’s biological family act to control a woman’s sexuality and her behavior. In the modern society this control shifts from the father to her husband, which may be worse for the woman, Baker, Gregware, and Cassidy argue, because extended family and community arguably provide some restraints and guidelines on honour killing.

In a traditional society a husband must prove in public that his wife is unfaithful in order to have her punished. A mere suspicion, due to jealousy, is not accepted by the community. Furthermore, the honour society is prescriptive and women do not live under the illusion that they are free. As Shareen Lateef points out, women in traditional honor-bound societies seldom step out of line but instead confirm their behavior to societal dictates (S. Lateef, 1992).ⁱⁱⁱ Hence, the home setting is a less dangerous place for a traditional woman than it is for the modern woman. In her study of Roman honour, Carlin Barton argues that in classical times more than a social status, honour was a feeling, a glowing spirit, as she says in *Roman Honour: The Fire in the Bones* (C. Barton, 2001), which was associated with *vis*, *vires* or physical power, vigour, vitality, energy, violent or forceful action which led men and women to activities which were recognized by their community and for which they received *honores* or prizes and recognition. *Vir* and *vis* were associated with *viriditas* or the flourishing vigour and potency of youth. The female *virgo* was also related to the same notion. The *vir* and the *virgo* had in common youthful vigor, growth, fertility, freshness, and energy. They were the source of life and their fertility ensured continuation of life. The gender roles in the preservation of life were different, but they both required active participation. Barton points out that women competed in the contest of chastity just as strenuously as the men competed in the contest of virtue: *labor, industria, disciplina, diligentia*. “For the Romans, to be *pura* and *casta* required an ardent will” (C. Barton, p. 37).

Spanish plays *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma* and *House of Bernarda Alba* written by Federico García Lorca show the complexity of the honour culture which defines itself by social rules and prescribed social conduct, but in these plays honour killings are as much a part of human nature and negative natural forces as they are the result of the patriarchal system. All three plays deal with honour killings which are inspired by both the primeval drives of sexual potency and fertility and by power relations and man's or society's desire to control women. In *House of Bernarda Alba* the youngest daughter Adela is driven to suicide because social pressure and watchful eyes of her family do not allow her to express her youthful vigor and sexuality. *Blood Wedding* begins with the Mother's plea to her son to stop the tradition of vendetta or male honour killing in Southern Spain but it ends with her command that her son pursue and kill the man who dishonored him by taking away his bride on the day of their wedding. The play ends ambiguously, not determining if the Bride is driven to suicide by the death of her lover and her husband or if she is left to live with her mother-in-law because suffering grief is greater punishment than death. In *Yerma*, the eponymous female character strangles her husband to death at the end of the play because he controls her in order not to lose his honour, but more importantly because he fails to help her live honourably.

The three plays have enjoyed immense popularity internationally from their creation until now, but today *House of Bernarda Alba* is the most popular because the topic of social control and female liberation appeals to a wide modern audience. The play was written in 1936 but first performed in 1945. In 1987, Mario Camus directed a film in Spanish by the same name, which was presented at the Cannes Film Festival to be followed by a made-for-TV movie in English, *House of Bernarda Alba*, in 1991. In 1967 Lorca's story was adapted and choreographed into a ballet, and in 2006 it was adapted into a musical which opened at the Lincoln Center in New York City. The other two plays have also been turned into films and music productions, and all three plays enjoy constant presentation in theatres in different parts of the world. In his review of the *House of Bernarda Alba* playing this summer at the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada, John Coulbourn writes that the play "has endured not so much because it is a potent metaphor for life under Franco, but because it is a potent metaphor for life, period."^{iv}

While focussing primarily on life, the plays are written in the context of Spanish honour culture where, as William Ian Miller and Julian Pitt-Rivers indicate, the question of identity, or who we are, depends on a “person’s self-esteem and on the esteem or the envy he or she actually elicited in others.”^v Spanish honour culture is a variation of the Roman honour culture in which the self was a social object for whom *fama* was guarded by a sense of shame. Honour and shame are equally important concepts in Spanish honour culture, however inherited honour as social rank and honour as purity of blood are more prominent than the honour of the soul. The definition of honour has several senses, the first of which was nobility of soul or “el adorno del alma,” as Marcela says in *Don Quixote*. This sort of honour derives from the perceived virtuous individual integrity of the person endowed with it. Honour has also been defined in relation to reputation and fame, privileges of rank or birth. This sort of honour is not so much a function of moral or ethical excellence, as it is a consequence of power. Finally, with respect to women, honour has been related to chastity or virginity, and to fidelity in the case of a married woman.

In Roman times, an important aspect of the honour culture was the atmosphere of fair game and positive attitude as citizens in general strived to be good, and their good behaviour led them to an honourable position in society. As American scholar Carlin Barton explains in her 2001 book *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones*, in Roman society the individual’s desire to elicit envy in others was one of the strongest emotions and a motivating force. Rome had no central peace-keeping force, but the Republic survived and flourished for so many centuries because it had a shared public sense of honour and shame. Those who did not behave according to the rules of the game lost their honour through public disapproval: “There was no one so poor or so despised that they could not repay aristocratic abuse with gossip and slander. Even the humblest could hiss you at the games or piss on your statue,” Barton writes. Hence, the honour culture allowed the poor and the marginalized, women included, to express their feelings, and to protest discrimination. But to protect individuals and society from destructive and groundless gossip “among the earliest provisions of Roman law was a law making it a capital offense to chant abuse (*occentare*) or chant curses (*carmina*) that would destroy the social existence, the *fama* of another,” Barton points out.^{vi}

In the rural Spain of Lorca's plays, on the other hand, public opinion and social competition are a warped version of Roman competition and are more in line with competitions we see in modern political arena; the practice is not to show how good one is but to show how bad the opponent is. And Bernarda Alba prides herself in her ability to dishonour her neighbours so that in relation to them she can be superior. While everyone else is at Bernarda Alba's husband's burial, the play begins with her servants' gossip about Bernarda's tyrannical character. "Domineering old tyrant," Poncia calls Bernarda, as she and other servant talk about Bernarda behind her back, and about the misfortune of having five aging ugly single daughters who will not marry because their family economic situation does not match their pretended social status. Poncia says: "Not that I envy her her life. Five girls are left her, five ugly daughters - not counting Angustias the eldest, by her first husband, who has money - the rest of them, plenty of eyelets to embroider, plenty of linen petticoats, but bread and grapes when it comes to inheritance" (p. 159). As there is no adequate dowry for four of the five daughters, the mother prefers to keep the daughters unmarried than to let them marry below their social rank. Bernarda insists: "for a hundred miles around there's no one good enough to come near them. The men in this town are not of their class" (p. 168).

