

*FULVIO TOMIZZA'S UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS:  
IDENTITY, GUILT AND BETRAYAL*

and

*DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF HIS LITERARY CHARACTERS*

by

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and

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And approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### FULVIO TOMIZZA'S IDENTITY AND HIS UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS: DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF HIS LITERARY CHARACTER

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This study examines the “self- identity” of the Triestino-Istrian writer, Fulvio Tomizza, and it discusses the nexus nation-language identity. Tomizza’s claim of ‘non-identity’ with a nation is analyzed, as well as his recurrent themes of betrayal, guilt, shame and loneliness in his mostly autobiographical literary works. My research concentrated on the developmental stages of his character, Stefano Marcovich (Tomizza’s alter ego), using the psychosocial and psychological approaches of Erik Erikson’s theory on developmental life-cycle stages and identity crises. This study claims that the author’s difficulty of national identification stems not only from his cultural environment and the turbulent socio-political and historical events, that took place in the Venezia-Giulia region, but also from the development of his own personal psyche.

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KEEP YOUR DREAMS ALIVE. UNDERSTAND TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING  
REQUIRES FAITH AND BELIEF IN YOURSELF, VISION, HARD WORK,  
DETERMINATION, AND DEDICATION. REMEMBER ALL THINGS ARE  
POSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE. (Gail Devers)

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## INTRODUCTION

### Geographical and Historical Background

Becoming aware of the background information that affects writers helps the reader to interpret and appreciate the text more effectively. Places and locations are mapped throughout Fulvio Tomizza's writings in terms of social and historical representations. Thus, it is necessary to become familiar with Tomizza's geographical coordinates and historical events that shaped his writing.

Since ancient times humans have tried to make sense of the world around them by mapping it. In the northeastern corner of the 'Mare Adriaticum', a land protrusion in the shape of a triangle, now called Istra, is depicted on maps from Ptolemy's Geography, to Tabula Rogeriana to the Mappaemundi<sup>1</sup> (Mapping the World 24, 35).

Several past civilizations left a mark on the heart-shaped Istrian peninsula in the Adriatic Sea on the northeastern border of today's Italy. The name Istria, legend has it, comes from the name of the Danube's tributary called Istro and its settlers were called Histri. Its remote history goes back to Paleolithic times. The stone piles, known as 'castellieri', of the legendary city of Nesazio are still visible today.<sup>2</sup> In this area remnants of sculptures are attributed to Greek settlers. Later, Illyrian, Liburnian and Istri tribes populated this region. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. the Romans conquered it and named it Regio X. Emperor Diocletian, later proclaimed it the province of Venetia et Histria. For

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Idrisi compiled the so called "Book of Roger", for the Norman king of Sicily, from Ptolemy's information from travelers and merchants in 1154. One of the 'mappaemundi' is a road map (circa 335) of Rome and its empire copied in a 12<sup>th</sup> century manuscript called the 'Peutinger Road Map'

<sup>2</sup> The archeological excavations at Nesazio – Nesactium – Vizace (Croatian) in south eastern coast of Istria about 10-11 km from the city of Pula uncovered "the historical reality of the legend about the glorious past of the Istrian town. The settlement of Histri dates to pre-Roman inhabitants". See Miroslav Bertosa, Robert Matijasic, et al. *Pula 3000*. Pula: Libar od Grozda, 1997 and Antonio Puschi. *La necropolis preromana di Nesazio* in "Atti e memorie della Società istriana di archeologia e storia patria", Vol. 22, Pola 1905, pp. 227-236.



six centuries Istria enjoyed a prosperous period of Roman life, customs and language. Its cities witnessed the grand Roman architecture of monuments, amphitheaters, basilicas, public baths, etc. Today the Arena in Pola (Pula, Croatia) similar to the Coliseum in Rome and the Arena in Verona, attests to the splendor of the Roman era.

In the book, *L'Esodo*, documenting the political downfall of this region and the tragic occupation that followed the takeover of the Yugoslav Communist regime after World War II, Bruna Tamaro states: “Le pietre parlano e non sanno mentire....Le pietre hanno e avranno sempre nei secoli una voce sola: ‘Italia’” (Flaminio P. Rocchi 62, 67). It may be sentimental and a doleful remembrance for an exile, but historical traces of the belonging to a rich civilization are cast in stone.

The Roman rule was followed by the Republic of Venice. The coastal cities in Istria, had their ‘padrone veneziano’ and they still bear the Venetian architectural and sculptural signs, such as the Venetian winged lion. Paintings by Tintoretto, Vivarini and other Venetian painters can be seen in many churches throughout the area while the Venetian dialect is still spoken today especially by the older generation. As Venetian government administered the region, the neighboring Slavic people were often invited to settle on Istrian fertile land. These new settlers, who first worked as ‘coloni’ (sharecroppers), later acquired their own land in the central part of the peninsula. These newcomers worked and lived peacefully along with the earlier population who settled mostly in the coastal cities. The Slavic people did bring their customs, culture and their Croatian dialect called, ‘Čakavski’ (Chakavski).<sup>3</sup> Their customs and their language mixed

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<sup>3</sup> There are many different variations of Croatian dialects. However, three dialects are predominant. The dialects do not necessarily follow a state line, but roughly the Chakavian dialect is spoken in the south-eastern part of Croatia and the question ‘Ča?’ (Cha?) corresponds to ‘what?’ The Kaikavian dialect is spoken in the north and northeastern part and the question ‘Kaj?’ corresponds to ‘What?’. The Shtokavian dialect embraces Dalmatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and the ‘Što?’ (Shto?) corresponds to ‘What?’. Standard language, like in Italy, is used by professionals, on TV, in newspapers and books.

with those of the Italian population especially through intermarriages and local commerce.

Upon the fall of the Republic of Venezia, Napoleon Bonaparte signed a treaty at Campoformio in 1797 and ceded the region of Venezia Giulia to the then great Austro-Hungarian Empire. This brought German people to settle in Istria and soon names such as Ostroman, Eisenbichler, Rotensteiner mixed with Petrović, Kozulić, Martinolić and Rossi, Milani, Bossi or hyphenated names such as Oluić-Deghenghi. Over the following centuries an array of genetically and linguistically different people sprang over this territory. Mostly due to the tolerant policy of the Austro-Hungarian administration, people were able to choose in which language to educate their children. Latin, however, remained the language of the church, Italian was used for administrative documents, while schools in Italian, Slavic and German were opened throughout Istria and the Quarner Islands.

The end of the ‘golden age’ for Istria (this reasonable tolerant, coexisting and peaceful region of farmers and coastal maritime cities) came at the beginning of World War I. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas such as the principle of nationality and patriotism incited through liberal movements soon degenerated into nationalism, which inflamed masses, provoked violence and gave rise to different regimes. The idea of Italia ‘irredenta’ was very much felt in the city of Trieste and in Venezia Giulia. The feeling of ‘italianità’<sup>4</sup> became a real connecting tissue, but it also provoked differences and became a degenerative and divisive factor in the population. World War I ended in 1918 and

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<sup>4</sup> “Italianità”, understood as idealization of Italy, was promoted by writers such as Attilio Tamaro, Giulio Gratton, Gianni Stuparich etc. The myth of italianità is examined during the rise of the fascist era by Katia Pizzi. See her “The Myth of Italian Motherland,” Chapter 3.

Trieste, Istria and the Quarner Islands were united with their 'Patria' and remained Italian until 1943.

In her historical book *Nata in Istria*, Anna Maria Mori describes the advent of the Fascist regime in Istria: "Ha rotto un secolare equilibrio di convivenze multietniche, ha chiuso le scuole che non fossero italiane, si è macchiato di violenze intollerabili soprattutto sui territori di confine, e ha italianizzato i cognomi sfidando a sua volta il ridicolo"<sup>5</sup> (95). Not only did Fascism impose italianization to those who did not want it, but as Anna Maria Mori adds: "ha reso più visibili e insopportabili le divisioni tra città e campagna, tra borghesia cittadina italiana e contado spesso slavo, che si adattava, fingendo, al suo ruolo subalterno regalando servizi e sorrisi, ma aspettando in realtà solo il momento della vendetta e della rivincita" (77).

After World War II, the Communist regime became a destructive force for the Istrian population. Its genocide, tortures, atrocities, displacements, refuges, exiles, and suffering of millions of people are well known and documented. Istria was not spared ethnic and cultural cleansing.

There are two specific periods cited for the massacres committed in Istria and Trieste when the Carsic deep holes called 'Foibe' were used to dispose of victims. One period began right after Italy capitulated on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1943 and it lasted until October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1943 when the German Army occupied Istria. The other period went from May 1st to June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945 during the time that Tito's partisans occupied Trieste (Fr. Flaminio Rocchi 77).

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<sup>5</sup> "Si racconta di un signore che di cognome faceva 'Smerdelj' [Translated as Maleodorante and in Croatian considered derogatory] e poi da un giorno all'altro si è ritrovato con un nuovo cognome 'Odorisi'. Il fascismo ha anche cambiato, italianizzando, qualche nome di località" (Mori 95).

Thousands of Istrians (Italian citizens) as well as German war prisoners and some New Zealand soldiers from the British Army were massacred (Arrigo Petacco 43). Men, women, children, priests, teachers – innocent people whom their accusers may not have liked – were forcefully taken from their homes, usually at night, never to return again. Sometimes they were tried in front of a provisional court without the privilege of defense and they were always sentenced to death as “enemies of the state”. They were then handcuffed with barbwire and forced to walk, while brutally beaten, to be thrown alive into a foiba.

The word ‘foiba’ comes from Latin ‘fovea’ – cave. These deep crevasses were created in prehistory by water and limestone and some may be 4 meters wide and an average of 200 meters or more in depth. On their spiky bottoms there usually runs an underground river. These chasms are typical of the geological makeup in the Karst area of the Venezia Giulia region.

Through time, caves and caverns have acquired several meanings in folklore and classical literature as well as tourist attractions<sup>6</sup> in contemporary culture. However, these deep holes, the foibe, during World War II became dead beds for thousands of innocent people. There are different estimates of how many people ended up in the foibe. The

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<sup>6</sup> In folklore caves denote the archetypical and mythical fear of the mysterious black chasms inhabited by witches and evil spirits and the chasm is often synonymous with death.

In classical literature collective archetypes and legends of the frightening dwellings of the underworld became a common theme over the centuries. J.B. Bierlein, an American author, sees these myths as the glue that holds societies together; “it is the basis of identities for communities, tribes, and nations ... common threads are woven through the world’s greatest myths in many cultures throughout the world” (6). The journey of the web of death has been explored from Babylonian stories of Ishtar to the Indian lord of the dead Yama, to the Egyptian Osiris to the Greek Hades to the Roman story of Aeneas looking for his father Anchises. Other stories, such as Orpheus and Eurydice and Dante’s *Inferno* deal with journeys into the underworld.

In contemporary culture caves often provide entertainment for the tourist who is marveling at the wonder of nature’s creation of stalactites and stalagmites. An example of such a recreational function is the ‘Postojnska Jama’ (Grotta di Postumia- The Postojna Cave, Slovenia). A small train takes the visitor into the depth of the cave.

estimates range from 5,000 to 10,000 victims that may have been thrown into the foibe.<sup>7</sup>

According to E. Boegan, there are 1,700 foibe in Istria and Pamela Ballinger shows a map with 24 foibe, which may have been used as death beds for the victims of the massacre (Ballinger 134). Marcello Lorenzini describes these frightening deep holes, graphically:

The rocky plateau of the Carso... is marked by numerous chasms. People have counted 1,700 which descend for hundreds of meters into the bowls of the earth. These are the mysterious, frightening, impenetrable foibe. Near them exist cavities of every kind... The foibe have become an instrument of martyrdom and horrid tombs for thousands of victims. The corpses (found in the foibe) are shocking evidence for the cruelty and ferocity of the 'infoibatori': naked and mutilated bodies, their hands bound with wires cut to the bone, people bludgeoned, horrendous tortures of all kinds... The lorries of death (death bus) arrived filled with victims which, often chained to one another with hands cut up by wire, were pushed in groups from the edge of the chasm. The first ones in line who were machine-gunned fell and dragged the others into the abyss. (qtd. in Ballinger 134)

The mythical frightening deep pits in Istria and Venezia Giulia, which bear the memory of the Istrian tragedy, became a frequent theme for the region's writers after World War II. Writers such as Carlo Sgorlon, Enrico Morovich and Fulvio Tomizza portray descriptive scenes or surrealistic images of the chasms. Directly or indirectly, their literature often refers to the "infoibamento", a word coined during the horrible events in World War II. For example, one of Carlo Sgorlon's works is entitled *La grande foiba*. In a passage he describes what a foiba conjures up:

La foiba faceva sempre pensare al sangue, all'ossario, alla macelleria, e nello stesso tempo anche alla favola, alla leggenda perché nessuno [...] aveva mai potuto vedere il camion della morte, i sequestri, il lancio dei vivi e dei morti nell'abisso. (315)

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<sup>7</sup> The significant difference in estimates is explained by Roberto Spazzali who has studied the "problematica delle foibe" regarding "Le zone dove gli Angloamericani non giunsero, ...parte dell'Istria, Fiume e la Dalmazia ... manca, ovviamente, qualsiasi dato numerico" (qtd. in Rumici, Guido. *Fratelli d'Istria* 15).

Another writer of the Istrian border, Enrico Morovich, surrealistically portrays the descent of his character into the foiba and what the protagonist sees: “un busto magro con la testa magra di una vecchia ... giaceva come uscito da un pacco sfasciato...E poi il corpo sfracellato di una donna ancora giovane e infine quello del suo [del protagonista] amico Oscar” (*Il Baratro* 102).

One cannot even imagine the horrific images a speleologist could have seen while exhuming the bodies from the foibe. Another description by Morovich again brings to mind what it must have meant to witness the final criminal act at the edge of a foiba. Even though Morovich writes his *Baratro* as a surreal story, a realistic scene emerges as his literary victim recounts:

Fummo sospinti verso l’orlo di una foiba, la cui gola si apriva paurosamente [...] La cavità aveva una larghezza di circa 10 metri e una profondità di 15 alla superficie dell’acqua che stagnava sul fondo...Vidi precipitare altri 4 compagni da una raffica di mitra. (102)

Fulvio Tomizza also writes about these abysses in his *Torre Capovolta* identifying the foiba in these terms:

Costruita nella roccia scendeva a capofitto, tonda e precisissima, come una torre capovolta, più in forma di cono che cilindrica, tanto profonda o perfetta nella sua costruzione a lieve spirale, da non riuscire a distinguerne l’estremità. Il fascino, lo smarrimento deriva proprio da questa estrema compiutezza formale.” (84-85)

The conflict he draws between ‘fascination’ and ‘smarrimento’ for the geological wonder of the foiba is typical of his contrasting writing style. As he continues with his oneiric narrative he also refers to a lady ‘dall’interno’: he may be referring to the partisan women who had distinguished themselves in the fight for the liberation of the country and who, as witnesses documented, partook in the ‘infoibamenti’ and the atrocities committed.

Tomizza observes:

Volli scendere alla bocca della torre: i gradini vecchi, sconnessi, conducevano tuttavia simmetricamente verso il fondo. Sul fianco avevamo direttamente fabbricato la casetta del custode; una donna più ancora dall'interno, forse resasi meritevole durante la lotta. (84)

In *La Quinta Stagione*, Tomizza often mentions the foibe. References to foibe may be subtle and yet they are part of his landscape as remnants of the war and death. A few examples will illustrate his frequent, elliptical references:

“Dopo la squadra fu tutta rivolta verso Buie ossia verso l'interno, le foibe” (118).  
 “Hanno buttato in foiba l'avvocato Attavani” (205).  
 “Aveva visto il fildiferro della foiba tutto macchiato di sangue”(205).  
 “La guerra e la morte non potevano che venire dal bosco” (154).

In Tomizza's description the foibe are located in the woods and they are fenced with 'fildiferro' (spiked iron net) as a warning of danger and death. They provoke fear and anxiety. It is interesting to see that Pamela Ballinger sees the references to foibe by the Triestini writers as “fitting metaphors of border anxiety” (131).

Besides the purely allegorical meanings chasms have acquired in literature and folk legends, the foibe massacres, which engulfed bodies or pieces of tortured body-parts, are linked by some critics to a “politics of submersion”. Especially in regards to the genocide in Trieste in 1945, the notion of submersion works at various levels.

“Metaphorically speaking the trope of submersion refers to silenced histories...Dead bodies come to evidence not only 'genocidal' victimization, but also the nation's right to the territory sanctified by the remains of its martyred subjects”(Ballinger 131).

The massacres in the foibe during World War II, then, had a direct connection with regional identity. Life and death was often determined in the name of nationalism as well as on the basis of a professed or simply perceived political identity of the prejudged victims. The psychological fear and impact by such process cannot be adequately

represented. A condemnation to a macabre death conveys a loss of value and a loss of hope in humanity. The behavior of witnesses and witness-accounts terribly affected the population and their consequences provoked long-lasting traumas. Gianni Oliva states, “gettare un uomo in una foiba significa considerarlo alla stregua di un rifiuto, gettarlo là dove da sempre la gente getta ciò che non serve più: un vecchio mobile, la carcassa di un animale morto. ... La vittima viene cancellata nell’esistenza fisica, ma anche nell’identità”(86).

World War II ended in 1945. Italy lost the war and was at the mercy of the Allied forces and on September 11, 1945 the peace treaty was signed in London to determine the new borders, the so called ‘Morgan line’, which established the division of the occupied territories between Italy and Yugoslavia. The destiny of Venezia Giulia was ill charted. The Quarner islands, Pola, and Istria (which Dante remembers in the *Inferno IX* (vv 113-114) “...sí com’a Pola, presso del Carnaro/ ch’Italia chiude e suoi termini bagna...”)

were separated. The Quarner Islands, Fiume and part of Istria fell into the hands of the Yugoslav Communist Regime led by Marshall Tito. The cities of Pola and Trieste, both strategic ports, were placed under the direct control of the Allied forces, and part of western Istria was divided into Zone A and B. The decision about who should eventually govern the two zones was to be settled later. Immediately after the occupation by the Yugoslav forces, a second wave of foibe massacres began and thus another tragedy followed the devastating war raging on the soil of the peninsula and the surrounding islands. The violence and persecutions were continued by the Slavs, who lost all sense of measure. Brother fought against brother, friends became mortal enemies, property was confiscated, religion was desecrated, identities were forcefully changed; beatings and



tortures were the order of the day. These horrors were committed by the ‘Narodni Oslobodilacki Odbor’ (Comitato popolare di Liberazione - People’s Committee for Liberation) in the name of the Communist regime. The judging committees were comprised of mostly illiterate locals who decided the fate of thousands of defenseless individuals. Hatred and old vendettas were their law. The landowners, the industrialists, the merchants and the clergy were more harshly targeted. Most of the people were forced to leave and abandon everything. A recent inquiry by Silvio Maranzana, a journalist of the Triestino newspaper “Il piccolo”, provides numerous testimonies and documents of 18 rich families whose property was confiscated right after the war. Roberto Spazzali observes in the introductory pages of Maranzana’s *Patria perduta*:

Se una cosa accomuna le testimonianze raccolte da Silvio Maranzana, è l’assenza di risentimento e di spirito vendicativo. Amarezza, invece sì. Questa accompagnata da un’inevitabile nostalgia, quella che appartiene alle generazioni penultime che hanno ancora memoria diretta dei fatti ( Maranzana 10).

From the very beginning of the occupation Communism spread like a gospel. The frequent Communist Party meetings required attendance by the town people who were indoctrinated in the name of nationalism. In the attempt to explain who was a Communist, Anna maria Mori engages in a sermon-like speech using the rhetorical device of anaphora:

Qualcuno era comunista perché era nato a Pisino.  
 Qualcuno era comunista perché era metà italiano e metà slavo per parte di madre o di padre e pensava di risolvere la propria schizofrenia interna con l’internazionalismo comunista.  
 Qualcuno era comunista perché vedeva la Russia come una promessa...  
 Qualcuno era comunista perché era povero.  
 Qualcuno era comunista perché il comunismo gli avrebbe pagato la scuola.  
 Qualcuno era comunista perché prima...prima...prima era fascista.

Qualcuno era comunista perché, non avendone, era contrario alla proprietà privata.

Qualcuno era comunista perché i fascisti gli avevano imposto l'unica nazionalità e lingua: quella italiana.

Qualcuno era comunista perché credeva nell'uguaglianza.

Qualcuno era comunista perché era contadino, pescatore, e facendo il contadino o il pescatore non riusciva mettere insieme il pranzo con la cena. (101)

These repetitions of clauses and reasons to be a Communist provide clever examples of what Communism meant to different people or groups of people. Fulvio Tomizza understood that and often wrote that his own people used and claimed nationalism or patriotism for convenience and self-interest.

While the indoctrination proceeded throughout the area - Istria, the Quarner Islands, and part of Dalmatia, - the fear and uncertainty produced a mass exodus. It is estimated that between 300,000 and 350,000 exiles left the region and joined the Italian motherland for protection.<sup>8</sup> The first exodus from Pola took place in 1947. The ship 'Toscana' transported Istrians with all kinds of personal belongings. 'Toscana' made 12 trips from Pola, the city which Emperor Augusto called 'Pietas Julia', to Venice and Ancona. The exiles mostly belonged to the upper social classes. The second wave came in 1954, after the London 'Memorandum' treaty when it was determined that Zone A would become part of Italy and Zone B would belong to Yugoslavia. It was precisely in 1954 that Tomizza left Istria and established himself in Trieste. It was also at this time that Italians from zone B began abandoning their homes taking the way of the exile. Flaminio Rocchi comments, "È una fuga biblica tra lacrime, preghiere ed imprecazioni" (131). These people were mostly farmers and they left with their farm equipment, hoping to get a piece of land in Italy and start a new life. Unfortunately, most of them ended up

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<sup>8</sup> Numbers taken from Fr. Flaminio Rocchi's *l'Esodo*

in refugee camps and some remained there even for ten years. The Italian government was unable to help fast enough and to provide decent resettlement, since the country had lost the war and did not have the resources to absorb the large amount of refugees. Because of these circumstances, many chose to emigrate to Canada, Australia, and South or North America. The exodus created two factions: the ‘rimasti’ and the ‘andati’. The ones left behind were mostly old people slowly aging in their despair, looking at the photographs of their relatives perhaps sent from America, and never able to know or see their grandchildren, who did not even speak their language. An example of a literary work on the consequences of the divide between the ‘andati’ and the ‘rimasti’ is the book *Bora*, written by two friends who were parted by the divided border: Anna Maria Mori, a journalist living in Italy and Nelida Melani, a professor who settled in Zagreb ( the Croatian capital). The psychological torment, which they endured from the separation, is described poetically and realistically.

In Italy the fate of the exiles became deplorable. As they were placed in different refugee camps, they were not called exiles anymore but they were labeled as profughi – refugees. Old military barracks and old schools became their home. Their living quarters were divided by hanging rough blankets to separate families and men from women. Within tight spaces bunk beds were placed, a poor substitution for the comfortable homes the exiles left behind in Istria. At one time, there were over 100 refugee camps throughout Italy. Those in Trieste and Udine were called “campi di smistamento” (sorting places). From there they would be shipped to Marina di Carrara, Roma, Latina, Bari, Altamura, Capua, Napoli, Sardegna, and other locations. The relationships between the natives and the exiles-refugees were often marked by suspicion and intolerance.

Meanwhile in Yugoslavia, the anti-Italian movement was propagated through the annexed region. The testimony of Tito's deposed minister, Milovan Djilas, in a 1991 interview exemplifies the "disegno preordinato di espulsione."<sup>9</sup> This political scheme also had a contradictory outcome. In 1947 Yugoslavia officially gave the Italian citizens the option to join their mother country and yet many citizen who opted to leave were refused permission to do so based on arbitrary reasons. Because of this denial people began to escape by land or sea. The risk of losing one's life by running away and the fear of being caught were equivalent to trying to walk on a high wire over an abyss. Some people tried to escape in a clandestine way through the woods; others paid guides who were concealed spies and who later turned them in. Other people tried to dare the Adriatic sea and the unpredictable Bora wind by rowboats or by sandolines.<sup>10</sup> Those who were not caught or survived the storms on the sea would end up in Pesaro or Ancona.

In Italy these fugitives became 'profughi' – refugees eradicated for ever from their homeland and their identities. Gianni Oliva sees the refugees as bearing the burden of a tragedy:

I profughi vengono dispersi in oltre cento campi di raccolta disseminati in tutto il nostro paese dove per molto tempo vivono in una situazione di totale emergenza, nella più assoluta provvisorietà e promiscuità, attornati da un clima di avversione o d'indifferenza. ... [è] lo sradicamento e l'esodo di una popolazione che paga per tutti il prezzo della Guerra perduta (*Profughi* Introduction i).

Raoul Pupo remarks, "per quanto riguarda l'esodo... si trattò di una politica di distruzione dell'identità nazionale italiana"(17).

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<sup>9</sup> Raoul Pupo cites a statement by Milovan Djilas, a former and deposed minister of Tito in 1991, "Ricordo che io e Kardelj [another minister of Tito] "andammo in Istria a organizzare la propaganda antitaliana. Si trattava di dimostrare alle autorità alleate che quelle terre erano jugoslave e non italiane. Certo che non era vero. Ma bisognava indurre gli italiani ad andarsene via, con pressioni di ogni tipo" (196).

<sup>10</sup> A type of kajak on the Istrian and Quarner coast built primarily for sporting events.

Claudio Magris observes that “I profughi hanno dato nel complesso un grande esempio di dignità, di aperture, di modernizzazione e tolleranza, di intelligenza, pagando essi soli una colpa che ricade su tutta l’Italia”(qtd. in Oliva *Profughi* 170).

Many people and critics ask about the crimes committed and about the foibe massacres: Who is at fault? People were ‘infoibati’ for being Italian, which was synonymous with being suspected to be Fascists in the prosecutor’s mind. Italian refugees demanded from the Italian government some answers and action with regard to the victims of the foibe. Finally, in 2005 a ‘Giorno del ricordo’ was instituted to commemorate the victims on February 10th of each year. The day coincides with the date in 1947 when the Paris treaty was signed between Italy and Yugoslavia, assigning Istria and the Quarner Islands to Yugoslavian jurisdiction. Since the date of the proclamation by the Italian Government, the foiba of Basovizza (at 4 km from Trieste) was covered and proclaimed a national monument. Families of the unfortunate victims together with thousand of curious visitors visit it to pay homage in silence.

The historical circumstances and tragic events leading to this massive exodus constitute the background of Tomizza’s biography. When the territory of Istria Zone B, which included Materada, the native town of young Fulvio Tomizza, was assigned to Yugoslavia in 1954, (while Trieste was returned to Italy), Tomizza’s family, like many others exiled to Trieste. It was a difficult transition for the Istrians and the long wait to resettle filled them with anxiety. Their hope and longing for Istria were inscribed even in the lyrics: “Vola colomba bianca vola/ diglielo tu che non sarai più sola/ e che mai più la lascerò”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> It was a song which Istrians and Triestini sang and it was directly connected to the separation of Trieste from the Zone B (Istrian hinterlands) Guido Crainz explains:

Tomizza never totally left Istria for he returned to his native village many times physically as well as in his phantasy through his characters. He is considered the cantor of the Giuliano-Dalmati's painful exile and their border-related syndrome, linked to the fluctuating identity of their 'nation-language'. In the next chapter my aim is to examine the nexus "nation-language" as portrayed in his characters.

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"Il trattato di pace 1947 assegnava alla Jugoslavia: Zara una parte della Venezia-Giulia e quasi tutta l'Istria, con Pola e Fiume. Inoltre prevedeva la costituzione di un teritorio Libero di Trieste, provvisoriamente diviso in una Zona A (comprendente Trieste) ad amministrazioni alleate, e una Zona B ad amministrazione Jugoslava. Negli anni successivi la pressione e la mobilitazione per il ricongiungimento della città all'Italia aumentarono progressivamente: a Trieste nel 1953 l'intervento della polizia alleata con due successive manifestazioni provocò la morte di sei persone. In tutto il paese toni nazionalistici si mescolavano a una più generale emozione. Al Festival di San Remo del 1952 trionfò [la canzone] "Vola Colomba" cantata da Nilla Pizzi esplicitamente dedicata alla situazione della città di Trieste [e dell' Istria - zona B]. Nel 1954 un Memorandum d'intesa restituì Trieste all'Italia ma l'accordo definitivo verrà solo nel 1975 col trattato di Osimo." *Italia Repubblicana*. p 35. The lyrics were written by Bixio Cherubini and the music by Carlo Concine, 1962.

## CHAPTER I – *IDENTITY*

### I: I Nation - Language

Un' identità di frontiera è una striscia che divide e collega, un taglio aspro come una ferita che stenta a rimarginarsi, una zona di nessuno, un territorio misto, i cui abitanti sentono spesso di non appartenere veramente ad alcuna patria ben definita o almeno di non appartenere con quella ovvia certezza con la quale ci si identifica, di solito, col proprio paese (Ara e Magris 192-193).

Fulvio Tomizza was one of the inhabitants of a hybrid territory where national identity is fleeting because of frequent border changes, due to unstable political governing bodies, while the language – the mother tongue – remains a reliable component of an individual or group identity. The area of Venezia Giulia is geographically positioned among diverse civilizations: Latin, Germanic and Slav. The remnants of each civilization had left an imprint on the population of this area where cultures have come together or collided. Fulvio Tomizza interrogates the predicaments rooted in this borderland instability and in the process he explores his self-identity through his literary characters.

Cognizant of this reality, in this chapter I will discuss nationhood and language as agents of one's identification. I will support my findings with examples from Tomizza's works.

Many prior studies have attempted to define identity, by categorizing it into several types. The word 'identity,' like the word 'nation,' has ambiguous connotations because both may denote a group of people and their place of birth, or their ethnic origin in a particular territory. The term identity has many facets. It can be changed, constructed, deconstructed and it can even be stolen. *The Synonym Finder* lists nouns: 'identity' and 'identification,' the adjective 'identical' and the verb 'to identify.' The

listing of their synonyms is over 200 words long. Among them, words such as ‘pointing,’ ‘naming,’ ‘seeing,’ and nouns such as ‘uniqueness,’ ‘difference,’ and ‘person’ clarify that the concept of identity is tied to perception and is of a psychological nature.

By hearing our name, our senses respond to the question “Who are you?” The initial identification comes from an utterance involving language. Identity is multifaceted. Infinite answers, real and prefabricated, may come out of an autobiographical piece of writing.<sup>12</sup>

Erik Erikson, remarks, “The term ‘identity’ expresses ...a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, 109). Bernard Lewis discusses identities in terms of historical and literary records: “Identities may be social and economic – by status, class, occupation, and profession. Generation and gender provide two major demarcations of identity; so too do such contrasts as civil and military, lay and ecclesiastical...” (5). He also divides identity into two basic categories: primary, acquired by birth, and secondary, linked to the allegiance to the state. The first category is involuntary and the second compulsory. In the primary category identity is defined by blood (ethnic), place and religious affiliation. In the second category identity can change by transfer of power.

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<sup>12</sup> Identity, this timeless concept, has been explored through world literature. It was extensively examined in the early Greek theater, where the mask, an instrument of identity, was to conceal or reveal an identity of a character at the whim of a dramatist. Masks as identity devices have also a complex and powerful function in African art. During a ceremony an individual assumes the role of the mask. The new identity may function as religious, spiritual, social or political authority – all according to what the mask’s profile represents. Meanwhile, the personality of the person wearing the mask is temporarily annihilated. Later in the *Commedia dell’Arte* again, masks had a central part. Pantalone, Arlecchino, Pulcinella, just to name a few, have entertained the public, which immediately guessed their identity. In modern times, Pirandello’s *Il fu Mattia Pascal* problematizes the notion of identity. Writers, who wrote under a “nom de la plume”, especially, used the ‘pliable’ property of the identity. For the Triestini writers, often called “scrittori di confine,” – such as Italo Svevo, Scipio Slataper, Gianni Stuparich and others – identity was of primary importance. For Fulvio Tomizza the issue of identity became not only a literary theme, but a life-time quest.



The study of the scholar and historian, John E. Joseph, *Language and Identity*, is helpful for this project as he discusses the role of language in the construction of national, cultural, and personal identity. He stresses the links between language and identity and makes a distinction between two fundamental types of identity: personal identity and group identity. He calls personal identity ‘ambiguous’ and splits it into two subcategories: “deictic” and “semantic”. The term deictic (pointing) – refers to a name, for example, which belongs to a branch of onomastics and designates an individual, such as the name ‘Rose’ or ‘Dawn.’ Upon hearing a name we can immediately think of the semantic aspect of personal identity. When we know someone’s name we also attach a meaning to it, thus language to a great extent could determine our preconception of the individual’s identity. Joseph relies on Saussure’s notions of *langue* and *parole*, upon which we construct an identity of the other. However, “on the semantic or meaning level, the difference between individual and group [a nation, a town, a race, or ethnicity, a religion, etc.] is more complex. (Joseph 4). From this we surmise that it takes a minimal clue to construct an initial identity of the other, while the identity of one’s inner-self is hard to define. The profound question “‘Who am I really?’ can never be fully captured and articulated in words.” (Joseph 1). Joseph states:

The identities of real and fictional individuals are actually not all that easy to distinguish. When it comes to the subject of biography, it can be difficult to say whether it is real or a fictional personage that we are dealing with. Joseph suggests: ...fictional characters can seem more ‘real’ than real people, because their identities are wholly contained. It may even be that the modern desire to have a clear sense of self is the result of feeling that one completely knows a character in a novel or a film, and that by comparison oneself is messy and fuzzy, and one’s self-knowledge incomplete. (4)

I feel that the notion of being “messy and fuzzy” when applied to self-knowledge and understanding is congruent with Fulvio Tomizza’s search for personal identity. His

character Stefano Marcovich helps him reconstruct his childhood and adolescent experiences and Stefano is a catalyst, in an attempt to understand who he really is.

Joseph's premise that readers can comprehend better the "inner essence" of an author's character is presented as a possibility:

Perhaps the people whose identity we feel we most fully comprehend are the great literary characters, the Lears and Emma Bovarys and, closer to earth, the Henry Potters. Their authors have captured something even more remarkable than the inner essence of an actual human being. Using language alone, they have created persons in whom readers find a resonance of their own inner being – persons in a sense more real than any actual individual. On account of being strictly linguistic in make-up, they are more knowable. (1)

The power of language, therefore, has an inestimable value and it plays a fundamental role in establishing one's identity, which is connected to individual experience.

According to Joseph, "Group identity frequently finds its most concrete manifestation in a single, symbolic individual. The group identity we partake in nurtures our individual sense of who we are"(5). Therefore, there is reciprocity between individual and group identity. Specialists argue about the notions of 'sameness' and 'uniqueness.' Joseph also states: "Individual identity starts with the ego which already at the time of its emergence is encountering social forces that will cause the superego to develop. Group identity contributes to the establishment of both ego and superego. Yet, in the ego there is always a need for unique possession."(38)

Erik Erikson also confirms the notion of reciprocity:

It is this identity of something in the individual's core with an essential aspect of a group's inner coherence which is under consideration... for the young individual must learn to be most himself where he means most to others--those others, to be sure, who have come to mean most to him. The term identity expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others. (*Identity and the Life Cycle* 109)

Joseph states that, “The difference between individual identity and the identity of a group – a nation or town, a race or ethnicity, a gender or sexual orientation, a religion or sect, a school or club, a company or profession... a social class – is most like a true difference of a kind”(4). Therefore, the individual identity, ‘the self,’ is perceived largely as a social construction. In this respect Erikson’s and Joseph’s theories parallel the value of reciprocity between group and individual identity, which also explains the sense of multiple identities. Additionally, Joseph claims,

The entire phenomena of identity can be understood as a linguistic one. The language-identity-nexus has been researched by sociolinguistics, psychology anthropology and these studies have shown how complex is the question of how national language shapes national identities and vice-versa. (13)

Discussing linguistic aspects of nationalism, Paola Gambarota states, “Modernist theories of nationalism have drawn attention to the role of language and communication in the modern process of internalizing the nation. Benedict Anderson, for instance, asserts that the nation, ‘from the start, was conceived in language, not in blood’”(9).

If we look at the very beginning of recorded history, the word “nation” is found precisely in the Old Testament in *Genesis 10*. In the biblical text, where the story of the flood is recorded, there is also the story of Noah and his three sons. Words such a ‘land, tongue, family...nation’ are recorded. We learn that Noah’s descendants migrated west in search for new fertile lands. We read in *Genesis 11:4*, “and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” Here’s the beginning of national identity: “let us make us a name.” It is not difficult to interpret this as: ‘let us construct a national identity’(*The Holy Bible* 9).

Thus, Anderson's argument that national language shapes national identities is credible, but Joseph calls it "a one way street"(9) because "national identities also shape national language" (13), and P. Gambarota reiterates Hobsbawm's idea that language can be "a symbolic marker of some stable commonality that could make the nation appear 'more eternal'"(9). With all the different notions of the language-construct of national language and the nation, the debate on the "genius of language" "stretches our ability to imagine the many possible relationships between language and nation," remarks Gambarota (9).

Throughout my discussion it is obvious that the word 'nation,' like the word 'identity,' has ambiguous connotations even if there is a centralized government administrating several territories. The nation-state may not truly coincide with what is often perceived as 'language equals nation.' An example of this reality is the imperial nation of Austro-Hungary, where the government permitted its subjects to use their own language. Throughout Istria schools were opened in several languages: Slovenian, Croatian, Italian, and German. Another example is Tito's Yugoslavia, which consisted of six republics, five nationalities, four languages, three religions, two alphabets and one nation, the FNR Yugoslavija,<sup>13</sup> Each republic was allowed to use its own language and alphabet, but soon the regime demanded that the Cyrillic alphabet be learned in every republic and the standard language became Serbo-Croatian. Tito's dictatorship and politics of harsh nationalism was felt all over Istria as Italian schools were gradually closed down while people who spoke Italian were scorned. In Istria, where people historically used both Italian and Croatian dialects as their spoken language, there was a

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<sup>13</sup> In the Federal National Republic of Yugoslavia, the republics were: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Hercegovina. The nationalities were Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian and Bosnian. The four languages were Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian. The three religions were: Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim and the two alphabets were Latin and Cyrillic.

real mix, and such “mistilinguismo”<sup>14</sup> started to be looked at as a remnant of Fascism by the Communist regime. In Yugoslavia language was exploited and used as a political instrument for power. The Serbian federalists claimed supremacy and the Croatian language was infiltrated with Serbian vocabulary even though it was officially called Serbo-Croatian. For Croatian language purists this became a point of contention, and in the nineties as Yugoslavia erupted into a national war, language and nation did not coalesce.<sup>15</sup>

It seems clear that the notion of language as a foundation of national identity is a constructed one. This strong association of language and national identity is further reinforced by Joseph’s central statement that “language and identity are ultimately inseparable”(5). While accepting such a premise, I still found myself asking if Fulvio Tomizza’s non-alignment with national identity and identification with “language” was responsible for the cultural collision he portrayed in most of his works. How many degrees of separation are there between these two similar and yet different bodies of identity? Or does this become an open-ended question for all those who experience the instability of a border? Can a national identity be claimed only for convenience? Can a claim to national identity be only a feeling? These and other questions I addressed during my research on the fleeting national identity of Fulvio Tomizza.