Bernarda's enclosure of her four daughters in their twenties for eight years under the pretence of mourning their father is an example of harsh matriarchal control. Magdalena says that she would rather "carry sacks to the mill, anything except sit here day after day in this dark room" (165), but Bernarda holds an essentialist view insisting that prescribed gender roles are not to be changed. "This is what a woman is for. In this house you'll do what I order... Needles and thread for women. Whips and mules for men. That's the way it has to be for people who have certain obligations" (p. 165). To uphold her social standing Bernarda also orders her servants to keep her house clean. "I've got blood on my hands from so much polishing of everything," the servant says, to which Poncia replies that Bernarda must be "the cleanest, she's the decentest, she's the highest in everything" (p. 158). But Bernarda cannot show how good she and her daughters are in the sportsmanlike fashion because her daughters do not possess beauty or youth, nor do they have money. To compete and keep her status, Bernarda must collect and spread gossip about her neighbours. She has Ponica "whole days peeking through a crack in the shutters to spy on the neighbours and carry her the tale" (p. 158). When Bernarda finds out how Adelaida's father got his lands, she spreads the gossip

around shamelessly. Martirio remarks that “every time she [Adelaida] comes here, Mother twists the knife in the wound. Her father killed his first wife’s husband in Cuba so he could marry her himself. Then he left her there and went off with another woman who already had one daughter, and then he took up with this other girl, Adelaida’s mother, and married her after his second wife died insane” (p. 169). How Bernarda knows what happened in Cuba is not clear, however it is clear that she gossips about the young woman in order to claim supremacy in her power relations.

Exploring the psychology of rumors, in his article “The Gossip Paradox: Can Gossip be Good for Us?” Nicholas DiFonzo writes that gossip about others makes us feel good about ourselves. Stories about Tiger Woods and his affairs, for example, sold in millions of copies because it is comforting to learn that someone else is worse than we are. DiFonzo writes: “What? Tiger had all these affairs but presented a squeaky clean image? What a hypocrite! (I’m not proud of what I do but at least I’m honest...)” This motive explains the heightened interest in negative gossip about people in positions entrusted with moral leadership - ministers, priests, politicians, professors, parents, and well-known sports figures. “Spreading negative gossip about others is a (cheap) way of boosting your estimation of yourself,” DiFonzo concludes.^{vii} To boost her estimation Bernarda spreads vicious gossip about Adelaida’s father who, like Tiger Woods, is a womanizer. Why does she pick on Adelaida? Because her daughters do not have as much land to inherit as Adelaida does. Following the psychology described by DiFonzo, Bernarda’s daughters are not large land owners, but at least their land is not swindled.

Bernarda claims moral superiority in other instances, which makes up for her daughters’ poor inheritance. When Librada’s unmarried daughter had a child and to hide her shame, she killed it and hid it under the rocks, but the dogs, “with more heart than most Christians,” dug it out, “as though directed by the hand of God”, and left it at her door, Poncia informs Bernarda (p. 195). Bernarda is a harsh judge of the young woman who had a sexual relationship outside of wedlock. When she shouts from her doorsteps: “Hot coals in the place where she sinned!... Kill her! Kill her!” (p. 195), Bernarda is asking for an honour killing, which is self-motivated.

The honour killing is supposed to function as a deterrent to young women for whom contraceptive methods were not available. To prevent birth of illegitimate children and

proliferation of unwaged young single mothers, honour society uses the practice of shaming, and honour killing is an extreme measure of prevention. Bernarda's call for murder of the young mother might be motivated by her fear that she herself will have a daughter pregnant out of wedlock. As the scene happens and Adela holds on to her stomach as a reaction to her mother's words, the audience begins to suspect that Bernarda's youngest daughter is pregnant with her sister's fiancé. Hollywood films would end this story with a happy ending where Adela and the father of her child run away and live happily ever after because love must win in the end. But for a young man with poor economic means and pitiable prospects for employment running away with a pregnant girl would not be a very happy life regardless of the fact that Adela loves him. Rather than a romantic vision, Lorca offers his audience a tragedy, which is an outcome of Adela's desire to be free and sexually active, and her sister's jealousy of her youth and of her mother's thirst for power and control. To show her power, Bernarda takes out her gun and shoots the young man. When she misses, Adela's sister Martirio helps carry out the honour killing. Out of jealousy, she intentionally gives Adela wrong information that the young man is dead, which leads Adela to hang herself. But the death of a young girl is less horrifying than a loss of social esteem. "The youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba died a virgin" (p. 211), Bernarda shouts at the end because she cannot stand the public condemnation; for her dishonour and loss of power are worse than her daughter's death.

In this case of honour killing women are the only actors. They hurt each other because of jealousy and power struggle as "the best looking man around here" (p. 172), twenty-five-year-old Pepe el Romano chooses to marry the ugly 39-year old sister Angustias because she has the biggest inheritance. As Martitio remarks, "What do men care about ugliness? All they care about is lands, yokes of oxen, and a submissive bitch who'll feed them" (p. 170). Instead of uniting to fight against such men, the sisters break each other's bones. Magdalena takes out her frustration on her marrying sister by commenting about Angustias: "If she looked like a dressed-up stick at twenty, what can she look like now, now that she's forty?" (p. 172). When Martirio, on the other hand, admits: "Yes. My breast's bitter, busting like a pomegranate. I love him [her sister's fiancé]" (p. 208), she also promises Adela that she will watch her every step, that she will not let her breathe so that Adela won't spend time with Pepe. Even Poncia, the servant, participates in the dishonourable competition among sisters. She tells Adela "Angustias is sickly. She'll die with her first child. Narrow-waisted, old - and in my experience I can tell you she'll die. Then Pepe will do what all

widowers do in these parts: he'll marry the youngest and most beautiful, and that's you" (p. 182). But, youth is impatient. She enjoys sexual pleasure with the young man and pays the price with her life because of the social system and her mother's control, but also because of her sister's jealousy and men's concern for economic improvement.

Yerma, written in 1934, two years before Lorca was killed, is also a play in which both the social order and human nature contribute to the tragedy. The play, which Lorca described as "a tragic poem," tells the story of a childless woman living in rural Spain whose desperate desire for motherhood becomes an obsession that eventually drives her to strangle her husband. Writing from the North American and simplified point of view, Wikipedia explains that "Because of the time she is living in, *Yerma* is expected to bear children," and when she cannot stand the social pressure for not fulfilling her gender role, she goes crazy. *Yerma*'s desire to have children is more natural than social, however. She laments her infertility:

Oh, what a field of sorrow!
Oh, this is a door to beauty closed:
To beg a son to suffer, and for the wind
To offer dahlias of a sleeping moon!
These two teeming springs I have
Of warm milk are in the closeness
Of my flesh two rhythms of horse's gallop,
To make vibrate branch of my anguish.
Oh, breasts, blind beneath my cloths!
Oh, doves with neither eyes nor whiteness!
Oh, what pain of imprisoned blood
Is nailing wasps at my brain's base!
But you must come, sweet love, my baby,
Because water gives salt, the earth fruit,
And our wombs guard tender infants
Just as a cloud is sweet with rain. (131)

Female fertility and child bearing is a part of a larger natural order: “water gives salt, the earth fruit, and our wombs guard tender infants,” Yerma insists. It is a part of the creative energy the Romans tried to capture in their idea of honour. But when her husband, who is a frugal and economically-driven man, does not embrace the natural fountains of life and spends his nights out in the field irrigating his lands instead of spending his nights in bed with his wife, Yerma’s frustrated desire tortures her as “nailing wasps at [her] brain’s base.” She claims “every woman has blood for four of five children, and when she does not have them it turns to poison” (p. 109). One may object to Lorca’s male point of view regarding this gender role. However, the play presents women who would rather not have children or who would have sexual relationship outside of marriage. The Second Girl claims that not having children makes her life easier: “You and I, not having any [children] live more peacefully” (p. 115). She also says that it is the “old women” who forced her to marry. “I’m nineteen and I don’t like to cook or do washing. Well, now I have to spend the whole day doing what I don’t like to do. And all for what? We did the same things as sweethearts that we do now. It’s all just the old folks’ silly ideas” (p. 115). And immediately after this conversation with the Second Girl, Lorca introduces Victor’s song: “Why, shepperd, sleep alone” suggesting that sexual pleasure and love should not be undermined by the honour culture. Yet, the answer to Victor’s question sung in a voice that Yerma hears “like a stream of water that fills your mouth” (p. 117) is not simple. Society needs order and, for Yerma, personal honour comes with a sense of responsibility.

Yerma’s husband’s notion of honour is much simpler and is in tune with the warped understanding of honour Spanish society came to hold. Juan is a man who is not interested in deeper feelings or profound reflection. He accepts gender roles as defined by society, even though he himself is a victim of the same order, and he expects his wife to do the same. He admits: “I am not strong enough for this sort of thing,” (p. 130) and since he does not have the strength to follow the power of nature, he chooses to follow social expectations knowing that “honour is a burden that rests on all,” (p. 130). He believes that his “life is in the fields,” but that his “honour is here [in the house]” (p. 128) because in the honour culture the man’s reputation and social standing comes from his wife’s and female family members’ sexual conduct. “And my honour is yours too,” he tells his wife (p. 128). But since she perceives the idea of honour differently and goes out to look

for improvement to her life, her husband has to revert to the Spanish tradition of enclosure captured in the popular saying: “la mujer casada, pierna quebrada y en casa,” or, as he says: “The sheep in the fold and women at home” (p. 128).

Given this insulting grouping with the sheep, Yerma should reject the honour culture. Yet, as she looks for fertility and love, she holds onto the ideal of honour. She tells Juan: “You and your people imagine you’re the only ones who look out for honor” (p. 142). Similarly, when people begin to rumour that she is looking for a lover, Yerma tells her friend Maria: “Like all people who don’t have clear consciences.... They don’t know that even if I should like another man, **to those of my kind, honour comes first**” (p. 133, emphasis mine). When Juan offers that she bring one of her brother’s children, adaption is not an option for Yerma who says: “I don’t want to take care of somebody else’s children. I think my arms would freeze from holding them” (p. 129). The reason why Yerma does not accept Juan’s practical solution is that she wants a child, which would be a product of her and Juan’s love. “I’m looking for you,” she tells her husband at another occasion. “I’m looking for you. It’s you I look for day and night without finding a shade where to draw breath. It’s your blood and help I want” (p. 142). But Juan does not have the sexual interest and virility so important for the Roman notion of honour, leaving his wife frustrated because “the body - cursed be the body! - does not respond” (p. 143).

Given that “the body does not respond” because her husband thinks only about work and acquisition of land and sheep, Yerma has other options which she does not take because, as she says, “to those of her kind honour [and fidelity] comes first.” She recalls the time when Victor, “a husky boy,” took her by the waist to leap a ditch when she was fourteen years old. “I started shaking so hard my teeth chattered” (p. 113) she tells the old women. She still finds that he has a “vibrant voice.” “It’s like a stream of water that fills your mouth,” she tells him (p. 117). The water in his mouth could quench some of her thirst, but Lorca, who was not a moralist, does not choose love over honour that easily despite the fact that such preference is favoured in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to an opportunity to experience love, Yerma also has a chance to have many children with the Old Woman’s son who comes from a house where “there’ll still be the odor of cradles” (p. 150), but Yerma angrily responds to the old woman: “Do

you imagine I could know another man? Where would that leave my honour?... On the road I've started, I'll stay" (p. 151), she insists. Having children for children's sake is not an answer for Yerma. Consequently, when the Old Woman who reminds her that "When one's thirsty, one's grateful for water" Yerma responds that she is "like a dry field where a thousand pairs of oxen plow, and you offer me a little glass of well water. Mine is a sorrow already beyond the flesh" (p. 151). When she finds her husband, she strangles him in a gesture of fatal resignation: "I'll sleep without startling myself awake, anxious to see if I feel in my blood another new blood. My body dry forever!" (p. 153).