To have a better perspective on Tomizza’s quest, differences between the two concepts of nation and language will be further considered. By nature nations are not perennial. Nations rise and die. In fact, the change in nationality may occur during one’s

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<sup>14</sup> See Marta Moretto thesis “Il paradosso della conciliazione nell’opera di Fulvio Tomizza.” Università degli studi di Trieste, 2007-2008. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Another example of language identity exploitation by politicians concerned Istria and the Quarner islands for those who were given the option to join the mother country after the war. My own case testifies it, as my family’s application to rejoin the mother country was repeatedly denied for 7 years based on the claim that my mother tongue was not Italian, which was false.

life span two or three times such as was the case of Istria's population. While a given language is "culturally 'neutral' for it is capable of sustaining more than one culture, individuals use language in such a way as to signal their cultural identity, making language culturally loaded" (Joseph 167). Mother tongue is acquired and it is transmitted to the child who may carry it to posterity. The intrinsic value, then, of the language acquired at home is not negotiable and it becomes part of the person's identity. For Fulvio Tomizza Italian language is one steady aspect of his identity. The other aspects of his group identity, such as tradition, ethnicity, and religion are present in his identity quest and are fragmented pieces, which he and his borderline characters are trying to piece together like an archeologist confronted with the Aquileian mosaics.

Who was then Fulvio Tomizza? He was a historical victim bearing the consequences of the events that took place in Istria during the Communist regime and, furthermore, a member of the "collective unconsciousness" – his Istrian agrarian, multiethnic, and multilingual geopolitical past. He artistically represents all these aspects in his literary works, without resentment or blame. Umberto Saba referring to "Adriatic identity" states that Trieste and its surroundings are "a conglomerate of individuals with ... different strains of blood in their veins ... held together by the Italian language and by Italian culture" (qtd. in Maura Hametz 193). Fulvio Tomizza's works are a compelling testimony of Istrian individual identities and of the upheavals affecting their land after World War II.

## **I:II Literary Representation of Nation-Language identity**

In his section I contend that Tomizza's literary characters, in one way or another,

live fragmented lives and examine how national identity and/or language identity construct one's own life experience.

His first novel *Materada* (1960) captures a historical moment and tells the story of a farm-owning family, stressing their greed and love of land. The disturbing changes that shook the core of Materada's agrarian life system motivated its inhabitants the painful decision to exile. The book begins with a grim statement: "La Guerra l'abbiamo tutti provata, e anche la liberazione che si portò dietro altri lutti e altre miserie." (1) Francesco Coslovich, the main character, tells in first person the events that happened in Materada, a rural village in Istria. He tells us of the torments, passions, fights, and deceiving methods used by the self-proclaimed authority, the Slavs against the local Italians. The sharp divisions and broken identities caused by old hatred and vendettas are reflections of egoistic reasons more than ideological ones. We can see through the conversations of Tomizza's characters how identity is not 'fixed,' and 'stable.' It is 'fluid' and it is constructed as the political winds bend people's feelings. Identity can be negotiated. One can be Italian or Croat or Slovenian or German depending on one's personal or economic convenience and choice of the moment. When seen in such optic, identity can also be considered a marketable commodity affected by the frequent border changes which introduce and assume an economic value open to speculation and personal gains. For example, the identity of Francesco Coslovich contains the traces of two linguistic and culturally diverse identities. Francesco is an Italian name, while the last name Coslovich is of Slavic origin. However, to show 'italianity' it is not spelled Koslovic, with the 'K', but with the letter 'C' and the 'ch' ending. When he is talking to a person with an Italian identity, like Barba Nin, he is addressed as 'Francesco.' When he is

in the office of the ‘People’s Committee’ he is addressed as Franz, the Slavic version of his name. The name can change according to how one thinks the ‘other’ will perceive one’s identity. Throughout the novel identity is explicitly or implicitly understood or expressed. Francesco and his brother Berto are Italian. Their uncle Tio claims his Croatian identity. After a bitter family feud between the old, selfish Tio and the two younger nephews, Francesco and Berto, Francesco begins to contemplate leaving Istria. He seeks the advice of Barba<sup>16</sup> Nin, an older member of the village. His visit to his house is portrayed like a visit to a guru who wisely gives advice as Francesco observes, “nonostante il suo vigore e la sua forza in lui vidi parlare l’età”(127). In their conversation the conflict of identity seems to bring out the past, the present and the fear of the uncertain future. Barba Nin, speaking about Francesco’s Tio says: “Io italiano, lui croato. Io con la mia bandiera della Lega (Italian Club), lui con la sua [bandiera] e i suoi ‘Drustvo’ (Association/Club). L’Austria permetteva. Ma quei bastardi ci accusavano di aver dato fuoco alla loro scuola...Non siamo venuti mica dalla Serbia noi” (127). Barba Nin recalls the clashes that occurred because of national identification. Francesco probes, “Dunque anche quella volta c’era la solita storia di italiani e slavi, slavi e italiani?” (127); Barba Nin replies, “Ma quella volta si poteva! Il mondo andava così, e in fondo era anche un divertimento; mai un gioco di interessi. Quella volta si ballava anche la mazurka, ma va a vedere al Dom a quanti dei nostri giovani piace ancora ballarla!”(127). Francesco adds, “Il mondo è cambiato.” And Barba Nin angrily responds, “É cambiato in peggio! ... Una volta si ammazzavano gli uomini per le strade solo per i fatti di donne. Ora si ammazza per altro, per gusto di ammazzare e ancora si vuole avere ragione!” (128).

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<sup>16</sup> The word ‘barba’ is a respectful way to address older people in the Istrian region.



Barba Nin continued, “Vedi? E ora mi si domanda perché la gente parte. Ebbene te lo dico io. Oltre agli interessi, che molte volte sanno essere più forti dell’uomo...ognuno sente in fondo a se stesso ...che in fondo c’è da aver rispetto o paura o vergogna per qualche cosa” (129). The change that occurred after the takeover of the regime was not only generational. Barba Nin’s account seems to indicate a tragic flaw, a hamartia in their multiple coexistence. He continues, “...Per domani non so, per domani non rispondo. Può darsi che il mondo sarà cambiato”(129). Barba Nin then advised Francesco, “Va... a cercare la tua fortuna. Qua essa ti ha lasciato; e tu corri dietro” (133). And the family Coslovich began the way of the Exodus.

In his interview with Riccardo Ferrante, Fulvio Tomizza makes a reference to the Austrian-Hungarian dominion:

Uno stato la cui forza e il cui stile poggiavano, paradossalmente, irripetibilmente, proprio sul suo essere plurimo e in definitiva sovranazionale. ...ungheresi e friulani, triestini e croati, sloveni e veneti sorbirono forse senza avvedersene un senso civico che consisteva principalmente in rispetto per la cosa pubblica, sentita come patrimonio di tutti, e in aperture verso il proprio simile perché cittadino a pari diritto, ugualmente necessario al compatto mosaico ... la trasgressione doveva ingenerare senso di colpa e quasi di tradimento. (33)

Barba Nin seems to sum up all this with one simple phrase, ‘quella volta si poteva.’ It is also interesting to see how in his interview with Ferrante, Tomizza feels that a “sense of guilt” can develop if the state political ideology is not upheld.

Recounting the story of his grandmother who, under the Austrian rule, went to visit her husband from Istria all the way to Galizia (today’s Poland) without crossing borders, he concludes: “Se io ho un sogno è questo: che arrivi un giorno in cui non si debbono più passare confini”(34). In *Materada* there is also an allusion to language identity when Barba Nin remembers the end of Austrian dominion with a sense of nostalgia as he tells

Franz a story about an Austrian officer. In the conversation in Barba Nin's barber shop, an example of the typical multilingual mode occurs:

Officer:       Nine, vedi quel sacco?  
 Barba Nin:    Ja gospod ofizir.  
 Officer:       Se lo riempi sta in piedi, se no cade giù, vero?  
 Barba Nin:    Ja gospod.  
 Officer:       Ebbene così sarà anche per l'Austria; non ha più cosa dar da  
                   mangiare alla sua gente: cadrà. (131)

"E così fu," concluded Barba Nin. Not only the prediction of the Austro-Hungarian fall is alluded here, but a real mix of languages is used. 'Ja' is German for 'yes'. The noun 'gospod' is 'mister' in Croatian. 'Ofizir' (officer) is spelled in German. Through out Tomizza's writing we encounter the mix of languages and dialects. The Slav people who came to the Istrian territory soon learned the 'istroveneto' dialect and, as mentioned earlier, using one's own language during the Austro-Hungarian rule was not an issue. Freedom of expression was in line with freedom of borders. People were freely travelling from Northern Italy to Croatia, Prussia, Austria and Hungary. Yet, all these countries after WWII and during the 'Cold War' had designated borders, which required passports and visas to travel from one country to another.

However, the tolerant, coexisting population in the northeast corner of the Adriatic under the Austro-Hungarian administration suffered a profound change during the Irredentist movement. An excerpt from Tomizza's *La ragazza di Petrovia*, reveals the state of mind of the people and their costly resignation: "Gli uomini sono vissuti da anni in una pace come forzata e non turbata ... una pace rassegnata, che costa, perché piena di rinunce"(55).

The Irredentist movement and the desire of many people to be annexed to Italy were especially felt in the city of Trieste and over the entire Istrian territory. In his novel

*Franziska* Fulvio Tomizza captures the historical facts of the times, which impacted the destinies of two people with diverse languages and nationalities. Nino Ferrari is an officer of the Italian military from Cremona and Franziska is a Triestino-Slovenian young woman living and working in Trieste. Nino and Franziska are in love but their problems stem from the fact that they belong to two different social classes, two different cultures and speak two different languages. Initially, their love does not seem to be affected even by Franziska's chopped communication skills in Italian. At their first encounter, he asked her for her name and she replied: "Franziska" but he immediately translated and repeated it, "Francesca". Here, the 'deictic' identity is revealed. By hearing this character's name one can perceive the semantic aspect of her identity. Depending on which sounds she utters, Franziska or Francesca, her identity can be perceived as Slovenian or Italian. At one of their usual luncheons in the cafeteria where they work, one of the colleagues asked Franziska, "E che ne dice la nostra splendida Francesca?" Taking it as an insult, she answered in her broken Italian: "sue parole... se sarebbero vere sarebbero giuste" and Nino Ferrari sensing the 'racial slur' came to her defense and said to his colleague, "Si dovrebbe dunque ammazzare tutti quelli che non sono italiani quanto lei? Ma mi faccia il piacere di starsene zitto." Bursting into tears Francesca said, "Gente come è lui ammazzasse noi come è niente. Ma no che possono ancora. E allora vogliamo scacciare via noi, marsh, tornare in vostro Carso!"(50) Franziska and Nino are left alone in the cafeteria and between them a looming tension sets in. As Nino hands her a handkerchief to wipe her tears, they have the ensuing dialog, which is particularly interesting for its use of language and its irony:

Nino:           Ora asciugati gli occhi e piantala anche tu.  
 Francesca:   È neto'?

Nino: È pulito.  
 Francesca: Già ... si dice pulito.  
 Nino: *Si dice* è giusto, *pulito* no. Come fa in sloveno pulito?  
 Francesca: Cist. Ma tacato con fazzoletto è cisto.  
 Nino: E *neto* da dove viene?  
 Francesca: Tutti qui dice *neto*. E' dialeto?  
 Nino: Perché piangevi?  
 Francesca: Avevo nervi. Perché sono sola e tutti trattano me male. Tu anche.  
 Nino: Io cosa?  
 Francesca: Tu venuto e sempre arabiato con me a Stanjel.  
 Nino: Non ricordo nessun Stanel.  
 Francesca: Stanjel, no Stanel. S come scioco. Vedi che nianche tu sei pulito in mia lingua. Come io in tua, e così pari, zero al zero." (104-105))

The conversation is filled ironically with puns, which expose Francesca's incorrect use of standard Italian. At the same time, her emotions and her injured self-esteem are emphasized and Franziska is trying to please Nino by using her newly learned vocabulary such as the term "pulito". However, she vindicates herself with "pari siamo" when he cannot pronounce the Slovenian word "Stanjel."

When Nino leaves Trieste their love continues to be expressed through their letter writing. However, Nino's letters eventually stop, while she continues waiting and hoping for Nino's decision to marry her. For him it is a long debate, on whether to marry Franziska or not. His family is expecting of him an heir and "la questione della lingua" is a real concern for him and his family. This is obvious as he deliberates: [Se Francesca] "si fosse trasformata in una sposa ideale e in una signora italiana, si sarebbe liberata anche dei lagnosi sentimentalismi slavi ...non rischiava lui di subire un contraccolpo con la nascita dei figli, unica continuità del ceppo dei Ferrari?" (121) Their relationship ended sadly because Nino was never able to accept the identity that Franziska embodied. Nino died in Cremona of tuberculosis and Franziska died in a street accident in Trieste, "dove si eleva ancora il platano dei loro primi convegni amorosi"(223). The protagonists of this

love tragedy embody the insurmountable differences of culture, language and national identity.

Just as conflicts of identity emerge from Tomizza's story, another border writer, Anna Maria Mori, in *Nata in Istria* narrates a story of crushed self-esteem and bruised identity. She recounts a story of an Istrian boy who, while attending middle school felt estranged, excluded and hurt. His self-esteem was crushed in a class experience: "Lo schiaffo più grande, il più doloroso, me lo dà l'insegnante di lettere." (91) The child lived with his family in the refugee camp of Opicina, near Trieste and since there were no middle schools in the vicinity of the camp he was sent to an exclusive school in Trieste. While still in the elementary school he received an award for writing even though his spoken Italian was "un po' zoppo: risentiva del dialetto." (91) However, one day, in front of the entire class, the teacher questioned him: "Ma tu, perché parli così male l'italiano? Che lingua parli a casa tua, lo slavo?" (91) – a question which caused a painful reaction in the child. "Mi son sentito morire dentro ... mi raccontavano sempre di essere venuti via dall'Istria, lasciando tutto, perché mandati via dagli slavi ... quell'insegnante mi faceva sentire in qualche modo in colpa nei loro confronti come se li avessi traditi e rinnegati." (92) She continues summarizing a sad but common reality felt by the *esuli*:

Ma questo è quello che hanno patito in silenzio moltissimi di noi: una doppia esclusione. Esclusi nella loro terra, l'Istria, diventata jugoslava, perché accusati di essere "italiani-fascisti." Ed esclusi, dopo, in quell'Italia in cui erano arrivati da esuli, perché qui venivamo definiti "slavi." (92)

The painful exodus from Istria in search of a new identity is documented by many writers who describe the status of the refugees in Italy which is depicted through dry realistic facts. Instead, Fulvio Tomizza, an exile himself, describes the historical moment,

but in his narratives he creates his characters artistically and presents their feelings and the psychological impact that such uprooting has on a human being. In his poetic and creative way he describes his characters' physical and mental struggles and the constant realignment of their divided identity. I claim that here Tomizza is identifying and empathizing with his literary characters as he projects his experiences in them. The awareness of the experience of the mass exodus from Istria pervades most of his works.

In 1967 three of his works were published in one volume entitled *Trilogia istriana*, which deals particularly with the realities of the Istrian exiles, the loss of their homeland and of their identity. The first novel *Materada*, which I analyzed partially, describes the land feud of the Coslovich family -- two brothers, Franz and Berto, with their uncle -- and their painful decision to leave their homeland. The second book, *La ragazza di Petrovia* has two parts. It can almost be seen as a two-way street; in one direction the author is driving us to view the life in a refugee camp, and the prejudices the refugees encounter, the contradictions with former farmer way of life, the hopelessness and fearful waiting of the unknown future. In the opposite direction the reader is introduced to a psychological, very personal love story. The young country-girl Giustina leaves her homeland and ends in a refugee camp to see her boyfriend, whose child she carries. Both accounts depict life after the exodus and the struggles in search of a new identity in a new land. The Stepancich family is trying to confront the new reality, while Giustina is dealing with her secret love affair. The third part of the *Trilogy* is *Il bosco di acacia*. Here Tomizza describes the farmers on the new land given to them by the government in the lower Friuli area. A family, which lives in the refugee camp, at the wish of their old father, goes to the newly acquired farm in Friuli to bury the father in the

land that at least resembles the one he left in Istria. “Somiglia ma non è. Non è quello di prima, non lo sarà mai”(Trilogia 425), one of the characters concludes - the word ‘mai’ is loaded. The loss of identity is total.

In *La ragazza di Petrovia* through Giustina’s eyes, the reader is able to understand first the exodus from Istria and then is faced with the impact of the life in the refugee camp. Walking in the town of Petrovia, Giustina hears:

Il rumore ben noto di un camion che avanza guardingo dalla parte dell’acquedotto, come se a ogni pietra, ogni ghiaia, ogni bovazza della strada trovasse un’improvvisa resistenza, e dal canto suo intendesse spietatamente abbattere e schiacciare ogni cosa per non lasciare dietro a sé non un fiore non un filo d’erba. Raggiunge rapida il successivo tronco di gelso non curandosi d’altro, ora, che di sfuggire all’orribile drago che sempre più guadagna terreno facendo sussultare lievemente la groppa alta di masserizie.(57)

Here Tomizza is describing the exodus of 1954 from the towns of Istria. People would fill the trucks to the maximum, with everything they could take with them. The ‘orribile drago’ is, then, the metaphor for the exodus. The exiles were reluctant to leave behind even a ‘filo d’erba’ or ‘a fiore’ which was part of their ‘terra,’ their identity. The mood and the feelings of those leaving are again reflected through Giustina’s eyes.

Giustina’s reflections continue,

Camminando, passa in rassegna casa per casa. I suoi occhi inquieti si posano di preferenza sulle case più grandi, tutte ormai vuote, sprangate. ...di gente nel paese ne rimaneva ben poca, e anche quei pochi o erano dei poveri diavoli anche loro e avevano i loro guai cui badare, o erano già con un piede sulla strada. L’indomani sarebbero partiti in molti – da varie parti le giungevano gli ultimi colpi di martello sui cassoni.(58)

The exodus split the Istrian people in those who left, the ‘andati,’ and those who remained, the ‘rimasti.’ Giustina’s family was among the ‘rimasti,’ while Vinicio (her boyfriend) and his family were among the ‘andati.’ The ‘andati’ took with them all the

belongings, all the masserizie<sup>17</sup> that the ‘drago’ [camion] could transport, but once across the border they could not keep them. What they did keep was their ‘Istroveneto’ dialect, which became their talisman inscribed in their Istrian identity. The voice of their dialect continued to live among the community of the refugees while their children learned standard Italian in school. The language sometimes became an obstacle, like in the case of Tomizza’s character, the Slovenian Franziska, whose inadequacy in speaking Italian developed into an inferiority complex.

The sudden change of status of an Istrian identity is also reflected in the terminology. In Istria, the ones who left were called ‘esuli’ and they were referred to such when they reached Italy, but as soon as they entered the ‘Shelter Centers’ they became ‘refugees’ and their home was now a ‘Refugee Camp.’

The opening of *La Ragazza di Petrovia* reads:

Vennero i camion e bloccarono i freni, si fermarono qui fra le baracche dai vari colori come arrivassero da competizioni diverse, vinti e vincitori. Veramente dalla foga con cui avanzavano poteva sembrare che tutti indistintamente avessero vinto; ma la sconfitta venne fuori dopo... Gli uomini stavano seduti lungo il gradino che accompagna la bassa costruzione di docce e gabinetti al centro delle baracche. Fermi al sole, non si guardavano; ognuno teneva serrata nel pugno una chiave nuova. Ma gli occhi ... esitavano a levarsi dal cemento...per vergogna di non tradire la speranza che, accompagnandosi all’idea di un possibile più fondo squallore, si faceva sempre più inquietante ed era comune a tutti. (3)

The quote not only describes the physical aspect of the camp, but the prevailing mood of the refugees. The ‘chiave nuova’ may have double meaning. It denotes the object ‘key’ but the adjective ‘nuova’ gives a sense of a new directional sign. The term ‘key’ is pregnant with symbolic meaning. It could be the key which opens new horizons.

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<sup>17</sup> For 50 years their masserizie were stored in a depot on pier #22 in the port of Trieste. Most of the belongings were never claimed because the owners either resettled far away or died. Recently the pier caught fire and some objects were rescued and placed on display at the IRCI (Istituto Regionale Civico Istriano).



However, at some point, one of the characters, Giusto, noticing his countrymen's somber mood, scolds them, "Che c'è da stare con la barba sul petto? Non lo avete scelto voi stessi?"..."Ci danno l'alloggio di cui già avete le chiavi; ci danno due pasti al giorno. Sapete, anche il sussidio ci danno"(5).

In his creative way, Tomizza explores and builds his characters around common struggles of resignation, acceptance and choices on how to adjust and adapt to a new identity. For the Stepancich family, as for most other refugees, the process begins with a glimpse of hope. Their farming life in Istria was defined by the rhythms of nature and its cycles. Now they were beginning to learn to be bricklayers and to accept the new profession with dignity. Giustina, who came to the camp "a mescolare il suo destino a quello degli altri compagni, anch'essi sbandati e senza identità"(174), joins her lover Vinicio. She is carrying his child and hopes for a better future.

While Giustina is in the camp we are able to get a grasp of the squalid living conditions of the once proud farm-owners and Istrian families. Giustina's impression is

... di trovarsi in una caserma: uno sgabuzzino provvisorio assegnato ai familiari del ragazzo chiamato sotto le armi, i quali non hanno neppure vuotato interamente i bauli nella certezza di doversi spostare fa breve tempo in un identico sgabuzzino già pronto ad attenderli in altra località. (109)

In fact, Vinicio's mother confesses to Giustina her hope of an imminent transfer, "Per fortuna pare ci abbiano assegnato un altro posto. In una casa vera e propria, questa volta. Mica come qui che ti pareranno le tende degli zingari sotto Vilania!" [An Istrian village] (112). The dream of owning a place, a house, lives on. Meanwhile, the refugees are condemned to tight spaces with very primitive sanitary conditions.

Soon, Giustina's initial hope to remain with Vinicio in Italy begins to vanish due to her psychological torments. She decides to leave the camp and go back to her father in

Istria but while trying to cross the border she meets her tragic end. A Yugoslav guard shoots her while Stepancich, who heard the shot, describes his reaction, “Credetti di sentire una lepre ferita lamentarsi dietro il muro”(188). Giustina’s end is described through her perception: “le sue gambe vacillano e il cielo diventa viola” (193). The daring act of crossing the imaginary dividing line between two enemy territories (an action attempted by many Istrian runaways) is contained in the lament of one wounded, dying creature: la “ragazza di Petrovia.”

There are different accounts of how many people escaped or exiled legally from this region and sought refuge in Italy. Father Flaminio Rocchi states: “Il problema dei 316,000 profughi giuliani, fiumani e dalmati fa parte della grande tragedia mondiale.” (207) Guido Rumici, a historian, reports that even Tito admitted in 1972, in a speech, that over 300,000 people left Istria.<sup>18</sup> Raoul Pupo, another historian, comments, “Nei campi gli esuli si sentivano talvolta più reclusi che assistiti. Nel 1949 il ministro dell’Interno dispose che a tutti i profughi che chiedevano il rinnovo della carta d’identità venissero prese le impronte digitali”(210). He also notes that the refugees took this disposition as a great offense. It was a hard blow to their Italian identity and a bitter reminder that their homeland treated them as criminals.

The world of the refugee camps was a world of alienation, insecurity, discrimination, poverty, loss of self-esteem, fear of ‘the other’ and hopelessness.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Rumici. ‘Il lungo dopoguerra nella Venezia Giulia. L’Esodo della popolazione Giuliana’, “Atti del seminario”. Ed. Carmen Palazzolo Debianchi. Trieste: Associazione delle Comunità Istriane, 2004, p. 168.

<sup>19</sup> Despite this sense of dispossession, a new bond developed among the Istrians in the refugee camps. Raul Pupo tells us that “Fu l’esilio che maturò una comune identità istriana capace di travalicare le precedenti appartenenze... Identità che sarebbe stata rafforzata e perpetuata dalla rete dell’associazionismo della diaspora” (212).

Later due to the lobbying at the government level by these groups, some rights were recognized to the exiles/refugees while the refugees associations were effective in preserving the traditional values of their abandoned homeland and worked with the government in recognizing the martyrdom suffered by Istrians. In fact, the associations were involved in obtaining from the government

Tomizza's narrative portrays the initial uprootedness, and the temporary stay of the refugees in the refugees camps, while Gianni Oliva, in his book *Profughi* describes the permanent consequences and the effects it had on the Istrian exiles:

Mentre i profughi iniziano il faticoso cammino per conservare la propria identità storica e culturale sul loro dramma scende un impenetrabile silenzio dello stato. ... sono un fardello ingombrante perché dimostrano che l'Italia è uscita sconfitta dalla Guerra. (i)

The refugees who could not resettle in Italy had to look elsewhere to begin a new life. Many emigrated to Australia, South America, Canada, and the United States. These original exiles, then refugees, were now identified with a new and familiar term, 'immigrants'. Another identity yet to be assumed, constructed and explored – another language to be learned and a new culture to intergrate with.

The immigrants could not carry with them their 'masserizie' but they took with them across the ocean their precious childhood possessions: the Istroveneto dialect and their culinary and religious traditions, which in many cases were the only inheritance of their homeland identity.

Tomizza's narrative incorporates the painful and diverse experiences of the Istrian immigrants. In *I rapporti colpevoli*, we follow an immigrant Istrian family to Argentina and their difficult intergration in the new world and their disappointing return to their homeland after a life time abroad. The protagonist's maternal sister Eligia and her husband Pietro migrated to Argentina and later, Eligia invited her younger sister Vespera

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permission for the proclamation which recognized the Istrian tragedy. "Il giorno del ricordo" is celebrated on February 10<sup>th</sup> each year since 2004: people visit the foiba of Basovizza and bring wreaths and flowers.

"La difesa dell'identità" is also discussed by historian Gianni Oliva: "Le difficoltà, che i profughi attraversavano prima di approdare ad una nuova normalità, lasciano segni profondi in tante storie individuali e di famiglia, ribaltando spesso ruoli sociali e condizioni economiche, ma non provocano la deriva della comunità, né sul piano morale, né su quello culturale: I giuliano-dalmati sanno raccogliersi attorno alla propria identità, diffendendola attraverso la memoria, ma anche rifondandola con dignità all'interno dei campi, utilizzando al meglio i pochi spazi fisici e psicologici che essi lasciano. Ogni campo sotto questo profilo, ha una sua 'piccola storia', un insieme di iniziative, di momenti, di progetti che disegnano un percorso lento ma positivo verso la riappropriazione del futuro." (179)

and husband Osvaldo to join them. After the young couple accepted, they experienced doubts and painful initial impressions:

Nei cinquanta giorni di mare gli emigrati di Scarbaria, al massimo del loro vigore e delle possibilità, ebbero tutto il tempo per pentirsi di aver dato credito cieco a una semisconosciuta che li faceva andare all'altro capo del mondo. ... Al porto di Buenos Aires non trovarono nessuno ad attenderli. Vennero invece attorniti da gente di tutte le razze... Al tassista porsero il retro di una busta da lettera con mittente. Dopo due ore furono scaricati tra capanne col tetto di latta sprofondato dal fango... furono accompagnati su una strada ugualmente melmosa, fiancheggiata da casupole in mattoni coperte da lastre di eternit. (163)

The description paints a miserable picture: the newly arrived immigrants experienced a total cultural shock. Their complicated life saga in Argentina ends with their return to Istria. Vespera left “l’America dove non aveva che patito”(183). An interesting scene unfolds upon Vespera’s return and upon her meeting with her old mother who, not recognizing the other daughter says, “Chi è quell’altra matta?”(157). Eligia, now Argentinian, tries to suit her mother by saying, “Madre cara, madre santa” ...*Despacio*, madre....che non abbia *a passar ahora* cioè che non vi auguro da qui a trent’anni” (157). There are two interesting points here. One is the sudden insertion of Spanish vocabulary and the second is the “trent’anni,” a prediction of her mother’s death (the mother will die 30 years later). In fact, Eligia was believed to have a sorceress’ magic power for which even her family looked at her ‘strangely.’ Other Spanish words surface during their conversation, ‘linda,’ ‘otro,’ ‘mas bueno,’ etc. Tomizza is conscious of how the acquisition of a foreign language becomes mixed with the speaker’s original language. This interference points to a hybrid language identity. Eligia moves to another location, and the narrator comments, “Mi sarebbe piaciuto seguirla, fortemente attratto dalla sua parlata, poggiante su delle “g” e delle “c” dolci rimaste quelle zotiche dei vecchi, e alla

quale il castigliano prestava un'enfasi chiesastica [della] mia terra" (162). The 'zotico' denotes the remnants of the original dialect that the immigrant 'zia' inherited and retained. The term 'chiesastico' suggests the canonical, almost priestly, adherence to the sacredness of the native speech. The desire for 'immortality', in the case of the immigrant Osvaldo, seems to have been left on the entrance door of the maternal home. "I coniugi argentini vollero lasciare un segno del loro passaggio, che sarebbe dovuto sopravvivere a loro stessi. Il marito muratore dotò la porta d'ingresso di una gettata di calcestruzzo perché la vecchia non scivolasse sul fango; firmò l'opera con nome e cognome e vi appose la data" (161).

The nexus language-identity is evident throughout Tomizza's works. The cultural and ideological identification is equally present in his characters, it even collides within the members of the same family where family's upbringing, religious beliefs and behavior clash. In *Rapporti colpevoli*, for example, religious collision is seen between two sisters. When Eligia, who migrated to Argentina, comes back home to Istria, she is worshipping an Indio statuette of terra cotta. For the other sister, Vespera, with a Catholic upbringing, this act is totally sacrilegious and offensive.

In Tomizza the many faces of identity are often represented according to the status of "andati" and "rimasti." The "andati" who remained in Italy, called esuli, had to 'defend' their 'italianity.' They had to prove their place of origin and their language. The "andati" who migrated to foreign countries such as South America, the United States, Australia etc. had to 'restrain' their identity in order to blend into the new cultural and linguistic environment. The "rimasti," instead, had to 'conceal' their Italian identity, such as avoid speaking Italian, which was prohibited in many places by the Yugoslav regime.

Thus, the *rimasti* often felt abandoned and hopeless, and struggled to cope with the oppression imposed by the new political regime.

Many “rimasti” kept their Italian identity alive (privately) through old Italian songs, letter writing, and care packages sent by relatives from Trieste or other Italian cities. In *Valize & Destini*, a book by Tajana Ujcic, the correspondence between the ‘andati’ and ‘rimasti’ is amply documented. The letters reproduced in this volume express the loneliness of the *esuli* and their pain of separation. These themes have been extensively explored in exile writings across the ages, from the ancient times, through Dante, to modern times. The piercing sense of feeling ‘ovunque solo’ is poetically exemplified by these Lamennais’ lines:

Sono passato tra le genti. M’hanno fissato.  
Io li ho fissati e non ci siamo riconosciuti.  
L’esule è ovunque solo.

M’hanno chiesto perché piangi?  
Poiché non avrebbero compreso il mio pianto  
Ho risposto: nessuno piange.  
L’esule è ovunque solo. (qtd. in F. Rocchi 101)

The theme of loneliness is also expressed in *Rapporti colpevoli* by the Argentinian zia, (one of the ‘andati’) who longs for her native Istria and who returns to her land after many years of residing in South America. Like many other emigrants dispersed throughout the world, she dreams of a happy return. Unfortunately, her return to the homeland does not match her expectations and it is rather a bittersweet experience. After years of wandering, a return to one’s homeland cannot but be disappointing. In poetry and in prose, from Ulysses to today’s Bosnian immigrants’ memoirs, nostalgia and loneliness permeate the pages of literature. The sense of loss is real, as no one can go back in time since the past is often remembered with sentimentality and unrealistic

expectations. The migrant “zia Argentina,” looking for some relatives, finds out that “son passati alla miglior vita” and could only be found in the village cemetery.

The return of the zia is described by the narrator as a shipwreck, “La spedizione della zia trovò peraltro una meta scombinata con i suoi ricordi e fu un mezzo naufragio” (160). During her stay in Argentina she intergrated with the adopted nation and developed her Argentinian identity. However, when she went back to her original home she encountered the linguistic and cultural collisions between the old world she left and the world she acquired. ‘Una meta scombinata’ reminds us of missing pieces of a puzzle that cannot ever be put together.

The nexus language-culture identity for immigrants has a generational span. For the immigrants the original linguistic and cultural aspects in a new world tend to fade with each generation. For example, when Italian immigrants arrived in the United States they were identified as ‘Italians.’ Their children born in America became ‘Italian-Americans.’ Their grandchildren are labeled ‘American-Italians’ while succeeding generations call themselves ‘Americans.’

However, the issue of identity at the border areas usually crossess generations because of border instability and national changes. The national identity is imposed upon the subjects by the occupator, as seen in the Giuliano-Dalmata region, which was contested by different nations. The land of Istria, Quarner islands, and part of Dalmatia were occupied by a foreign authority on the pretext to bring freedom to the population.

During my research overseas, I conducted an interview with Mr. Domenico Cugliani, an older gentleman from the Quarner island of Cherso (now Cres, Latin Crepsa) about his personal experiences under three different nations and governments. As an

eyewitness of the changes that occurred in his hometown over a span of over ninety years, Mr. Cugliani reminisced:

I have lived through three liberations. The Austro-Hungarians came and told us they had liberated us. The Fascists came and told us they had liberated us. The Communists came and also told us they have liberated us. I have never asked to be liberated and, moreover, I still do not know what we were liberated from.  
(Interview)

I found the anecdote very interesting, as it embodies the essence of a constructed ideological freedom and the pretext to impose a national identity, which at the border has a direct impact on people's psyche. The frequent changes of national flag become a common and insignificant occurrence. The pledge of allegiance becomes a routine act, while the attachment to one's land and language becomes stronger and ultimately is the only anchor. Language then becomes a natural and safe harbor of one's identity. In fact for Fulvio Tomizza identification with the Italian language remained stable and became certified by his literary legacy.

In the interview *Destino di Frontiera*, Riccardo Ferrante asked Tomizza:

“*Materada* è il libro di uno scrittore che non si identifica né nel mondo dell'Istria croata, né in quello dell'Istria italiana e che trova in questa inappartenenza la sua identità.

Com'è avvenuto questo senso di inappartenenza?” The writer answered:

Ho vissuto fino all'estremo l'assurdità dei nazionalismi. La discordia ha creato due gruppi di persone consanguinee e la guerra li ha fatti scontrare: recriminazioni, delazioni, vendette, il farsi del male... Non mi sono mai indentificato bene né con l'Italia né con la Jugoslavia. Io ho sangue slavo, mentre la mia educazione è tutta italiana (36-37).

In her memoir of life in Pula (Croatia) Nelida Milani writes: “Gente di confine significa anche fragilità estrema. ... di un luogo prenatale dove avversione e attrazione, ancora indistinguibili, sono una componente dell'aria stessa. ... e si confonde in una fascia grigia



stratificata e sovrapposta, in un territorio rimosso, quasi onirico nella sua reale irrealtà” (Bora 44). Russell Valentino calls Tomizza’s ‘not-belonging to a nation’, “cultural cameleonism [which] derives from an older problem ... from a lifelong struggle at the border of multiple cultures.” (190) Tomizza’s ‘inappartenenza’ to a fixed nationality was not only a literary theme, but a lifetime quest. Tomizza investigates thoughts and emotions of his characters – people who lived in spaces contested by various nationalisms and who assimilated two different linguistic and cultural worlds -- the Slavic and the Latin-Mediterranean one. Mauro Covacich uses the metaphor of the ‘leopardo’: “Una delle maggiori difficoltà per tracciare il confine sulla Venezia Giulia [è] proprio la presenza disomogenea di comunità italiane e slave che, nell’Istria in particolare assumeva la classica conformazione a macchia di leopardo” (9). To establish or claim an identity becomes “un’identità dilemmatica” which Covacich deems “possibile solo nel dimidiamento” (9).

In *Rapporti colpevoli* Tomizza describes how the sense of belonging to the Yugoslav nation was perceived by the “rimasti” who had no choice and who had to cope and adapt psychologically by accepting the political change, and different ways of living dictated by the ideology of the new nation. The narrator comments: “Noi non ci trovavamo né in Francia né negli Stati Uniti, però vivevamo a un passo da Trieste e incominciavamo ad appartenere ad un paese che aveva un ruolo di spicco nel Terzo Mondo”(160). To belong to a new nation that has “un ruolo di spicco” underscores, ironically, people’s need to give some meaning to their new imposed nationality, which was replacing their past Italian national identity.

Milani, who remained in Istria, adds, “La non-appartenenza diventa mitezza rassegnata, ordine rassegnato, calma rassegnata ... che di volta in volta fanno anche sorgere l’inquietante sospetto che, questo istriano è in qualche modo italiano ed è in qualche modo slavo”(45).

On many occasions Tomizza seems to put a heavy weight on the term ‘destino.’ His book *Destino di frontiera* is an example of this: it evokes the unfortunate, discouraging fate of a territory and of its people, who are “predestined” to be uprooted and continue with their past of ‘collective tragedies.’ Yet, the same interview also offers a historical overview of the Istrian peninsula and its people, who found tolerance and understanding in their diversity. In reference to the Balkan war of 1991, which dissolved Yugoslavia, Ferrante asked Tomizza,

L’Istria riesce a mantenere un maggiore equilibrio, rimane un’isola di relativa tranquillità ... Ciò ha sicuramente a che fare con quelle caratteristiche peculiari di multilinguismo, di multietnicità che lei tante volte ha richiamato nelle sue opere come dato di straordinaria importanza. ...l’Istria potrebbe essere un laboratorio di ‘anazionalismo’ in un’Europa che purtroppo sta diventando per molti aspetti Europa dei nazionalismi. A suo parere, è corretto impostare il problema in questo modo?(12).

Tomizza’s answer was: “È una visione perfetta, non c’è da spostare nulla.” And his motto ‘ET-ET’ and AUT-AUT’ was used again, but this time only with the ET-ET: “l’essere italiano che non escluda l’essere croato e viceversa. Qui si può essere l’una cosa e l’altra. Si dovrà trovare una ricetta per realizzare questo” (122). (This interview took place in 1992)

In 1997 Tomizza published *Il sogno dalmata*. The narrator first describes the exodus of his “paesani” and his steadfast decision that he would remain in his neighbourhood and on the land he loves. Then, suddenly, he makes a turnabout. The

narrator decides to leave Istria, with the awareness that his choice will continue to haunt him:

Allo scadere dei termini dell'esodo feci un ragionamento inverso: l'anima delle cose, dei luoghi, dei ricordi, si era trasferita di là, stava dall'altra parte. E partii sapendo o soltanto temendo di collocarmi per sempre in uno spazio di mezzo, neutro e impervio, nel quale molte volte mi sarei sentito estraneo anche a me stesso. (56)

Stefanie Schuman discusses the same idea of "spazio di mezzo" about Turkish migrants in Germany: "The permanent negotiation of belonging characterizes a dichotomy between retention of the ethnic and adoption of the [new culture] ... this phenomenon creates the so called "third space" referred as hybrid identity."