Yerma sees her infertility in terms of lack of water for a dry earth presenting her tragedy more as an outcome of cosmic force than of social limitation and controlling, although they too are evident. She is "a dry field," as she says, because her husband does not show the virility so cherished in the Roman (and Spanish macho) honour culture. Examined from the point of view of power relations, in the honour culture a woman is controlled by a man. But viewed from a humanistic point of view, the man is to take care of and protect the women in his family. The debate whether the honour culture is designed to protect or to control women has yet to be fully debated, but in Yerma's eyes her husband does not do what nature and society say he should do. Given that she holds onto the classical ideal of honour and fidelity, she refuses to take advantage of someone else's fertility and make Juan a cuckolded husband. In her frustration she kills him to end her own suffering. Her decisions are difficult to understand for the modern audience, yet the character appeals to people and the play has enjoyed immense popularity. This may be because subconsciously the audience identifies with Yerma and unknowingly still holds ideals of the honour society. James Bowman says: "the basic honor of the savage - brevity in men, chastity for women - is still recognizable beneath the surfaces of the popular culture that has done so much to efface it. If you doubt it, try calling a man a wimp or a woman a slut" (p. 5).

Human position as part of the natural order is not as prominently dramatized in *Yerma* as it is in *Blood Wedding*. If Yerma is described as dry earth, in *Blood Wedding* the Beggar Woman describes Leonardo (Lion) and the Groom as "two torrents" of water that became "two dead men in the night's splendor" (p. 93). In her description of herself, the Bride refers to both cosmic forces and social ones. When she returns to her mother-in-laws house after the Groom loses "his good

name” (p. 96) in order to be killed and thus complete the honour killing, she returns also to proclaim her love for the two men: “I came here so she can kill me and they can take me away with them [the two dead men],” but more importantly, like Yerma, she wants her mother-in-law’s and her neighbours to know she is *casta* or “clean,” as she says. “I may be crazy but they can bury me without a single man ever having seen himself in the whiteness of my breasts” (p. 96). But, regardless of her self-control and preservation of her virginity, and her aspiration to follow what is socially expected of her, she says to her mother-in-law and her neighbours:

I was a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside out, and your son was a little bit of water from which I hoped for children, land, health; but the other one [the man she ran away with] was a dark river, choked with brush that brought near me the undertone of its rushes and its whispered song.... Your son was my destiny and I have not betrayed him, but the other one’s arm dragged me along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always –even if I were an old woman and all your son’s sons held me by the hair. (p. 96)

The Groom in *Blood Wedding* is for the Bride what the Old Woman’s son would have been for Yerma: “a little bit of water” unable to quench her enormous sexual thirst. It is evident throughout the play that cosmic forces and social order are incongruous. Leonardo sums it up in the following poetic fashion:

But I was riding a horse
And the horse went straight to your door.
And the silver pins of your wedding
Turned by red blood black.
Oh, it isn’t my fault’
The fault is the earth’s’
And this fragrance that you exhale
From your breasts and your braids.

The play begins with the Mother's plea to end the honour killings: "Cursed be all knives, and the scoundrel who invented them...Everything that can slice a man's body. A handsome man, full of young life, who goes out to the vineyards or to his own olive groves and then does not come back" (p. 34). The play also ends with the mother's grief and reiteration that honour killing is senselessness. The voices of the young girls at the end and the voice of the Beggar Woman and Woodcutters who function as the chorus in the Greek drama also emphasise the brevity of human life and the meaninglessness of killing: "At four o'clock born, at ten o'clock dead" (p. 91), "Bodies stretched stiffly in ivory sheets!" (p. 92) and "Two men at the horse's feet" (p. 93). The mother describes her dead son as "an armful of shrivelled flowers... a fading voice beyond the mountains now" (p. 94). The honour killing has taken her last son away, her husband and her older son already killed by Leonardo's family in a previous male honour killing. Hence, it is understandable why she wants the honour killing to stop. But, at the same time, she also contributes to it by giving importance to social esteem. When the Bride runs away the Mother is the most vocal that "the hour of blood has come again. Two groups! You with yours and I with mine. After them! After them!" (p. 78). The importance of identity as social esteem and honour is evident not only in the Mother's call to regain the family honour by going after the two who had dishonoured her son and her family, but also in her concern about how she will be perceived with her loss. As she is told that her neighbours are coming, she stops her mourning "because the neighbour women will come and I don't want them to see me so poor. So poor! A woman without even one son to hold to her lips" (p. 95).

The Mother's feeling of personal honour and dignity, even at the moment of the deepest tragedy, gives her and individuals like her the strength to go on living. In *Roman Honour: The Fire in the Bones* Carlin Barton shows that not only in the context of the Romans' society, but also in the Jewish Holocaust in Europe and the pre-Civil Rights struggles in the United States, what kept the peoples' spirits alive even during the darkest moments was the idea and the feeling of honour. In García Márquez's short novel *No one Writes to the Colonel* the impoverished, hungry old wife tells her husband that he cannot live on ideals, that "you cannot eat honour," to which the wise old man replies: "You cannot eat honour, but it nurtures you." Hence, even if the culture of honour is viewed as negative because of the numerous examples of honour killing in the worldwide media, the honour culture has its positive characteristics and should not be simplified.

In *Honor: A History*, James Bowman explains that culture of honour dominated European culture from its beginning but it started to be viewed with some skepticism in the nineteenth century because of honour killing in duels and because of the notion that “might is right.” Philosophers such as Schopenhauer, or Mandeville before him, advanced the view that honor is nothing but a crude instrument of social control. The Romantic movement also gave precedence to the heart over social expectation of all kinds. Yet, the real decline and even fall of the Western Honour culture came between 1914 and 1975, Bowman indicates. If in the First World War a machine gun could wipe out a whole battalion of men in three minutes, where then was the relevance of the old concepts of heroism, glory and fair play between gentlemen? The psychiatric institutions of the First World War laid the foundation for the psychiatric institutions full of war veterans of Vietnam, the Gulf and other modern wars. Hollywood also stopped showing heroes as knight in shining armor as they became more like Rhett Butler in *Gone With the Wind* (1939) or the American bar owner Rick in *Casablanca* (1943) who is proud of having run guns to Ethiopia and fought against fascism in Spain but only for the profit in it. Whatever idealism he may harbour, Rick keeps it well out of sight, Bowman points out. The biggest changes regarding the honour culture came in the United States in the 1960s. Living in the affluent society, the youth of the Woodstock generation experienced sexual liberation not only themselves, but came home to find their parents divorced. With the legalization of abortion in the Roe v. Wade decision of the Supreme Court in the 1973, and with the beginning of the widespread use of the contraceptive pill, the honour culture became antiquated because it was no longer needed to control female sexuality and unwanted birth. Feminism also attacked “the ideology of the (power) holding group which struggles to define, enlarge and protect its patrimony in a competitive arena,” as Schneider (1971) says. Women started to object to being associated with “immense negative power because any misbehavior on their part can bring shame and dishonor to the male members of a whole community, lineage or family,” Kandiyoti, explains (1987).