*(Hybrid Identity Formation of Migrants 1)*

Anna Maria Mori states:

Io le sento, le mie radici incrociate: sono mezza slava e mezza italiana. E so che non posso rinunciare alla mia parte slava, come non posso rinunciare a quella italiana. Noi, qui, siamo così, in tanti eravamo e siamo così. Ed essere fatti così: significa vivere camminando sulla corda tesa: a ogni passo puoi cadere, e cadi, dall'una o dall'altra parte. Non sei fino in fondo né l'una né l'altra cosa: sei una cosa terza. (107)

Some modern writers, discouraged from defining their identity according to the traditional place of birth as the identity factor, (which are classified by Bernard Lewis as "involuntary identities"(3), have devised their own way of identification. For Sandra Arosio identity is a matter of feeling: "... è un fatto interiore, un sentimento, una scelta." ("Resine" 103)<sup>20</sup>

Charles Klopp remarks, "The forced exchange not just of nationality but of self-hood has created a multiplicity of cultural identities for many Istrians." For him: the

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<sup>20</sup> In reviewing the border writer Franco Vegliani and his novel *La frontiera*, Arosio comments: "[Vegliani veniva] da quella frontiera instabile più delle altre e più delle altre aperta agli attriti e alle mescolanze delle nazioni, dove la propria identità, non solo etnica e culturale, ma anche esistenziale non è un elemento ovvio. ... (e) viene contrastata, destinata a veder variare i propri punti di riferimento a seconda del mutare del contesto politico" ("Resine" 103).

forced deracination, ‘reracination,’ and even ‘polyracination’ of these ethnic Italians is a major theme not only in the works of Mori and Milani, but also in those of Fulvio Tomizza, ... Much of Tomizza’s writing centers on the aftermath of what Giani Stuparich called “Trieste and Venezia Giulia’s bitterest days when the powerful of the world toyed with our tiny destiny.” (“Bele Storie Antiche” 8-9) Russell Valentino, a scholar, compares “the multiplicity of cultural identities to a multiplicity of selves or characters”. In “Doppia Anima,” discussing Tomizza and Triestini writers, Valentino refers to ‘fluidity’ or ‘liquidity’ as the quality of a character and the capacity to maintain open lines of communication. He sees “fluidity” as a “healthy and malleable” ingredient “for the acceptance of differences” (“Bele Storie Antiche” 200).

The multinational phenomena of identity of the Venezia Giulia population brings us close to the notion of hybridity found in other parts of the world. Bernard Lewis also classifies identity as “compulsory,” when it belongs to the state or nation. Today, some subjects may have two or three different citizenships, which allow them to have different passports. These cases pertain mostly to borderline people and they are not examples of loyalty to nationalism, but they are a matter of economic convenience.<sup>21</sup>

Writing about modern history of Trieste and its surroundings Jan Morris nostalgically says:

The Europe of my dreams had never existed, above all because of nationality. If race is a fraud, as I often think in Trieste, then the nationality is a cruel pretense. There is nothing organic to it. As the tangled history of this place shows, it is disposable. You can change your nationality by the stroke of a notary pen; you can enjoy two nationalities at the same time or find your nationality altered for

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<sup>21</sup> On documents we often find the acronym DOB (date of birth) and POB (place of birth). The DOB is simply an anagraphic data recorded in the registry of births, but the POB, which is often obscure, confusing and many times non-existent on modern maps. The reason is its ‘deictic’ nature, which produces an enigmatic geographical quest, due to the shaping and reshaping of borders and changing nations. This political factor in modern times has caused a very costly loss not only of identity, but often of property and created animosity and clashes between brothers, neighbors, and friends.

you, overnight, by statesmen far away. In one of his books Joseph Conrad ...knowing how artificial nationality was, likened it to ‘an accomplishment with varying degrees of excellence’. It is not usually racial prejudice that incites hooligans to bash each other in football stadiums, but particularly unaccomplished convictions of nationhood. The false passion of the nation-state made my conceptual Europe no more than a chimera: and because of nationality the city [and the surrounding Istria] far from being a member of some mighty ideal whole, was debilitated in loneliness. (122-123)

Nationality is not always understood and it does not have the same semantic meaning.

For example, in France ‘nationalité’ defines a citizen’s allegiance to the state. In the United States is the same, but in Russia, for example, the word is ‘grazhdanstvo’ (phonetic spelling) indicates citizenship, while nationality means ethnic belonging. The same system was used in former Yugoslavia..

Thus, the modern term “nationality” mutates because of the pressures of political machines and it has acquired different political weight and functions, especially under Communism, during Tomizza’s upbringing in his borderline Istria.

Tomizza’s choice to identify nationality by language and culture is not unique. Jean-Marie LeClezio, for example, a well-known novelist, who was born in France and raised in Mauritius (Mauretania), embraces two different cultures at the same time. The Mauritanian upbringing instilled in him the Mauritanian culture of legends, folklore, food etc., while his upbringing in France was responsible for his French culture and French language. When asked in an interview what he considered his homeland, he answered: “I love the French language which is perhaps my true country” (Interview 3). Thus, LeClezio’s identity is associated with language. When Tomizza declares, “La mia educazione è tutta italiana” (*Destino di frontiera* 36), there is an echo of LeClezio’s belief -- identification by language.

Another writer, yet, who also in exile experienced the effects of the border syndrome, sees European literature as a huge hybrid of cultures and identities. He sees through the Mediterranean civilization a constant exchange: not a continuous collision, but an absorption, a sort of osmosis among people and literatures. There is no place for that mythical ‘pure race’ which nationalist used for their political and territorial expansion and evil purposes. He sees identity as follows:

Il mio nome è Gèzim è una parola albanese vuol dire gioia, ma il mio cognome Hajdari viene dall’arabo, appartiene agli sciti, e lo si trova in Iran, Irak, Siria, Afganistan, Turchia, Grecia. La mia lingua madre, l’albanese, contiene nel suo lessico moderni neologismi latini, italiani, slavi, greci. La mia nascita è balcanica, ma la mia lingua adottiva, nonché la mia esperienza diventano italiane, e la mia seconda patria la lingua italiana. La mia formazione è un po’ di tutto: dall’epica albanese ai poeti classici cinesi, dai taoisti ai mistici arabi ai maledetti francesi agli ermetici italiani. Io vivo in bivio a ogni equilibrio. Non voglio avere appartenenza, perché l’appartenenza è morte... Gèzim è la mia identità è il mio corpo la mia patria.” (Parole migranti 2)

Just as Tomizza chooses ‘non-appartenenza,’ Hajdari also refuses to belong, because ‘avere appartenenza’ in a border region where ethnic origins are lost in time, means stagnation. It means death.

Anna Maria Mori takes a neutral approach to this issue and states, “l’identità di frontiera è una ricchezza e una debolezza” (29). For Tomizza, the border may be a place of collision as well as a point of encounter. In the next section I will discuss the cultural collisions in some of Tomizza’s works.

### **I:III Borderline – Cultural Collisions**

Borderline experiences are deeply rooted in the history of humankind and are part of a doleful drama often depicted by visual artists and writers. Since the dawn of history, border changes, exodus, displacement, intimidation, imprisonment, forced migration, and

exclusion have been reported and documented. The experience of the ‘borderline individual’ has been the focus of studies in many different fields, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, and history. Many autobiographical works testify to the physical and psychological suffering caused by the frontier experience. Some Triestini writers, such as Gianni Stuparich, Quarantotto Gambini, and Scipio Slataper are part of “scrittori di frontiera” who recognize these cultural collisions. The legacy of feminist writer Gloria Anzaldua points out cultural divisions and artificial cultural borders. Unfortunately, today, in many parts of the world, borderline conflicts still exist. “Globalization brings the immigration experience beyond borders and makes the collision of cultures a reality everywhere”(Anzaldua, Introduction 4).

Cultural collision is often referred to as a clash of social and personal cultural values. Democracy encourages integration and attempts to prevent or mitigate conflicts. Cultural differences, when fomented by political machines, can inflame the population, break up communities and bring about atrocities and hatred.

The cultural collisions in Istria, which Tomizza portrays in his works, are summarized by Zivko Nizic, a Croatian scholar and critic:

Incontro o collisione intorno al confine e come confine, opposizioni sorte dallo scontro di macromondi (i Romani, gli Slavi e i Germani) sul microcampo Istria, collisione di macroideologie (macroeconomie) capitalismo-fascismo-socialismo-capitalismo balcanico nelle guerre, prima e dopo le guerre, poi lo scontro tra religioni e religioni eretiche, e ateismo, sono il campo di ricerca nei romanzi più importanti di Tomizza. (*Lo scrittore e i suoi confini* 91).

In fact, analyzing Tomizza’s works, we find layers of cultural collisions on the Istrian territory, which occurred before and during his time. His historical novels testify to it. For example, *Il male viene dal nord*, tells the story of Pier Paolo Vergerio, the

bishop of Capodistria during the Reformation, who was caught between the culture of the Vatican and the Court of Vienna. In Tomizza's works the syndrome of cultural collision is captivating because of his insistence on defining borderline ("la frontiera") "come forma di collisione accompagnata da fenomeni sia negativi che positivi"(99).

Tomizza declares in an interview, "La frontiera può essere motivo di arricchimento. Si può disporre di due o più educazioni, culture, esperienze a volte anche religioni. Quindi si dovrebbe essere in una condizione di privilegio, sul dispiacere di due o tre mondi. In realtà questa situazione si risolve spesso in una perdita d'identità"(48).

Fulvio Tomizza understood that,

Invece di avvicinare i popoli e i governi, di funzionare da cerniera fra razze diverse, queste situazioni di frontiera a volte sono causa di conflitti e, sul piano privato, di uno scontento, di un'estraneazione continui. C'è dunque un diritto e un rovescio della medaglia. Io ho cercato di pormi come conciliatore, dopo lacerazioni terribili. (48)

In fact, he constructs characters who lived historically the drama and the tragedy of the people divided at the border and who were used as instruments for political gain. At the same time, he may also be telling us a love story and his characters' private torments.

As shown in the author's works that I discussed earlier, all his characters are affected by cultural collisions. In *Materada* the cultural clash is seen with the old way of life and the bustling energy of the new system; on a personal family level the confrontation occurs on husbandry's management. In *La ragazza di Petrovia* the collision is perceived between the old way of living in Istria and the new unsettling life in Refugee Camps. In *Franziska* ethnicity as much as language collide in the relationship of Franziska and Nino Ferrari. Similarly, in *La miglior vita*, sacristan Martin Krusich tells us of two people, with different cultural backgrounds, who fall in love and end up



tragically. Even though *La miglior vita*, an epic story, takes place in Istria, a crossroad where different ethnic people settled, mixed and coexisted by sharing culture and language, the personal borders between people were impenetrable.

*La miglior vita* takes us to the early Yugoslav period where the love story between Miro, a Catholic priest, and Zora, a young, atheist, schoolteacher unfolds. By the nature of Miro's vocation and his devotion to faith, the reader immediately feels the foreboding – the Shakespearian 'star-crossed' destiny.<sup>22</sup> The young teacher is a product of the Communist revolutionary national movement thus religion had no place in her life. Their brief relationship is pathetic: they collide culturally, ending tragically.

In the preface of Zivko Nizic's *Kolizijske Kulture u Prozi Fulvia Tomizze*, several Croatian critics claim that Tomizza's works are imbued with universal themes on cultural collisions generated at the border: "Tematica kolizijskih kultura vrlo je prisutna i aktualna u svim pograničnim područjima gdje je normalno da ljudi drugacije žive i drugacije disu od ostalih"(5). (The theme of cultural collisions is very present and real in all border zones where it is normal that people live differently and breathe differently than others. – my translation).

Nikola Kolumbic states that Nizic's study on the narrative of Fulvio Tomizza is "najopsezniji i najpotpuniji rad" (the most comprehensive and the most complete work [on the Istrian cultural conflicts]). He continues: "On je inspiriran tim prostorom, posebno specifičnom duhovnom klimom kolizije nekoliko kultura u specifičnim socialnim, nacionalnim i političkim uvjetima" (He [Tomizza] is inspired by this space, [his Istrian land] especially with the collisions' specific spiritual climate of a few cultures

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<sup>22</sup> The phrase "star-crossed" was coined by William Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is referred to two lovers whose relationship is doomed from the beginning.

prevailing under specific social, national and political circumstances.) (Nizic *Kolizijske Kulture u Prozi Fulvije Tomizza* 6)

Tomizza's writing was not welcomed in Yugoslavia until the end of the sixties when relations between Italy and Yugoslavia eased. At that time some of his works were translated and critics were able to comment on them. He was able to return to Istria and purchase property where he chose to spend his summers, while his winters were spent in Trieste. With some normalization of government relationships, Tomizza became more hopeful for a peaceful coexistence and tolerance among people of different creed, race, language and religion.

Unfortunately, when the war broke out in the Balkans in 1991, Tomizza's hopes for a peaceful coexistence shattered. The massacres that ravaged Istria during World War II repeated themselves in Bosnia and hatred among Croats, Serbs and Muslims revamped again. In Yugoslavia another exile followed – this time from Bosnia - and history had to document once again the horrors of carnage and devastation. Tomizza suffered a setback and was very disappointed, but his later works expressed hope again as he believed that the efforts of the European Union and the opening of borders between the mitteleuropean cosmos and the Balkans would ultimately promote a peaceful coexistence so that diversity will be an asset not a collision.<sup>23</sup>

The environment in which a child lives has a direct impact on his/hers emotional and physical growth. The early stages are formative for self-awareness and, consequently, the early experiences are part of “who you are.” As a child Tomizza has

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<sup>23</sup> I recently visited the cemetery of Materada, where Fulvio Tomizza is resting in peace. On his tomb stone the inscription reads PASSATO ALLA MIGLIOR VITA in three languages: Slovenian, Italian and Croatian. (These three languages are still spoken in Istria). I feel it is a bittersweet reminder of his conviction that man can overcome differences. A better life can be reached only in death, but the coexistence of these three languages inscribed on his tomb stone is speaking of hope.

witnessed the suffering of his Istrian people. Therefore, I deem it essential to examine the psychological and psychosocial effects that these circumstances had on young Tomizza.

In his writing his recurrent themes of guilt, shame and betrayal appear to be remnants of his experiences, which I claim were imprinted into his subconscious and later transferred onto his characters. These themes will be examined in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER II - *CHILDHOOD*

### II:I Formation of Ego Identity

The previous chapter described the geo-political, linguistic and cultural realities of Fulvio Tomizza's space and time and how those experiences reflect his "social" identity as well as some of the identities of his literary characters. The following chapter will explore the psychological and psychosocial features of Fulvio Tomizza's literary character, Stefano Marcovich, often referred to as his alter ego, in order to see how various processes affected the formation of his ego identity and how they may be reflected in Tomizza's "personal" identity.<sup>24</sup>

In Tomizza's 'creative journey,' which Bernard Golden calls "one that involves exploration and evolution" (105), he seems to explore themes of shame, guilt, solitude, nostalgia, disappointment and betrayal. These recurrent themes in his works are, in my view, unresolved conflicts of his own identity, and I believe that his characters portray his quest. In fact, in a radio interview from 1971,<sup>25</sup> Tomizza states, "Scrivere significa vivere due volte."

"Psychoanalytic literary criticism does not constitute a unified field. However, all variants endorse, at least to certain degree, the idea that literature is fundamentally entwined with psyche", states Patricia Waugh (200). In Fulvio Tomizza's writings, psychological and psychosocial issues are 'entwined' in his characters: I will use an analytical approach to the themes mentioned above to focus particularly on the character of Stefano Marcovich.

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<sup>24</sup> See Buss, pages 89-109, for a discussion on social and personal identity.

<sup>25</sup> Radio Interview with Adrian Dugulin 'L'Ora del racconto', 1971 – During the opening of the exhibition "Fulvio Tomizza's Destino di frontiera" in Trieste on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, I witnessed Dugulin, the director of the Arte Cultura – Civici Musei di Storia ed Arte, recalling Tomizza's phrase from their past interview.

In the study of human development the psychologist Jan Kroger tried to answer some key questions such as, “When does identity form?” and “How do early life experiences affect one’s later sense of identity?”(4). The same questions were also asked by the developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson, a new-Freudian, while he was observing the growth of children in their environment. In his work he encompassed the psychosocial stages in human beings and their consequent identity crises. Even though there are many theories on human development, the eight theoretical stages postulated by Erikson and his tripartite division of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, coalesce well with Fulvio Tomizza’s trilogy: *La quinta stagione*, *L’albero dei sogni* and *La città di Miriam*, where he describes the growth of his main character Stefano Marcovich from childhood to adulthood.

Erik Erikson was influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud, who originated the theory of five psychosexual stages, while Erikson concentrated on the psychosocial aspect of human growth and identified eight stages in a life cycle. These eight stages coincide with biological growth and exposure to the sociocultural environment of the child. Erikson developed an “epigenetic chart suggesting ‘a global form of thinking’. ... The chart is only to think with, and cannot aspire to be a prescription to abide by, whether in a practice of child-training, in psychotherapy, or the methodology of child study” (273). As mentioned before, each psychological stage shows the Ego’s development outcome, basic strength and its approximated chronological age. Erikson also concluded that if a stage is not successfully completed some psychological problems may arise later in life (273).

Thus, this chapter will align Fulvio Tomizza's *La quinta stagione*, which describes Stefano's childhood, with the theory of Erikson's developmental stages, specifically stages I through IV, as delineated in the epigenetic chart, which is enclosed. I will also refer to other theories of various psychologists who may help elucidate my findings.

## **II:II Stefano's Childhood**

*La quinta stagione* is set in an Istrian village, Giurizziani, during Stefano's growing years. (0-10 years) We meet Stefano during the time of Fascism, and we follow him through the German invasion, the Italian and Yugoslav partisan struggles and the atrocities of World War II. Stefano was born into a well to do family. His father was a landowner and a merchant and the mother a storekeeper. Stefano had an older brother, Alfredo, who was studying to be a priest in a seminary in the nearby city of Capodistria. His large extended family all lived in the neighborhood villages and the interaction among the family members is described as cohesive and supporting. As we meet Stefano, the protagonist, his age is not revealed, but from his activities, conversations and engagements we can approximate it to be between five and ten. The book ends as Stefano is ten years of age, leaves his family and Giurizziani and pursues religious studies in the seminary of Capodistria. Thus, the period of his childhood can be approximately aligned with Erikson's chronological table of childhood development.

In the first paragraph of the book, we encounter Stefano and the village boys as they are busily involved with war games, chant battle cries and march to the tune of: "Battaglioni del Duce, Battaglioni," a war song chanted during Mussolini's time. Soon

after Stefano hears from the adults “...è cascato Mussolini” (60) and in his innocent child-voice he inquires, “Come è cascato? Da dove è cascato?” (60) and interprets it in a physical sense. Stefano is confused as he witnessed the fall of the Duce and the reader understands the historical time is 1943.

Stefano thus grows up in the period of WWII during dramatic, historical circumstances. Anella Prisco, a critic, commented during a conference presentation about *La quinta stagione*, “...abbiamo una scrittura che va sotto forma di fiaba. Una fiaba che ha però come sottofondo una terribile ineluttabile realtà, quella del secondo conflitto...un libro un po’ inquietante e impalpabile” (Lecture 6/17/200). Indeed, there were no predictable routines for the children and the external influences due to the war experiences shaped Stefano’s character. Helena Janeczek calls Tomizza’s *La quinta stagione* “un romanzo di formazione e la sua negazione” (*La quinta stagione*, Preface 16).

*La quinta stagione* opens up with a group of children of different ages and different economic statuses playing war games. These war-like games, which children of Giurizziani innocently play, mirror the real war looming around them: in their ‘pretend’ mode children may have diffused the fear of destruction. In their games they are using “fionde” and “cerbottane,” plastic weapons, matches, and are starting fire with old cartons and dry grass. All these items are used to make explosives. The first page reads, “Erano cinque sei ragazzi di Giurizziani. Nessuno di loro aveva ancora visto la guerra”(25). Thus, with the first page we immediately have a scene of children playing war games, but the narrator reminds us of the real war menacing in the distance: “Ne parlavano i grandi e i coscritti partivano – qualcuno tornato in licenza subito non lo si

riconosceva, vestito in grigioverde tra le case – mai dai campi e dai boschi non venivano che i colpi dei fucili da caccia”(25). The children’s play, meanwhile, turns out to be an experimentation with explosives:

Avevano pensato di far spari, dapprima con le capocchie dei fiammiferi che però sfrigolavano. Stefano arse un’intera scatola di cerini e altro non ne uscì che una fiammata. Marco consigliava i colorati che servivano alla marina ed ardevano anche bagnati; ma Danilo tagliò corto e disse di volere gli zolfanelli che almeno facevano puzza (26).

The children’s team-work is evident as they are trying out their ideas. They also decide to make more fireworks using a can with ‘carburo’ which finally rewarded them with the desired sound. In the game their experiment is successful and the experience positive.

The author Helena Janeczek remarks:

Il gioco, ci insegnano gli etologi, è una forma elementare di apprendimento. I cuccioli si impadroniscono dei comportamenti che dovranno esercitare da adulti. Ma nel caso dei esseri umani la cosa è più complicata. ... Il gioco, rispetto alla vita adulta, acquista uno spazio autonomo. Possiede uno statuto ambivalente tra l’essere fine a se stesso e continuare a fungere come palestra di esperienza (5).

It is this so called ‘palestra di esperienza’ that finds similarity in Erik Erikson’s *Toys and Reasons*, as he proposes the theory that “the child’s play is the infantile form of the human ability to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experiment and planning” (*Childhood and Society* 222).

Even in the early day of psychoanalysis, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud observing children developed the theory of the “fort/da” play which helped to master painful experiences in later life (12). The ritual of ‘fort/da’ can be observed still today playing with children/infants the “peek-a-boo” game of appearance and disappearance. Recent research confirms the notion that child play has a complex role, even though Angeline Lillard, a Montessori scholar, does not support the view that



pretend play is crucial for children's cognitive development. She states that, "pretend play works in concert with other factors to support children's development and pretend play is related to a number of early childhood learning and development outcomes" ("Psychological Bulletin", Vol. 139(1) Jan. 2013, 1-34)

In regards to the war games Nancy Carlson-Page, another renowned child psychologist, states, "War play is a form of play that has seemingly engaged children for centuries and across many cultures - artifacts of what look like war toys have been found from ancient Egypt to the Middle Ages." (Web.)

Recently "USA Today" dealt with a similar subject. The article titled, "Iraqi kids play make-believe war games", by Hendavi Hamza, describes Iraqi children playing make-believe war games on Baghdad's dusty streets today just as the Istrian children played war games more than 70 years ago. (Web)

Nancy Carlson-Page also speaks of the value of war plays. She claims,

War play can help children work on a number of important developmental issues. Perhaps more than any other form of dramatic play war allows children to feel powerful as they play...children can experience a sense of power and competence in war play. (Web)

In Tomizza's *La quinta stagione* the war games do not seem to have the predicted effect of Nancy Carlson-Page's theory on young Stefano, as he does not exhibit a sense of power or competence. As Stefano plays in a group with older children the narrator often describes Stefano's feelings of mistrust, loneliness, disappointment, shame and guilt. For example, the other children do not obey him when he is trying to give an order. The reason could be that he is the youngest one in the group and "age is a central factor in the pecking order" (Haimowitz 162-163).

Another example of Stefano's disappointment is seen when the children are finally able to get a sound out of their made-up explosive device. The author describes the behavior of the group:

Gridarono tutti, tranne Stefano. Si sentiva un po' triste come a ogni nuovo evento: in parte perché non era stato lui a provocarlo, o almeno prevederlo, in parte perché la sua aspettativa rimaneva sempre delusa, qualunque fosse il risultato. Gli altri avevano perso la testa, si buttavano addosso gonfiando le gote a imitare la detonazione, rotolavano per la rodina<sup>26</sup> in pendio verso le viti. (29)

One immediately realizes that Stefano stands apart from the other kids. He feels disappointed, sad and inadequate for he did not fire-up the device.

Among the screams and uproar of the pretend warriors, Stefano tries to impart some orders, but the children ignore him:

[I ragazzi erano] pronti a scattare con urla e baionette di acacia, ignorando i comandi di Stefano che pur aveva in testa il fez di papà. Era solo; con quei fronzoli che gli toglievano la vista, girava perduto per il campo incitando invano gli altri a seguirlo con le parole del Duce. (30)

In this description one may sense the narrator's ironic attitude towards il Duce and his disapproval of Italy's participation in WWII.

## **II:III Basic Trust vs. Mistrust**

Some of the reasons and the origins of the negative feelings discussed above, I believe, can be traced by using the framework of Erikson's epigenetic chart. We learn that the stage from birth to approximately the age of two, what Freud called the 'oral stage,' is explained by Erikson as a stage where basic trust or mistrust develops:

The first demonstration of social trust in the baby is the ease of his feeding, the depth of his sleep, the relaxation of his bowels. The

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<sup>26</sup> 'Rodina' from Croatian 'rudina' meaning grass, field, square in the village or space between houses where the harvest may be accumulated.

experience of a mutual regulation of his increasingly receptive capacities with the maternal techniques of provision gradually helps him to balance the discomfort caused by the immaturity of homeostasis with which he was born... (147). The first establishment of the enduring patterns for the solution of the nuclear conflict of basic trust versus basic mistrust in a mere existence is the first task of the ego, and thus first of all a task for maternal care. (249)

The infant's basic needs of food and love, then, are directly related to maternal care; however, Erikson states that, "the amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstration of love but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship" (249). From Erikson's theory we understand that the biological need and the psychosocial forces must not conflict or a feeling of abandonment and delusion will develop in the future. In this dynamics the crucial agent is the mother, or a steady caregiver. In the case of Stefano, we do not know how many of his needs have been met or how much he has suffered the pain of abandonment. However, from various comments Stefano makes about his mother, it can be assumed that his mother at this particular stage of Stefano's infancy could not have possibly had an optimal relationship with her son.<sup>27</sup> As we progress in *La quinta stagione* some examples will illustrate the character of Stefano's mother, her interests and her commitment to a business world rather than to full-time motherhood.

During an incident, when Stefano is given a shotgun by his friend Villy to target a chicken, by mistake, he hits the servant Dina in the leg. Fearful of the parental consequences, Stefano runs away from home, while his older brother Alfredo is trying to persuade him to return home. He knows that he will be punished by his father, but

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<sup>27</sup> In a 'personal' interview in Trieste on July 7, 2007, Laura Levi, Tomizza's widow, confirmed that Fulvio Tomizza and his mother did not have a good relationship.

Alfredo tells him, “Ora vedrai dalla mamma che cosa ti tocca. Lei è ancora più arrabbiata” (33). And the narrator continues:

E lei non dimenticava; lavorava in bottega tutto il giorno, pesava la roba e incassava i soldi dietro il banco, la sera misurava il latte che le donne dei paesi più lontani portavano, e alle tre si alzava per caricare i vasi sul carretto che Bepo conduceva al piroscabo di Umago; ma non dimenticava.  
(33)

The three things we can infer are: Stefano’s mother is a disciplinarian, she works long hours, and she is concerned with money. The narrator continues: “Lei aveva il sarmento sulla nappa, lasciava trascorrere tutta la giornata e d’improvviso chiudeva la porta: esattezza e il calcolo non la abbandonavano: picchiava sulle mani, sul sedere, mai sulla testa.” (33). The mother believed in punishment and the words “calcolo” and “esattezza” are emphasized, showing how her behavior is adherent to a mercantile disciplined mentality. She was either in the shop, tending the grape harvest, working in the kitchen, or collecting milk. We read: “La madre era sempre assente sul cucito o sui conti,” and her own words are: “Non ho nemmeno il tempo per fare la croce” (33). Another example of her calculating, hard-working attitude is during a village dance when Stefano’s parents were invited to dance:

Papa ballò attento al passo mentre mamma girava con un’aria indefinibile sul volto, come di commiserazione e di rammarico per un altrui spreco, che spariva soltanto nei brevi intervalli, allorché i suoi occhi si posavano di sfuggita sulle donne ai margini ognuna delle quali le doveva qualcosa.  
(129)

The woman could not even enjoy the dance party without thinking of her creditors and looking at the event as a waste.

After Stefano is harshly beaten by his father as punishment for shooting Dina and left in the kitchen in tears and pain with his mom, he reflects on his mother’s indifference

and insensitivity: “pensò che se fosse stata una donna come le altre si sarebbe messa a piangere” (43). These examples seem to indicate a type of a woman who is cold, business-like, calculating and heartless.<sup>28</sup> Stefano did not have the privilege to bond with his mother as an infant and, therefore, he did not develop a warm relationship with her. As a consequence, according to our epigenetic chart, I believe that Stefano’s mistrust, his solitude, feeling of abandonment, nostalgia and the anxiety that he shows in his growing years, are related to this phase.

#### **II:IV Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt**

Again, I will use the theory of life cycle to try to discover the roots of Stefano’s feelings of doubt and shame, which accompanied him throughout his childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The second stage of Erikson’s epigenetic chart focuses on Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. It is the stage connected to “muscular maturation, ...with two sets of social modalities: holding on and letting go” (251). We are simply dealing here with ‘toilet training.’ The child for the first time has a choice but is not ready to make decisions. Erikson states,

Outer control at this stage ... must be firmly reassuring. [The child] must come to feel that the basic faith in existence, which is the lasting treasure saved from the rages of the oral stage, will not be jeopardized by this about-face of his ... Firmness must protect him against the potential anarchy of his as yet untrained sense of discrimination, his inability to hold on and to let go with discretion (*Childhood and Society* 252).

The child must also be encouraged “to stand on his own feet” and must be protected “against meaningless and arbitrary experiences of shame and of early doubt” (252).

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<sup>28</sup> If Stefano is the alter-ego of Fulvio Tomizza, the textual description of Stefano mother’s character can be connected to the biographical dimensions of Fulvio Tomizza’s mother. In fact, in another ‘personal’ interview with Mrs. Laura Tomizza on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 in Trieste I learned that Fulvio was nursed by a village woman called Lidia. This fact reinforces the assumption that Stefano/Fulvio did not bond with his mother.

It is hard to find evidence as to what kind of ‘toilet training’ little Stefano had in his household and how much encouragement he received from his parents. However, gathering from the environment where Stefano grew up and from his and the narrator’s comments, we can surmise that children were not protected from early experiences of shame. Most of the homes in the village of Giurizziani at the time of Stefano’s childhood did not have an indoor toilet<sup>29</sup> and in Giurizziani, a rural place, a construction called ‘tigor’ (stalla-stable) and the nearby fields served for the purposes of bodily needs. For example, there is a graphic reference to the process of bodily elimination when his friend Danilo, “calava le braghe, faceva il mucchietto, e si allacciava le bretelle”(35). Because neighborhoods in the village were in close proximity, and smaller and older children played together, the experience of the “anal stage” was, most likely, more public than private. Danilo’s defecation outdoors is witnessed by other children and “shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at: in one word, self-conscious” (Erikson, 252). Other psychologists also agree “children are not born with a sense of self. The notion of ‘self’ distinct from others appears to emerge in the second year of life. In the developmental process it is at this age that signs of self-conscious emotions first appear” (Tangney and Dearing 141). Stefano’s feelings of ‘embarrassment and shame,’ which we will see later, must have been internalized at this very early stage of his ego development. As Stefano gets older the internalized feelings of shame were reinforced through his childhood, in many different situations. They emerge as painfully intense emotions that influence his behavior.

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<sup>29</sup> The inhabitants of Giurizziani did not have running water in their homes. They were getting water from the public well. Running water became available when Fulvio was 5 years of age and his family moved into a modern home provided with an indoor bathroom. Thus, for our analysis, Stefano’s (Fulvio’s alter ego) stage 2 was over when their household acquired an indoor bathroom. (see Visintini, p. 71)

According to Tagney and Dearing:

Shame and guilt are rich human emotions that serve important functions at both the individual and relationship levels. On the one hand, as moral emotions, shame and guilt are among our most private, intimate experiences. In the face of transgression or error, the self turns towards the self—evaluating and rendering judgment. Thus the experience of shame and guilt can guide our behavior and influence who we are in our own eyes. On the other hand, shame and guilt are inextricably linked to the self in relationship with others. These emotions develop from our earliest interpersonal experience—in family and in other key relationships. And throughout the lifespan, these emotions exert a profound and continued influence on our behavior in interpersonal context . (2)

In addition to ‘muscular maturation,’ Erikson believes clothing can also trigger feelings of shame. For example, we read: “Mira non aveva mai le mutande e dei maschi solo Stefano le portava”(35) The omission of the underwear could have been a remnant of the etiological (primitive) way of the farmer’s life, but it also denotes the poverty of the lower class. However, we are immediately struck by the fact that “solo Stefano le portava.” Stefano was the only one wearing underwear because he belonged to an upper social class and his family could afford the luxury. The distinction between him and the rest of the boys produced in Stefano a feeling of inadequacy. At this point, it would have been easier to accept the jealousy of the village boys because of Stefano’s privileged social position rather than Stefano’s ‘inadequacy’ and the feeling of not “fitting in.” Dressing differently produced inadequacy and shame in front of others less fortunate. It is obvious that Stefano seems at odds with his social class and does not share the attitude of a wealthy person, who often displays an attitude of arrogance and vanity rather than feelings of empathy.

The conflict that Stefano faced was “rich vs. poor.” The following episode illustrates Stefano’s social class and the perception village people had of his family.

During Carnevale, Valdo, Stefano's friend persuaded him to dress up in a costume and the two would go from house to house, according to the ritual asking for 'treats' (a custom similar to 'trick or treating' in the United States). As they were getting ready in Valdo's house:

Valdo si tagliò una fetta di pane mezzoscuro (poor men's bread) ne offerse anche a Stefano che pur non avendo fame fu costretto di accettare. Sua madre disse: "Dove si sono mai visti due amici così? Uno tanto ricco, l'altro così povero.(135)

Another episode also deals with class distinction when people recognize Stefano and say:

Ma guarda chi c'è... il figlio di Marco e della Tina Gregorka... Il loro atteggiamento, tutto il loro modo di fare cambiò d'improvviso. Lo coccolarono, gli domandavano se aveva cenato, non gli permisero di bere oltre un bicchiere. E ciò che era peggio lasciavano bere il compagno anche, come se ai poveri il vino non potesse fare male. (138)

For all the attention and the preferential treatment he received, Stefano felt ashamed and inadequate: "Restò male ...lo fece vergognare davanti a Valdo" (138).

Stefano's inadequacy is also seen in other instances. He equally felt 'out of place' for being the youngest one whether he was among members of his own family or in school. On many occasions, being a second child, he had to experience rejection when compared to his older brother Alfredo. In school, he was always surrounded by older, physically bigger children, for he started first grade one year earlier than the other children because he was Marco's son and a bright boy. We witness a scene when Stefano is trying to escape from home after injuring the servant Dina and thinking of hiding at his grandma Fedora's place. His brother Alfredo tells him that nonna Fedora does not want him: "Proprio lei ti vuole. È capace di suonartele ... Nonna Fedora coccolava Alfredo e lo chiamava uccellino" (34). Stefano defends himself and responds,



“...vuole te perché l’ascolti quando parla male della mamma.” Alfredo replies, “Non è vero!” and “divenne rosso fino i capelli”(34).

Here again, we learn how Stefano deals with the intimation of rejection, by defending his feelings of inadequacy and shame. We also perceive a trace of shame when Alfredo becomes red in his face. The physical reaction of blushing described by Tagney is interesting: “...the function of blushing is a primitive form of shame –protoshame – as an early mechanism for communicating submission” (125). Is Alfredo really ashamed, embarrassed or ready to capitulate to his younger brother? According to Tagney, “this perspective emphasizes the role of shame and embarrassments as means of communicating one’s acknowledgement of wrong doing, thus diffusing anger and aggression” (127). For Tomizza this episode may again be a reflection of the mechanism of shame in the “context of social interaction” (127).

Since shame and inadequacy can be felt in different situations, it is important to examine a few more examples where Stefano feels ‘direct’ shame and ‘mediated’ shame, which can be circumstantial and contingent on a transgression by someone else. In other words Stefano seems to feel ashamed of someone else. In either case the feelings of shame are profound and painful.<sup>30</sup>

The first example comes from Chapter Two, which describes a Fascist demonstration in the city of Umago to which upper classmen of Stefano’s school were

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<sup>30</sup> In a study by Tagney, (1993b), undergraduate college students anonymously described personal shame, guilt, pride and depression experiences. The result of the students’ ratings indicated that “shame experiences were more powerful than the experiences of guilt. Shame was more likely to be accompanied by a sense of being inferior and physically small.” Also “when feeling shame, participants were more likely to feel observed by others and they were also more concerned with others’ opinions of the self versus their own self-perception. ... People reported a stronger desire to hide from others when feeling shame ... and participants felt more isolated.”(*Shame and Guilt* 21) The conclusion drawn from this experiment can be applied to Stefano’s interpersonal relationships with his peers, his friends and the adults which demonstrate his inadequacy, isolation and feelings of shame.

invited to participate. The protocol was to dress up as a ‘Ballila,’ a young member of a Fascist organization to which children between ages 5-10 belonged, and march in the uniform all the way from the village to the city to listen to the mayor’s speech. Even though Stefano was not in the upper classes and was smaller than the other children, he was asked to participate because of his father’s social status. We are witnessing Stefano’s few embarrassing, disappointing moments and feelings of ‘personal shame’ as his mother improvised his uniform and made him wear it. A pair of servant’s Dina, green knee-length socks – ‘calzettoni’ to put on was his biggest objection (45). “Avrebbe rifiutato – portare la roba e poi di donna – ma la mamma stava per perdere la pazienza” (45). Here two things are clear: his mother’s attitude and coercion to wear woman’s clothing. Stefano is helpless, succumbs to maternal authority and starts to walk towards school with tears in his eyes. Soon his legs begin to tremble because he realizes he was never taught the proper steps one must employ in marching. A cousin asked him why is he crying and he answered : “Non so il siniss”. (He did not know when to turn left or right). Everyone around him laughed at the cost of Stefano’s embarrassment, tears and his feelings of shame.

Once in the city, the final blow came as a group of kids from Umago wearing proper uniforms and occupying the first row of the gathering kept turning and looking at him. In addition to wearing girls’ ‘calzettoni,’ his cousin - trying to help him before they started the march - stuck Stefano’s snack into his shirt, which made his shirt bulky.

Si sentì osservato. Quattro ragazzi allineati più avanti nella fila accanto lo guardavano, approfittando della confusione che si creava ad ogni battimano e facevano voltare il compagno successivo. Pensò ai calzettoni della Dina. O era per via della fascia bianca che a lui mancava? Solo adesso sudava dopo i sette chilometri di strada sotto il sole. Approfittando di un applauso più lungo , tutta la

fila si era girata verso di lui e il ragazzo più vicino disse: “Guarda, ha le tette come le donne.”(49)

At the beginning Stefano fears that the kids were focusing on Dina’s clothing he was wearing but the devastating bullying statement, “ha le tette come le donne” directed at him gave him the pangs of shame.

The other examples deal with Stefano’s feeling ashamed of his father: therefore, the shame he feels depends on others’ wrongdoings. Stefano notices that among other ‘camice nere’ (Fascists wore black shirts) his own father is not wearing the fascist uniform. The author tells us, “Se ne vergognò come lo vedesse nudo sulla rodina” (50). His shame was reinforced when a neighbor, Roz, said to his father, “Guarda che figura ti tocca fare davanti a tuo figlio” (50). Meanwhile, his father put the blame on Stefano’s mother, who was negligent and did not prepare his uniform. In the midst of these transgressions she hears his teacher say to his father, “Te lo lascio; è ancora piccolo per marciare” (50). Thus Stefano is left disappointed, shameful and isolated.

## **II:V Initiative vs. Guilt**

In the previous section, following Erikson’s theory, we have shown at what stage shame originated with Stefano (toilet training, clothing, and social class difference) and how shame and bullying were reinforced during his school years. In the next part, applying Erikson’s theory, we shall examine some of the recent theories on shame and guilt and see how they apply to Stefano Marcovich’s stage of Initiative vs. Guilt.

In *Child and Society*, written in 1950, Erikson states: “Shame is an emotion insufficiently studied, because in our civilization it is early and easily absorbed by guilt.” He also adds, “Doubt is the brother of shame” (253). Today, as research has advanced,

there is much discourse on shame, doubt and guilt. In fact, in *Shame and Guilt*, Tagney and Dearing provide us with authoritative findings and evidence on the affective experiences of shame and guilt. The authors discuss the effects of and the distinctions between these two human emotions. It is useful to be aware of these perspectives because they can be found, in one form or another, in both psychological and popular literature. Erikson tells us that “...even the father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud neglected the distinction between these two emotions.” However, Erikson does make that distinction of “shame as exposed self-doubt versus guilt over misguided behavior (initiative)” (12).

Tagney gives a succinct conclusion of his twelve years’ research on shame and guilt, which is in line with Erikson’s distinction between “self concern” and “behavior concern.” This is important in order to observe Stefano Marcovich’s developmental stages and see how certain situations lead to shame, a more “public” emotion, whereas other situations lead to guilt and thus are experienced as “private” ones (Tagney, 14).<sup>31</sup>

As empirical research shows, shame and guilt differ. The study also shows that “shame experiences are more painful and more difficult to describe than guilt experiences...people reported stronger desire to hide from others when feeling shame than when feeling guilt and when shamed participants felt more isolation”(Tagney, 21). For Stefano Marcovich the feeling of shame throughout his childhood is rather frequent and his isolation is evident in the examples cited earlier.

Researchers tell us that it is also common that one situation may elicit shame and guilt at the same time. The incident about to be described seems to be aligned more with the theory of Helen Lewis, cited in Tagney, where “guilt involves a more articulated

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<sup>31</sup> Ruth Benedict, an anthropologist, assumes that shame is a more public emotion than guilt. Shame is seen as arising from public exposure and disapproval of some shortcomings or transgression, whereas guilt is seen as a more ‘private’ experience arising from self-generated pangs of conscience (Tagney, 14).

specific behavior (i.e. “I did that horrible thing” ) ... a phenomenological experience where guilt presupposes tension, remorse and guilt”(23). We also must look at the epigenetic chart of Erikson and its psychosocial crisis where Stefano could be placed in his chronological age of 5-7 and where his relationship with family is of paramount importance. A child in his existential mode is exploring how to manage and learn to use manly - grown-up - things. The occasion presents itself when the older boy Villy, his neighbor, offers him a shotgun and challenges him: “Vediamo se sei buono di levare due piume a quella gallina” (30). Stefano pulls the trigger and immediately afterwards a loud cry comes out from Dina, the servant who drops the bucket of water and jumping on one foot move towards the house. Villy reprimands him, “Cosa diavolo hai fatto? Ti avevo detto la gallina e tu mi vai a sparare alla serva!”(30)

Immediately neighboring people arrive while Stefano has the image of his father appearing, “stringendo le mascelle e bestemmiano” (30). Stefano runs away from the house and hides in the stable where they kept their horse Rosa. He kept thinking,

Stavolta l’ho ammazzata e io non volevo, più giusto se moriva quando la colpivo con la scopa perché faceva l’amore con Ruggero, (e aveva il coraggio di negarlo); quelle volte sí che volevo farle del male e ci avevo gusto a vederla stringersi agli angoli, pronta a correre da mamma – “se glielo dici poi sei una vigliacca!” Quando il padre di Svane picchiava la moglie pareva volesse finirla. Forse che in guerra si ammazza senza voler far male. Senza nemmeno il gusto di uccidere. (31)

Here we learn not only Stefano’s fear of the possibility that he might have killed Dina, but his “io non volevo” is an apologetic and remorseful cry for an action that happened without his will or his premeditation. It was an accident and he speaks of how it would have been justified had she died when he hit her with the broom because she was ‘betraying’ him. (He was jealous of Dina’s giving affection to someone else). Stefano’s

rationalization on killing seems to belong to an infantile logic, but the author's irony permeates the passage. Stefano asks himself if killing in war could be without intention of hurting and he reasons that there are two types of killing: 'Ammazzare per il gusto' which presupposes a motive and does not involve guilt, and to kill by mistake, which provokes remorse and guilt. In the next chapter different types of guilt will be explored.

Hoping to get consolation for his guilty feelings caused by the horrible thing that just happened Stefano, "appoggiò la testa sul collo della Rosa, ma si sentì innaturale" (31). Suddenly his father comes into the stable to get the horse and to take Dina to the doctor in the city of Umago. Suspecting his son may be hiding in the stable he screams: "Mostro di un ragazzo sacramentato, che Dio l'ammazzi, che cosa diavolo mi va a combinare"(32). Immediately we are faced with a stern disciplinarian, a cursing father who threatens, "...faremo i conti al merlo" (33). All this takes place in the presence of Alfredo, who knows Stefano is hiding in the stable, but to Stefano's surprise, does not reveal the hiding place of his brother to the father and saves the moment. Stefano is in disbelief that his brother did not act as a spy, as he did in the past. Throughout this episode we sense Stefano's feelings of mistrust, remorse, guilt, and fear.

The sense of fear intensifies as the story unfolds. Stefano decides to run away and hide in the woods of Vidja, where the foiba is located. Even his brother Alfredo, who was four years older, had never entered those woods. Alfredo was shaking his head saying, "Non ci andrai, no'... Lui stesso non ci sarebbe entrato, nonostante fosse di quattro anni più vecchio. Solo per via della foiba che dicevano si estendesse, sotto, fino al mare? ... la sua apertura stretta tra gli spini e il fildiferro, [lo avrebbe] inghiottito dentro" (35). But

the real and imaginary dangers lurking in the woods of Vidja do not divert Stefano from his plan and he says:

‘E invece ci andrò.’ ... Il fratello continuava a scuotere la testa. Anche per via degli strighi, metà uomini e metà bestie, sempre appostati nel fitto, che succhiano il sangue ai bambini? Anche per questo, e per le bisce che si attorcigliano sotto i piedi. Lui stesso gli avrebbe ceduto in cambio quei quattro anni in più se avesse avuto il coraggio di farlo. La saliva non gli si scioglieva nella gola perché capiva che non si trattava solo di vigliaccheria, ma di un’impossibilità legata ai suoi pochi anni. (35)

Despite his brother’s admonitions, Stefano is determined to go into the woods and face the foiba. This decision is a ‘rite of passage’ – he must overcome his fears and become a grown-up.

In this passage, Tomizza gives us a mythological description and refers to popular beliefs of the aura foibe had for children. They all incited horror and fear, but at the same time, it will appear from other passages in the book, they were a frightening reality for the victims in World War II. While Stefano is ready to proceed into the “forbidden” dark woods, he rationalizes his decision as he gets closer to the place, “Già che c’era doveva entrare nel bosco. Se non altro per raccontarlo l’indomani” (40). Erikson explains this attitude of the growing process: advancing “into the direction of an adult social life”<sup>32</sup> Stefano is at the threshold of his childhood stage of initiative vs. guilt. By shooting Dina he crossed the ‘border’ between childhood and adolescence. He commits a crime by accident, but he is now willing to gather all his courage and spend a night in the frightening woods to expiate his crime. He has to undertake this initiative and prove to himself that he can be an adult. But the thought of coming back through the woods

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<sup>32</sup> According to Erikson, “The very word “initiative” to many has an American and industrial connotation. Yet, initiative is a necessary part of every act and man needs a sense of initiative for whatever he learns and does. ...There is in every child at every stage a new miracle of vigorous unfolding, which constitutes a new hope and a new responsibility ... Initiative adds to autonomy the quality of undertaking, planning and ‘attacking’ a task for the sake of being active and on the move. ... The danger of this stage is a sense of guilt over the goals contemplated and the acts initiated in one’s exuberant enjoyment of new locomotors and mental power.”(255)

terrifies him because the “strighi” and the “demoni” might know what he has done. His emerging conscience, like Pinocchio’s ‘grillo’ (talking cricket), speaks to him and his guilt overwhelms him as he decides to go back home and face the punishment.

In this episode several things reveal Stefano’s infantile challenges and his attempts to overcome moral transgressions, anxieties and fears of the foiba, the deep woods, the darkness of the night, the barking of the dogs and the belief that the “strighi succhiano il sangue ai bambini.” He is not ready yet to become an adult and, like many other children of his age, he chooses “flight over fight,” which is part of the human and animal reaction to fear. There are differences between fear and anxiety, Erikson explains: “In childhood fear and anxiety are so close to one another that they are indistinguishable and this for the reason that the child, because of his immature equipment, has no way of differentiating between inner and outer real or imagined danger” (408). In fact, Stefano’s inner fear of the unknown increases:

Avanzò di un passo. L’erba era bagnata di rugiada, si sentiva ormai isolato dalla strada. Tra le masse dei cespugli odorosi di funghi si creavano fitte ombre... Una mano dalle unghie avrebbe potuto afferrarlo da un momento all’altro... Stava per compiere un altro passo, quando un cane abbaiò lontano. Se arrivi fino alla foiba, hai vinto. Ma come fare a tornare dopo, con gli strighi nei cespugli che lo avrebbero visto passare e sapevano chi era? Non poteva nemmeno cantare. Credeva già di intravedere gli alti tronchi, intorno ai quali correva un doppio giro di filo spinato dal giorno in cui nella foiba era caduto un vitello, quando il cane di nuovo abbaiò. Sul suo cuore si appoggiò il ferro – ghiacciato anziché rovente. ...Ricordò un istante quella sua altra grande paura e concluse sommariamente che avrebbe preferito in quell’istante trovarsi in soffitta, davanti al quadro raffigurante le due enormi navi da guerra. Capitò e voltandosi di scatto, si ritrovò sempre a un passo dal filo spinato sul quale cadde ferendosi a una coscia. (40)

Stefano fell and injured his thigh. The spilled blood could be interpreted as a sign, a necessary ritual to enter the new stage of adolescence. The ‘strighi’, the shadows, and the trunks of the trees are all metaphors for what would be commonly labeled as ‘guilty



conscience,' which has a direct consequence to Stefano's physical performance. He cannot sing (a way to conquer fear), and his heart has turned to a 'ferro ghiacciato' which denotes a 'freezing' of his emotions. The physical impressions of being frozen, speechless, awkward and disoriented are all symptoms of fear and anxiety.

We also learn from psychology that guilty feelings stem from early anxiety feelings in an infant. In Stefano's early stage we were able to apply Erikson's theory of "Basic Trust vs. Mistrust" stage, where anxiety originates, and show how the lack of maternal care may have jeopardized the feeling of security and thus instilled anxiety in Stefano. "Infant anxiety," states John McKenzie, "arises from a threat to its dependence, that is a loss of the object on which it depends"(30). In his work he discussed other child-analysts such as Melanie Klein, Joan Reviere, and Winnicott and Bowlby, who also state that: "Anxiety feelings are among the earliest an infant can experience. ... 'Guilt' originates in anxiety"(30). Winnicott explains:

The sense of guilt implies for the analyst a study of individual growth. ... Ordinarily guilt feelings are thought of as something that results from religious or moral teaching. [They are]... not inculcated, but are an aspect of the development of a human individual. ...that does not mean that religious and moral teachings do not elicit guilt-feelings. Indeed, such teachings may accentuate real guilt feelings and arouse unrealistic guilt feelings. (29)

McKenzie tells us that, "for a true sense of guilt-feelings we have to wait for the growth of conscience... which begins with self-consciousness" (34). Winnicott asserts that, "this moral organ develops 'naturally in children'; that is to say it comes to birth spontaneously"(34). McKenzie contradicts him and claims that: "It is not part of our biological equipment but it is part of the equipment of a potential personality and its function is to conserve the moral integration of the person" (34).

Groundbreaking research conducted by Paul Bloom, a leading cognitive scientist, brings us another perspective. Bloom demonstrates that “humans are hardwired with a sense of morality.” He argues that, “...before babies can speak or walk they can judge the goodness and badness of others’ actions; feel empathy and compassion, act to soothe those in distress, and have a rudimentary sense of justice.” Was Stefano “hardwired” more with a sense of ‘good’ than a sense of ‘evil’? Was Stefano’s conscience in a process of development? As Stefano’s actions throughout his life demonstrate, he seemed gifted with a sense of goodness, but as far as his conscience was concerned, it was still in the process of growth.<sup>33</sup>

As explained by McKenzie, experts agree that conscience is developed at a very early age. According to Bergson:

True feelings begin with the prohibition, with the awareness of forbidden...our duties are given to us, they are imperatives. Social barriers are erected by parents and teachers and for a child those are the first guides in moral behavior. If a child crosses those barriers he has to pay a penalty. But there are also mental or moral barriers which may carry no penalties; it is the invisible prohibition. Cross it and we get the guilt-feelings. (35)

If we examine again Stefano’s act of injuring Dina, it is clear that it was an accident and his sense of guilt (his morality) initially coincides with the approval and disapproval of parents and teachers, and he runs away from home. This indicates his fear of parental punishment, but as he comes closer to the woods and the foiba, his fear intensifies and with the expected child reaction he turns back and seeks the ‘love object’ – his father. Even though he knows he will be punished, he still prefers the consequences

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<sup>33</sup> According to McKenzie, a social scientist, Erich From, distinguishes between, “authoritarian conscience” and “humanistic conscience.” The former is characterized by compliance with external authority, speaks much of self-sacrifice, duty and resignation. The latter is not the internalized voice of an authority we are eager to please, and afraid of displeasing: it is our own voice present in every human being and independent of external sanctions and rewards... Conscience judges our own functioning as human beings; it is a knowledge within oneself, knowledge of respective success or failure in the act of living” (qtd. in McKenzie, 44).

of a beating, rather than the loss of his father's love. This ambivalent reaction, running away from his father's punishment and then succumbing to the punishment, could be seen as balancing the fear of the unknown against the loss of love. However, at Stefano's age, when conscience is just forming, his "wish to obey is wholehearted and not divided against by secret rebellion"(McKenzie 41). According to Freud, it is the origin of the Super-ego, the intangible inner voice which tells Stefano to return. The tendency to go back may also involve the hope that father will forgive. Freud's punitive "Super Ego" concept may be at work as well as Stefano's love for his father as he submits to his punishment. Here, one can also apply C. H. Waddington's theory, which claims that "we have an innate tendency to accept moral authority." Waddington further explains:

Without an internal system of authority an individual of the species of *homo sapiens* could not become a human person, but the price he pays is to be inflicted, by the excessive development of authority, with feelings which are described as guilt, anxiety and despair. (Waddington, 164)

So far we have tried to see how Stefano's growth synthesized "initiative and guilt" through the author's narrative devices of foibe and the dark woods. In Fulvio Tomizza's narrative the theme and the use of foibe is multiple. First foibe are mentioned as part of the geological make-up of Istrian territory. We then learn of foibe's mythological bewitching nature and finally about their use as graves for some of the World War II victims. In this chapter, I will focus on the use of foibe and the dark woods in regards to child's risk-taking behavior, defiance of fear, development of courage and of judgment. Stefano's risk-attitude in the attempt to defy the fear of foibe is an example of Erikson's theory of a child's 'Initiative vs. Guilt' stage.

The following episode, which describes Stefano's gathering his courage by entering the dark woods and getting closer to the opening of the foiba, relates to the stage

of exploring oneself and testing one's capacity of action. In fact, Stefano thinks of the members of the Petrovich family and specifically of Villy: "erano diversi senza paura, sicuri nel gesto e nella voce: erano Fascisti" (39). This family embodied for him what Freudian psychologist would call an 'Ego Ideal.' Stefano admired the Petrovich, as individuals to look up to. He wanted to identify with them rather than with his father, who was not a Fascist and who could never side with any political party, but tried to be helpful to everyone. Soon other thoughts overcame his initial courage and image of the Ego-Ideal and in fear and despair he turned back, trembling. Once back home he entered his house and saw the entire family waiting for him:

Volò dapprima uno schiaffo, poi [il padre] gli prese il braccio e incominciò a tirare e a colpirlo come capitava. Tra le giravolte riusciva a scorgere le sue mani grandi e bianche, non abituate alla fatica e le mascelle irrigidite. Eustacchio, secondo lo stesso Alfredo intervenne troppo presto. Papà minacciò anche lui, vecchia guardia giurata del tempo dell'Austria; ... A una sberla particolarmente felice avanzò lei, [Dina] furba, che dolce disse: "Basta, sior Marco, non l'ha fatto apposta!" Falsa e vacca, che voleva dire: "dagliene ancora, così impara!"; in tal senso la intese anche papà che isveltì il ritmo. ... Per l'intensità e l'accanimento si trattava di un'esperienza di tutto nuova rispetto alle precedenti in cui picchiava malvolentieri, per puro dovere e con rincrescimento, come stava scritto nei libri; or pareva volesse fargli proprio male, dimostragli interamente la forza dei grandi. ... Lo prese per il collo e lo alzò tutto... Ma in quel momento la porta si aprì e nel rettangolo comparvero santolo Gabriele e santolo Doro Petrovich. Nel vederli si placò. Avanti gli ospiti. (41-42)

When they asked what was wrong the father answered: "Una piccola lezione perché non tocchi quello che non è per lui" (42).

The harsh beating in front of the family and neighbors was a lesson – a punishment so that Stefano would not do it again. The sentence "Picchiava per puro dovere come stava scritto nei libri," tells us that his culture believed children have to be hit in order to teach them proper moral behavior. We also read in psychology that children's misbehavior can be projected onto parents, who feel ashamed for not having

imparted proper moral teaching to their children and thus display anger and use punitive measures.

Stefano also observed that his father was beating him in a bestial manner and he interpreted the increased intensity of the beating as a sign of father's fear of the war which was looming in the background of Giurizziani. The father rationalized that his child brought shame to the family by using a weapon of war and thus he deserved harsh punishment.

Several emotions can be analyzed in this passage. Stefano's mistrust is not only shown towards his brother Alfredo, but it surfaces again when Dina pleads with his father to stop the beating for he did not really intend to shoot her. His suspicion twists his reasoning as he thinks that his father interpreted Dina's pleading as ironic because he actually intensified the beating. Stefano's mistrust and suspicion seem to come up often since embarrassment and humiliation are products of shame. As I stated earlier, guilt is also part of Stefano's feelings and he perceives his experience as having done something bad. Again his, "Io non volevo" confirms it.

Arnold Buss explains that, "there are agreements and disagreements on whether shame and guilt are distinct emotions" and theorizes that "they are merely different labels for a single negative self-emotion which lowers self-esteem"(192). In Stefano's incident, it seems that shame and guilt oscillate as the child experiences these negative feelings.

These emotions are intimate aspects which burden, harm, pressure and interfere with relationships. Erikson formulates stages of these emotions and believes that shame begins with self-awareness, "Shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at ... [and ] guilt as occurring at the developmental stage

immediately after shame, is requiring some internalization of parental injunctions to form a conscience” (252). Arnold Buss adds that guilt originates “largely in secular settings through the actions of parents and other socialization agents”<sup>34</sup> (134).

In *La quinta stagione* issues of shame and guilt are also portrayed by the local boys as they deal with ‘sexual morality.’ In fact, the theorist Paul Bloom contends that “sexual morality is connected to guilt and shame.” (154) In Stefano’s environment moral restrictions are reinforced by customs and we read that local boys refer to sexual activity as “brutte cose.” One day Stefano finds the village boys spying on two people making love in an open field. Curious, he pushes his way through the group of boys and he sees:

Dietro un cespuglio due persone sembravano impegnate in una lotta. Non si scorgeva di loro che la metà inferiore dei corpi, poi l’uomo si scostò un istante e lui vide una carne bianchissima, gambe incredibilmente grosse di donna che gli fecero salire il sangue alla testa: uno spreco di natura, tutta quella carne senza muscoli e senza osso, inutile, bianca, da rendere all’istante violacea a suon di pugni e colpi di bastone (142)

Stefano perceives the scene of the two lovers as engaged in a fight while their bodies were only meat and no bone. The phrase ‘uno spreco di natura’ ... ‘inutile...’ ‘Senza muscoli ... da rendere violacea a suon di pugni,’ seems to allude to ‘misogynist violence.’<sup>35</sup> Stefano appears to be disgusted with the scene. The village boys, on the other hand, excited with the discovery, decide to play a prank and make a poster which reads “l’anno, il giorno, l’ora e il luogo in cui l’atto vergognoso era stato consumato” (142) and they parade in front of the house where the involved girl lives. The behavior of the boys

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<sup>34</sup> The developmental theory argues: “shame and guilt ... occur only after rules and standards have been internalized and then a child breaks a rule or fails a task.” The evolutionary theory of shame and guilt, claims: “guilt is a reaction to a specific breach of conduct, followed by a need to atone whereas shame is a generalized self-reaction, accompanied by a strong desire to escape.” (Buss, 134) In the previous examples we have seen both: Stefano broke the rule of behavior and experienced shame and guilt and after breaching the rule of conduct (although accidentally) he seeks atonement after trying to escape. (Tomizza, *La quinta stagione* 39-41)

<sup>35</sup> In an interview, Adam Duke, a psychotherapist, discusses his book *Why Men Hate Women*, and reiterates that “the genesis of misogyny lies in what happens, early on, between boys and their mothers and that boys will be misogynist because men’s hatred of women begins in infancy”. Interviewed by Angela Neustatter. “Independent”. Web. [www.Independent.co.uk](http://www.Independent.co.uk)

then reflects the sexual morality of the society they live in. It is a morality of shame, a condemnation of the sexual act and a punishment of the women who engaged in sexual activity. In addition the kids, to further shame the girl, make up rhymes and sing in front of the girl's home,

La sfollata e Villi  
 pigliavano i grilli  
 gli ha messo il coltellaccio  
 nel fondo del cuor (143).

The metaphorical line “gli ha messo il coltellaccio” conjures up the image of sharp object cutting, hurting, lacerating. “Fare le brutte cose” for these boys is disgusting and shameful.

Disgust about sexual activities was not limited to the societal mores of the village boys or to their culture. In fact, disgust in general is believed to be an “instinctive emotional response” (Bloom, 6).<sup>36</sup> Bloom also points out that, “Disgust is a powerful force for evil,” and “...experimental research shows that feelings of disgust make us judge others more harshly ... disgust makes us meaner” (141).

Thus, the village boys, fueled by their immature sense of disgust, parade and chant in front of the girl's home in order to shame her for the allegedly evil act she committed, which they considered dirty and shameful. They seem to be the moral judges and administer punishment according to their community's moral restrictions.

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<sup>36</sup> In his studies Paul Bloom investigates the origins of disgust seen as a universal feeling. He discusses Paul Rozin, the preeminent researcher on the topic of disgust, who has developed a ‘scale of sensitivity.’ Through cross-cultural observations he found that “people are repelled by blood, gore, vomit, feces, urine and rotten flesh – this evokes what Rozin dubs ‘core disgust.’ Bloom examines various theories such as Freudian trauma of toilet training, and the food-based theory which Darwin observed. ... “The most popular explanation is that disgust evolved to ward us away from eating bad foods. Indeed, the English word itself derives from the Latin, meaning ‘bad taste’.” He also discusses “a more plausible theory that core disgust serves an adaptive purpose.” According to this theory, “disgust isn’t learned but rather emerges naturally once babies have reached a certain point in development.” Bloom concludes: “Sex is disgusting for a much simpler reason. It involves bodies, and bodies can be disgusting. The problem with the exchange of bodily fluids isn’t that it reminds us that we are corporeal beings; it is that such fluids trigger our core disgust response. Other drives shut down or inhibit this response – including love and lust. But disgust is the natural default. (132-150)

The “brutte cose” – the bad deeds – which are linked to ‘moral impurity’ are a counterpart to spiritual purity. Stefano as part of the larger Catholic community was brought up by the Catholic religion, which is codified by laws and specific ways to expiate sins by means of confessing to God through the priests.

In the following episodes we learn how Stefano dealt with guilt as he went to confession before receiving his confirmation. The local priest Don Paolo conducts the confession for the children of Materada. One of the boys, coming out of the confessional quite upset, tells the other boys, “Gli ho detto che ho fatto quelle robe con mia sorella” (120). The older boy reprimands him, “Sono cose da dire in chiesa?” and Stefano immediately thinks, “[le mie brutte robe] ... la Rosina. Ma non era peccato, non avendo sentito il gusto, come dicevano i grandi. Si sentiva piuttosto l’obbligo di confessare i baci dati alla Dina” (120). It is interesting to note that sexual exploration by children in the story is a reflection of what they see and hear from the older kids and adults. The sexual act is referred again as “brutte robe.”

When Stefano’s turn comes to confess he tells the priest of minor misgivings: he stole some candies, he cursed the German soldier and - remembering “le gote calde della Dina” - he says, “Ho visto due che facevano l’amore” (121). The priest instantly demands to know who they are. Stefano, feeling guilty, ‘half-way confessed.’ Now at the command of the priest, embarrassed and not wanting to admit anything he said, “Non ricordo.” The priest admonishes him and tells him he will not give him the absolution. Stefano lies and gives him a fictitious name.

In this episode we witness guilt for sexuality and shame and embarrassment for disclosing the name of the sinner. This event not only intensifies Stefano’s guilty



feelings, but it made him lie. Stefano escaped the anger of the priest, but he did not escape from guilt. In fact, guilt has taken possession of his inner self as we will see it in the next phase of his ego development.

## **II:VI Industry vs. Inferiority**

“One might say that personality at the first stage crystallizes around the conviction ‘I am what I am given,’ and that of the second, ‘I am what I will.’ The third can be characterized by ‘I am what I can imagine I will be.’ We must now approach the fourth: ‘I am what I learn.’ The child now wants to be shown how to get busy with something and how to be busy with others” (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 86). According to Erikson, this stage may occur between ages six and eleven and it seems to set “entrance into life.” It coincides with school and the social interaction with peers, teachers, and other adults. School children, Erikson states, “develop self-confidence and by performing various tasks well they get praise or if tasks are not done well, they may develop a sense of inferiority” (91).

Erikson’s term “industry” denotes in a child “a sense of being able to make things and make them well ... He learns to win recognition by producing things ... He develops the pleasure of work completion by steady attention and persevering diligence. ... The danger at this stage is the development of a sense of inferiority. ... He still compares himself with his father and the comparison arouses a sense of guilt as well as a sense of anatomical inferiority” (91).

In *La quinta stagione* Stefano plays with other children with war toys (cerbottane, fionde). Even though handling these objects represents a sense of ‘industry,’

the real concern of Stefano is ‘What can I achieve?’ and ‘How can I prove myself that I am as good as Alfredo, and Alfredo’s friend Cin?’ An example of his desire to be as competent as the rest of his peers is seen in the following incident. Alfredo, Cin and Stefano are planning to go “uccellare” (bird hunting) – precisely, pigeon hunting. Alfredo was able to sneak a gun out of his father’s room and give it to his friend Cin as they are ready to depart, but Stefano protested, “È anche mia.” and Alfredo replies, “La porterai anche tu.” Stefano, however, is afraid Cin will reject him: “Ma lui non mi vuole.” L’aveva bastonato un paio di volte, non appena si erano trovati soli” ( 62 ). The three boys start on the mission, each of them with an assigned object: Cin has the gun, Alfredo has ‘la cartucciera’ and to Stefano, the youngest one, is assigned a ‘carniere a tracollo’ to bring home the prize. Thus, he was able to participate and ‘do things’, as Erikson says, ‘with others.’ Unfortunately, the expedition ended in failure, no pigeons were caught, and Cin angrily hurled the gun far away into a muddy cave. When Alfredo asked Cin to fetch it he replied, “Vada lui che è più piccolo”( 64 ). Again, the sense of inferiority emerged in Stefano, but his hurt feelings were partly balanced by the fact that Alfredo commanded Cin to retrieve the gun. At the end Stefano still felt disappointed because he returned with an empty “carniere.”

Disappointment, incompetence, and inferiority are featured also in another important event in Stefano’s life: his Confirmation in the parish church of Materada. The preparations are all done in advance: Stefano’s godfather – santolo Gigi - is chosen by his father, the date is set as well as the festivities at home are planned with an abundant dinner and many guests. Before they go to church, as the tradition calls, the godfather would get a present for his ‘figlioccio’, his godson. For the lucky ones it was usually a

gold pocket watch, which represented more than just a device showing time. It symbolized a step in the rite-of-passage from child to adult. As Stefano gets the watch from his godfather, in his exuberance he wants to show off his industry: his competence of telling time. But when he tries to get his father's attention by telling him: "sono quasi le due," everyone laugh and the derision on his account causes him a sense of inferiority. "A lui non riusciva mai la finzione; veniva scoperto" (82).

On Sunday, the day of the Confirmation, Stefano together with the other children, was waiting in church for the bishop to arrive. Stefano is filled with expectation and the solemnity of the moment. Unfortunately, the war did not spare this ceremonious occasion and the priest announces that the bishop's automobile was detained by the rebels and that the confirmation is cancelled. At that point,

La chiesa si svuotò. Stefano si sentì profondamente deluso come a un suo proprio fallimento. Perché a lui non era consentito di passare attraverso il regolare svolgersi delle cose? Nato in gennaio, era stato mandato a scuola con la classe dell'anno precedente e venne a trovarsi in banco con ragazzi ripetenti persino di quattro anni più vecchi di lui; da allora per i propri coetanei aveva sentito sempre un pungente senso di nostalgia e di rimorso. La sua esistenza persistentemente veniva a costruire un'eccezione, si sviluppava come su un terreno poco stabile, condizionata da modi e avvenimenti casuali. Era per via della Guerra o doveva scorgere in questa sua particolarità il segno di un destino? (82)

This passage describes Stefano's state of being "profondamente deluso" – a disappointment with himself. He questions why he does not have a normal life and why things do not run smoothly for him. He feels that his life is not standing on a firm base: he calls its foundation "un terreno poco stabile". He then doubts if his unconventional existence depends on the war or on the design of his destiny. Invoking Erikson's theory, this kind of reasoning seems to be a prelude to the coming of age – the stage of adolescence.

Another example of Stefano's 'industry' is seen when electricity is brought to the town of Giurizziani from a neighboring town. The adults are debating where to find cement poles. Stefano knows where to find them for he has seen them previously and he eagerly wants to contribute:

Stefano sentì il cuore battergli più veloce; lui sapeva dove si potevano trovare i pali. Avertiva tutta l'importanza di quel suo segreto, per mezzo del quale avrebbe potuto fare il suo primo ingresso nella vita degli uomini e insieme nella storia del paese. Si accostò a papà, volle farsi notare anche dagli altri e prese a tirargli una manica. Ma non ebbe il coraggio di parlar forte. Gli disse in un orecchio: 'Sono in Tribbie dove eravamo andati a marciare.' (169)

His father hears him, but ignores him, and yet he uses the information without crediting his son. The cement poles are brought to the village and Stefano sits on one "come su una cosa di sua proprietà," (169) while the kids are making fun of him. The mission of the adults is successful while Stefano's attempted 'industry' is not. Once again, adults cause him a sense of 'inferiority' as his tears demonstrate his defeat.

In *La quinta stagione* there are numerous instances of Stefano's attempts at 'industry' and of consequent defeats. A few more examples will illustrate Stefano's trials to mastering things and gaining approval from adults.

While electricians are installing a wiring system in Stefano's house, he volunteers to hold a hanging live wire, unaware of the imminent danger. When the electricians warned, "ora attacchiamo" Stefano keeps the wire in his hand and experiences an electric shock. At that point he drops the wire:

Abbandonato il filo, con il cuore partito al galoppo, si rifugiò in un angolo nascondendosi le mani. Così doveva giungere la morte dalla guerra: un grizzolo improvviso nel cuore mentre affondi il cucchiaino nella minestra o ti arrampicchi su un albero. Deluso di essere ancora in vita e soprattutto di vedere gli altri ridere con quelle bocche sgangherate anziché curarsi della grande prova cui era stato sottoposto e del segreto ch'era riuscito a strappare, sconcertato infine della contrarietà tra il mondo suo e quello dei grandi, fu colto da un'acuta smania di

urlare in faccia a tutti il suo essere solo e il suo essere diverso e scoppiò a piangere a voce alta mentre gli elettricisti continuavano a ridere. (176)

Stefano's attempt to gain competence and approval fails again while adults are laughing at him instead of sympathizing with him and guiding him. He realizes the gap between the adult world and his own, and tears of delusion and isolation are mixed with his sense of 'inferiority.'

Erik Erikson explains that in the stage of Industry vs. Inferiority "the new mastery is not restricted to one technical mastery of toys and things; it also includes an infantile way of mastering experience" (*Identity and the Life Cycle* 90). Stefano's experience of the real war happens as we find Stefano alone in the family shop. The parents are away and assign him the duty of taking care of the store. He suddenly hears heavy shooting outside the store; he quickly locks it up and gets out. He hears the villagers yelling, "I tedeschi! I tedeschi!" He sees homes in flames in the neighboring town of Buie and suddenly it occurs to him: "Finalmente la guerra, questa era la guerra" (109). The following paragraph reveals Stefano's notion of war:

Dalle colline, incendiando case e riempiendo l'aria di strepiti, scendeva dunque la guerra? Ma si trattava proprio di guerra? Dove era l'altro esercito schierato sul campo e rassegnato forse a retrocedere, ma passo per passo, camminando sui suoi stessi morti? I tedeschi avanzavano senza che venisse loro opposta resistenza. L'esercito avversario poteva forse essere formato da Valerio, da Nucci, che tenevano lo schioppo in mano come si agguanta la ronca? Intuiva che soltanto soldati con una regolare uniforme possono vincere la guerra, truppa che viene da fuori e parla una lingua diversa. Ora avrebbero abbattuto tutte le case perché per loro non sarebbero stati che muri coperti da un tetto; avrebbero ucciso. (109)

At the thought of being killed he starts to tremble as he finds himself alone since his mother is in the fields working, his father in the town of Umago, and his brother in the seminary. Seeing the villagers running to hide in the woods, he follows them but he is unable to run as fast as they do and he cries: "Mio papà, mia mamma!" His friend Volo

comes to rescue, taking him by hand.

This passage seems to portray first the child's transition from the 'imaginary' war to the 'real' war through Stefano's sensory experience. He sees the burning of the houses; he hears the rifles shooting; and he runs for safety. Secondly, Volo extends his hand to Stefano, which signifies the support a child needs in order to grow. Thirdly, Stefano-child invokes "Mio papà, mia mamma" the cry for a paradise lost while he is faced with the struggle for survival.

After his real experience of war in the village and after seeing a real battleship in the sea, Stefano suddenly realizes that all the fears he had up to that moment, such as the fear of the picture representing two warships engaging in a battle which the family kept in the attic, are over. He finds himself alone in the attic facing the painting calmly with a certain detachment as he ponders the skill and talent of the painter:

Solo ora poteva guardarlo con una certa calma e cogliere con sufficiente distacco tutto lo sforzo che il pittore aveva inutilmente impiegato per rendere l'immagine quanto più somigliante. La forma della corazzata vera infatti non corrispondeva che minimamente a quella dipinta, e anche il colore del mare gli appariva sostanzialmente diverso. Ma c'era nel quadro un qualche cosa di più che non riusciva a rinvenire né nella nave destinata a scomparire presto alla vista, né nello specchio di mare precisamente rinchiuso entro una linea retta: quel senso di fissità minacciosa e irremovibile che rendeva la corazzata dipinta forse addirittura più grande di quella reale. ... la capacità da parte di un uomo di aver potuto racchiudere con essi e sviluppare entro un breve rettangolo di spazio quel senso di vastità senza limiti, venivano ad esasperare il suo naturale terrore dell'enorme." (180)

Through the eyes of Stefano, Tomizza the author, is describing the wonders and magic of art – the fact that the enormity and vastness of life can be captured in a small space.

Another epiphany in Stefano's childhood was the realization of the irrevocability of death when he witnesses the death of two young men, victims of war. Throughout his growing up during the war he overheard many stories of atrocities committed against

innocent people either by the Germans or by the partisans. One day he watches his father Marco being very upset at the news that “I ribelli avevano buttato nella foiba di Pisino trenta uomini di Parenzo. Si diceva che metà ne avevano ammazzati e metà li avessero lasciati vivi; avevano poi legato assieme col fildiferro uno morto e uno vivo e li avevano spinti giù. ... per lo più bottegai e commercianti come lui, gente che aveva solo pensato al lavoro” (106).

He hears of two “rastrellamenti” in the village as the Germans search houses and line up people outside their homes, but no one is killed. Other war operations, such as the gasoline container that fell from a flying airplane, the trucks with soldiers stopping in the village and the bombardment of the passenger ship S. Marco are all events or accounts Stefano witnesses, but he never sees death caused by the war. War for him still resembles the pretend-games he and his friends played in the fields. But one day the direct encounter with death produces a shock in him as he sees two young men slaughtered by the Germans and left on the grass. Stefano’s revelation that the war games he and his friends played were over, is expressed by the line: “la finta battaglia ora era davvero finita.”(120) The statement explicitly predicts another end -- the end of his childhood era.

*La quinta stagione* closes with the preparations for Stefano is being sent to the Capodistria seminary to follow in his brother Alfredo’s footsteps. A moving scene occurs when his “valigia era pronta.” (211) The entire extended family comes to say good bye. His paternal grandfather imparts his blessing and says half in Slavic half in Italian: “Dete moje, (my child) diventerai un prete, una persona istruita e un giorno tornerai a insegnarci a noi la parola di Dio” (212).

For Stefano, who is now ten years old, the ‘Eriksonian’ stage of ego development is completed. Childhood came to an end and Stefano, saddled with the baggage of his previously gained psychological and psychosocial ‘negative and positive outcomes,’ leaves his town and embarks upon a new stage – his adolescence.

Upon examining Stefano’s stages in this chapter, I claim that the psychosocial stages : Basic Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, Initiative vs. Guilt and Industry vs. Inferiority all took place in Stefano’s childhood and accrued ‘strengths and weaknesses.’ In the following chapter, by examining Fulvio Tomizza’s *L’albero dei sogni* , I will analyze whether each stage was resolved by his ego and determine whether Stefano incorporated more ‘negative or positive outcomes.’



### CHAPTER III - ADOLESCENCE

In Chapter Two, I analyzed Fulvio Tomizza's character Stefano Marcovich in *La quinta stagione* during his **childhood** and aligned it with Erikson's psychosocial development stages I-IV in order to trace the development in Stefano's social encounters and the influence they had on the formation of his ego identity.