Lorca’s plays are modern plays which portray rural setting and honour culture to show the oppression and the control individuals suffer when they do not follow the normative gender roles. If his plays discuss only the antiquated Spanish culture, why are they so popular in New York and London today? The honour culture is complex and deeply rooted. Honour killing is a detestable phenomenon *The Blood Wedding* shows but as the Mother’s example shows, it is difficult to

eradicate. Fidelity and other ideals of honour culture, such as the ideal of sexual potency and fertility, are important concepts for which Yerma is willing to kill her husband when he undermines them. Her example, the case when a woman kills a man in an honour situation, is not common. However, the situation in *Bernarda Alba*, where women actively participate in honour killing with their gossip and jealousy as the main motivation, is similar to situations in modern TV series where women show similar behavior. Social orders are oppressive, as the honour culture is, but Garcia Lorca suggests that human nature and cosmic powers are equally responsible for negative practices such as honour killing.



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Screening Honor Killings in Western European Countries

Flavia Laviosa

Introduction

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) defines honor killings as crimes committed against women who are rape victims, suspected or accused of having premarital sex, or women thought to have committed adultery. In societies in which honor killings are practiced, families attach their moral reputation to their female members and in particular to the women's bodies, so honor and its outcome shame are instruments used by the men to monitor women's sexuality and freedom of movement. In this context, the building block of social relations is the collective entity, family or tribe, as opposed to the individual. Consequently, shame and modesty codes embody the entire group, not just the individual who is perceived to have violated the honor code.

Honor killings cross socio-economic classes and education boundaries, and are part of cultural practice, rather than of specific religious beliefs. While there is a general association of these crimes with Muslim-majority societies in the Arab world, or within Muslim immigrant communities in North America and Europe, there is in fact widespread incidence of such killings among Christian-majority groups in Latin America and South-East Europe, among Hindu and Sikh communities in India, and in several African nations. In these societies, the male relatives of the woman in question convene a family council to decide her punishment and designate the male family member who will kill her. As Diane King states, the explanation for such decisions lies in the belief that

without the murder, the lineage that the victim and perpetrator share would suffer irreparable harm to its reputation. With the murder, this wrong is righted and the lineage restored to a place of respect in the community. (D. King, p. 318)

Furthermore, perpetrators rely on the leniency of their countries' legal systems towards honor killings, abusing this practice to their advantage.

A relatively recent phenomenon associated with honor killings is the widespread practice of honor suicides. Traditionally, a close relative of a dishonored girl, usually a brother under the age of eighteen, would carry out the death sentence and receive a short prison sentence because of his young age. Since 2006, Turkey for example has reformed its penal code to ensure tighter punishment with life sentences for honor killings, regardless of the killer's age. However, in response to these legal changes new methods have been developed: some families, trying to spare their sons from the recently enforced harsher punishments associated with murdering their sisters, order their daughters to kill themselves, and disguise their deaths as suicides (D. Bilefsky). Turkish journalist Ayşe Önal argues that countries in the Middle East and neighboring regions cannot end the practice of women's killings through law-centered policies alone, because these crimes are imbedded in the socio-cultural tapestry of the communities. In fact, the occurrence of this suicide epidemic among young women suggests that other, more culturally-sensitive intervention strategies are needed (A. Önal, p. 253).

The patriarchal notion of honor has been re-introduced into Western societies through transnational migration and the import of family structures and belief systems which are incompatible with the values of gender equality, secularism and individual self-determination promoted in multi-religious and multi-cultural Western democratic nations. When families migrate to new countries, they also bring with them their traditional forms of punishment inflicted on women who are deemed to have stained their family's reputation. These codes and practices inevitably cause intercultural and intergenerational clashes when young women, born and raised in the host country and society, aspire to education and a career, and want the freedom to socialize with other groups and make their own choice of partner. According to Arjun Appadurai, this tension stems from the spatio-temporal fracture experienced by diasporic patriarchal families, which preserve the reputation of their men and entire family by policing their women's honorable sexual behavior. Appadurai argues that diasporic communities' norms become deterritorialized, consequently rituals, such as honor killings, are strategies to <<embody locality>> (A. Appadurai, p. 179) and adhere to the culture of origin.

Another recurrent phenomenon widely reported in the news is the disappearance of teenage girls who fail to return from trips to their countries of origin. It is suspected that they are lured to these communities, then forced to marry men chosen by their families. If they refuse, they are subjected initially to death threats and ultimately to murder (J. Smith). Honor killings pose new problems for the criminal justice system in many Western nations, because these crimes are often disguised as unreported disappearances, suicides or accidents, and are often performed in the families' home countries or carried out by hired killers.

While honor killings inevitably draw human rights activists' attention to the protection of women's lives, Önal also addresses the phenomenon from the men's perspective. She writes extensively on the high cost that men pay in order to preserve honor within their groups. Perpetrators of the killings are themselves victims of social beliefs and cultural traditions as their families put the burden of the murder onto them. Mojab (cited in King, p. 320) writes, <<Honor killing is a tragedy in which fathers and brothers kill their most beloved, their daughters and sisters [...] Here, affection and brutality coexist in conflict and unity>>. Önal adds that <<honor killings cause a double tragedy for families. The girls lie in the cemetery while the boys or men are thrown into prison>> (Önal, p. 255). On the other hand, if a man chooses not to kill, he cannot continue a normal life and is belittled and humiliated by his community.