A follower of Erikson, James Marcia, states:

The formation of an ego identity is a major event in the development of personality. Occurring during early adolescence, the consolidation of identity marks the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. Identity formation involves a synthesis of childhood skills, beliefs and identifications into a more or less coherent, unique whole that provides the young adult with both a sense of continuity with the past and a direction for the future. (Marcia, Waterman, et. al. 3)

In view of this assessment, I will now explore the formation<sup>37</sup> of Stefano Markovich's ego identity in Tomizza's *l'Albero dei sogni* during Stefano's **adolescence** stage (Erikson stage V). Erikson defines this stage as 'Identity vs. Role Confusion' as it is characterized with biological, psychological and psychosocial issues.

S. L. Archer, too, stresses the importance of identity formation in adolescence: "Adolescence is the stage in a life span that Erikson designated the first in which the task of identity formation becomes salient." (Marcia 177) He continues reiterating Erikson's statement: "Identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence; it is a life long development unconscious to the individuals

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<sup>37</sup> "The formation of an identity is different from the construction of an identity. In experimental terms, one becomes progressively aware of one's basic characteristics and position in the world. For example, one comes to realize gradually that one is separate from one's mother... [that one becomes the member] of certain social and religious groups, the citizen of a specific country." (Marcia, Waterman et. al. 7)

and to his society. Its roots go back all the way to the first-self-recognition" (Erikson, *Identity in the Life Cycle* 122).

By reflecting on the "roots" of Stefano's psychosocial development during childhood and examining his phases of his ego formation in his adolescence stage, I intend to give an interpretation of Stefano's difficulties in adopting a specific identity in his later years.

The critic Marco Neirotti pointed out that Tomizza's *L'albero dei sogni* is a novel which embodies:

La necessità di raccontare, di sviscerare il proprio mondo interiore (tutt'uno con l'avventura storica vissuta), affollato da turbamenti, struggimenti, sensi di colpa, diventa un'esperienza di carattere psicoanalitico, sulla scia di Svevo, tentativo di una liberazione apparentemente impossibile.(69)

Thus, Stefano's disturbing inner experiences, rooted in his childhood and adolescence and tied to historical events, are condensed in *L'albero dei Sogni*.

The story is told in first person by Stefano Marcovich, the protagonist, and it is difficult to recount, for all the events that happen are intertwined with Stefano's inner life. His emotional experiences can be interpreted as psychological "twists and turns" among an array of psychosocial phenomena.

A brief summary, however, will serve as point of reference to revisit events in Stefano's life during his adolescence stage and thus evaluate his identity crisis. At the age of ten, Stefano leaves his family, his village of Giurizziani and is accompanied by his father to the seminary of Capris (Latin name for the Italian 'Capodistria,' and today Koper in Slovenia). During his first year in Capris his immature behavior irked

the administrators and as a consequence he was transferred to the Salesian school (Collegio) of Gorizia. His stay at the new school in Gorizia was equally troublesome, and at the end of one school year he was transferred back to Capris. Meanwhile, the political scene in Istria has drastically changed as the Yugoslav Communist regime took over the area and his old school Capris was no longer a seminary, but it became a state school, called “La Casa dello studente” (The Student’s boarding house).

Giurizziani was now under the Communist control, and economic and political changes significantly impacted Stefano’s life. His father, Marco Marcovich, originally a merchant and a landowner, becomes a victim under the new regime and is unjustly accused of being a “reazionario” and imprisoned. At this time, Stefano is still attending his third year of school when his father, affected by bad health, is released from prison. Together with his wife he leaves Giurizziani and exiles to Trieste. Stefano joins the family as his father sets up a business venue – a coffee shop. Stefano reluctantly helps with the business for a short while and then, in order to finish school, leaves his family behind in Trieste, and returns to Capris. His conflicting feelings of love-hate towards his father are haunting him and soon they turn into guilty feelings. His father’s health worsens and his premature death affects Stefano gravely. When Stefano completes his studies at Capris, he gets a job with radio Capodistria. However, it is a brief interlude in his life for he receives a scholarship to attend to the University of Belgrade (the capital of Yugoslavia), where he enrolls in the department of Romance Languages. By living among the Slavs in Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, he is hoping to find the missing links in the search for his identity. He knows that ethnically he belongs to the Slavic group, and

yet he knows and feels his culture and language are Italian. However, the political scene complicates his life in Belgrade and when in 1954 Zone B became definitely Yugoslav at the end of the semester, without any tangible results, but with a strong sense that he does not belong to the Serbs, he returns to Giurizziani. In the meantime, a theater script he wrote is accepted and he gets an opportunity to get into filmmaking in Lubiana (Slovenia). There he meets Daniza and feels their love will save him from his wandering. Unfortunately, his constant feeling of loneliness and his disappointment with himself again drive him to continue searching for his identity. He returns to Giurizziani once more and in 1954, like many Istrians, decides to exile and settle in Trieste.

For practical reasons, I subdivided Stefano's life into three parts: **Early adolescence** – Stefano's attending the Capris and Gorizia schools; **Mid-Adolescence** – Stefano's father's exile and resettlement in Trieste and Stefano's return to Capris; and finally, **Late Adolescence** – Stefano's journey to Belgrade, his employment as a filmmaker in Lubiana and his exile from Giurizziani to Trieste.

This division also corresponds to the division used in psychology, where adolescence is also divided into three parts: Early adolescence (10-13), Mid-adolescence (13-15) and Late adolescence (15-18). Although these chronological distinctions differ among various social theorists, the onset of puberty is the demarcation in the classification of adolescence. The physiological growth of an adolescent should run parallel to her/his psychological and psychosocial development. It is accepted by scholars that adolescence is a stage between childhood and adulthood where an individual experiences conflicting forces: both of

biological and of sociocultural nature. According to Erikson, “the challenge for the individual is to reconcile the tension and master the ‘psychosocial crisis’” (Erikson *Identity and the Life Cycle* 105).

As mentioned in previous chapters, Tomizza’s writings abound with themes of estrangement, isolation, guilt, shame, betrayal, and remorse. In Erikson’s theory of early adolescence these issues are embedded in stage V, labeled ‘Identity vs Role confusion.’ Within the framework of Erikson’s theory, I will analyze Stefano’s early adolescence, evidencing how he dealt with these conflicts and which of the above issues was predominant in his early adolescence.

### **III:I Early Adolescence**

#### **1) *Capris***

At the age of ten, Stefano is left alone by his father in a huge dorm of the seminary in Capris. He suddenly realizes that his life will change forever:

Ebbi la precisa sensazione che solo allora stesse iniziandosi la mia vera vita....Nell’ inimmaginato camerone con lo scandire dei minuti andava maturandosi il distacco dal paese, al quale sarei per sempre tornato come uno che viene da fuori (9).

Erikson would explain the impact on Stefano’s parting from his father and his village as a “normative crisis, i.e. a normal phase of increased conflict characterized by a seeming fluctuation in ego strength, and yet also by a high growth potential.

Normative crisis are relatively more reversible, or, better traversable” (125).

However, I would argue that Stefano’s crisis was not so much ‘reversible’ nor ‘traversable,’ but rather that the crisis created by the abandonment has awakened

his childhood anxieties that generated conflicts and given rise to a propensity for psychological isolation, as we will see in his future life.<sup>38</sup>

The expressions ‘per sempre’ and ‘tornare come uno straniero’ resonate with the awareness and conviction that he will forever be a stranger among his own people.<sup>39</sup> When Stefano opens his suitcase, and calls it “l’unico oggetto assegnatomi per il mio pellegrinaggio” (10), we sense his loneliness. The word ‘pellegrinaggio’ is permeated with a religious connotation, but it can also serve as a metaphor for the life-journey of an individual who seeks enlightenment. Stefano’s journey should be interpreted as a search for identity clarification.

Another scene that confirms Stefano’s disheartenment occurs when his older brother Alfredo, who is also attending the seminary at Capris, visits him in the dorm:

Il fratello mi colse su un letto d’altri, le mani incrociate dietro la schiena. Alla sua domanda più compassionevole che severa risposi scrollandomi in un pianto rivolto a me, a lui, al mondo perduto, al presentimento che d’allora in poi mi sarei trovato sempre con estranei. (10)

Stefano’s cry can justifiably be understood as a significant ‘visceral’ cry, as he will now have to navigate among strangers. He cries to his brother, he cries to himself and he cries for il ‘mondo perduto.’ It is a cry for a ‘paradise lost’. He realizes that he will now have to make an effort to associate with people, “comportandomi,

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<sup>38</sup> “Erikson does not detail identity-related tasks of adolescence more generally – many of which are more relevant to mid- and late adolescence.” Kegan (1982), Kegan describes an Affiliation Vs. Abandonment stage additional to Erikson’s eight stages sequence of psychological tasks, as representing the key psychosocial conflict in early adolescence characterized by themes of affiliation and abandonment, being accepted or left behind by others ... by family and, later, by groups [this phase] is essential to the process of one’s identity formation” (Kroger 38)

<sup>39</sup> Aliberti has attributed to these sentiments the perceptions of the Istrian people who left Istria as exiles. (*L’anima di frontiera* 48) I offer an additional interpretation, based on Erikson and other psychosocial psychologists: Stefano (Tomizza’s alter-ego) is crossing into early adolescence and is aware of the end of his childhood phase when he used to be recognized in his village as the little boy Marcovich.

nell'opposto ed equivalente gioco di difesa e di corteggiamento, sulla base dei dati di ieri" (10).

Stefano's 'internalized parental standards' are still the guide by which he attempts to function in the new environment. However, he also realizes that he has to make decisions on his own and in the process he has to 'free' himself from 'the dictates of the internalized parent.'<sup>40</sup> Stefano calls it "gioco di difesa e di corteggiamento". Thus, the interplay of the psychological tasks that Stefano has to undergo in this transitional period is challenging, but it is also the necessary beginning to

differentiate one's own interests, needs, attitudes and attributions from those of one's parents and significant others. ... [and integrate] newfound bodily changes and sexual desires into a sense of personal identity. ... [and channel them] into socially available outlets using culturally appropriate forms of expression.(Kroger 40)

I will continue to examine the themes of biology, individual psychology and social surroundings in order to understand Stefano's early adolescence development, drawing from Jane Kroger's remarks:

The biological changes of puberty, the move to a complex way of thinking, redefining the self within the family, developing new forms of relationships with peers, and adapting to the more complex demands of junior high or middle school system – all raise important identity considerations for the young adolescent. (14)

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<sup>40</sup> The psychologist Marcia, who has built further upon Erikson's theories, discusses some identity-related psychosocial tasks specific to early adolescence. He believes that this period, which he calls 'disorganization', is necessary for an adolescent to 'free' oneself from the dictates of the internalized parent. The internalized parent stands for prohibitions and aspirations from one's parents which have been taken into self through childhood and upon which one has built a sense of self-esteem. However, the continued, unreflective, and rigid adherence to standards from internalized parents is not adaptive to the many demands of adult life, at least in Western advanced societies. (40)

As Stefano enters Capris, the biological aspect of his puberty is still dormant because he is in 'transition.'<sup>41</sup> Erikson would label him, "retarded in his psychosocial capacity for intimacy" (*Childhood and Society* 119). Stefano is being treated as a small boy by his classmates and by the adults, because he is short and he is only ten. This prevents him from engaging into adult discussions and makes him feel left out and disappointed. Father superior: " invano aspettava particolari da un interlocutore di dieci anni e il più delle volte era costretto a prenderselo sulle ginocchia a tagliarli le unghie." (15)

His entering puberty is not precocious, but Stefano, as a keen observer often finds that the behavior of older seminarians does not fit their presumed vocation. He would like to share his doubts and clear the confusion with the father superior, but the timing has not come yet.<sup>42</sup> 'Puberty timing' is also seen in his not being yet engaged into a conversation about sexual matters and Stefano is angry "...la rabbia di non avere cose da dire essendomi ancora precluse le ragioni del sesso, si liberarono un giorno sullo sparato consunto..." (15). Stefano is frustrated and at one point explodes for an apparently unrelated reason.

When his superior, the reverend, is praising a little church, which was surrounded by a green grassy area, Stefano angrily takes a stand and in an outburst

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<sup>41</sup> For a detail discussion see <http://www.sexualityandu.ca/teachers/sexuality-and-childhood-development/late-childhood-9-12> "In the years 9-12 most children will begin a rapid phase of transition from childhood to adolescence. The term 'Puberty' refers to a stage of biological maturation where a boy or a girl becomes capable of reproduction. Although some children will begin the changes of puberty before age 9, most will begin the process of rapid growth and physical changes in the years between 9 and 12 ... As they go through puberty, it is typical for young people to develop a heightened, at times seemingly obsessive, preoccupation with their physical appearance. Anxiety over physical appearance can lead to feelings of inadequacy."

<sup>42</sup> Several studies have pointed out the timing of pubertal development. "The timing of pubertal change holds important implications for early, on time or late maturer in relations to one's peers affects one's sense of self -esteem and identity" (Kroger 47). A study by Berzonsky and Lombardo found that "those males who experienced an identity crisis did, in fact, report a relatively late pubertal onset. ... The experience of being 'different' in relation to one's peers may precipitate a crisis of personal identity." (qtd. in Kroger 47)



contradicts the reverend by saying that, "...era brutta, disadorna, con solo fiori di campagna intorno al tabernacolo, senza altari laterali, il tutto ridotto a un'unica navata, se a tanto poteva aspirare un corridoio tra panche tarlate..." (15)

The priest looks at him in horror and is equally astonished when Stefano, giving vent to his frustrations the next day, says that one morning he has gone three times to receive the Holy Communion approaching different altars. Stefano's action is condemned and considered a scandal and a sacrilege. However, the mere word sacrilege did not impress or scare him, as did the idea that now he was judged according to another set of values. In the priest's eyes his act was clearly a dangerous defect found among Istrian Slav-farmers. Thus Stefano reaches "l'amara constatazione di essere rimasto condizionato, forse per sempre, da un ordine mentale contadino e slavo"(15). The perception, in general, of the Slav-farmers mentality was negative, culturally awkward and ignorant.

In Capris, Stefano, like his brother Alfredo, did not choose to associate with the boys from the countryside, who were mostly Slavs and considered 'different,' like Vinko and Metodio. Both brothers preferred to befriend Italian city-students from Trieste. Stefano never revealed the incident about the communion to his Triestini friends, not because they would criticize his action, but "per aver scoperto a mio maggiore danno la mia più profonda natura grossolana" (15).

Another example of Stefano's pubertal stage is the episode on the boardwalk. With his friend Spadaro, who was older than him, he used to take walks on the boardwalk in the city where the bathers were enjoying the beach. One day, Stefano in his curious-puberty mode kept staring at a young woman:

... in un costume da bagno che lasciava trasparire l'ombra del pube.  
Camminando a braccetto con Spadaro, lo sguardo indugiava offeso tra quelle cosce divaricate che nella loro compiutezza e nell'abbandono mi sembravano più disposte al lancinante sacrificio del parto che ad altro, e mi presentavano la cruda imagine di una maternità profanata. (16)

When Spadaro realized that his young friend had a fixed gaze on the 'forbidden,' he gently turned Stefano's head the other way and engaged him in a mundane conversation. These events reveal two different preoccupations in Stefano's behavior: one is his curiosity about sexuality; the other is the surfacing of what will later become a split -- the vacillation between 'farmer-Slav' and 'city-boy Italian.'

Kroger's theories of early adolescence as a phase "developing new forms of relationships with peers and a more complex way of thinking" apply to several episodes in the novel. The relationship Stefano develops with his Triestini acquaintances has a positive outcome as his friendship with Spadaro and other peers. However, the animosity of two classmates (both belonging to the Slavic nationality), Vinko and the not-trusted Metodio, has a profound negative impact on Stefano. Without any provocation on many occasions Vinko hit and punched Stefano, while the onlooker Metodio, who was considered a sure candidate for priesthood, never said anything and never came to Stefano's rescue.

A mutual antagonism developed: one day being threatened by Vinko, Stefano, physically inferior, dared to defend himself by calling him "s'ciavo."<sup>43</sup> A punch in the stomach made Stefano fall to the floor. This incident was brought up to the administrators, who tried to warn all the seminarians about the real danger a word

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<sup>43</sup> S'ciavo is short for 'schiavo' – an offensive label for Slavs who were often labeled with this humiliating name.

can trigger and provoke an explosion of anger. Even though the old hatred between Italians and Slavs was not tolerated, the Triestini boys were using the word 's'ciavo', as Stefano explains, "per spavalderia, ignari della ferita che poteva arrecare"(13). Stefano, however, used deliberately the word 's'ciavo' intended as a weapon to defend himself. From the beginning, when he first met Vinko and Metodio he felt that he could not trust them as he compared them to some of the Slav people he knew in his own village:<sup>44</sup>

Fin dal primo istante, e non cogliedomi impreparato, [Vinko] mi aveva preso in così violenta avversione da farmi riandare a oscuri pregiudizi di razza o a malefiche incarnazioni tanto radicate in una piccola comunità come la nostra, nella quale nessuno era interamente buono e nessuno veramente cattivo. (11)

Stefano's behavior about his anger for not being included in the discussion of subjects of sexual context, his curiosity about feminine nudity, and his daring to receive the sacraments more than once in a single day<sup>45</sup> are in line with his pre-puberty anxiety in his ongoing maturation. However, his concerns and preoccupations with the duality of being both a farmer-Slav and a declared Italian are symptoms of the malady affecting a region where nationality is unstable, unsettled and embedded with prejudices and hate. Even at this early stage we sense that his identity is at risk and definitely endangered.

If we accept Kroger's theory that a 'more complex way of thinking' is part of the "early adolescence identity issues [which are] associated with the biological

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<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note that Stefano judges his newly formed acquaintances on the basis of his previous experiences. Again his behavior as an adolescent corresponds to the Erikson's theory.

<sup>45</sup> Contradicting the superiors is also part of the 'normal' behavior in puberty: "To dare the ethical and test the social system." (Kroger 132)

changes of puberty and their reverberations in psychological processes and societal responses”(34), then the following episode shows Stefano’s compelling behavior to rectify publicly what he perceives as wrong. The school cafeteria is described as having some terrible meals:

Un’ indecifrabile minestra di verdure chiamata ‘tabacco’; alla crema di fagioli era assegnato l’appellativo di “carriarmati” per la coriacea baldanza con cui gli insetti propri del legume, resistendo a cotture prolungate (alla messa si aggiungeva sempre la benedizione), s’incolonnavano sull’orlo freddo del piatto.” (18)

Stefano refuses to eat the ‘disgusting soup’ and he makes a pact with some classmates to pass his bowl of soup to another classmate, without the supervisor’s permission, in exchange for an afternoon snack. Eventually, the supervisor one day discovered this insubordinate act. The boy who ate two bowls of soup was harshly punished and given only bread and water for several meals:

Gli fu indicata la colonna della fame che si ergeva in mezzo al refettorio e alla quale il giovane dovette appoggiarsi per quattro pasti a pane e acqua. Il pungolo dell’obbedienza era così inculcato, che per il primo giorno il seminarista non toccò cibo né bevanda. Nel pomeriggio [del secondo giorno] si sarebbe rifatto con due miei pani dolci, e gli occhi di tutta la tavolata rivolti a me che non sapevo darmi un contegno distaccato trascinandoli a una timida ma compiaciuta insubordinazione.(18)

This episode demonstrates a complex thinking behavioral process by Stefano: the insubordination towards the supervisors and the challenge he poses to the sacred rule of obedience. Furthermore, he defies the injustice of the rule, and shows compassion towards his classmate.<sup>46</sup> This behavior gains him respect among his

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<sup>46</sup> Stefano’s moral reasoning resonates with Lawrence Kolberg’s idea that “conventional moral reasoning occurs during late childhood and early adolescence and it is characterized by reasoning that is based on rules of conventions and society.” (qtd. in Kroger 73)

classmates and among the upper classes, a respect he was seeking. Furthermore, it generates a high social support for him and the approval from his peers. In fact, a few days later he is called by upper classmen to be part of another scheme for they felt he had demonstrated “una certa intraprendenza”(18).

Unfortunately, however, this behavior was seen as rebellious by the administrators, even though psychology recognizes it as a role-play in the context of early adolescence. In his struggle for acceptance and approval by his peers, Stefano also violated his own sense of morality. His initial ‘compiaciuta insubordinazione’ appears to be short lived. As his father comes to pick him up in the court yard of the school to take him back to Giurizziani for the summer, Stefano describes himself:

Nello stesso cortile in quel crepuscolo di maggio si trovava un'altra persona ancora più delusa e straniera a lui stesso: io, bloccato nella mia misera sudaticcia “eènza”<sup>47</sup> ...nell'impossibilità di proseguire, come di tornare indietro. (20)

Stefano reached a standstill. His feelings of delusion and estrangement prevent him from understanding who he truly is. He is confused and seems to be, “in the jungle of human existence [where] there is no feeling of being alive [for there is] no sense of ego identity” (Erikson 94-95). Stefano is experiencing what Erik Erikson calls an “identity crisis”.<sup>48</sup> (A key turning point in one's identity development.)

Stefano's undertakings and insubordination during his Capris experience cost him a transfer to another school. In his egotistic effort to be accepted and to gain respect by his peers he broke the ethical rules of the institution. He realizes

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<sup>47</sup> Tomizza coined the term ‘eènza’. It is interpreted as ‘conscience’ – ‘essence.’

<sup>48</sup> “The growing child must, at every step, derive a vitalizing sense of reality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experiences is a successful variant of the way other people around him master experiences and recognize such mastery.”(Erikson, *Identity in the Life Cycle* (94-95)

that his peers' acceptance became an 'empty praise' and that the self-esteem he derived from his insubordination was temporary and artificial. The glory did not last nor did it allow him to strengthen his ego identity. Ultimately his experience of the first year in Capris away from home was miserable.

## **2) *The City of G\*\*\****

Stefano's early adolescence is being discussed through two phases of his life: first in Capris and then in the City of G\*\*\*.<sup>49</sup> Stefano's experiences in Capris, as we saw, indicate a rather negative psychosocial outcome. The following analysis of his early childhood will continue to focus on his life experiences in the school in Gorizia to assess if his psychosocial development hindered or promoted the growth of his ego identity.

After one unhappy year in Capris, Stefano returns to his family in Giurizziani for the summer. That same year in autumn his father accompanies him to the new boarding school located in Gorizia. This school is not a seminary and the student-body is composed of youth from the neighboring towns of Friuli as well as students from Trieste and Istria.

Upon entering the boarding school, Stefano is immediately impressed with the location and the panoramic view, "Un panorama al quale si sarebbe potuto accedere da un albergo o da una costosa casa di cura" (22). His father seems satisfied with the upgrade of his son's school, but he abruptly leaves with teary eyes. As he exits, he coldly taps Stefano's shoulder leaving him very disappointed, "...

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<sup>49</sup> La Città di G\*\*\* Tomizza alludes to the Italian city of Gorizia. I will refer to it as Gorizia.

lasciandomi in una solitudine maggiore non tanto per la completa estraneità del luogo, quanto per la possibilità ormai perduta di sentirlo un poco anche fratello” (22) Stefano is unhappy because his emotional needs are not met, and the hope to get closer to his father vanishes as the father leaves. Once more Stefano is overcome with feelings of solitude and estrangement. Meanwhile, the father, a wealthy landowner, in his own isolation, has high aspirations for his son’s future and sees in the new school an opportunity for his son’s advancement on the social ladder.

Since I aim to observe Stefano’s identity formation within a psychosocial developmental framework, it will be necessary to see under what circumstances the sense of solitude and estrangement occurs, which “states of mind” are predominant in a particular stage, and with what frequency they occur. It will also help me assess if Stefano was able to accrue from his experiences the ego strength as postulated in Erikson’s theory, starting with the assumption that,

A successful resolution of each stage is predicated on the successful resolution of foregoing stages. So that if one succeeds in forming an identity, it may be assumed that the earlier stages of Trust, Autonomy, Initiative and Industry have also been resolved successfully. (qtd. in Marcia 6)

At the onset of Stefano’s stay in the new boarding school in Gorizia, he befriended an old priest, who took him under his wing, after discovering that he came from Capris and that he knew Metodio, the Slav seminarian. Somehow the old priest was convinced that Stefano would be an excellent example of exceptional faith and that he will pursue his religious vocation zealously. Ironically, Metodio was in effect the person for whom Stefano felt aversion and mistrust, but that was never made clear to the priest.

Furthermore, Stefano's relationship with the old priest gave the other classmates the impression that he had special privileges, because they assumed he was a rich family member, or that he had some special talents. Therefore, the peers treated him with special esteem. In spite of this esteem, Stefano preferred to associate with the poorest of all – the so called “figli di Maria.” These were orphans or abandoned children who were serving in the cafeteria, and they could only aspire to become clerics, a minor status in the convent, or perform some other manual jobs.

He felt instantly and spontaneously attracted to these people whom he would meet “nel rustico” –fields where the ‘figli di Maria’ played and performed different tasks and jobs. Their polite behavior attracted him as well as the environment they frequented, because that reconnected him with memories of his early life:

...una corsia di trifoglio, un filare spruzzato di verderame, le gabbie dei conigli, fin gli attrezzi arrugginiti in un canto, mi richiamavano ad aspetti e visioni troppo brucianti perché potessi privarmene e solo in omaggio alle ambizioni paterne. (25)

Stefano was also able to help the older clerics and farmers with some chores which reminded him of the farmers of his countryside: “[questo] mi offriva il destro di idealizzare i contadini dei miei luoghi” (26). In Giurizziani he also choose to befriend a boy, Valdo, who came from a poor family. This predilection appears to stem from the desire to “contraddire le aspirazioni paterne” and yet he feels:

... I nostri furti alle meloniere, i giri per i villagi durante il carnevale si erano sempre svolti con una specie di esitazione, quasi un timore da parte mia di tradire irreparabilmente la fede familiare. (26)



It seems that Stefano's attraction and willingness to befriend the farmers were genuine, for he liked the natural cycle he experienced on the farm. However, in this choice there is also a trace of rebellion against his father, and the conflict generated by his family status provokes anxiety and feelings of betrayal in him. This duality, this split of his feelings will recur on many occasions as he grows up.

Driven by his longing for his earlier life experiences, on the farm of the boarding school he makes a new friend, Giuseppe, a little older than he, who as a farmer is working in the 'rustico.' In his company, Stefano feels happy and believes that he could accept that type of life ("pienamente aderire [alla vita del contadino] ... che mio padre con i suoi negozi tentava invece di lasciarsi alle spalle.") (27) Stefano's friend Giuseppe played the trumpet. One evening, while Giuseppe was playing, the sounds emitted by the trumpet touched Stefano's soul and he became one with nature and the farm environment. This connection with the the natural environment deeply touched his inner feelings. When he embraced his friend Giuseppe, confused existential questions came to his mind:

Tanta era la dolcezza che mi invadeva in quelle ore di tramonto, mentre dal balcone filtrava un ben noto profumo di verbena, che prima di accomiarmi un giorno di slancio lo abbracciai scoppiando in un pianto che si alimentava in queste confuse domande: perché sono solo al mondo? perché il mondo non é buono? perché papà non va in chiesa? perché mamma bada soltanto ai propri interessi? (27)

This passage is significant for it confirms Erikson's theory, which postulates that in 'stage five' in the life cycle an adolescent, "first questions the values, goals, and beliefs of their 'significant others' (qtd. in Marcia 177). In Stefano's case I claim that his question, 'perché sono solo al mondo?,' is a remnant of his early childhood

experiences, which were never resolved along with his unresolved Basic Trust in Infancy, which I have discussed in Chapter Two. Similarly, the question ‘perché il mondo non è buono?’ is an existential question which weighs on morality, as ethical concerns become important during adolescence. Significant here is also his questioning his father’s religious practice (or lack of it), while also expressing a negative judgment on his mother’s self-centeredness and her self-interest. This concern is an implicit lament and possibly even an unconscious condemnation of the fact that he was deprived of maternal love.

The way of life of his friend Giuseppe and the pleasantly relaxing environment of the school farm reminded him of his own childhood experiences with such intensity that he saw Giuseppe as his ego-ideal. Stefano’s questions were not only related to adolescent’s concerns, but they represented a cry of loneliness and an outburst of discontent with himself and his family.

This episode was followed by yet another cry. Stefano was, however, able to hold back his tears for it was a silent cry out of anger. His friend Giuseppe told him that the father superior had forbidden him to come to the “rustico” fields. In fact, the next day the principal called Stefano to his office and asked him bluntly if he had joined the boarding school “per studiare o per portare l’erba ai conigli?” (27). Stefano defended himself by saying that he had cleared this with his guide Don Beretti and that he was not neglecting his studies. However, hurt by the reproach, he also slipped in a complaint, saying that Don Beretti was not fair in assigning grades. At hearing this, the principal got furious and Stefano ended up being thrown out of the office. Stefano perceived this as an injustice:

Nel petto sentivo spalancarsi una fenditura di pianto asciutto che invano saliva alla gola, dentro ricacciato dalla rabbia di aver trovato il direttore deliberatamente ingiusto ... Ero proprio solo, e all'inizio di ogni ora di studio, ritto in piedi durante la preghiera, fissavo le mie sembianze nel vetro della finestra, socchiudevo gli occhi, buttavo la testa quanto più possibile all'indietro rimanendo un istante immobile a contemplare l'immagine della mia morte. (28)

His sense of justice and his strong feelings of being misunderstood reinforced his sense of loneliness while his death fantasies highlighted his state of desperation.<sup>50</sup>

From this point on Stefano's relationship with Don Beretti became one of mutual contempt. The dislike for Don Beretti is further reinforced when a young refugee from Zara confesses to Stefano that Don Beretti hit him because, "si era rifiutato di fare ciò che voleva lui" (29). Stefano understood the Zaratino's comment literally:

Ipotesi che non mi sembrò del tutto errata ricordando le violente liti tra consanguinei, oltre che tra coniugi, nelle quali l'agredito che agli occhi estranei appariva come vittima, aveva avuto in realtà il torto di esser venuto meno a un patto preciso e pienamente sottoscritto.(29)

Stefano does not understand the complication of homosexual relationships due to the late maturation of his puberty stage. The 'patto preciso' between Don Beretti and the boy is not clear to him. In another similar episode Don Beretti again assaults the Zaratino refugee for disappearing for a long time into the woods with a classmate. When Don Beretti tries to justify his anger by saying that it is dangerous to get close to the Yugoslav border, all the other students chuckle. Stefano thought Don Beretti's warning was fair. However, he begins to become aware about sexual

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<sup>50</sup> Erikson explains that, "In extreme instances of delayed adolescence an extreme form of disturbance in the 'experience of time' appears which, in its milder form, belongs to the psychopathology of everyday adolescence. It consists of a sense of great urgency and yet also of a loss of consideration for time as a dimension of living. The young person may feel simultaneously very young and in fact babylike, and old beyond rejuvenation" ...The 'wish to die' is only in those rare cases a really 'suicidal wish,' where 'to be a suicide' becomes an inescapable identity choice in itself." (Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* 136-137)

identities: “C’era una sfida aperta tra i due, il punto di arrivo di una situazione, di una mal celata intesa che coinvolgeva tutti loro più adulti e dalla quale io ero sempre stato escluso” (30). It is obvious that Stefano was too young to understand the complicated matters of sexuality.<sup>51</sup> His biological changes were still dormant and his delayed puberty can be seen in his early adolescence as responsible for his innocence and confusion.<sup>52</sup>

Stefano’s stay at the new school was not a happy one and he called it a “signorile prigione.” As a consequence, he became reserved, taciturn, bashful and reluctant -- a behavior which his teachers and superiors, especially the older ones, misinterpreted as shyness. The superiors thought he was predestined for religious vocation and, as an encouraging reward, he was given a mentoring assignment: to teach the newcomers how to serve Mass. Stefano accepted it gladly and used it for his personal benefit:

Iniziai con i giovanissimi lanciati come me a mettersi inevidenza a ogni costo, e l’entusiasmo con cui accettai l’incarico, la dedizione con la quale lo svolsi per un anno intero significarono, più che una definitiva rinuncia, un disperato ripiego sottilmente congegnato per entrare di diritto a far parte della comunità dei grandi. (31)

Indeed, as he hoped and anticipated, he did become part of the adult group as this special assignment opened up for him several opportunities. The younger students, Don Fiore, the older priest and even Don Beretti, who originally showed him contempt, had a new special consideration for him. Driven by the desire to be

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<sup>51</sup> “A key developmental task of early adolescence is beginning to come to terms with a new sense of sexual identity, which the biological changes of puberty bring” (Erikson, 1968). And Kroger states, “Although recognition of oneself as a boy or a girl has occurred well before the time a child reaches the preschool years, it is during the years of adolescence that newfound feelings of sexual interest and awareness must be integrated into one’s sense of identity orientation.” (49)

<sup>52</sup> See St Augustine’s recollection: “Clouds of muddy carnal concupiscence filled the air. The bubbling impulses of puberty befogged and obscured my heart so that it could not see the difference between love’s serenity and lust’s darkness. Confusion of the two things boiled within me.” (Augustinus, *Confessions* - qtd. in Kroger 24)

noticed even more, one night he makes an irrational decision. He reveals to his director that he wants to become a priest. The director is surprised, but Stefano in order to appear sincere, invents a lie. He tells him that his family is opposed to his entering priesthood which prompts the director to console him by giving him a hug. The director also spoke to him about the vote of chastity made by priests. Here once more Stefano's innocence appeared:

Per dare ulteriore importanza al mio caso avrei voluto ancora inventare, ma con tutta la malizia di villano cresciuto tra le bestie non riuscivo a stabilire come si potesse infrangere il sesto comandamento in una comunità di soli maschi, e sia pure le fughe isolate del dalmata e degli altri nel bosco. (35)

Stefano's announcement of wanting to become a priest and the prefabricated information of his family opposition, prompted the director to write a letter to his father, advising him of his son's decision. A few days later when Stefano's father came to see him and questioned him about the motives for such a decision, Stefano persisted in his lie, but admitted silently his inner conflicts towards his father:

Io che avrei voluto saltargli con le braccia al collo per soffocare ogni rimprovero e ogni rimorso chiedendogli solo di portarmi via con sé, insistetti nel mutismo, nelle risposte brevi e formali per fargli pesare l'inesistente distacco ...dicendogli che ero stato lasciato solo, che non volevo più vederlo, che gli orfani là dentro finivano preti. (36)

Stefano's answers were deliberately chosen to hurt his father and to make him feel guilty. The father, listening to his son, simply reclined his head and after a while told him about home matters and the passing away of an old servant. This made Stefano cry, but his tears were now "per l'intatta umanità di chi mi stava di fronte, per una capacità di partecipazione all'altrui dolore di attaccamento ai nostri destini che in me sentivo quasi perduta." (37)

Because of his commitment to become a priest he is given special responsibility in school. This gained him respect and trust as well as access to Don Beretti's grade book. Given this special privilege, he is soon persuaded by a classmate to check his grades in Don Beretti's register because he suspects that Don Beretti posted grades according to his whims. When Stefano discovers the truth and Don Beretti's fraud, he angrily explodes about such an injustice: "Mandai al diavolo il lavoro di sagrestano e scontrandomi con l'allarmatissimo don Fiore, gli gridai forte sul viso paonazzo: 'Non voglio fare il prete, non farò più il prete.' Ne ricevetti un sorprendente schiaffo" (38).

Stefano's violent reaction worsened when he tried entering the locked classroom as he realized someone was there. He finally had an epiphany as he realized that his ignorance about sexual matters had lasted too long, but he still did not learn life lessons until the Zaratino explained to him in details the "fughe nel bosco da cui tornava con gli occhi cerchiati" (39). In Stefano's words:

Qualcosa si rompe dentro di me, qualche cosa doveva essere accaduto nel mondo di fuori. Corsi allo specchio e stentai a riconoscere il mio viso nell'immagine riflessa: i baffi cresciuti, qualche pelo lungo sul mento e soprattutto la presenza ferma e asciutta di due aculei feroci negli occhi sfuggenti che per la prima volta mi giudicavano.(40)

This passage characterizes the intersection of biology and psychology in the psychosocial realm of identity. Stefano became self-conscious as his outlook changed. The growth of his moustache and the facial hair reflected in his mirror image were signs of the onset of puberty. Stefano suddenly realized that he would have to deal with judgments and complexities of his inner and outer world.

The analysis of Stefano's early adolescence reveals themes of doubt, remorse and betrayal. Furthermore, two significant themes in this segment of his life are the feelings of estrangement and of loneliness. Both are indicators that Stefano is missing positive ingredients to balance his life. His loneliness "is a negative state, marked by a sense of isolation ... a deficiency state, a state of discontent marked by a sense of estrangement."<sup>53</sup> Both are negative states which promote social withdrawal and implies an inability to establish relationships. Even though Stefano was able to function within social networks in Capris and Gorizia, he felt emotionally separated from the adults and from the peers he interacted with.

Stefano's identity formation in his Early Adolescence was affected by many variables; his initial identification with his parents and family was deflated as he became dissatisfied with his parents life style and their occupation. He disapproves of his father's intense dedication to 'i suoi negozi' and blames his mother, who 'bada soltanto ai propri interessi' (27). He further questions the lack of their religious practice, even though they sent him to a seminary school. Their apathetic political views and their discontent with the change in their economic status disturbs him. Both parents were authoritarian and Stefano's behavior in both schools showed signs of rebellion, low-esteem and confusion. On several occasions he asks the rhetorical question "Who am I?" and laments "la mia sudicia eènza." He is handicapped by his loaded baggage and his unresolved psychosocial issues of his childhood stage. [At the end of the Gorizia's parochial school] Stefano's budding

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<sup>53</sup> see <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/what-is-solitude>

identity development came to a halt, which in Erikson's terms is called "identity crisis":

The emerging ego identity bridges the early childhood stages ...A lasting ego identity cannot begin to exist without the trust of the first oral stage; it cannot be completed without a promise of fulfillment which from the dominant image of adulthood reaches down into the baby's beginnings and which creates at every step an accruing sense of ego strength. (Erikson 96-97)

Stefano's dilemma has reached the stage which Erikson and Marcia labeled "Identity Diffusion."<sup>54</sup> In the following segment identity diffusion will be further examined as Stefano enters mid-adolescence.

### III:II Mid-Adolescence

#### 1) *Stefano's Return to Capris*

In *L'albero dei sogni* Stefano exhibited signs of protest, rebellion, negativity and "testing the limits." In his early adolescence he was confused about his social role and experienced a sense of "loss of sameness and continuity" (Erikson 261).<sup>55</sup> Generally, theorists agree that in mid-adolescence there is more preoccupation with freedom while the focus shifts to self and self-gratification.

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<sup>54</sup> Marcia categorizes Identity development into four segments:

**Forclosure** – conferred identity – "a strong identification with one or both parents and where the expectation has been strong that a child will follow family traditions about vocation, religion, politics and so on;"

**Diffusion** – a person with no firm identity attachment;

**Identity Achievement** – those with constructed identities – an individual decides who to be;

**Moratorium** – those in transit. (46)

<sup>55</sup> "Sameness and Continuity" is one of the major aspects of Erikson's theory. This is especially true with the onset of adolescence when an individual needs to develop a sense of self by integrating the accrued experience with the present 'physiological revolution within oneself. "The sense of ego identity ... is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity are matched by the sameness and continuity prepared in the past." (Erikson, *Childhood and Society* 261)



In Stefano's early adolescence I traced some 'normative' themes of his experience tied to puberty changes and found that there were no puberty rites as a hallmark of entrance into his mid adolescence. His rite of passage can be considered the moment when the older Zaratino boy gave him 'instructions on sexual behavior' and when his image in the mirror left him with an ambivalent quest toward his anticipated role and expectations.

According to Kroger, mid-adolescence abounds with important challenges:

Most [youth] begin to make peace with the biological transformation of puberty and to move further toward more complex ways of thinking. In addition, mid-adolescents continue renegotiating family relationship and focus attention more fully on the peer group and the beginnings of one-to-one love relationships, experimenting with expressions of sexuality, considering potential vocations and moving toward greater participation in community roles. (60)

Kroger also lists some questions that came out of her survey given to teenagers, which can be applied here to analyze Stefano's preoccupations as he attempts to give meaning to his perceived reality and future uncertainty: "What do I value? What am I like? Why are people prejudiced against me because I am different? What is justice? How much control should my parents have over my life now? Why does society expect things from me that are not what I want?" (60)

These teenagers' concerns are universal and in line with Erikson's theory that in adolescence

All sameness and continuities relied on earlier are...questioned again ... The growing and developing youth, faced with this physiological revolution within them, and with tangible adult tasks ahead of them are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are. (Erikson 261)<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Erikson further explains: "The adolescent mind is essentially a mind of the *moratorium*, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult. It is an

Equally interesting is Kroger's approach of looking at identity development from different perspectives.<sup>57</sup> In this chapter I will continue to apply Erikson's psychosocial theory, which remains my main guideline in understanding the development of Stefano's identity. However, the historical approach suggested by Kroger is of paramount importance and it must be taken in consideration in Stefano's process of forming an ego identity, since historical and geographical changes are the backbone of his life experiences. According to the historical approach,<sup>58</sup> for example, we can examine how Stefano returns to his old school in Capris after the Communist system took over and completely changed not only the school administration, but also the more significant social structure, eliminating any form of religious instruction. Equally important were the changes in his village, where the social order had been reformed and which caused Stefano to feel alienated from his old friends since his original "conferred identity" bestowed by his parents and family life was no longer acceptable. He felt that those early experiences were outmoded, as a quote from *L'albero dei sogni* demonstrates: "Sapevo di appartenere a una famiglia i cui rampolli dovevano trapiantare il seme del proprio

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ideological mind—and indeed, it is an ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to an adolescent whom is eager to be affirmed by his peers, and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds, and programs which at the same time define what is evil, uncanny, and inimical. In search for social values which guide identity, one therefore confronts the problems of *ideology* and *aristocracy* [the best people will come to rule]. (*Child and Society* 263)

<sup>57</sup> From Erikson's original writings on identity, theorists have generally followed one of five major avenues in defining its meaning, and different research traditions have followed from these different understandings of identity. Identity has been examined according to the following models: 'historical, structural, sociocultural, narrative analysis and psychosocial model' (Kroger 12). The model of the narrative approach would be another interesting perspective to analyze as Don McAdam's statement, "we come to live to stay as we write it," (qtd. in Kroger 12) is very similar to what Tomizza said in an interview: "scrivere significa vivere due volte." (*Destino di frontiera* 15)

<sup>58</sup> In *Life History and the Historical Moment*, Erikson discusses the interrelationship of the psychogenic development of an individual and the historical development of the times. "Psychosocial identity has also a psycho-historical side and ... life histories are inextricably interwoven with history" (Kroger 20)

destino fuori dell'ambito paesano e della stessa proprietà che avrebbero ereditato.”

(10)

In the following section I will review events and experiences that Stefano lived through after he left Gorizia's boarding school. I will align them, whenever possible, to the psychosocial stage of mid-adolescence, seeking clues that will determine if Stefano accrues more positive than negative “outcomes” to combat the ‘role confusion’ of a typical teenager.

To illustrate some chronological relationships, it is necessary to mention some facts in this phase of Stefano's life. During his third year of schooling and especially during his one year of absence from school, as mentioned earlier, Capris school administration and program underwent radical changes. However, he is able to engage in different social roles as he is given different responsibilities in school. In his own native village of Giurizziani there are changes in the economical and societal structures. All these shifts in space and time impact the already predictable confusion of an adolescent. During the summer recess, Stefano is experiencing the awakening of his sexuality that causes rivalries with his peers. In addition, at this time, a disturbing event occurs when his father is arrested by the Communist for the second time. This event causes the whole family to move to Trieste, a city still under the allies' administration. In Trieste, Stefano helps with the small family business, which the father established, but goes through some tough times as he chooses to associate with some shadowy characters. To add to his discomfort, he also finds out the devastating news of his father's terminal illness. Because of these family

responsibilities his schooling had to be interrupted. At the end of the year, with his family's approval, he returns to Capris to complete his studies.

Through an examination of these difficult times and subsequent mid-adolescent contradictions (that made Stefano's psychosocial stage more complex), in the following section, I will analyze and highlight his struggles to define his identity formation.

As Stefano returns to Istria he is faced with many changes. First, he arrives at Capris alone because his father is detained in the same city, which houses his school. He also immediately notices physical changes as he crosses the courtyard of the prior seminary school, now called 'La casa dello student.' His discomfort finds physical expressions, "Nell' angolo della cappella, fui percorso da brividi scaturiti da un ragionamento sospeso sulla particolarità del destino mio e della mia terra." (41) Stefano also notices that the crucifix in the ex-study hall was now replaced by a picture of the Yugoslav leader Marshal Tito. Furthermore, he learns that the present director is an ex-seminarian, Mr. Frausini, who spent time in the partisan war and who, after attending some workshops sponsored by the new Communist regime, was appointed to the position of director of the 'Casa dello Studente.' Stefano's brother, Alfredo, and his friends, also members of the student body, mistrust and ridicule Frausini's management style as well as his ability to lead. Stefano's rationalization is fair, giving Mr. Frausini 'the benefit of the doubt', recognizing the merits he achieved during war time and his perfect knowledge of both the Croatian and Italian languages:

Io argomentavo invece che con il suo passato di seminarista e di partigiano e la conoscenza perfetta di entrambe le lingue attenuasse la sproporzione

troppo vistosa di rivedermi in compagnia di tanti Vinko e tanti Metodio ignari di una parola d'italiano e garantisse nel contempo tra i due gruppi una netta distanza. ...questo direttore Frausini mi offriva l'ultima possibilità di riconquistare la vita paesana ulteriormente alterata. (43)

Stefano also sees the possible personal benefit of the new circumstances. Giving his complex way of thinking and the cognitive ability he revealed in his mid-adolescence, I interpret his phrase, "riacquistare la vita paesana," as a hope (in Erikson's terminology a virtue)<sup>59</sup> to maintain 'social sameness.'

Some other significant changes that Stefano recognizes as he comes back home during the summer vacation include the way the new regime has affected not only his family economics, but all the other landowners who were not willing to enter the new social institution called 'cooperatives' and in turn were burdened by heavy taxes. The sharecroppers - who, before the new socio-political and economic system took place, worked for years for Marco Marcovich and were compensated with part of the harvest - have now kept the entire harvest to themselves and many were accusing Stefano's father of siding with the Italians, calling him 'reazionario.' These were painful revelations for Stefano, who realized the drastic impact of the many things changed during his absence from his hometown:

Constatai poi che le cose erano andate avanti senza la mia partecipazione, come me lo provavano del resto il gioco del calcio introdotto anche sulla rodina, gli insistiti riferimenti a fatti paesani ed eventi politici a me sconosciuti, l'uso di termini nuovi desunti da una parlata slava non dialettale. (44)

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<sup>59</sup> Erikson states: "I believe, that there is an intrinsic relationship between ego and language and that despite passing vicissitudes certain basic words retain essential meanings. ... Strengths are really the lasting outcome of the 'favorable ratios' mentioned in every step of the chapter on psychosocial stages." (274) According to Erikson, the potential positive outcome of Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust - a satisfactory resolution of a stage - results in a strength called drive and the basic virtue is *hope*. For the second stage, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, the strength is 'self-control' and the basic virtue is '*willpower*'. The third stage, Initiative vs. Guilt, the strength is 'direction' and the virtue is '*purpose*'. The corresponding strengths and virtues for stages four and five are '*method* and '*competence*' for the first one, and '*devotion* and '*fidelity*' for the latter one. (See the complete list of strengths and virtues of the psychosocial crisis theory in Erikson's *Childhood and Society* 274).

Thus, economic, political, linguistic and social changes surprised Stefano, but his greatest shock was when he met his childhood friend Valdo:

M'imbattei nel compagno già uomo, di ritorno dal lavoro nelle cave di bauxite. Fermo col piccone in spalla, bloccò lo slancio con cui correvo ad abbracciarlo, continuando a fissarmi e poi scandendo di non aver più niente da spartire con i 'figli dei reazionari.' Erano gli occhi in cui faceva capolino l'innata malevolenza del Vinko che allora mi riusciva inconcepibile estendere alla mia gente e che, presentandomisi allarmante nel silenzio dell'amico, costituí un'altra sorpresa di quell' inizio d'estate. (44-45)

Stefano is disappointed and saddened by his old friend's unfriendly attitude and regrets the loss of his childhood friendship, as he shifts his attention towards his brothers' friends, who were older than him but who held Italian sentiments.

As Erikson's psychosocial system claims, not only is the need to belong to a peer group prominent, but at this stage emphasis is placed on the importance of teenagers' interest in the opposite sex. In fact, that same summer Stefano's budding sexual desire is awakened and directed towards a young girl his age, who is also home on vacation and about whom he feels, "Avrei dovuto mercé sua vivere tra non molto la mia breve stagione leopardiana"(48). He soon finds out that his brother Alfredo and Silvano "se la contendevano all'inizio di ogni ballo" and feels excluded "da ogni possibilità di competizione." Stefano adds: "Mi costringevano di nuovo, e in un ambito quasi familiare, a rifugiarmi nella mia piccola e dolorosa 'eènza'"(48).

Nevertheless, he keeps daydreaming of Adelina: "Avrei voluto popolare con la sua vicinanza amari ricordi di solitudine, inoltrarmi con lei tra le querce e, cancellare la strada di ritorno, soli nell'ombra del folto abbandonarmi a ciò cui il crescente tremore forse mi avrebbe trascinato" (49). Teenagers' dreams are part of

the “growing and developing youth” faced with “physiological revolution within them, and with tangible adult tasks ahead of them”(Erikson, *Childhood and Society* 261).

While Stefano continues daydreaming about Adelina, she flirts between the two competitors (his brother and Silvano) during a village dance, hurting Stefano's feelings: “ero nel buio della strada a piangere sull'incostanza e gli inganni femminili”(51). Stefano's emotional status worsens the next day when his father is arrested and Adelina, in sympathy, briefly hugs Stefano while she embraces and sobs on Alfredo's chest. Once more Stefano feels rejected, hurt and left alone.

The next rejection Stefano experiences occurs when he meets with his childhood friend Rusina, “la ragazza che nei nostri amori infantili mostrava di considerarmi il suo favorito” (50), who now avoids him: “serrandomi... un'altra porta di accesso al mondo di ieri, che in segreto contavo mi fosse rimasta socchiusa” (50).

However, at the end of the summer, when all the students returned to Capris, Stefano's infatuation with Adelina, and interest for Rusina, are replaced with another feeling, a very different one, when he meets Gabriella:

Era nato un sentimento di cui ambedue avevamo notizia e sostegno dalle confidenze dei rispettivi compagni d'altro sesso e che in null'altro consistette se non nello sfuggirsi con strenui accorgimenti, nel balbettare parole a sproposito nei rari, inevitabili incontri. ...Ma bastava la sua presenza a rendermi liete le ore di studio quando, finalmente non visto, potevo levare gli occhi dal libro e fissare il suo profilo mosso in una luce appena irreale. (56)

Gabriella, who also came from the countryside, showed the same anxiety as he did, and for the first time he felt an impulse to protect her. He saw in her face a reflection of perfect beauty. This sort of “Platonic love” helped him to detach himself from his longing for parental and family ties. Thus, the infatuation with Adelina and the new feeling for Gabriella fit the ‘normative’ psychosocial development of an adolescent.

What is not usual in Stefano’s adolescent life is the constant feeling of duality; a splitting feeling of acceptance and rejection, which I believe, is tied to the historical development of his societal environment. The following passage illustrates his case:

Nella mutata cittadina che già mi aveva ospitato vissi ai primi anni una doppia esistenza. Da una lato la scuola, considerata dalla stampa nazionale una roccaforte dell’italianità in Istria e poggiante ancora su insegnanti ex allievi del glorioso istituto e su discepoli provenienti da famiglie di ceppo irredentista; dall’altro la Casa dello studente finanziata dalla nuova amministrazione e instaurata nell’antico seminario dal quale era uscito l’intero clero dell’opposto ginnasio. Se da una parte dunque ero portato a simpatizzare con lo sprovveduto Frausini ...[e] mi prodigavo mettendo a disposizione dei superiori e dei colleghi le esperienze contratte nei due precedenti convitti, dall’altra non potevo neanche sottrarmi, con un padre in carcere e i beni confiscati, alla generale professione di ostilità al regime. (54)

Stefano is aware of the contrasts he is experiencing: “Non si trattava di mimetismo, quanto di due fasi di vita quotidiana diverse e via via contrapposte”(54). He adheres to both behavioral practices, but with some reservation, and he feels that these contradictions “potevano esistere solo in persone giovani, timide e non giudicanti, uscite da una campagna di per sé complessa e vergognosa fino al limite”(54). Stefano repeatedly affirms that his “doppio atteggiamento” was sincere and that he wished to “simultaneamente vivere i due stati d’animo” (55). I claim that this feeling of duality is the seed of his unresolved conflicts.



Even though in Erikson's theoretical postulates contradictions in the adolescence stage are the main features of teenagers' process of growing up, Stefano's contradictions are deeply rooted to his time of historical changes as he persistently refers to it. Contrasts and paradoxes are the core of his existence as he is trying to reconcile conflicting issues. His desire to belong is split between country and city, Italian and Croatian identities and, ideologically, between his father's spirit of 'Italianness' and the ideology of the new communist system. He felt trapped being at the institute, while he feels liberated as he gets out in the "calli incavate tra palazzotti del Seicento"(55). Therefore, the culture of his upbringing was colliding with the present. This cultural collision was particularly intense as the past and present tried to coexist in his mind. However, since he was not able to synchronize all the different issues he was faced with, he opted for "[un] atteggiamento di difesa e corteggiamento"(55). This mediating mode helped him adapt to the various situations, but his persistence also made him live in a state of continuous paradox.

In spite of his ongoing, still unstable ego development and desire to take part in society, Stefano often tends to rely on his parents' values. At times he remembers his mother's selfish way of acting towards a subject and prefacing her actions with "non si sa mai," always anticipating a future advantage. On the other hand, he sees his father from a different perspective because of his constant unselfish way of bending towards the poor and his sustaining ideals, which were not to his advantage. Embodying the parental "conferred identity" in order to score points, Stefano suggested to director Frausini ways of governing the dorm. Immediately after, he would assert his father's ideology by singing "Fratelli d'Italia," which was

another contradiction and certainly not welcomed in the Casa dello Studente. Thus, on the one hand he was upholding and spreading parochial discipline, while on the other he was welcoming the school's co-ed component implemented by the new system. Such paradoxes are seen clearly as he claims that at first he feels "a mio agio nella dimora accettata da principio con vergogna e poi con diffidenza" (57).

Describing the new student body, he comments:

si rivelavano inafferrabili nel profondo, manifestandomi un indistinto quanto vano spirito cameratesco forse soltanto in virtù delle circostanze che ci accomunavano, differenziandoci da tutti gli studenti di una normale scuola in Italia e in Jugoslavia. (58)

He simultaneously feels uneasiness, shame and doubt about his fellow students' sincerity, thus experiencing a constant conflict.

Stefano does not seem to trust either the Slavic students nor the Italian ones. The students who came from the neighboring Slavic villages were admitted in the dorms of the Casa dello studente, "il cui stemma, consistente in una stella rossa e illuminato per buone ore della notte, gettava sugli storici palazzi una luce sinistra" (59). Stefano's perception collides culturally as he describes the 'Casa dello Studente' as "un ostello gestito dal regime" (59).

While Stefano socializes with the Italian students, however, it is clear that he is irritated by their attitude:

La tanto conclamata italianità degli altri, il loro atteggiarsi a vittime di un'occupazione senza precedenti (quella della "civilissima" Austria a distanza di trent'anni impallidiva), oltre a offendermi mi irritava, essendo in realtà al confronto di quanto avveniva nelle nostre sperdute regioni, fin rispettati dai nuovi dirigenti, sia per l'impossibilità pratica di mantenere in una città un serrato controllo, sia perché la loro ininterrotta prestazione nella medesima scuola tornava utile agli stessi persecutori. Potevo forse associarmi alla

protesta della classe perché i barcaioli del luogo s'erano visti sequestrare l'intero pescato o per la recente istituzione di un'ora settimanale di lingua slovena nell'italianissimo istituto, quando mio padre giaceva da mesi nelle carceri senza conoscerne il motivo e per saperlo ancora in vita mi recavo all'imbrunire sotto le sbarre ad attendere l'inconfondibile colpo di tosse? (60)

With this state of mind, Stefano felt rancor towards his Italian peers who had never shown any sympathy or given him comfort for the pain he was suffering while his father was imprisoned in Capris. In the evening Stefano would go visit the walls of the prison just to hear his father cough, as confirmation that he was still alive. This is a devastating and painful experience for a teenager trying to cope with the indifference of his peers. The poetic description of his return from the prison site confirms his solitude: "Me ne andavo lentamente...nelle calli della cittadina eternamente deserta, eternamente grigia, assaporando l'amarezza di una solitudine prosperante come l'erba selvatica in una terra di nessuno" (60).

Another disquieting episode occurs when his father is released from prison and shows up unexpectedly in school in Capris. When Stefano is told his father is in the atrium he happily runs to greet him and has the courage to call him "Papa," while his father just smiles at him. Stefano hopes to have his father now close and back in his village and anticipates positive changes. His father, instead, in his usual cold manner, distances himself from Stefano and is ready to engage in conversation with his son's classmates. Stefano suddenly realizes that the relationship between his father and him has not changed and he dismisses his desperate dreams of getting closer to him. At the same time reality and practical concerns take over as Stefano stops him from going further among his peers because his father, "provenendo direttamente dal carcere, si era portato nel vestito lo stesso odore che la truppa

bosniaca lasciava passando per le calli”(61). Stefano’s awareness turns into remorse: “Mai mi era capitato di sentirmi così coinvolto in una situazione per scansare i rimorsi” (60)<sup>60</sup> and he becomes speechless. The unpleasant episode ends as his father is joined by his mother and they all board a bus where he again experiences pain watching his father crying silently.

As previously mentioned, in mid-adolescence one important task is social involvement. One’s social and cultural milieu provides opportunities for expression as well as recognition of biological and psychological needs. For Erikson “optimal identity development involves finding roles and niches within the larger community that provide a good fit for the youngster” (Kroger 8).

For Stefano such opportunity came in Capris when he became a representative in the newly formed committee for social events at the Casa dello Studente, together with his brother and his brother’s friends, Celso and Silvano. The primary task was to organize an annual party (celebration) under the meticulous supervision of the director Frausini, who was very careful in handling the affair in a politically correct way. Frausini personally picked the faculty members who were supposed to be invited, while the committee members were to mail out the invitations in a timely manner. All invitations were supposed to reach the selected faculty members of Slovenian and Croatian nationalities at approximately the same time. On the designated evening the festivities included a play where the actors were the students from the Italian institute, and subsequently a dance. At the dance,

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<sup>60</sup> An inter-textual note: A well known Slovenian author, Ivan Cankar, wrote a play, *La madre* which under the Yugoslav regime, in middle or high school, was part of the art language curriculum. The plot deals with a mother who is a poor farmer. In disheveled clothing she goes to visit her son in the city school. The son is ashamed of his mother and in front of his peers denies being related to her. It is a very moving mother-son love story, imbued with guilt and shame. It was also part of my curriculum as I attended middle school under Yugoslavian regime.

however, it became obvious that many of those who were invited never showed up, which stirred confusion and suspicion. An investigation revealed that the invitations were never sent out, because Alfredo and Silvano burned the invitations, without Stefano's involvement. The incident got so serious that the entire student body and all the committee members were called by the administration to be reprimanded and to explain the infraction. This incident became political and, as a consequence, Alfredo and Silvano were expelled from the Casa dello Studente.

As Stefano was dragged in front of the principal and the faculty to confess, he felt a 'burning' moment of shame and guilt:

Dovetti confermare che gli inviti non erano stati recapitati. ...mi si stendevano davanti facce atterrite o solo indignate, compresa quella livida e plebea del locale segretario del partito che chiedeva 'perché? perché?' non avevamo inoltrato i plebeissimi inviti. Seguivano atroci silenzi... In mezzo a due fuochi continuavamo a tacere, non sussistendo colpa più inconfessabile della propria vergogna. (68-69)

## **2) *Life in Capris***

Exploring Stefano's process of identity development, I find that Stefano's needs are challenged not only by the 'common issues' which a 'normal' teenager deals with: relationships with peer group, love relationships, moving toward a greater participation in a community or renegotiating family relations, but also by contradictions deeply rooted in religious, ethical and psychological realms.

With the expulsion of his brother from the 'Casa dello Studente,' Stefano does move towards greater participation in his community, because the administration believes in his innocence in the breach of the invitation affair. He states:

"L'espulsione di Silvano e dell' Alfredo favorì il mio definitivo ambientamento nella

Casa dello studente... [però] avrebbe proiettato su ogni passo da me intrapreso l'ombra di una colpa"(70). This 'ombra,' – a shadow of guilt, is a burden Stefano carries throughout his adolescence and his life. His advancement in the committee to 'assistant with salary' was promoted by the director Frausini. He was now able to implement some of his rules, such as imposing silence during study hours and setting a curfew in the dormitories. He now wants to see implemented in the dorm many other rules which he experienced in the seminary. The 'continuity' and 'sameness' which Erikson points out in mid-adolescence are clearly seen in Stefano's actions. What is not predicted in psychosocial theory is the behavior Stefano exhibits in wanting to keep what he is familiar with and then accusing others of abiding by their old habits. For example, he wants to have regular prayers and Bible reading during lunch hours, but at the same time he complains to Frausini that the girls went to mass before the beginning of classes. Frausini, who abandoned his religious beliefs, understands his "split feelings" and benevolently advises him that such a prohibition would not be wise: "Se ne accorgeranno anche loro che [la religione] è soltanto una menzogna" (74). Stefano continues:

Mi pareva lo dicesse a se stesso e punto nel vivo della costante ombra del dubbio che gli increpa la fronte sottratta alla cenere quaresimale oltre che dall'eco appiccicosa delle mie parole, per fare male a me e a lui affrettando l'azione dolciastra di un incipiente rimorso. (74)

The word 'rimorso' and the expression 'la fronte sottratta alla cenere quaresimale' are imprints (residues) embedded in both Stefano and Frausini, from the time they both attended the seminary. The new ideology of the regime and the education of the seminary brought social and cultural collisions, causing silent feelings of

remorse to surface. This remorse and again 'l'ombra' – the shadow of doubt - became staples, vital traits of his identity development.

As Stefano experiences more involvement in the administrative tasks, he also gains the privilege of suggesting specific names in hiring new professors. The acceptance of his suggestion would trigger in him a sense of self-esteem, a necessary ingredient for the ego-development. Stefano reasons: "Se il mio parere avesse trovato credito...questo a me bastava." (81)

In the relationship with his peer group and involvement in sports, he displays the competitive spirit typical of the mid-adolescent. Because of his excellent performance in soccer he gains membership to the Soccer Union. As a member of the travelling team he also ends up playing in Giurizziani, his village. But his bad luck strikes again: "passando un giorno il pallone indietro al portiere, rischiai di venire espulso sotto accusa di tradimento"(82). The concept of 'tradimento' – betrayal – surfaces again. It is interesting to note that betrayal is more pronounced in the mid-adolescence phase than in early adolescence. Some examples in different contexts confirm that Stefano's feeling and perception of betrayal are strong and range from inconsequential, minor observations of behavior to significant life-threatening ones. A serious one, to be discussed later, is seen in the accusation of his friend against his father: Valdo testifies in court that Marco Marcovich was hiding weapons in his house. Some of the 'minor' betrayals are seen when he describes his mother's attitude towards her own father: "attenta a rispettare le aspirazioni paterne ma anche a non tradire la parlata di nonno Gregorio" (72). Stefano feels that even refraining from speaking his mother-tongue

is a 'betrayal.' In some instances his brother Alfredo chooses to dress differently than other villagers. He would look at him with reproach, "[rinfacciandogli] con un'occhiata la comune origine tradita" (72). Another example, of rebellion directed to his brother is seen when Alfredo breaks up the friendship with Celso Petrovich. Celso is one of the sons of the Petrovich family, highly admired by the Marcovich family. A special bond links the two families even though the Petrovich consider themselves Slavs, while the Marcovich consider themselves Italian. Stefano describes the Petrovich family as impervious to external influences. He cannot forgive his brother "per aver tradito pubblicamente l'amico e compagno di classe"(77)<sup>61</sup> and condemns "l'insensibile fratello" for having betrayed "la fede familiare ...solo per soddisfare le accresciute vanità nella cittadina" (77). Yet, he notes, "la vicinanza [dei Petrovich] agiva su di me da stimolo e da freno, mi dava un acquietante equilibrio da considerare però una tregua necessaria per riprendere il cammino dettato dall'indole più vera" (77). The dichotomy of "stimolo e freno" (instruments which act as agency), guides Stefano in his search for 'l'indole vera.'

At the end of the school year, Stefano returns to Giurizziani for the summer break. During this time some major events happen that intensify his emotional life forever: Stefano attends the court trial of his father, lives through the frightening

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<sup>61</sup> The passage in which Stefano is lying in bed shows important concepts which capture the reconstruction of a new country, the character molding in the seminary and his psychological attachment to his family beliefs and traditions, which Marcia would call "Forclosures" in identity development. The passage reads: "Tra le coperte ruvide ma nuove, da Paese in affannosa volontà di ripresa, potevo assaggiare la diversa misura in cui la vita del seminario aveva inciso su ognuno di noi e aveva invece risparmiato ...[Celso Petrovich] quasi arrestandosi di fronte alla compatta scorza dei Petrovich che si moltiplicavano anche in generi e nuore professanti unitamente il principio del tutti per uno e uno per tutti."(77) The expression "coperte ruvide ma nuove" denotes the poverty, yet the determination of the renewal of the new Yugoslavia. "La vita del seminario" points to the Catholic upbringing and character molding, while the metaphoric 'scorza' of the Petrovich denotes the shield - the strength - of an individual who is able to protect himself and remain true to his family values.



interrogation by the UDBA (the Yugoslav secret police), and witnesses the betrayal by his best friend Valdo.

### **3) *Summer in Giurizziani – Father’s Court Trial - Friend’s betrayal***

After a busy and productive year in Capris, Stefano returns during the summer to Giurizziani, where negative psychosocial experiences produce feelings of betrayal especially with regard to the behavior of his best childhood friend: Valdo. The disappointments and sense of loss were feelings which he often experienced, but this time they are especially connected to the notion of betrayal. The dictionary defines it as disloyalty, breach of faith, double cross and even, in biblical context as ‘Judas’s kiss.’<sup>62</sup> The violation of confidence disappoints all hopes and expectations. The betrayal, says Jackson, “elicits more than strong feelings ... and...has to also be examined through moral framework.”<sup>63</sup>

In Stefano’s case betrayal can be distinguished in “genuine instances of betrayal [and] ... those that are merely ‘felt’” (Jackson 73). In the examples I have examined earlier I labeled the betrayal Stefano experiences as either ‘minor betrayal,’ without consequences, or ‘grave betrayal,’ which could compromise a life.

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<sup>62</sup> A few classical examples where betrayal appears will confirm how common is the subject in literature: Judas Iscariot betrays Jesus in the *New Testament*; Dante in his *Inferno* has the betrayers in the 9<sup>th</sup> circle, frozen -- perhaps for their lack of sensitivity. Shakespeare’s tragedies abound with betrayal and some modern writers, such as Conrad or Jane Austin, explore the topic and analyze the violation of trust.

<sup>63</sup> “Psychologists offer clinical evidence of attesting to the devastating effects of betrayal. Betrayal acts as an assault on the integrity of individuals affecting the capacity to trust, undermining confidence in judgment, and contradicting the possibilities of the world by increasing distrust and skepticism. Betrayal changes not only our sense of the world, but our sensibility toward the world” (Jackson, L. Rodger 72). Besides psychological studies on the effects of betrayal, Jackson said that the phenomenon has to be also studied through moral frameworks as there are many ambiguities surrounding betrayal, and interpretation of whether a particular behavior is perceived as betrayal makes its evaluation complex.

Stefano experiences the grave betrayal during his father's second arrest. This time his father was charged with possession of firearms and publicly threatening the representatives of the Party to vindicate himself when Italy returned to govern again. The "milizia" came to search his house for hidden weapons, "compreso il fucile da caccia tanto magnificato negli anni dell'infanzia" (92). Stefano witnesses the guards' destructive search of his home:

Nello schianto delle assi sotto i colpi di martello, d'improvviso ricordai di aver portato l'inseparabile Valdo a stendere su le noci di un lontano giorno di guerra e di avergli confidato che sotto il pavimento mio padre, temendo la perquisizione tedesca, aveva nascosto il fucile. Un senso di vortice mi proiettò in una dimensione anche acusticamente irreale, nella quale di concreto avvertivo solo amplificati battiti del cuore, che parve volesse staccarsi del petto, quando una mezz'ora dopo ritrovatomi nell'atrio, vidi i due militi scendere a mani vuote. (92)

Luckily, they had not found anything. But the UDBA, the secret police, not having found material proof, summons Stefano for an interrogation:

Mi ritrovai faccia a faccia con quello dell'Udba, cui l'accompagnatore si rivolgeva bestemmiano che ne aveva abbastanza di me e dell'intera faccenda. "Adesso sono qua io" gli rispose nella lingua che covava dentro di me come brace sotto la cenere, e chiuse la porta a chiave. Mi rividi di colpo al primo anno di scuola, di fronte al Metodio e al Vinko, che anche fisicamente mi si restituivano attraverso le differenti figure dei due funzionari. ... a un mio nuovo rifiuto a parlare, ad ammettere la confidenza fatta all'amico d'infanzia, afferrò una squadra dal tavolo e cominciò a picchiarmi sulle mani. Mi mancò l'aria e gridai. Il Metodio corse a chiudere le finestre, il Vinko mi strinse forte il mento e riuscì a farmi tacere con uno schiaffo. (95)

Despite the physical abuse, the interrogation is not very successful and the guards now bring in Valdo, his childhood friend, now wearing a blue uniform, to testify to the veracity of the accusation:

L'amico non aveva assolutamente la stessa persona e, avendo mutato anche voce, non potevo non collegare l'incredibile trasformazione con l'odiosa casacca, il cui cinturone di pelle stretto da una grossa fibbia risvegliava

assopiti tremori del tempo dei tedeschi, mentre la stella rossa sulla bustina gridava le mie colpe recenti. (96)

Valdo recalls in details the conversation they had in Stefano's attic a long time ago and Stefano, in dismay, watches the police write down what they called "Stefano's confession." As the two ex-friends remain alone Stefano fixes his gaze on Valdo, "con la forza della disperazione fissai lo sguardo negli occhi estranei per chiedergli ragione di quel gesto che metteva in rischio una vita"(96). Valdo, ignoring him, exits in silence.

The betrayal Stefano experiences can be classified as "genuine", or "grave" behavior, because Stefano's father is now at risk. However, Stefano's sensibility is stronger than his own feeling of abandonment and violation of trust, and he comments that Valdo must have read his penetrating gaze and felt "l'assurdità del mio atteggiamento quasi un tentativo di corruzione verso una guardia giurata" (97).

Stefano was aware of what had happened to young men who were farmers and whom the communists indoctrinated and recruited to become guards. These youngster came back to the village "avendo assorbito toni e gesti estranei ma generalmente improntati a un'astiosa rudezza quasi a rivendicare il vero spirito di una terra costretta da secoli a simulare folcloristiche compiacenze." (97)<sup>64</sup> However,

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<sup>64</sup> In the *Psychology of Power*, Zimbardo reports the results of a study on 'tortures and executioners' conducted by social scientists at Stanford University. He claims that the violation of the traditional sense of morality can be explained with 'situational variables'. Although he recognizes individual factors, such as "genetic, personality, character and pathological risk factors" he claims that, "The human mind is so marvelous that it can adapt to virtually any known environmental circumstance in order to survive, to create, and to destroy as necessary. We are not born with tendencies toward good and evil, but with mental templates to do either." Thus, situational circumstances "can be very powerful" in changing the behavior of an individual. The Stanford study and Zimbardo's perspective validate events described by Tomizza and the brutality of the 'infoibatori', the evil doers, in the foibe massacres, as well as Stefano's understanding of the process which affected the behavior of the young men recruited to become guards after the Communist takeover with the promise of a better life. (See Zimbardo [www.prisonexp.org/pdf/powervil.pdf](http://www.prisonexp.org/pdf/powervil.pdf))

he feels a victim because he knows that his family belonged to the class of the rich landowners, and the Communists - considering them “reazionari” with Italian sentiments - persecuted them:

L'autorità dell'uniforme consentiva nel contempo di ricambiare piccoli torti subiti magari nel permaloso ambito infantile, per cui anche le rivalse risentivano grottescamente di quei tempi lontani. Un anziano padre di famiglia venne ammanettato col fildiferro da un collega del Valdo e fatto camminare per il paese in un giorno di festa; un altro dovette procedere ginocchioni per un buon tratto di strada; all'Alfredo, al Silvano e al Celso fu ripetutamente vietato l'uso della bicicletta. Mio padre infine dal carcere alla stanza nella quale i due funzionari lo costringevano per ore a stare in piedi con le mani levate era scortato dagli stessi ragazzi, cui per anni aveva impedito di avvicinarsi al cortile nell'ora della siesta. (97-98)

As an adolescent, Stefano feels the contradiction and the unnatural process of his developmental stage. His fears are projected on his mother and on the safety of his father. He feels the injustices directed towards his family. Although they attained a decent living through hard work, they are now scorned and subjugated under the communist system. Nevertheless, in school at Capris Stefano is sympathizing with some aspects of the socialist system and he continues his friendship with Frausini, who is a communist. During the anti-Italian demonstrations in the city of Buje (close to his village of Giurizziani) Stefano finds a new attraction:

Lungo le vie principali erano stati allestiti chioschi con bibite e panini, e nella franca baldoria di una festa tra paesana e cittadina, nella scanzonata rudezza di una categoria sconosciuta trovavo ragioni di una nuova attrattiva, sottolineata dallo sventolio di bandiere e l'assordante suono degli altoparlanti. Vi riscopro la forza rabbrividente della massa. (100)

Stefano, like many teenagers, is attracted by the festivities and the energy of the new system: “Era la vita giovane a manifestarsi in tutta la sua prepotenza.” The new system was supplanting “una comunità invecchiata insieme alle proprie

insoddisfazioni.” (100) Split between two different lives – one linked to a family destined to be economically and politically harassed and the other impregnated with socialist ideology and propaganda slogans - Stefano is confused, experiencing feelings of betrayal, guilt, remorse and anxiety.

In chapter two I examined Stefano's infancy stage and concluded that according to Erikson's scale his basic trust was tarnished and 'the outcomes' were more negative than positive. The lack of trust in Stefano after Valdo's betrayal was compounded and devastating, even though his father was released on account of insufficient proofs. The narrator explains: “ [Le] imputazioni erano cadute per l'infondatezza o inesistenza di reato e ....per la mancata comparizione del mio amico, l'incredibile accusa di aver sparato col proprio fucile da caccia a una sentinella alla caserma di Verteneglio” (104). Valdo's betrayal weakened Stefano's trust, but - even more - arises his sense of guilt towards his father. One night his brother Alfredo approached him angrily for socializing with Frausini, a communist: “Quel tuo Frausini, lo sapevi? Ha fatto ammazzare suo padre”(101). Stefano's anxiety increased:

Rimasi senza respiro più per l'aperto rimprovero di aver dimenticato lo stato paterno che per la gravità dell'accusa mossa all'amico, convinto che anche le ultime preferenze per le riunioni cittadine, proprio per la loro diversità sottintendente un intimo dissidio, comprovassero il mio disperato e forse più accorto attaccamento al destino del genitore.” (101)

To reassure himself of the innocence of his friend, he checked directly with Frausini, who told him that his father had been killed by a member of his party. The verification of the 'grande accusa' and 'mortificante discolpa' brings Stefano's and Frausini's destinies and existential sufferings closer.

Stefano's anxiety is also evidenced on the day of the trial, when his father was sentenced to seven months of prison. In the courtroom Stefano was ready to scream, but "Nessun suono uscì dalla mia bocca attanagliata da un terrore così cieco che spezzando le ultime radici col mondo di ieri mi fece sentire per la prima volta uomo vigliaccamente cresciuto, attento innanzi tutto alla propria incolumità" (105).

The pain Stefano feels for his father is intensified because 'per la prima volta,' - for the first time - he realizes that he is acting as a coward and thinking only about his own safety. Stefano is beginning to judge himself. The "existential anxiety" he is experiencing is defined by Anthony Giddens in these terms:

Feelings of unreality which may haunt the lives of individuals in whose early childhood basic trust was poorly developed may take many forms. They may feel that the object-world, or other people, have only a shadowy existence, or be unable to maintain a clear sense of continuity of self-identity.  
(45)

Considering Erikson's and Giddens's theories, I believe that Stefano's developmental stages of 'Basic Trust' and 'Initiative' encountered unfavorable experiences which provoked his sense of guilt. His self-identity was shattered once more.

The day after the trial the Marcovich family left Giurizziani to settle in Trieste.

#### 4) *Trieste*

With Stefano's and his family's departure from Giurizziani to move to the city of Trieste more challenges awaited him, as relocation during adolescence posits more problems to the youth's search of identity.<sup>65</sup>

The Marcovich family in Trieste did not choose to go to the refugee camp like many other Istrian exiles, but - encouraged by the father's enterprising spirit - they franchised a bar and settled in a furnished room nearby. The entire family worked in the bar and Stefano became an apprentice, learning the trade of a bartender while his studies were interrupted.

At this time the political division of Istria's into zone A and B and the fate of the contended city of Trieste had not yet been decided. The city was under allied protection and American and British soldiers were patrolling the streets. While Italians were asserting their right to their city, Slavs were claiming their territorial entitlement. As a consequence, clashes and demonstrations in Trieste were frequent and protestors' voices were loud. Stefano did not take part in these demonstrations, but these events themselves excited him as well as the colorful flags and festoons.