Cinematic Representations of Honor Killings in Diasporic Societies

Films that report unambiguous truths about the practice of honor killings are now reaching audiences worldwide. International directors are particularly interested in exploring the patriarchal notion of honor as it permeates contemporary Western societies. Their films deal with issues surrounding multiculturalism and women's rights in Europe and North America. The relationship between family honor and female sexual behavior in the context of contemporary diasporic communities is portrayed in an increasing number of mainstream and independent films exploring the occurrence of honor killings in Western countries. This production now includes documentaries, feature films, a Bollywood production, and journalistic reportage.

The documentary *Honor Killings* (in production) by singer and human rights activist Deeyah.ⁱ Set in London, the film is about a young British-Kurdish woman who was murdered in 2006. She was married at the age of 16 to a man who was 10 years her senior and who repeatedly beat and raped her. She left her husband and fell in love with another man, but she was killed by her family for bringing shame on them.

The thriller *Fortunate Sons* (in production)ⁱⁱ by American director Danielle Lurieⁱⁱⁱ is the long feature version of Lurie's earlier short *In the Morning* (2004). *Fortunate Sons* is loosely inspired by the murder of Kadriye Demirel in Turkey, in 2003, a case that received considerable international attention (D. Filkins). She was six-months-pregnant when she was stabbed and then beaten to death by her older brother. She had been raped by a cousin, and when the family tried to force the cousin to marry her, he refused. She was killed by her brother Ahmet (F. Laviosa, pp. 194-195). Set in London, *Fortunate Sons* follows a first generation Turkish teenager whose life gets turned upside down when he is ordered to kill his twin sister after she has dishonored the family by being the victim of a rape, which leaves her pregnant.

Canadian filmmaker Shelley Saywell^{iv} directed *Crimes of Honour* (1999), a documentary filmed in Jordan and in the West Bank, about the tragic lives of three Jordanian women, all murdered by their own family members (F. Laviosa, pp. 191-194). In 2010, Saywell directed a second documentary, *In the Name of the Family*, about cases of women killed in North America. The film documents several dramatic stories. Aqsa Parvez, a 16-year-old girl living in Toronto, was strangled to death on December 10, 2007. Her father and brother are charged with first-degree murder. Three weeks later, Amina and Sarah Said, teenage sisters were shot to death in Dallas; their father fled the country and is still wanted for murder. Six months later, Fanzia, a 19-year-old college student was stabbed eleven times by her brother in Rochester NY. She survived the attack, while he was convicted and is now in jail. *In the Name of the Family* is an alarming portrayal of honor killings in the Western world through the testimonies of friends and families of the victims who explain the reasons that led to these tragedies. Schoolgirls talk about living in constant fear and under the threat to be killed by their own family. The documentary also recognizes the work of

Muslim women's organizations that help girls at risk, and the educational effort of an imam teaching that Islam condones no form of violence.

Another dramatic documentary is *Murder in the Family: Honor Killings in America* (2008) by Fox News, which gathers several cases of honor killings against young women in North America. When she was 19, Sandeela Kanwal traveled from America to Pakistan for an arranged marriage to a cousin twenty years older than her. After her marriage, Kanwal lived in the United States apart from her husband, who remained in Pakistan. She was reunited with him in April 2009 at her family home in Atlanta, but her husband moved to Chicago days later, leaving her alone once again. On July 1, Sandeela filed for divorce, a decision that her father, Chaudhry Rashid, a 52-year-old immigrant from Pakistan, would not allow. Investigators say that, after an argument on the night of July 5, he strangled Kanwal with a bungee cord. He could not accept the disgrace a divorce would bring on his family. Another dramatic story is about 50-year-old Yaser Abdel Said who in 2008 killed his teenage daughters Sarah and Amina for dating boys against his will. A third story is about Zein Isa, a Palestinian terrorist living in Saint Louis, who was convicted of killing his daughter Palestina (Tina) in 1989. Investigators say he could not accept that she had a black boyfriend, went to a school dance, and got a job at Wendy's. Tina's mother held her down as Isa plunged a 9-inch knife into their daughter's chest. The last story is about Waheed Mohammad, a 22-year-old immigrant to Canada from Afghanistan, who thought that his sister was not a good Muslim. In 2009, he stabbed her multiple times, but she survived and spoke to FOX News.

The Bollywood production *Rabba Maph Kare /Honor Killings-God Forgive Us^v* (2010) by British-born Indian director Avtar Bhogal^{vi} is set in London and the Punjab. In spite of the heavy subject matter, as a Bollywood-style film the story is interspersed with sparkling song and dance routines. The film spans three generations. Firstly, there is the story of an affluent Sikh businessman who is jailed for murdering his daughter after she fell in love with a Muslim man. The second story unfolds when his grandson also begins a secret relationship with a Muslim woman; it leaves her father racked by indecision, as he considers whether he too must kill to protect his family's honor. The third is a story of three friends an Englishman, a Sardar, and a Pathan. They live in the UK, are secular, and they celebrate each other's festivals. However, during minor discussions between the

Pathan and the Sardar, it is the Englishman who soothes the argument. On the occasion of the Englishman's daughter marriage in the UK, Sardar's son Sunny, who has arrived from Punjab to study, meets Sameera, Pathan's daughter. They meet again in college and their friendship develops into a romance. Their parents object their relationship, but they are confident that their parents, being liberal and friends, will not be against their marriage. Unfortunately, the tension builds as the love story again crosses the religious divide. Friendship between the Sardar and the Pathan turns into hate and they do not listen to their English friend's advice regarding a solution to the situation.

Set in modern Birmingham, the feature film *Land Gold Women*^{vii} (2009) by Indian director Avantika Hari^{viii} revolves around a small British Asian family caught between tradition and modern life in contemporary England. Nazir Ali Khan, a 45-year-old professor of History at a University in Birmingham, emigrated from India in the 1980s. He made Birmingham his home with his wife Rizwana and their two children, Saira, 17 and Asif, 14. Saira is a senior in high school, excited at the prospect of going to university to pursue her studies in Literature. She also hopes that this will give her more time to spend with British boyfriend David. At this critical juncture in his daughter's life, Nazir is increasingly preoccupied and conflicted at the thought of seeing Saira entering the outside world. His fears are further strengthened by the arrival of his older brother Riyaz from India. A traditional man, Riyaz arrives with an arranged marriage offer in India. Saira refuses the marriage proposal. When the family finds out about her secret relationship with David, Nazir is confronted with the dilemma of sacrificing her daughter for her moral misconduct or the prospect of being ostracized by his family. The painful decision to suppress Saira and save the family's honor is inevitable.

The documentary *Two Sides of the Moon*^{ix} (2010) by American filmmaker David Gould^x is set in Berlin, and the feature film *Die Fremde/When We Leave*^{xi} (2010) by Austrian director Feo Aladag^{xii} is set in Turkey and Berlin. Both report on the murder of Hatun Sürücü. *Two Sides of the Moon* is the poetic title of the documentary about the case of Hatun Sürücü, a young Turkish-German woman who was killed by her youngest brother, Ayan, in Berlin in 2005. The film denounces the practice of honor killings in contemporary Germany.

Gould thoroughly explores the patriarchal notion of honor as it permeates modern Western nations. The film includes interviews with spiritual leaders and Nobel Peace Prize winners His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso and Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, who comment on the philosophical and moral issues at stake. Experts such as social anthropologist Unni Wikan,^{xiii} and cultural and social anthropologist Werner Schiffauer^{xiv} put the topic into cultural and historical context. Honor crimes attorney Seyran Ates,^{xv} and human rights activist Taina Bien-Aimé^{xvi} address the topic from a social justice perspective. These authorities contribute to the film by discussing the problematic and unresolved coexistence of culturally diverse and parallel worlds. They examine the complex picture of psychological and sociological forms of cultural marginalization and discrimination as experienced by Turkish migrants in German urban contexts, as well as the inability of these groups to reconcile the two cultures.

Although no members of the Sürücü family, nor any of Hatun's closest friends, are interviewed, the audience is constantly in close connection with all of them. The film retells the compelling story of the struggle for social and cultural integration in Western communities, while maintaining a respectful attitude to Hatun's murder by refraining from showing graphic images or playing up the event. The film avoids any vampire-like exploitation of the tragedy, and instead develops a more participatory and painfully intimate tone. It is an expression of human rights activism, giving voice to the marginalized as it chronicles the tragedy of Hatun and her entire family.

Gould interprets the various realities of present-day Germany through a new critically perceptive lens. He uses realness as a narrative strategy, and experiments with documentary reconstruction. Hatun's vibrant personality, ambitious goals, courageous spirit and 'defiant' life choices were all expressions of her desire to assert personal aspirations and pursue happiness and independence. Her life is presented through a complex collage of visually engaging images and memories. The film combines private family videos and photographs, newsreel footage, journalistic reportages, television programs, and other media and texts, while using new aesthetic devices and daring to push the boundaries of canonical documentary making.

The film is chronologically linear, with a narrative that is emotionally expressive and associative, thus transcending facts and spaces as it recomposes the broken pieces of the tragedy. The film is constructed around photo and film images of Hatun, her son, family, partner and coworkers that span emotional time and geographical space. The film's evocative title captures several crucial aspects of the story. As Gould explains, the two sides of the moon refer to the two cultures, Turkish and German, coexisting in a climate of multi-racial tension and irreconcilable intercultural disjuncture. <<In Hatun's story, I saw a woman caught between two cultures>>, Gould said. <<Ironically, had she broken free from her family, I believe she would have lived. Had she not questioned her family and culture, she likely would have been kept safe – though oppressed. It was having a foot in both worlds that sealed her fate>> (*The Gazette*).

The more poetic reference is elegantly stated in the film with the attempt to bring together brother and sister. Hatun's second name, Aynur, means 'moon beam'. In Turkish 'ay' (moon) and 'nur' (light), means either simply moonlight, or luminous and beautiful like the moon. Her younger brother's name, Ayan, means king of the moon. 'Ayan' however, does not seem to originate from 'ay' (moon), but rather it means 'apparent' or 'clear.' There is another 'āyan', an older word used in the Ottoman Empire, which refers to notable people in a community, like leaders or representatives. So Ayan means clear, luminous leader, poetically rendered as 'king of the moon'.

During the making of this film, Gould made three promises to those who (at often great cost) chose to help and trust him: he will not sell the film, but rather share Hatun's story freely; he will not allow the film to be shown in Berlin. As a result of the publicity that Hatun's case generated, many of her friends have become unwanted public figures. They now live very cautious lives, and Gould does not want the film to add to that attention or re-open painful memories; and he will do everything he can to see that this effort produces 'something good for the world'.^{xvii}

Conclusion

Honor killings have garnered increased international cinema and media attention in recent years. The dramatic confluence of social and cultural events that has made these crimes a worldwide crisis, crossing cultures, religions and nations, is portrayed in films which focus on this

prevalent, rarely denounced, and leniently punished practice. The horror and injustice of honor killings have surfaced strongly within the human rights framework in the past ten years, alerting new filmmakers globally about this pressing issue. International directors of feature, documentary and short films actively denounce honor killings, and play a major role in raising public awareness of the victims and perpetrators. They portray a kaleidoscope of people, whose customs and values deny women the right to free choice and mobility. Films like those examined in this article bear the historical responsibility of documenting death in the wide-open space of Western urban areas and portray the socio-ethnic mourning of European and North American cities. These films examine the socio-cultural causes of honor killings and offer a gripping transnational and transcultural representation of this criminal practice.



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i Deeyah is a Norwegian singer, music producer, composer, film maker and human rights activist of Punjabi/Pashtun descent. Since 2006, Deeyah completely stopped performing as a singer, instead turning her focus to producing and composing music. Deeyah has been active in raising awareness of honor killings for several years. In 2011, she established AVA Projects a registered non-profit public charity, working to reduce the marginalization of women and young people of South Asian and Middle Eastern descent. AVA means Voice in Farsi. Deeyah is also the founder of digital media initiatives Sisterhood, Memini, and I Have A Voice. Launched in February 2012, Deeyah and Joanne Payton of Cardiff University founded Honour Based Violence Awareness network (HBVA), an international multimedia digital resource centre working to advance understanding and awareness through research, training and information.

ii The director will start the shooting of the film in fall 2012. Email communication with Lurie on June 5, 2012.