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<sup>65</sup> "The importance of an 'average, expectable environment' has been stressed by Erikson (1968) as central to the identity-formation process of adolescence. Through such experiences, one ideally acquires a sense of inner sameness and continuity with one's past, which must be integrated into the present and the sense of identity that is forming. The reasons for residential relocation, magnitude of the contextual change, frequency of residential changes, age of the time of transition, and family supports available through the process are all extremely important variables to consider in understanding the impact that residential relocation may have on adolescents." (Kroger 131)

Kroger reported several identity-related impacts of residential relocation on adolescents. These mostly negative consequences affect the adolescents' self-esteem. Judging from Stefano's descriptions of his frequent relocations (Capris, Gorizia, Capris, Trieste, Capris, Belgrade and Ljubljana) and the hardships he suffered, the transitions impacted him negatively. In Trieste, especially, his self-esteem was crippled by living in a disadvantaged community that was not intellectually stimulating. His move to Trieste, crossing the 'national and cultural boundaries,' could be compared to the transition of an immigrant where 'group belonging' gives a sense of homeland.

Masses of people chanting and walking on the city avenues seemed to him like a festival rather than a political protest. In fact, these demonstrations gave him an uplifting and enjoyable feeling. Seeing the demonstrations in Trieste reminded him of the demonstrations in the city of Buje in Istria, where peasants would bring their oxen and carts as well as tractors creating an atmosphere of 'Carnevale' (Mardigras) and many times Stefano sees them as, "il fanatismo delle sante rogazioni." (99)

During the demonstrations in Capris where the young masses of students were more interested in listening to the speakers than swinging the banners and holding high the pictures of Tito and Milovan Gillas, Stefano was more attracted to the crowd. He felt the power of the young people: "era la vita giovane a manifestarsi in tutta la sua prepotenza" (100).

In Trieste the demonstrations against the Yugoslavs' threats and their national claim to annex Trieste were warmly applauded by his father and his brother. His childhood reminiscences of his Italian upbringing and his Italian language were resurfacing while at the same time colliding again with reality. In Capris, he had fallen under the influence of Frausini: "tacitamente avevo dato il mio consenso al regime del Frausini" (113 ). "Tacitamente" refers to the secret leaning toward an ideology different from the one his father and his brother held. However, he had always harbored Italian sentiments, whether they came from his 'conferred' identity or because of his original language acquisition. He explains that he could not join the demonstrators because they were students who could have easily discarded him and his Istrian fellow-students:

Negavo ai compagni il diritto di considerarsi gli esclusivi perseguitati e depositari di fede nazionale, così ora giudicavo facile e persino sleale



scendere in piazza. ...Una nuova coscienza, cui non erano estranei la vicinanza silenziosa del Frausini e gli anni trascorsi sotto l'inaccettabile amministrazione, interveniva a raffreddare l'impulso mai sopito a confondermi con gli inebriati per prevalere, con la stessa gratuità delle loro acclamazioni.(110)

Therefore, Stefano could not partake wholeheartedly in neither the demonstrations in Istria nor the ones in Trieste. He could not profess national or government preferences.

This kind of cognitive reasoning is in line with Kroger's theory of the cognitive development of an adolescent. What is not contemplated in a 'normal' teenager's development is the cultural and political collision which in Stefano's case is a "incontro e scontro"<sup>66</sup> - a meeting point as well as a clash in the search of his identity.

In the identity development process, as mentioned before, peer association is very important. For Stefano this opportunity diminishes in Trieste, since his "nuova condizione d'inferiorità dovuta al tirocinio nel bar"(114) prevents it. His socialization is now reduced to "commessi-droghieri, garzoni-lattai" instead of students his own age.

However, through Alfredo's student-friends he was introduced to a gym teacher, Mauro, who claimed to be a fascist. Mauro in turn introduced him to some youngsters with whom his relationship proved to be very difficult:

Più difficili si rivelavano i rapporti con i minori, gli immutati coetanei che in giacca di pelle, la zazzera ondulata, sembravano compendiare tutte le cattiverie, l'arroganza, il dispotismo dei più temuti compagni di prima.. Il richiamo interno che non fossero da frequentare mi veniva stranamente

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<sup>66</sup> On cultural collision and border "incontro-scontro" see Zivko Nizic, *Kolizijske Kulture u Prozi Fulvija Tomizze*, Rijeka – Fiume: Edit, 1996

suggerito dal fatto che bestemmiavano di continuo e senza motivo. Dal collegio di G\*\*\*, complice don Berretti, non ero più entrato in una chiesa ... eppure difronte alla profanazione gratuita, specie se per bocca di giovani come me, mi sentivo quasi direttamente responsabile.(114)

Not only Stefano could not 'click' with these peers, but he felt responsible for their behavior since they were kids his own age and he felt ashamed for them. He was weary of his companions, but to continue the sport he loved, soccer, he associated with them. His athletic skills, however, had diminished during his time in Capris which he angrily attributed to the "snervante lavoro dietro il banco, alle notti pressoché insonni in un angusto letto tra i genitori litigiosi"(115).

One unpleasant incident scared Stefano and ended his association with the teens and with Mauro, the teacher. A group of students plotted to prevent a communist senator from campaigning in the city. The plan was to paint derogatory slogans and swastikas on the external walls of the synagogue. He excused himself by saying he did not know how to paint, but the leader of the group forced him to start the unwanted assignment. Immediately after, Stefano was surprised by the police and, leaving the equipment he had ran away only to be caught up by the same students: "Fu una situazione peggiore che a Buje, trovandomi questa volta alla mercé di coetanei cresciuti che picchiavano con la stessa furia con cui in una guerra avrebbero infierito sui nemici delle loro generazioni" (117).

He was rescued by the arrival on the scene of an old lady, who, screaming for help, enabled Stefano to get away. Affected by the same emotion he felt during the interrogation in Buje, he sought refuge in the apartment of the teacher Mauro. Yet, another shocking event happened when Mauro on the pretext of consoling him

showed his real intentions toward Stefano, the same that Don Berretti had displayed in Gorizia with his students. Mauro was a homosexual.

Stefano, disgusted, stopped his association with the Triestini peers and with Mauro and dutifully took to tending his bar and the clientele. Unfortunately, those who frequented the bar were uneducated people and ladies of ill repute.

Since Trieste was engulfed with soldiers whose job was to protect the open city, the soldiers had money and free time, which they often spent in bars looking for ladies. One of these ladies, Carla, had a room on top of their bar, where she entertained a steady client, Jimmy, il mulatto. She was given food and drinks daily to be consumed in her room and Stefano often had to bring her breakfast in bed. One day, as she was mourning the absence of her Jimmy to an empathizing Stefano, Carla seduced Stefano, who described his first experience:

le ginocchia tremanti, mi trovai seduto sul letto. ...un calore noto m'infiammò con una violenza nuova. ...Poi mi sentii sommergere dai suoi capelli e insieme da un vago sospetto che al mio primo vero contatto con la donna, questa avesse avvertito l'opportunità di secondare in qualche modo le odiose esperienze solitarie. (122)

For Stefano another "first" experience was completed. A few days later Carla and Jimmy departed for Germany and Stefano's conclusion was: "tutto sommato [quei soldati] non erano cattivi ragazzi, lontani da casa dopo una guerra sfibrante, la colpa semmai era al vertice." However, Stefano continues: "impallidii, pur nel dubbio se la nostra avrebbe potuto dirsi una relazione vera e propria" (124).

Stefano's does not fault Carla or Jimmy. He believes the circumstances of their lives dictated their destiny. However, he entertains doubts whether his own first sexual encounter with Carla was a genuine relationship. Again, Stefano's

innocence and lack of basic trust surface and prevent him from building his ego-identity.

After the military troops left Trieste, the clientele of the Marcovich's bar changed. A group of Triestini, for the most part sale ladies, clerks, cleaning ladies and unemployed who ran into debts asked Stefano's father for long-term loans. The father would willingly accept credit against the mother's advice. The group was sympathizing with the Communists, which he strongly disapproved, but as a good businessman he ignored it. Meanwhile, Stefano's attitude concerning ideology kept fluctuating. He was able to discuss with the Communist clients "tornanti capisaldi della religione marxista assorbita durante gli anni di Capris"(125):

Mi ritrovai schierato con loro comunisti che giungendo dopo l'una, con subdola spontaneità mi chiedevano della 'nostra situazione' lungo il 38° parallelo e con sdegno sapevano poi toccarmi sul viso additandomi lo sfruttamento del possidente conterraneo ai danni di mia madre pallida e con i piedi gonfi, di me stesso che spendevo la giovinezza nel fumo delle loro sigarette. Furono giorni di provocazione e di sfida." (126)

The instigations from the conversations of the communists prompted Stefano's dissatisfaction with his father's choice of business. Stefano now develops the conscience of a "lavoratore oppresso," demands from his father a salary at the end of the week and ask him to respect his work schedule.

The business situation at the bar worsened, while the debts increased and the clientele disappeared. Stefano's father began to drink, "accusando come mai la sconfitta e soprattutto il disinganno, per la prima volta mostrava aperto rancore anche verso di me che avevo assistito ai suoi prestiti, al fallimento della sua 'politica'"(132). Out of desperation the mother took to bed for an entire month, while Stefano kept working from eight a.m. to midnight at the bar.

One night a disturbing scene between Stefano and his father occurred:

[In] un alterco scoppiato per il suo costante disconoscere il mio sacrificio, mi colpì al mento per la prima volta, facendomi ritrovare tra le gambe di un tavolino. Mi rialzai di colpo e, la vista annebbiata, mi buttai al contrattacco: afferrò lesto uno scalpello che serviva ad aprire le casse, fermo, in attesa, le mascelle contratte.(132)

Following this altercation, Stefano runs out of the bar and wanders the street of Trieste: “Dov’ era l’orgoglio della mia povertà ora che non sussisteva alcuna possibilità di ritorno all’agiatazza domestica e soprattutto non mi sentivo ardere da alcuna fede che me la esaltasse magari inasprendola?”(133)

The difficult relationship between father and son is displayed in the next scene when the father goes chasing after him on the street and grabbing him by the arm:

Rallentai anch’io, mirando ormai più a torturarlo ...perché tutto della mia vita dipendeva esclusivamente da lui, dal contorto sentimento che ci legava e che lui con dissimulazione di adulto tendeva sempre a disconoscere. Si scoperse dopo avermi bloccato sul ponte col fiato pesante. ‘Perché volevi far questo a tuo padre?’ (133)

In silence the father leads him towards their bar, but Stefano disengaged slowly from his arm and, passing by the church of St. Anthony in Trieste, entered it.<sup>67</sup>

He is alone in the church and he acknowledged his distancing from God with “dolce rimorso”. He had not gone to church since his Gorizia schooling. Alone he examines his past life:

Sentivo che le deludenti esperienze seguite, raffreddando il mio slancio di vita, avevano anche spogliato l’antica fede di tutte le esteriorità che sole l’avevano sostenuta, per lasciar posto a un’unica umiltà disincantata, a una diffidente incapacità, almeno per il momento, di altre illusioni. Ero nudo, come si suol dire, davanti a Dio.(134)

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<sup>67</sup> Garbarino notes that “religion would seem an important antidote to the experience of meaninglessness”; and that, “religion may serve as a buffer against risky behaviors for some troubled youth” (qtd. in Kroger 75). The spiritual conversion Stefano experiences in Trieste may be the ‘antidote’ to his troubled stay in the city.(For a discussion on Identity and Meaningful Values see Kroger 72-76)

Stefano exits the church “col cuore leggero” and returns to the bar and to his father.

The task which psychologists posit as “renegotiation of family relations” transpires in the above episode. Stefano, I believe, works the renegotiation through a spiritual conversion. “La repentina trasformazione, come per un intervento troppo sollecito e non richiesto dalla Provvidenza, aveva raccolto i primi frutti” (135). Stefano went back to his father, his mother got better, the store owner rescinded the decision to sell the bar and throw them on the street, Signora Angela offers Stefano a room of his own, and the family decided that Stefano would go back to school. Finally, he felt there was a positive transformation. At the same time a doubt bothered him: “La repentina trasformazione” may not have come from the “Provvidenza,” but nevertheless he continues going to church and praying “per avviliarmi nell’umiltà abbracciata e vincere il cosiddetto rispetto umano” (135).

He was trying to expiate the sense of guilt that he felt towards his father. As he was working, he was also studying and preparing for the exams in order to register for Fall classes. His prayers to God were now, “Devi aiutarmi.” Unfortunately, Stefano’s exams did not go well. He became angry at God and started skipping the morning mass:

I [miei] voti che risultarono di gran lunga i peggiori del fittissimo elenco [e] il fatto di non scorgere una sufficienza neppure nelle materie in cui mi ero dovunque distinto m’induceva a ritenere, come a un disastro totale, che l’accaduto non poteva ascrivere a mia esclusiva responsabilità ma fosse in gran parte dipeso dalle mutate circostanze, più forti dello stesso padreterno e di ogni altra cosa, che mettendomi a contatto con negri e prostitute, mi avevano spianato e imposto una strada diversa. (137)

Stefano feels like a failure, but does not want to take the full responsibility upon himself. He blames the circumstances which led him to different experiences and

encounters with the ostracized. Disappointed he says, “Al diavolo” and enters a bar to seek solace in the arms of a bar girl.

He returned home fearful about the negative results, but no one mentioned anything about his exams. The entire family was in mourning with the passing of the paternal grandmother, Fedora. They all left Trieste for Istria to attend the funeral of the grandmother, while Stefano heard his father say: “Va male; va tutto male”(137).

### ***5) Senior year in Capris - Evolving intimacy - Apprenticeship***

Stefano returns to Capris for the third time. He describes the many external changes of his old school as well as his own personal internal changes, caused by social involvement. After the court trial and the death of his father his sense of remorse and guilt intensified. I will concentrate on these feelings systematically and analytically since they are significant contributors to the negative outcomes of his adolescent ego-achievement.

When Stefano reinserts himself into the life of Capris, both sides, the Slavs and the “irredenti compagni italiani,” looked upon him with suspicion. Both sides knew he dropped school to go and live in Trieste, but they did not know how he felt intimately. By his external signs the Slavs considered him Italian. “In una zona di confine ... la guerra fra i due blocchi veniva combattuta soprattutto col differente abbigliamento”(141). Stefano was wearing ‘western clothes,’ which were enough for the Slavs to consider him Triestino. Meanwhile, his association with some Slav students prompted the Italian group to consider him a Slav.

Stefano again finds more changes in school staff than when he returned to Capris the first time. The director, his friend Frausini, was transferred to an elementary school in the heart of Croatia. All of his teachers, even those who conducted courses in the Italian language, were now Communist-party affiliated. At this time parades in honor of the Slovenian insurrections were often held, which reminded him of the recent demonstrations in Trieste and that, only a while ago, he had almost become a member of a neo-fascist club in Trieste. Every parade ended with the display of the triumphant effigy of a huge red star, which brought back a flash of memory of a smaller celebration, in Gorizia, where a sign of 'Ave Maria' was paraded. These diametrical opposites had a profound effect on his developing adolescent years.

In mid-adolescence the important tasks of an adolescent are the involvement with peer relationships, love relationships, and community and family relationships. In line with the task of his peer group, Stefano becomes comfortable in sporting activity and with his peers. He, however, also enjoyed socializing with fishermen, carpenters and all type of workers at his Club where he belonged. The 'proleteriat,' the laboring class rank was extolled, according to the Marxist ideology, as an integral part of the Communist system. As much as Stefano was attracted to the proletarian idea, his father hated it. Again, a contrast arises between parental values and the young adolescent's emerging values.

In his initial phase of attraction to the opposite sex, Stefano does not have a very encouraging beginning. He socializes mostly with the "ragazze del popolo," but



his attraction to Maria Luisa, a teacher's daughter from Materada and closer to his family status, disappoints him:

Stanco dei conformismi e degli industriosi allineamenti, frenato dall'esperienza cittadina che ancora avvelenava i giorni di mio padre, nella primavera esplosa su Capris avevo bisogno di un sentimento tranquillo, coltivato sui banchi di scuola, che mi rimettesse in pace con me stesso e con la famiglia divisa. (144)

Maria Luisa ignored him and one day when he tried to embrace her, she "con gli occhi lividi sfogò tutta la rabbia di essere stata stretta dalle braccia di un contadino ... gridando all'intera classe di disprezzarmi, di non potermi soffrire" (145).

Considering the importance of the "tentative experimentation with a budding sense of personal identity, including sexual and sex-role identity [as an] important dimension in the lives of many mid adolescents" (Kroger 21), Stefano's rejection is a hard blow to his sensitive ego. He first feels vengeance towards her, and the entire place, but his usual dual sense of reasoning and emotion enables him to placate the emotional side and reevaluate the situation. His attitude concurs with Kroger's statement that "identity must be viewed as more than a product of social messages alone in order to explain individual variation within a given social context"(21).

As Stefano continues his studies in Capris, his parents periodically went to visit him. They mourned the loss of property and equally condemned the local functionaries. Stefano recalls their claims, "Rivendicavano la vigna non passata sotto la riforma agraria ma ugualmente assorbita dalla cooperativa e una pubblica condanna degli arbitrii perpetrati nel frattempo dai comitati locali"(146). Stefano would console them, encouraging them to trust and to have patience, but at the same time (in his usual split-off aspects of himself) he truly wished that the property

be returned immediately. Empathizing with his parents, he decides to approach a teacher, a communist, whom he befriended. He explains to him that “la vigna non [era stata] ancora *restituita* per personale ripicca e vecchie beghe tra famiglie.”(150) The teacher interceded for him to a higher authority (il pubblico ministero distrettuale) about the confiscated property. The official deliberated: “Loro sono i soli conseguenti,”(151) meaning that his parents were the only ones responsible for the situation, and the farm was never returned. Stefano’s inquiry to the teacher shows the initiative he takes up in his adolescent development. Even though the result was negative, he learned that not every effort brings positive outcomes.

The difference in Stefano’s ideology when compared to his parents’ thinking comes out during a lunch conversation in Capris. His Father had a chance to ask him: “Adesso dunque che cosa saresti?” Knowing he would hurt his father, Stefano answered: “Socialista” (146), thus promoting a heated exchange:

Torse la bocca e dovetti cercare la complicità della madre per dimostrargli la nostra arretratezza di idee, l’assoluta mancanza di fede negli altri e nello stesso futuro. Si rabbuiò e vaticinando, come da tempo si compiaceva, si difese: ‘Già, perché io non conto più niente. Ma vi accorgerete di me, quando non ci sarò più.’(146)

The ideological divide may be typical of the generational gap.<sup>68</sup> However, Stefano’s leaning towards socialism is the result of his indoctrination and the many changes he underwent. Stefano’s “identity-defining options” collide with his parents. In Kroger’s view, “Adolescents who have explored identity-defining options and higher levels of ego identity development have parents who respectfully encourage

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<sup>68</sup> “Erikson has stressed that adolescents need ideological guidelines to bring some sense of meaning and order into their lives. At the same time he emphasizes that such ideological guidelines need to have a quality of transcendence – i.e. they must be transcendent family values and give young people a sense of connection to their broader social and cultural context” (Kroger 73).

autonomy within a supportive context.”(83) In Stefano’s case this option is not available. In fact, their different thinking only exacerbates young Stefano’s choices while his father’s comment “vi accorgerete di me quando non ci sarò più,” is a strong catalyst of lasting guilty feelings.

A few days after this political conversation, Stefano learnt that his father’s health was at risk and that he had to be admitted to the hospital immediately. For Stefano this was a painful epiphany. Before boarding the ship that took him to Trieste, his father extended his hand to Stefano and said: “Così è” (148).

Stefano felt that something horrible was happening, but still was unaware of the gravity of the moment:

Salii il Corso ubriaco, quasi sorridendo nervosamente del fatto che la vita vera si fosse per la prima volta accorta di me proiettandomi bruscamente, finalmente fuori del serio ambito infantile. Raggiunsi la piazza, attraversai metà in ombra e metà al sole, sentendo ormai prossimo l’unico traguardo che per ora mi era proposto: la camera buia e il buio delle coperte entro le quali colmare quel vuoto d’incredulità. Nudo fra un diverso paio di lenzuola ruvide, grigiastre, dov’ero? Chi ero? (148)

The existential quest “Who am I? Where am I?” denotes his fleeting identity. In disbelief he realizes that he has transitioned from his infantile surroundings to real life. The expression “metà all’ombra – metà al sole” alludes to the cusp of mid-adolescence.

After Stefano’s father left for Trieste to be hospitalized, Stefano continued his involvement in his school, while his brother kept him informed of father’s health status. During this time Stefano met a journalist who worked for a magazine (*La nostra libertà*), Ivo Lucchesi, a middle-aged Communist from Dalmatia, who spoke Italian and Croatian perfectly. Despite his party affiliation, Lucchesi understood

Stefano's family dilemma about property and was aware that local politics in the name of equality and a classless society was an abuse of power. Lucchesi was willing to stand for the peasants' rights and expose the abuses. Stefano and Lucchesi decided to go directly to the village of Giurizziani and inspected the fields of the Marcovich family. Lucchesi also offers Stefano an assignment to report for his magazine, which Stefano gladly accepts for he sees an opportunity to enter the editorial field, a desired vocation. While visiting Giurizziani, Stefano and his friend had a chance to socialize at the local bar where the villagers kept asking Stefano: "Che nuove porti di papà"? and "Dove ti eri nascosto?" (154) – wanting to know about the Marcovich family residing in Trieste. Stefano was overwhelmed with remorse. As the narrator explains: "Ad un tratto non sopportai le untuose occhiate e i colpi sulla spalla denunciante tutto il mio tradimento, e corsi fuori" (154). He sees the family's relocation, as deserting, abandoning his native village, which causes him remorse.

In Capris, thanks to Lucchesi, he is accepted in the circles of the new young intellectuals. He socializes with Lucchesi's co-workers, young officers, Italian expatriates, actors, film directors and radio announcers. The conversations in each group ranged from praises of the current system of power to its criticism and defamation. In his articles Lucchesi would sugar-coat some of the slandering, while Stefano was ill at ease during these discussions: "Pativo soggezione per entrambi i gruppi" (156). An interesting scene occurs when the party leaders would enter the caffè: "il comune irrigidirsi alla presenza dei capi del partito, il cui ingresso nell'ozioso caffè aveva ora l'aria di un'irruzione, ora di uno sbadato sopraluogo."

(a casual secret police check-up) (156) Stefano knew that every gathering was monitored by party members and every activity regarded suspiciously. Yet, he wanted to see the entrance of the party bosses as a casual visit rather than as an intentional invasion of privacy.

When his colleagues would leave the caffè Stefano, “con la sensazione quasi di tradimento,” would join the “chiassoso tavolo degli Italiani ‘in carne e ossa’” (158):

Che cosa, a rischio di ricadere negli studi, mi teneva inchiodato alla sedia della loggia per spartirmi equamente o, meglio, per prestarmi tutto intero all’uno e subito dopo all’altro? Non era l’immagine dell’Italia mai conosciuta che inseguivo ansiosamente sul filo dei loro discorsi diversamente oltraggiosi? ... o l’irraggiungibile e odiosamata Italia, schernitrice del mio povero lessico e dell’errata pronuncia; una restituzione appiccicosa al clan perduto e riassunto, da uomo in colpa, solo nei suoi aspetti deteriori. Accettato infine l’invito di far l’attor giovane della compagnia, nell’aspirazione di metter pace fra loro assorbivo il gergo dell’uno e il piglio militaresco dell’altro, sposavo cause e atteggiamenti opposti che mi avrebbero interamente distrutto e che all’occhio esterno conferivano anche a me l’aspetto di un trasfuga riparato nella multiforme Capris (157-158).

Stefano is aware of his duplicity, but he is searching for understanding. The image of the ‘trasfuga,’ of a fugitive, captures his inner feelings of guilt and remorse. The oxymoron ‘odiosamata’ Italia shows his contradictory feelings and the word ‘irraggiungibile’ the impossibility to reach his putative homeland.

At this time Stefano gets involved with a local travelling theatrical company:

Percorrevo le strade bianche dell’Istria, due volte estraneo, riducendo campi e piazze all’oleografia sempre ripudiata e illudendomi, per necessità di giustificare, di propagandare la cultura italiana con un repertorio di commedie borghesi attuali solo dentro ai nostri confini. (159)

Stefano's adolescent 'evolving intimacy'<sup>69</sup> coincides with his involvement with one of the lead actresses, Marcella. She is Italian, divorced from a "montenegrino," and the victim of her abusive ex-husband. She is described as having had "un' adolescenza terrorizzata da fughe e travestimenti di cui conservava stinti ricordi"(160). Marcella sees in Stefano a person she can trust (she would say to him: "Sei il mio uomo"). The narrator expresses his discomfort: "[Voleva] ripropormi la piena accettazione di quello che per lei ero e non volevo essere, il suo primo amore e sicuro rifugio"(160). However, Stefano spends his time with her, "lusingato di poter continuare nelle camera d'albergo l'intreccio con l'invariabile moglie o fidanzata, cercavo di convincermi di non essere più in troppo disaccordo col punto di vista familiare e scolastico che ormai collimavano" (159). In fact, the teachers and the students disapproved of his having a lover. Upon seeing Marcella, they would not only smirk at her, but they derided anything that had to deal with theater and art, "come per rintuzzare con moralismo vecchio e nuovo ogni conseguimento di libertà veramente piena"(161).

### **6) *Death of Stefano's father***

Just as Stefano was ready to take up the regents' exams, he got a message that his father wished to die in his own bed. That meant that Stefano had to travel to Trieste to his father's bedside and bring him to Giurizziani. This news follows the unfolding traumatic relationship between father and son as these events are

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<sup>69</sup> "Although Erikson (1968) has conceptualized the task of intimacy primarily as a task of young adulthood, following identity consolidation during late adolescence, Allison and Sabatelli (1988) argue that intimacy needs to be viewed as an evolving phenomenon which both contributes to and emerges from ongoing individuation and identity development during adolescence." (Kroger 79)

described with strong emotional participation and a devastating sense of remorse and guilt.

As Stefano rushed through the city of Trieste to reach the hospital, he thought: “Ero io che seminavo disgrazia”(164). When he arrived at the hospital his father was still alive and Stefano kissed him, “l’uomo che avevo due volte imprigionato e infine ucciso” (165). The father says: “Perdoniamoci di tutto”(165), and Stefano sees him, as never before, praying. As his father is transferred to the ambulance to be transported to Giurizziani, the father says to the nurse: “Questo è Stefano che mai non arrivava.” (Stefano hears him say, “Addio vita” as he catches a last glimpse of Trieste. He later says: “Sono contento ...proprio contento di finirla una volta per sempre. Purché tutto si sbrighi presto”(166). The father’s resignation and acceptance of his death saddens Stefano and, as they are crossing the border, Stefano keeps screaming to the guards “Hitro” (Fast), hoping “in extremis l’impossibile riconciliazione” (166). When they reached Giurizziani his father was settled in bed and requested a farewell to each member of the family separately.

Stefano was the last one to face his dying father and he would assist him to get a breath of air by the window as his father kept asking him to pray. Stefano, pretending to pray, moved his lips. His anger was now against God:

Con l'affievolirsi della luce ed il primo crepitare di raganelle, soli ancora io e lui, guardandomi con l'occhio smarrito e insieme acceso di speranza, mi domandò se credevo che se la sarebbe cavata. Non risposi e come lo vidi perso nell'immagine della morte schizzata su tutti i soffitti, chino su di lui gli dissi pressapoco: “Mi dispiace che tu muoia nella menzogna, papà. Dio non esiste, non è mai esistito, né mai esisterà. Se ci fosse veramente, sarebbe qui a fulminare me, non ad assistere al proprio crollo definitivo. Io solo posso ancora per un istante fare qualcosa di vivo per te, e allora stringiamo un patto dentro di noi: fra un attimo io non esisterò più, sarai tu a continuare a vivere in quello di noi che riuscirà a farcela.”(168)

In his grief Stefano conjures up surrealistic plans.<sup>70</sup> He proposes to his father a pact by which he, Stefano, will cease to live and his father will continue to live in the son. The father, already in agony, expires and Stefano faints. The next day the oldest son, Alfredo, as per family tradition, directs the funeral arrangements. Stefano knows that his father asked Alfredo to be his guardian, and he reveals the turbulent soul of a desperate adolescent in his musings: "Fratello mio caro lasciami al mio inferno, non posso rincominciare un altro odioamore culminato nell'altra casa e che ora richiede espiazione per il resto dei giorni"(169). Clearly, the "inferno" and the "odioamore" he feels towards his father convey Stefano's destructive feelings of remorse and guilt.

While the feelings of remorse, guilt and shame are found in other instances in *L'albero dei sogni*, they are not as pronounced and dramatic as those felt during the time he stood at the bedside of his dying father. To define adequately the key to this burning issue of guilt, I needed to analyze the 'meaning and significance of guilt.' As a start, I accept and concur with Hamilton's definition that, "Literature is the barometer of the spiritual climate of an age" (qtd. in McKenzie 13).<sup>71</sup> I believe that Stefano's guilt and shame are registered on an imaginary barometer that rises very high. I borrowed the idea of 'age' and 'barometer' to fit the age of adolescence and the metaphor barometer to measure Stefano's internal feelings of guilt, rather than

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<sup>70</sup> McKenzie explains that, it is common for psychotherapists to assert that there is 'unconscious guilt' and that the victim may hear voices which are 'repressed guilt feelings' projected upon an imaginary person or a person can feel guilty for a crime never committed like in the story *The Trial* by Kafka. (See McKenzie 'Unconscious Guilt-Feelings' 25)

<sup>71</sup> "In 20<sup>th</sup> century literature examples of guilt and shame abound. Jean-Paul Sartre brings out 'the existential fact that nothing is so personal in man as his sense of isolation and his feeling of guilt.' Preoccupation with guilt is evidenced by other authors such as W. Faulkner in America and H. Graham in England". (McKenzie 15).



the 'objective' guilt registered and used by the practice of law. Psychologists define it in purely subjective terms. They are concerned with "a pitiable affliction, probably a delusion; a symptom of disorder which causes intense suffering. ... Guilt is first and foremost an ethical problem which is often handled in disciplines such as theology. ... Guilt and the experience of guilt feelings must lead to the ultimate question of nature of moral judgments" (McKenzie 15).

C.H. Waddington, in *The Ethical Animal*, discusses the ethical implication of man's place in the biological world:

The processes which we have reason to believe are going on in the first few weeks of life are sufficiently extraordinary to be responsible for producing ethical authorities which have the qualities of the other-worldliness and absoluteness that we find in our ethical feelings, as well as the guilt and anxiety which are another of their unexpected but obtrusive characteristics.(173)<sup>72</sup>

Sigmund Freud in *Civilization & its Discontents* discusses the 'riddle of the sense of guilt.' He goes back to the murder of the 'father' and "the very earliest primal ambivalence of feelings towards the father [hate and love]" (120), which undoubtedly created an instance of 'remorse'. He states:

It is not really a decisive matter whether one has killed one's father or abstained from the deed; one must feel guilty in either case, for guilt is the expression of the conflict of ambivalence, the eternal struggle between Eros and the destructive or death instinct. ...it must express itself in the Oedipus complex, cause the development of conscience and create the first feeling of guilt.(121)

McKenzie's definition coincides with Erikson's psychosocial development of a child:

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<sup>72</sup> Waddington also discusses the myth of Adam and Eve and the disobedient act of eating the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, which led to the fall of man. This story is essential to understand the concept of good and evil. Relying on Waddington's theory I examine the 'internal authority'; the authority of the father who was disobeyed and whose creatures are considered to have committed sin. This infraction produces the sense of remorse and guilt. Waddington concludes: "the existence of ethical belief is a necessary part of the human evolutionary system." (173)

How much anxiety [the child] will experience will depend very largely on the reaction of adults especially that of a mother. ...If she is intolerant of these ambivalent tendencies and the child acquires more fear than love, anxiety-feelings are likely to be repressed ...and anxiety may now pass into guilt-feelings.(32)<sup>73</sup>

The next statement by Winnicott resonates with McKenzie's ideas:

The sense of guilt is little more than anxiety with a special quality. ...Guilt, from the psychological point of view, always implies an inner sense of wrongdoing, of self-blame. The vital connection between anxiety and guilt lies in the fact that the sense of guilt originates in anxiety; and anxiety can be experienced by the infant. (McKenzie 29)

These definitions and observations on the origins of guilt validate my finding that the guilt feelings displayed during Stefano's adolescence were intensified feelings, which had their roots in infancy. Erikson's psychosocial identity development theory is backed by many other psychologists. Anthony Giddeon's statement confirms, again, Erikson's theory when he asks:

What creates a sense of an ontological security that will carry the individual through transitions, crisis and circumstances of high risk? Trust is the existential anchoring in the early experience of the infant. What Erik Erikson, echoing D. W. Winnicott, calls basic trust forms the original nexus from which a combined emotive-cognitive orientation toward others, the object-world and the self-identity emerges. (43)

I believe that Stefano's guilt did not originate from his Catholic upbringing, although it influenced his feelings of right and wrong, since Stefano spent his puberty years in two different seminaries where his teachers were Catholic priests. In reference to the ethical frameworks psychologists concluded that the predisposition for guilt and remorse in some cases remains dormant, in others is exceedingly weak (Winnicott in McKenzie 50). I claim that Stefano's predisposition was strong and it was

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<sup>73</sup> McKenzie also adds to the research of Freud: "Freud stemmed the feelings of guilt from Oedipus stage; but now we know the Oedipus complex, if there be one, simply accentuates what is already there. And it is worth noting that the increase of guilty-feelings at this stage is not because of libidinal wishes towards the opposite parent, but because of the death 'wishes,' again the outcome of ambivalent tendencies." For a discussion on death wishes see p. 33 in McKenzie.

reinforced by the lack of Basic Trust in Infancy. I also believe that, especially during the adolescence stage, these subjective feelings were displaced by psychosocial pressures of his time and place.

### **III:III Late Adolescence**

Late Adolescence is the third and last phase of Erikson's and his followers' theory of Adolescence. This is a time of psychological development involving "intrapsychic and social restructuring, gaining more mature sense of intimacy and reaching into a deeper cognitive capacity" (Kroger 91). Erikson states: "The growing and developing youths faced with physiological revolution within them, and with tangible adult tasks ahead of them are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are" ( *Child & Society* 261).

Thus, societal influences become very important in the process of identity formation. "Social institutions prepare to receive and confirm (or not) the late adolescent as a fledgling member of a larger collective order" (Kroger 92). Kroger also discusses how intrapsychic changes affect the adolescent's 'second separation-individuation process,' which enables youth to relinquish the power of internalized parents and defines how an adolescent begins to be more autonomous in making decisions regarding issues of personal identity (112).

Drawing on these theories of psychosocial and psychological development of late adolescence, I will continue to examine Stefano's experiences to show how they

impacted his identity formation and to assess which "sources of identity" (Buss 118) provided an answer to Stefano's rhetorical question, "Chi sono io?"

Psychologists believe that as, "Predominant mood of any historical epoch is closely linked with contextual options vital to the adolescent identity-formation process, the concept of 'barriers' refers to external limitations imposed by the socio-cultural environment biases" (Yoder in Kroger 106). Therefore, I will analyze Stefano's experiences as a reflection of his historical circumstances and the political events affecting his life, such as the Treaty of Osimo, which divided the Istrian territory into zone A and B - each under a separate administration belonging to the two bordering countries of Italy and Yugoslavia.

My observations will focus specifically on Stefano's relationship with his work environment, his friendship with Lucchesi (his boss), his intimate relationships, his political and ideological views as well as his relationship with his family and how they affected his late adolescence development.

In the previous section on mid-adolescence, I reviewed the painful impact that the death of his father had on the protagonist and I also described his return to Capris, where he engaged in different psychosocial tasks that indicate the start of a new phase: late adolescence.

In the following passage Stefano specifically addresses the consequences of his father's death on him and his long lasting grief: "Per due anni sognai di lui con una frequenza di due e più volte ogni ventiquattro ore se si considerano le rare sieste pomeridiane e soprattutto le riapparizioni nel corso di una sola notte." (175) Relentless guilt and remorse are profound and destructive forces that compel him

to return often to his village, where he would stay for a short time before going back  
 “all’inferno di Capris” (177) :

Se invece la sosta si protraeva per più giorni, la volontà di resistere alla prepotenza esterna, unitamente al pregustato connubio eros-morte mi spingevano a tentare ciò che mai avrei osato prima a Materada; scartata l’irraggiungibile cerchia paesana, mi portavo a Buje e a Umago dove mature zagabresi relegate nel disadorno paesotto contadino impigrivano nostalgiche e sprezzanti nelle osterie con pretese di buffets. (178)

The ‘eros-death’ drive is overwhelming for him, and it is different from the adolescent’s experimenting with sexuality. In Capris he continues the relationship with Marcella: but again the ‘eros-death’ impulse proves to be “... una lenta autodistruzione davanti allo specchio trascinati dietro del ricordo del padre” (178): [con Marcella scorgevo] “la scala declinante della nostra relazione” (176). Now he sees Marcella in a different light: “Mi respingeva da lei quello che con tanto entusiasmo mi aveva attirato, la pura italianità riconciliante ora stranamente il mondo dei familiari superstiti e avversa soprattutto alla mia avviata balcanizzazione” (176).

The ideological change in Stefano’s attitude towards ‘italianity’ is also displayed in a physical sense. He begins to wear military jackets and a “berretto sardo caro al vice presidente e teorico del partito Milovan Gillas, un paio di baffi neri serbo-messicani”(176). This change is also noticed by one of his family members: zia Effa, who always considered him her favorite nephew, now refuses to accept his constructed identity.

As a late adolescent he also identifies more with his work as his friendship with his boss Lucchesi becomes closer:

Con maggior frequenza tornavo infatti alla compagnia del Lucchesi tra il caldo legno del nuovo albergo-ristorante Triglav per mandare giù grappe e stordirmi alle danze macedoni, cooperando già nello stato di veglia all'incupirsi del sogno subentrante al rabbioso sfogo su altro letto con impiegate slovene al catasto, ingenue meretrici scese al litorale, divorziate decise a pubbliche umiliazioni o vendette private. (176)

Lucchesi, the editor of the Italian magazine in Capris, gives Stefano many assignments. Through such close collaboration young Stefano absorbs Lucchesi's communist ideology. As a good employee, he often praises the industrial revolution launched by the Communist regime and recorded in his articles. The opening of many new factories gives him hope, just as the Communists preached hope for a better life, not only in the country, but in the world:

L'apertura di nuove fabbriche per il conseguimento della rivoluzione industriale, nell'immagine spesso tolta alle comuni esperienze botaniche con cui fortificavo l'avvenuta comunione tra operai e dirigenti ugualmente uniti nello sforzo, nuovo per la storia, di costruire un paese di prosperità e insieme un mondo migliore. (180)

The interlude of Stefano's association with the magazine and the ideological and political influence Lucchesi had on him are soon recognized by the Communist Party. Stefano, thus, appears to relinquish the power of the internalized parent and arrives at his own independent decisions. However, he is also bothered by guilty feelings of betrayal toward his father, who always hoped to rejoin his beloved Italian country. This kind of thinking blinds him and translates into his writing:

[lo scrivere] diventava duro, costandomi una fatica morale...[come] se fosse una denuncia direttamente rivolta contro il genitore per il quale già la reticenza corrispondeva a malanimo, a soverchieria. Il destino voleva che fossi di nuovo e sempre alienato contro di lui, indipendentemente dalle mie scelte se ora, scontato il non volerne sapere di Trieste e dell'Italia, della madre e del fratello, mi forzava a inneggiare al regime che lo aveva travolto, piuttosto che a secondare il moto sotterraneo che lo avrebbe rivalutato. (180)

Stefano cannot get over the feeling that he is betraying his father by praising the system: (“cieco nella mia ultima fede o soltanto succubo dell’ascendente del Lucchesi” [181]). This causes Stefano’s innate feelings of duality to surface again. Could his feelings be blinded by the new ideology or could this perhaps be a selfish motive to succeed or advance to be the editor of the newspaper? Whatever the reason, he passionately continues visiting the factories and faithfully reporting his findings. During his visits he uncovers some of the administrative abuses regarding workers’ pay, sanitary and medical practices. Spurred by Lucchesi’s earnest reporting, the magazine criticized the administrators and reported the complaints of the workers. The publication caused turmoil in Communist Party circles and it cost Lucchesi the loss of his editor-in chief position and his expulsion from the party. However, this outcome did not affect Stefano and, in his role as a young intellectual, he was spared punishment, and instead was offered a scholarship to a Yugoslav university of his choice. He chose the university of Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia.