iii Writer and director Danielle Lurie's debut short film, *In the Morning*, premiered at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, and won nine film festivals to date including Best Narrative Short at the Oscar qualifying Nashville Film Festival. In November 2005, *In the Morning* was invited to screen before the U.S. Congress at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus on Honor Killings, and later screened before UNIFEM. Right after *In the Morning*, Lurie made the short impromptu documentary *81-Year-Old Sweethearts*. Lurie has co-directed a documentary in Uganda where she lived in an IDP (Internally Displaced People) Camp and has directed a documentary following Sheryl Crows Global Warming tour through the south. On the narrative side, Danielle has written screenplay adaptations of Jamaica Kincaid's novel, *Lucy*, as well as an excerpt of Nicholas Kristof's best selling book, *Half the Sky*, directed by Marisa Tomei and Lisa Leoni, for a PBS series. Lurie is also adapting another Nicholas Kristof NY Times article into a full-length screenplay that she will direct titled *Usha*, set in the slums of India. She is also in development on a film about wrongful imprisonment.

iv Shelley Saywell is a Canadian documentary filmmaker whose films focus on social and political issues. She has won numerous international awards including an Emmy for Outstanding Investigative Journalism and has been short-listed for the Academy Awards. In Canada, her work has garnered three Hot Docs and three Gemini Awards. Saywell has personally been honored with UNESCO's Gandhi Silver Medal for promoting the culture of peace. She has directed the documentaries *Devil's Bargain: A Journey into the Small Arms Trade* (2008); *Martyr Street* (2006) focusing on life in Hebron, the West Bank, which won Best Canadian Documentary at Hot Docs 2006; *Hamas, Behind the Mask* (2005); *Angry Girls* (2004); *Generation of Hate and Generation X-Saddam* (2003); *Streetnurse* (2002); *A Child's Century of War* (2001); *Out of the Fire* (2000); *Crimes of Honour* (1999); *Legacy of Terror: the Bombing of Air India* (1998); *Kim's Story: The Road from Vietnam* (1997); *Rape: A Crime of War* (1995); *Fire and Water* (1994); *No Man's Land: Women Frontline Journalists* (1993); and *Shahira* (1988). Saywell is also the author of the books *Women in War* (Penguin Books, 1986), and contributing author to *Ourselves Among Others* (St. Martins Press, 1988).

v The film was shot entirely in the UK with active support of the British government. It was covered extensively by BBC and the local press. It was also shown to the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The film, in Hindi/Urdu,

Punjabi and English, will be released in fall 2012.

vi Avtar Bhogal directed the feature films *Dil Ka Doctor* (1995); *Aaj Ki Aurat* (1993); *Haar Jeet* (1990); *Zakhmi Aurat* (1988); and *Ek Hans Ka Joda* (1975).

vii The film is the world's first English language feature to explore the issue of honor killing.

viii Avantika Hari was born in India, brought up in the Middle East and educated in the US and UK. Hari won the Commonwealth Vision Award presented by HRH Prince Edward in 2006 for her short film *Hat Day*.

ix The film premiered at the 2011 Rhode Island International Film Festival, and won an Honorable Mention for Best Documentary Short.

x David Gould is an Associate Director for Student Development in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, and a Lecturer in the Health and Human Physiology Department, at the University of Iowa. As a filmmaker, Gould's credits include *Freestyle: The Victories of Dan Gable* and *The Checker King*. These films premiered on HBO Signature and HBO2 respectively. Among his awards, Gould has received a CINE Golden Eagle and a Regional Emmy for Outstanding Achievement. Gould is currently producing the feature film *Diane's Room*, based on the life of legendary wrestler Dan Gable.

xi The film won Best Narrative Feature at the 9th Tribeca Film Festival, Best Film at the 37th Ghent Film Festival in Belgium, the European Parliament's Lux Prize, and was selected as the German entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rd Academy Awards, but it didn't make the final shortlist.

xii Austrian director Feo Aladag began her film career as an actress, completing her training in London and Vienna from 1990-1995. While studying acting she also completed a masters in Psychology and Journalism, continuing on to receive her PhD in 2000. She acted in numerous film and television productions while attending master-classes and directing seminars at the European Film Academy and the German Film and Television Academy. During this time she also maintained a career as a successful scriptwriter and commercial film director, directing various spots for Amnesty International and writing scripts for the German television series *Tatort*.

xiii Unni Wikan is professor of social anthropology at the University of Oslo, Norway. She has worked as a consultant to UNICEF and the World Food Program in Bhutan from 1989 to 1994, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation in Palestine in 1999, and United Nations Development Program in Yemen (2004). Her most recent publications are *In Honor of Fadime: Murder and Shame* (University of Chicago Press, 2008); and *Resonance: Beyond the Words* (University of Chicago Press, 2012).

XIV Werner Schiffauer is Professor of Cultural and Social Anthropology, Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences, European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder), Germany.

xv Seyran Ateş is a German lawyer and Muslim feminist born in Turkey of Kurdish descent. Her family moved to Germany when she was six years old. She studied law at the Free University of Berlin and has practiced law since 1997, specializing in criminal law and family law.

xvi Taina Bien-Aimé is the Executive Director of Equality Now, an international human rights organization that works for the protection of the rights of women and girls. Founded in 1992, issues of concern to Equality Now include rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, reproductive rights, trafficking in women, and other forms of violence and discrimination that result in the degradation, enslavement, injury and death of women and girls every day.

xvii Statement by David Gould written in a letter sent to the author of this article on June 2, 2011.



Authors

Anna Cafaro is Visiting Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at Bard College, NY. She is the author of *L'improvvisazione dell'attore nel Teatro di Ricerca Contemporaneo* (Longo, Ravenna 2009) and other articles on Cinema and Theater. Her research interests include Human Rights in Cinema and Theater, Migration Literature, Chaos Theory in Theater and the application of science to art.

Flavia Laviosa is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Italian Studies and in the Cinema and Media Studies Program at Wellesley. Her principal area of research is Italian cinema and she has published extensively on several contemporary filmmakers. She has edited the volume *Visions of Struggle in Women's Filmmaking in the Mediterranean* (Palgrave Macmillan 2010) and she is the founder and editor of the *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies*, published by Intellect.

Gordana Yovanovich is Professor of Hispanic Studies at the University of Guelph, Canada. She is the author of *Julio Cortázar's Character Mosaic* and of *Play and the Picaresque*. She is the editor of *The New World Order* and of *Latin American Identities after 1980*. She has also published numerous articles on variety of topics in Hispanic literature.