At the same time the political situation between Italy and Yugoslavia reached a critical point due to the Yugoslav pretense to annex also zone A and Trieste:

I contrasti tra l’Italia e la Yugoslavia erano giunti alla loro fase cruciale. Nelle vie e nelle piazze si riversavano i partigiani indossanti la logora uniforme dei giorni gloriosi, il fazzoletto rosso intorno al collo. Ingrassati nel frattempo stentavano a entrarci ma si ripagavano con lo stesso grido di guerra che sotto il palazzo del distretto militare reclamava moschetti e mitraglie per muovere contro i fascisti e conquistare Trieste per sempre. (185)

The national cry to annex Trieste to Yugoslavia moved even President Tito’s agenda as he went to join the protesters on the border of Yugoslavia and Italy to give a

speech. Stefano's assignment was to record Marshal Tito's speech and he joined the crowd. Suddenly, President Tito's appearance provoked in Stefano a startling comparison, as his facial features bore an extraordinary resemblance to his father's face. This caused him immediately to feel close to that man: "Ora mi venne addirittura di pensare di aver finalmente imboccato la strada giusta per promuovere di persona il deciso confronto dopo dieci anni di vie traverse" (186).

The Slav features of the President resembled the Slav lineaments of his father. For a moment, this feeling appeared to be the convincing factor that caused his indecisive alliance between Slavs and Italians to come to an end. However, as soon as Marshal Tito utters his first words, a very strange thing happens to Stefano:

La voce non era quella: tenorile, persino stridula pur uscendo da un uguale torace, infranse la mia illusione, e, dando suono a una lingua aliena o addirittura generandosi da quella parlata opposta ed in fondo un poco ostile, fece insorgere l'intera mia parte italiana, costringendomi a considerarlo nel suo insieme uno straniero, il condottiero di un altro popolo non solo estraneo ma decisamente nemico. Proseguendo nel suo idioma foresto, sembrava rinfacciasse direttamente a me seduto sull'erba tutti i danni morali e materiali, i morti e i feriti, che gli "italiani" avevano inflitto alla nazione durante la guerra. (186)

This quote is significant as it foregrounds the conflict between national identity and language identity. Stefano's primary Italian language, the language he learned as a child, is an anchor and a definite identification for him. He feels that the language brings out "la sua intera parte italiana."

At the end of the speech he, confused and uncertain, runs home, to prepare his suitcase, not knowing precisely whether he is going to cross the border and go to Italy or if he is to take the Orient-Express for Belgrade and take advantage of the scholarship offer.



At this point Stefano's identity reached a 'moratorium.' He is ready to explore more and experiences his "second individuation separation." (Erikson, *Identity Youth and Crisis* 135-136). As he is preparing to leave, his mother and his brother came to his room to plead with him to go with them to Trieste. His mother even offers to clean homes so that he could rent a room. She also offers to stay in the refugee camp and she mentions the free tuition that would enable him to attend a university. But Stefano's resolution is firm as he opted for Belgrade:

Non erano le ristrettezze ad allarmarmi, quanto l'insopportabile ritorno a una mentalità che più non condividevo, di nuovo la nauseante corsa affannosa per riadeguarmi e che avrebbe comportato questa volta ripudi e intraprendimenti assai più gravosi. Tanto valeva condurre la mia esperienza fino in fondo, e decisi. (188)

To mitigate the separation, he promises them he would join them in Trieste in a few days and, as they leave, he watches them "allontanarsi dalla finestra, vittime ora consapevoli della mia aperta malafede." (188). He does the same with Marcella, promising her he would marry her upon his return. Marcella reveals she aborted his child and even threatens suicide. But Stefano holds steady to his "autonomous sense of self" – showing a resolve typical of the late adolescent stage. Again, in Erikson's view, Stefano has reached an identity crisis and thus he cannot commit to a lasting intimate relationship.

### **1) Belgrade**

As I have already stated, identity formation is different from identity construction: "Identity begins to be constructed when an individual begins to make

decisions about who to be, with which group to affiliate, what beliefs to adopt, what interpersonal values to expose and pursue” (Marcia et. al. 7). Erikson’s theory presents identity as a ‘key development task’ of adolescence. Kroger seconds it and elucidates the concept of ‘identity crisis’ by stating that when an ‘identity crisis’ is reached, “it is a key turning point in one’s identity development” (Kroger 11) -- contrary to the interpretation by some psychologists ‘of an impending disaster,’ which Erikson did not wish to convey.

When Stefano is ready to leave Giuriziani and travel to Belgrade, he is directionless, despairing, with no sense of inner coherence and again asks himself the question ‘Who am I?’ While the answer never comes, he still hopes that Belgrade would offer him the missing “sources of social identity.” (Arnold Buss 118)<sup>74</sup>

According to Marcia’s definition of identity statuses, Stefano is confused but at the same time he is seeking a university education in Belgrade. His predicament would put him into Erikson’s “time of disturbance,” which Marcia posited, as “a time of exploring and searching for some meaning of his identity” (20).

Erikson postulated his “concept of identity as involving a subjective feeling of self-sameness and continuity over time” (Kroger 7). As Stefano gets on the Orient Express directed to Belgrade, his concept of ‘sameness’ and ‘continuity’ is immediately shattered. The countryside scene contemplated from the train window

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<sup>74</sup> Arnold Buss discusses two identity sources that are necessary to reach a unified self: Personal and Social. Personal sources includes appearance, personality traits, private feelings, and daydreams. Social sources include interpersonal roles (e.g. relationship with the mother), organized social group, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. For additional information see Buss, Arnold. *Psychological Dimensions of the Self*. Thousand Oaks, Ca. Sage Publishing, Inc., 2001 pp. 87-118.

is not the same as the Istrian panorama. Even the way the peasants look and dress appear strange to him:

Lo strano abbigliamento di una diversa razza contadina, la bustina e i calzoni alla cavallerizza infilati in pantofole di pelle del corno ricurvo, i volti scuri e nuovi, estraneità probabilmente anche per quanto concerneva il comune lavoro nella campagna senza buoi e senza viti. (191)

As he gets closer to destination the following challenge is illustrated:

La consapevolezza della sfida – in definitiva dell’attenzione finalmente strappata – mi procurò con la prima aria del mattino una scossa di ardimento. Apparivano all’orizzonte le gialle acque del Danubio, incrociandosi con quelle della Sava nell’abisso di una fortezza turca, e via via tutta intera mi si svelava davanti la bianca città. ... una capitale che contava il doppio degli abitanti di Trieste.(193)

During the trip he feels the presence of his father and upon arrival he feels he has betrayed him, his brother, Celso and all his friends because he is “il primo di queste terre a inoltrarsi oltre le barriere del ragionevole e del lecito – da risentire intatta la mia eènza” (194).<sup>75</sup> However, despite the negative feelings of betrayal, Stefano says: “registravo la soddisfazione di trovarmi ... nella capitale infine cui ambivano i temuti arbitri dei nostri destini.” (194)

In Chapter One we saw how in Tomizza’s narrative characters deal with cultural collisions and how a collision can sometimes turn out to be a positive change. As Stefano arrives in Belgrade, however, his cultural collision intensifies at every step and does not bring a positive outcome. His attempts to adjust to a large city and an alien community are fraught with difficulties.

The first impact concerns the language, for the sounds he hears are noticeably different from the pronunciation of his old Slavic Istrian dialect. The second

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<sup>75</sup> Tomizza coined the term ‘eènza’, which often appears in his writing, and is understood as ‘being’ – ‘essence.’

difference regards his visual perceptions, as he cannot read the signs which are written in the Cyrillic alphabet . The narrator describes his arrival in terms of displacement:

Solo ... giravo da ore perfettamente estraneo, e quindi con un'accresciuta coscienza di me stesso... per orientarmi ...dovevo prestare attenzione ai suoni e agli odori come un cane dallo sguardo abbassato. Negli alberghi non c'era posto ed ero guardato con diffidenza. Balbettavo un croato fortemente dialettale, affermavo di essere italiano mentre i documenti che esibivo erano identici a quelli delle altre persone e dei diciotto milioni di cittadini assunti a un ruolo che imponeva reciproco sospetto. In nome di Dio, chi ero? (193)

Stefano's solitude and estrangement are overwhelming. He is looked upon with suspicion since he is professing to be an Italian while his documents attest his Yugoslav identity. His existential cry, "For God's sake, who am I?" proves the anguish of a disoriented identity. Stefano's experiences in Belgrade failed to bring him the answers he was seeking and as he sits in a bar and sees his reflection in a mirror, he ponders about his fragmented self: "Il gioco di rifrazioni mi restituiva sardonicamente come non mai, l'inconfessabile realtà per cui tutto ciò che avevo finora potuto imporre o pretendere era stato eseguito, a proprio discapito, dalla medesima persona." (194) His superego is at work as he blames himself.

The cultural divide he experiences from the very beginning also surfaces in his utterances. In every discussion he has, there are the personal pronouns 'Loro' and 'Noi' which highlights the two different ways of thinking, acting and speaking of the two diverse conflicting civilizations. The use of the possessive adjectives 'nostro' and 'vostro' also points to the divide felt by Stefano as well as by the Belgradesi he meets. Stefano is sharply aware of the cultural collisions between Serbs and Istrians, but he still tries to find some connections, some meeting point.

In the subsequent days of Stefano's stay in Belgrade he experiences further instances of cultural and political collisions. While in a café the drink Stefano was served is described as "una bevanda allungata e acida, assolutamente ingeribile" – 'slivoviza.'<sup>76</sup> In the same caffè he is also confronted by an older gentleman who mocks him. He tells Stefano that he knows how the Triestini and those in his part of the country feel: "Trieste nostra, Trieste Yugoslavia"(195), alluding to the uncomfortable political situation. Stefano introduces himself with the fake name of Rossi, and to show that he knows the Serbian language he translates it into the Serbian word 'crveni.' During the entire caffè scene he hears Serbian words used such as 'stvarno,' 'burek,' and 'ciganski tabor,'<sup>77</sup> which he does not understand: the impact of the Serbian language makes him realize even more that he is a foreigner. The old man that he just met turns out to be a prostitute promoter and when Stefano refuses to stay in his company he hears him say: "Siete un giovane da niente assolutamente immaturo per una grande città" (198). Stefano, now insulted and disappointed, retires to the hotel where he was staying.

The next day Stefano faces his displacement:

Sperduto nella folla non riuscivo ad amalgamarmi ... nelle vie interne la vita si stirava pesante, inerte fino all'abulia, mal sopportando presenze incomode che sollecitavano una sistemazione, uno sforzo mentale, c'erano loro belgradesi, c'erano gli schipetari addetti alla fornitura di legna e carbone e c'erano gli stranieri in macchina, quasi esclusivamente aggregati alle ambasciate. Per me che indossavo i loro indumenti, compreso il berretto dell'ex vicepresidente Gilas ormai agli arresti, non c'era posto. (198)

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<sup>76</sup> alcoholic beverage distilled from fermented plums used widely in Serbia and Bosnia.

<sup>77</sup> Stvarno = really; burek = type of puff-pastry filled with onions and cheese; Ciganski tabor = 'Gypsy Camp,' the name of a band.

For Stefano there appears to be 'no place' in Belgrade especially when, as he tries to register at the university, he is told that his school in Capris being in Zone A of the contended territory was not even on the list of Yugoslav schools. He hears the students say, "Non sa che siamo in guerra con l'Italia?" (199), and they were quoting Pella (prime minister of Italy) and Gina Lollobrigida in a derogatory way.

Despite the disappointing beginning, Stefano is curious and continues to explore the city. One day he ventures into the low-class section of Belgrade: "Fuori città, su terra nuda e fangosa, tra macerie, dove zingari accoccolati ardevano immondizie"(200). In this neighborhood Stefano comes in contact with the lowest strata of society. He is mocked, threatened, robbed and at the mercy of pimps and prostitutes who demand and forcefully extract bills from his hand.

At the hotel he was staying he was told to check out due to some insecticide cleaning. At the same time he was also given a summons to show up at the police station with regard to the robbery that he experienced but did not report. When he reached the station more trouble was awaiting him. The police needed to have the address of his residence. Suddenly, in a moment of desperation, Stefano remembers that his aunt Effa had given him the address of their old servant Dina, who married a Yugoslav army officer and moved to Belgrade. After he spent a good portion of the day in a prison cell, Dina arrives and rescues him.

Again Stefano believes in Providence and is luckily reunited with Dina, someone who knows him. She temporarily gives him her place to stay and recalls nostalgically, "I giorni da voi sono stati per me i più belli" (204). Dina's life in Belgrade was very difficult, but she tries to help Stefano and introduces him to an

agency, the “Students’ Assistance Office,” where he obtains vouchers for the cafeteria and some sleeping quarters in the ‘Casa dello Studente’ called “Dom.

During the first years of the communist rule, the regime proudly accepted students from different neighboring countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary: “Vanto di un regime che, affermatosi facendo leva sulle peculiarità etniche, proclamava ora il superamento di ogni nazionalismo e apriva le porte a studenti arabi e di colore, per anticiparsi un ruolo di guida nel terzo mondo.” (207) Stefano likes the idea of overcoming nationalism, but he is also faced with diversity, which he reluctantly accepts, not being able at times to distinguish an Egyptian from an Iraki. At this time he registers in the Department of Languages and Roman literature. He quickly discovers that attendance is not mandatory and, knowing that he would “stravincere sui compagni” (207) on the exams, he feels he would learn more from life experiences than in school and he stops attending classes:

Mi trascinavo stanco, importunando passanti collerici, nella parte della città dove mi attendeva l'alloggio per la notte, dipendendo ormai dagli umori come ogni mio passo non più dalla volontà o dai sotterfugi di un'educazione adattata alla propria indole, bensì dall'incontro fortuito, dalla pura circostanza. (208)

At this time Stefano immerses himself in the life of the city and aware that he is not in control of his own will, relies on the merci of circumstance.

During this difficult time Stefano also experiences hunger which pushes him to associate with petty thieves, and he befriends Azzo, a student with whom he goes to the open markets and steals food. However, the sense of morality overwhelms him:

Malvolentieri mi lasciai guidare dal taciturno Azzo nel primo supermarket cittadino a far man bassa di scatolame ... e asportarlo attraverso una porta

incustodita ... seduto come gli zingari sulla terra smossa della periferia, non mi andava di mangiare. Ora che quasi ci stavo arrivando, il costante anelito a confondermi con i poveri trovava un muro nell'educazione e nel principio familiare che mi trovavano per la prima volta consenziente. Potevo saccheggiare la volontà paterna sul piano politico con i mezzi borghesi in mio possesso, non compromettere un nome che mi era stato affidato e che quasi esclusivamente si fregiava del vanto di non aver mai avuto a che fare con la giustizia. (209)

Since identity development also involves moral reasoning, it is important to examine Stefano's experience from his perspective, too. Lawrence Kohlberg describes a hierarchical sequence of moral development stages.<sup>78</sup> Stefano fits in Kohlberg's stage IV, the stage of "Conventional level" - whereby he is upholding the expectations of his family and his social group. In other words, he is adhering to his parental conferred identity. He also obeys the commandment, "Thou shall not steal", which he had learnt in his religious upbringing. Stefano's refusal to steal can also fit Kohlberg's stage IV as he wants to uphold the laws of society. As a narrator he proudly states: "Non avevo mai avuto a che fare con la giustizia"(209). This also implies that some positive teachings are retained during Stefano's process of shaping his ego identity in the adolescent stage. He feels that while he can disagree with his father's political views, he cannot betray his family name. Stefano's resolution is decisive and reveals healthy moral reasoning: "a costo di morire di fame o di umiliarmi e tornare a elemosinare dalla ex-serva di casa"(209), he will not steal.

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<sup>78</sup> Kohlberg extended work from Piaget. He developed six stages that he believed "reflected changes in the ground on which moral decisions are based." (Kroger 73) Some of the Kohlberg's stages are:

"Stage I - Preconventional level - Reasoning based upon self interest found in children.

Stage II - Children may manipulate others towards their own self-interest.

Conventional level - Conventions of same larger social group order are the sole basis.

Stage III - "right" moral decision involve upholding the expectations of one family or other immediate social group.

Stage IV - The focus shifts to the larger social structure. The right moral decisions involve upholding the laws of the society." (qtd. in Kroger 73-74)



Stefano's luck changes just when he begins to sell his own clothes at the flea market. "Fratello sei ricco!" (211) exclaimed a voice as he enters a tavern. A substantial amount of money came by check from his favorite aunt Effa, who as Stefano will later learn, sold illegally some of his father's property. Stefano describes the scene as he goes back to the student tavern:

[Mi proclamarono] l'amico più vero che avessero incontrato nella capitale, da anni ormai adulterata. Mi vezzezzeggiarono ... e nei panni paterni io stavo al gioco esibendo proprietà e ricchezza. ... Il serbo mi presentava ad amici e persone conosciute all'istante, distribuendo i miei soldi ai ragazzi che vendevano semi di zucca. ...bambini in stracci attaccati alle falde del pastrano porgevano la mano chiamandomi teneramente Ciko (Zio) (213).

The sudden possession of money shows two significant realities: Stefano assumes the personality of his own father, who was always ready to share and help others, even when he is surrounded by fraudulent, dishonest 'instant friends,' who parcel out his wealth.

As he soon realizes that he had only half of his money left, he decides to reorganize his life. With Azzo he rents a room from mother-and-daughter landlords. In this lodging his troubled stay in Belgrade becomes even more complicated. In order to celebrate with Azzo their newly acquired social status, one night he spends time at the theater and while listening to Slavic music and poetry, he conjures up thoughts he never had before: "Mi lasciavi accarezzare dai toni, sfumature e cadenze che dalla nascita avevo portato dentro, seppellite sotto la facile disponibilità della lingua d'uso"(214). Stefano was born under Italian nationality and Italian was his mother tongue. His education was Italian as were his sentiments.

Yet, as he hears the sounds of Slavic music he reacts spontaneously, as those sounds touched his intimate feelings:

Ma perché dovevo scontrarmi dolorosamente a ogni ora della giornata con una mentalità tanto diversa, rimasta forse integra fin dall'inizio? Tutto quanto era successo, la nostra collusione con un altro popolo e un'altra civiltà – l'odiosamata Italia – aveva davvero fruttato un pervertimento radicale, irreparabile, dando fatalmente vita a un semiprodotto, a una piccola razza ibrida ma ormai inconfondibile, in affannosa ricerca, sui due opposti versanti, delle origini troppo lontane. ... la parlata scandita dall'attore mi filtrava nel sangue come farmaco e insieme veleno.(214)

Stefano comes to the painful realization that he belongs to a “piccola razza ibrida” that the mentality of the Belgrade, Slav people was very different from his own, and that it all happened because of the collision with other people and another civilization, which he defines “odiosamata Italia.” It all came to surface and did have a radical influence as well as an irreparable change in him. His obsession in his search for identity takes him to Belgrade to look for origins that he does not find except in the perception of some ancient musical sounds and language cadence. The sound of language, though, acts on him simultaneously as elixir and poison. Finding remnants of the Slavic language in his own Italian-Istrian dialect, Stefano remembers some Slavic vocabulary used in Materada: “Il fruscio delle frasche nel bosco si racchiudeva in uno *sciuskati*, lo scoppiare e sfrigolare del fuoco in un *puhati*, il silenzio notturno nel prolungato *tiho* sperdentesi sulla campagna?”<sup>79</sup> (215). The onomatopoeic sound of the Slavic words casually inserted in his spoken Veneto dialect are part of his language identity and are proof once more of the ‘piccola razza ibrida’ he belongs to.

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<sup>79</sup> Sciuscati – suskati= to rustle – puhati = to blow – tiho (tiho) silent, quiet

After his relationship with his roommate Azzo dissolves and the winter months set in “...come in certi racconti russi cui dalle mie dimore mediterranee non avevo mai dato pieno credito”(217), Stefano’s life in Belgrade became more isolated and his loneliness increased. He would go out only to grab a bite to eat and would spend the rest of the day annotating some verses “lugubri e scolastici”(217). One day he receives a letters from Marcella and from his brother Alfredo. After reading their affectionate messages, he hears his inner voice saying: “C’è dunque ancora qualcuno che si interessa di te, c’è chi ti pensa e ti segue da lontano”(221). That lifts his spirits and as he is outside on the street he sees people wishing each other Happy New Year. Christmas, the traditional holiday he loved so much, had passed without him realizing it. He suddenly remembers that there is a church nearby and enters it with some unease: “Io e Dio non ci trovavamo; pareva che a turno perdessimo gli appuntamenti.”(221)

Stefano remembers that, while in Trieste, he had an altercation with his father and that, after that incident, he also ended up in church. This time he reaches for the church in his state of loneliness. His return to church warrants a look at his religious identity. Garbarino notes that religion seems an important antidote to meaninglessness: “religion may serve as a buffer against risky behavior for some troubled youths” (qtd. in Kroger 75). Stefano is living a meaningless and troubled life in Belgrade. His religious upbringing is part of his identity and I believe that Stefano tends toward a conversion, even though his attempt seems strained. In church, while he contemplates the image of the Sacred Heart, he hears an inner voice: “Ehi, sono qua.”(222)

One other significant event happened which prompts his decision to abandon his 'mission' to Belgrade and return home. In 1954 a historical political decision shook the Italian and Yugoslavian nations. The day the news announced that the Zone A was definitely assigned to Yugoslavia while Trieste was assigned to Italy, a few of his student friends went to Stefano's apartment euphorically communicating the good news: "Ma allora sei dei nostri fratello!" (224), they shouted. Giurizziani was now definitely incorporated into Yugoslavia. He felt "fuori di senno come quel giorno nelle calli a iniettarmi la pronosticata, assolutamente inaccettabile e pure avvenuta fine del padre. ... Anche la correzione al confine era a loro vantaggio" (223). Stefano hears a long shout, "Zivio" – Long live!, which he comments in these terms:

Era il rauco grido di evviva che, bambino di dieci anni, dalle piazze di Buje e di Capris avevo visto rimbalzare sul pallore paterno nel nostro tinello, ed ora proprio loro, il contrario di tutto ciò che è ragionevole e bello e buono aveva vinto, il diavolo aveva vinto, Dio proprio non esisteva. (224)

Once freed from the crowd, Stefano runs to his room to pick up his belongings while the lady landlord screams at him for giving late notice: "Siete un giovane sfrontato. Siete un giovane corrotto, un miserabile; una persona del tutto incivile" (225).

In addition to the disappointing events experienced in Belgrade Stefano is also sent off with the equivalent of a 'dishonorable discharge' and he catches the first train to his beloved Giurizziani without ever turning back.

Ultimately, Stefano's mission to search and 'find himself' in Belgrade is disastrous for his ego development. Not only does he consistently run into cultural

and social collisions, but his personal identity is wounded. His sense of honesty and civility suffers several defeats and Stefano sinks into solitude even more deeply. According to Erikson's scale, his search accrues more negative than positive 'outcomes,' while Stefano still remains in the Diffusion Stage.

## **2) *Lubiana***

This section deals with Stefano's experiences in his Late adolescence as portrayed in the last part of Tomizza's *L'albero dei sogni*. Before examining the tasks expected in late adolescence as well as in a teenager's journey towards identity achievement, it is necessary to review the definition of Erikson's, Kroger's and their followers' primary psychological issues during this stage.

The adolescent will basically be concerned with 'actualizing vocational directions' and 'with mature forms of intimacy.' (Kroger 101) Both of these perspectives will be analyzed in the following pages: first, looking into Stefano's vocational opportunities and then focusing on his intimate relationships.

Erikson states that, "ego identity [denotes] certain comprehensive gains which the individual, at the end of adolescence, must have derived from all of his pre-adult experiences in order to be ready for the task of adulthood." (*Identity and the Life Cycle* 108) He also specifies that the issue of vocation is a primary concern for young people (101.) Kroger seconds this notion, by underlining that "identity formation process and career development are strongly linked"(102). Furthermore, she adds that, "Choices of vocational direction in late adolescence will set up the

initial framework for the way in which one's early adult years will be structured" (101).

In Stefano's case the vocational direction appears to be non-existent, since it was by chance and not by choice that he got his employment. Stefano did not go through the process of applying for a job since he was called by a movie director. In fact he states: "Poteva accadere solo in un euforico paese che di là a una settimana mi trovassi ospite di un albergo sontuoso con l'autista ad attendere nell'atrio; ... [ricevetti] l'invito a recarmi presso una Casa Cinematografica" (226).

As far as the second task expected in late adolescence (personal relationships), Stefano does experience his first real love, which does not last long. Erikson believes that intimacy cannot be reached until one is secure in his identity and Stefano was still far from the 'identity achievement status.'

When Stefano returns from Belgrade to Giurizziani he is disappointed and lonely. He feels guilty because he is the first to betray his family's and his father's ideals by wanting to study in a communist city. He recognizes that when he went back to Giurizziani he was "disilluso, costernato, a testa bassa. ... da una settimana vivevo isolato nella casa paterna, rischiando di affogare nell'ondata di rimorsi" (228). He blames his "nativa prepotenza" and explains, "ricorrevo alla morale di sempre, isolando in due gruppi paralleli [Italians and Slavs] gli opposti sentimenti che coabitavano in me" (227). Nevertheless, he passively accepts the invitation from the Movie Studio and heads for the city of Lubiana in Slovenia.

The move to the new city proves to be refreshing for him, as the social and cultural environment is very similar to his own environment. He finds that Lubiana

resembles Gorizia with the typical Austro-Hungarian gardens meticulously shaped and maintained. Stefano is also pleased to hear his dialect spoken and the signs written in Latin alphabet. With regard to his accommodation and to his disbelief, he is given a room in a sumptuous hotel and has a driver at his disposal. The production director, who is interested in filming one of Stefano's short stories, takes him under his wing, just like Don Fiore did in the seminary in Gorizia. The director is impressed with his short story, 'Caine 50,' based on a true event of a murder case that unfolds between two brothers, who argue about property near Giurizziani. The story resonates with Stefano since it deals with killing, guilt and the injustice of Buje's court house, which he experienced with his father. Stefano now feels strong enough to make suggestions to the staff of the filmmakers and proposes changes for the script. However, the initial euphoric reception by the film producer soon cools off: "Calma! Il tuo compito per ora è di guardare e ascoltare" [229]. Stefano's suggestions are not accepted and, within a short time, he is told that the production of the film is postponed. However, he is offered to stay on the set in order to learn about movie making. Because of the liking the producer took to Stefano, he also encourages him to learn different tasks, which would open up opportunities for him in the future. Stefano is moved to a different residence and soon he finds himself doing meaningless jobs among technicians, cameramen, light-technicians, students and journalists - all ignoring him and he feels again "la solitudine mortificante" (234).

During this time Stefano notices a brunette actress, Daniza, who is always in the company of the film director together with another lady. He becomes interested

in Daniza, but she ignores him. His romantic pursuit explodes in a confrontation with her, aiming at finding out the reason for her rejection. Daniza frightfully confides the reason of her indifference, prompted by the suspicious director and the warnings of the lady secretary, who believed Stefano was put among them as a communist spy.<sup>80</sup> Daniza confronts him:

[Lei è] cinico. Basta vedere come misura ogni nostra parola, giudica ogni nostro gesto. E dentro di lei ride come adesso. La smetta. “Che cosa ha da ridere di noi? Perché siamo un piccolo popolo, rifattosi dal niente?” Le labbra le tremavano, cessai di ridere nonostante ricevessi una nuova esca della considerazione che stava parlando a nome del fiero e offeso milione di persone, a uno tanto bastardo da avere avuto un nonno dei loro?(240).

Stefano clears her suspicion and soon wins her trust. Despite the odds and the antipathy the director and the lady secretary show against him, their relationship grows intimate: “li ignoravamo e li avremmo traditi per consacrarci interamente alla passione” (242).

According to Giddens, intimacy, one of the key ingredients in a “pure relationship,” is a form of communication which is “central to intimacy.” “Pure relationship generates hope and trust and self-identity is negotiated through linked process of self-exploration and development of intimacy with the other” (97).

Stefano is interested in Daniza’s past, which she never wants to reveal. When Stefano’s jealousy overwhelms him and he demands an answer, she hints to an involvement with the lady secretary, her colleague. Stefano describes his shock, “Ansimavo, di colpo strappato all’intimità e in preda all’odio esterno, civile, ... Come

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<sup>80</sup> The Communist party had everything under surveillance. In general, one or two employees in a company were communist informers. As a vehicle of communications, art was censured for fear it would be spreading propaganda against the system.



potevi? Non facevo che interrogarla. (244) ... Ma io stesso ero cambiato ... temendo il peggio ...cedetti”(245). Their relationship suffered because of Stefano’s ambiguity regarding Daniza’s past love story.

To restore their relationship, they plan a trip to her native village, where her mother welcomes them with joy. Stefano feels at home in the Slovenian peasant environment and he also learns more of Daniza’s past. Her Italian fiancé was shot in front of Daniza’s father during the war and her mother still mourned him. Stefano’s memories of his own childhood years come to light: “Qui potevo spazzarmi a mio agio ritrovando le ansietà e i rancori che avevo nutrito nella mia adolescenza” (247).

The visit is relaxing and pleasant as Daniza and Stefano even talk, for the first time, “di un nostro futuro sia pure immediato”(247). They dream of a film based on Stefano’s short story which they would shoot in the fields of his own Giurizziani. After a pleasant evening Daniza takes him by hand into the bedroom - “nella stanza matrimoniale delle altre notti”(248) and in the morning, when her mother brings breakfast to them, Stefano’s anxiety and his “conferred” morality resurface:

Il mattino la madre ci portò la colazione a letto e l’ansia di partire che mi aveva tenuto sveglio fino l’alba si convertì in smania. La coscienza popolata dai fantasmi familiari, insorgenti ora contro la presunta naturalezza e liceità di un rapporto invece vergognoso anche per l’età assai maggiore della compagna, sul treno di ritorno stavo incollato al finestrino rispondendo a monosillabi. (248)

The relationship between Daniza and Stefano fails also for other reasons.

There are serious disagreements between the producer and the director who, blaming Stefano, says to the producer: “Ringrazi il suo protetto che ha sempre ostacolato il mio lavoro. Ma sia chiaro: non lo voglio più”(250). Stefano is fired on

the spot and the producer gently reprimands him, making him feel guilty, because he never tried to praise the director: “Mi rimproverava di non essermi adoperato per la prima volta a ciò che mi si dipingeva insieme come infamia, rimorso e nausea”(250).

After the termination with the movie studio, Stefano, now unemployed, is still lingering in Lubiana and anxiously waits for Daniza’s return after her job. She instead finds excuses and their meetings become rare and forceful. He realizes one night as he is trying to see her in her room that “il suo corpo caldo più non mi apparteneva. Risucchiato nel vortice del passato lei poco c’entrava ormai con i deliri nascenti a ondate sulla constatazione che tutto doveva avere sempre una fine”(252). In the realization of the end Stefano’s last words as he exits her room are: “Salve Daniza, mi dispiace di averti perduto le chiavi”(252). He leaves Lubiana thinking: “Che cosa mi restava se non la certezza di aver vissuto il mio solo periodo felice?” (253).

However, his “more mature intimate relationship” does not bring him sufficient gains to achieve young adult identity. Erikson states: “Where a youth does not accomplish intimate relationships with others – with his own inner resources – in late adolescence, he may settle for stereotyped interpersonal relations and come to retain a deep sense of isolation”(136). Equally, his ‘vocational directions task’ is a disappointing venture and Stefano is still left in the ‘Diffusion State’ of Identity development.

Stefano returns to Giurizziani again at a historical moment, when the Istrians “Partivano. Ridicolmente, assurdamamente partivano” (253). Here the narrator refers

to the 1954 exodus from Istria. With the Osimo Treaty and the partition of the region, the Istrian exodus was biblical. Peasants who had never travelled anywhere were now abandoning their home and fields, packing their farm equipment and their belongings on rented trucks directed to Trieste. Most were temporarily put into refugee camps with the hope they would be resettled, while their belongings were stored in storage buildings in Trieste.<sup>81</sup>

Stefano's last days in Giurizziani are imbued with betrayal, remorse and guilt, "La mia storia particolare veniva ormai a intrecciarsi con quella degli altri, ...la dispersione di un piccolo popolo o di una grande famiglia ...protagonisti di un'estate caotica" (254).

Before leaving his home again Stefano visits their fields and the vineyards. He revisits his old school in Capris and he even stops to see Marcella. The only thing he could say to Marcella was: "Perdonami." His utterance is not only directed to her: "mi rivolgevo a tutto il mondo che avevo potuto offendere o che era stato costretto a subire a sua volta la mia povera, sudaticcia eèenza" (257).

This act of contrition is in line with the demands of a guilt-ridden conscience. Stefano crosses the border and goes to Trieste, the city that his father always said he belonged to. Stefano leaves Istria, his childhood and adolescence behind. However, his painful and complex experiences of adolescence did not accrue "certain comprehensive gains" which Erikson termed 'ego identity' and which he deems necessary: "an individual, at the end of adolescence, must have derived from all his

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<sup>81</sup> 'Magazzino 18', a warehouse in Trieste, is the subject of Simone Cristicchi's one-man play, which tells of a very sad moment in the history of Italy. It portrays the Istrian exodus through small everyday objects of daily life: a chair bearing a number or a name, dishes, mattresses, simple toys, photographs – all belongings that were abandoned by the exiles, who hoped to reclaim the properties someday: a dream that was never fulfilled. Cristicchi's musical show was recently performed in different theaters in Italy and Canada and aired on RAI television.

preadult experience in order to be ready for the adulthood.” (*Identity and the Life Cycle* 108) He is, therefore, in the stage that Marcia calls ‘a moratorium’ and moves on, saddled with his baggage of isolation, towards Erikson’s next stage of young adulthood.

*L’Albero dei sogni* ends with a diary. Stefano’s guilt feelings are condensed and expressed in an oneiric fashion, while his troubled mind attempts to reconcile itself with his father.

### III: IV - Frammenti di diario

*L’albero dei sogni* does not end with Stefano’s leaving Giurizziani and moving on to Trieste, but it continues with thirty pages of diary writing. The ‘Frammenti di diario’ is a collection of forty-one entries, written between 1953 and 1958. *L’albero dei sogni* was published in 1969 and won the Viareggio prize.

From the onset of the book the reader surmises that the ‘mode of artistic creation’ is of psychological nature, while the last section, according to C. G. Jung, can be called “visionary.”<sup>82</sup> *L’albero dei sogni* can be divided into these two modes of artistic representation, as the first three sections of the novel are psychologically distinct from the diary dream-entries. Trapani claims that the novel is “ricca di fermenti neoveristi ... impregnata di scavo psicologico” (Aliberti, *Tomizza e la critica*

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<sup>82</sup> Jung tells us that there is “a fundamental difference of approach between ...the so called ‘psychological novel’ ... where the author himself attempts to reshape material so as to raise it from the level of crude contingency to that of psychological exposition and illumination” [and visionary writing where] “nothing is self-explanatory and every [phrase] adds to the reader’s need of an interpretation”(155). Jung continues: “We are reminded of nothing of everyday, human life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears and dark recesses of the mind that we sometimes sense with misgivings. ...Dante and Wagner have smoothed the approach to it. The visionary experience is cloaked. ... But with neither of them does the moving force and deeper significance lie there. ... The obscurity as to the sources of the material in visionary creation is very strange, and the exact opposite of what we find in the psychological mode of creation. We are even led to suspect that this obscurity is not unintentional. We are naturally inclined to suppose - and Freudian psychology encourages us to do so - that some highly personal experience underlines this grotesque darkness” (158) See Jung, C. G. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

*più recente* 29). Critic Neirotti adds: “Questo lungo itinerario, che vede all’inizio Stefano bambino e alla fine Stefano uomo è un concerto di emozioni, sensazioni, lunghi pensieri e riflessioni, proposte con la massima fedeltà e ... [con] un’estasi autopunitiva e sensi di colpa.” (71).

Following Erikson’s theory in the analysis of Stefano’s psychosocial development stages of childhood and adolescence, I discussed his personal and social drama especially throughout his adolescence. The conflicts between city and country, Catholicism and Communism, love and hate towards his father, loneliness and isolation were prominent and determinant in the formation of his identity. Erikson’s instruments of psychosocial analysis of developmental stages are not applicable to the analysis of the final piece, written in oneiric fashion.

Even though some dream-like mode of writing surfaces earlier in the novel, the intensity of death-dreams is not felt as much as in the diary section. The earlier dreams can be interpreted, according to Freud, as hallucinations. An example of Stefano’s hallucination can be seen when at his father’s death bed he suddenly identifies with his father and feels as he was dying: “l’altra mano sua forte che mi cinge il collo, mi adagia sul letto, gliela inumidisco con l’anima, strappandogli l’ultimo pensiero parricida: ora non mi verrete più a dire che non sono stato io a farlo morire. Entrarono mio figlio maggiore e più buono ...ed eccomi ancora vivo”(168). Stefano’s ‘abnormal’ thinking can be interpreted as a confused state of mind lingering somewhere between his painful experience and a skewed mental activity or as an oneiric visionary creation of the artist.

Stefano's dreams, as described in the diary entries, are heightened. Out of forty-one entries, twenty-four concern his father's death, while the remaining seventeen deal with a variety of themes: mythological, historical or conveying his life experiences. Yet, all of them allude, in one way or another, to the theme of death.<sup>83</sup>

According to Freud,

A dream is a wish-fulfillment. Anxiety dreams [and] 'punishment dreams' ... are ... thus the wish fulfillment of a sense of guilt reacting on the condemned impulse ... and they obey the repetition-compulsion which in analysis, is supported by the (not unconscious) wish to conjure up again what has been forgotten and repressed (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 38).

If Stefano's dreams were a consequence of 'suffering from traumatic neuroses,' then according to Freud, these dreams are obeying the 'repetition-compulsion' mode, and are bringing up his repressed feelings.

In modern times, oneiric literature had a lot of success. It was particularly influenced by André Breton, who wrote the *Surrealist Manifesto* and purported the 'automatic writing strategy.'<sup>84</sup> According to Tsepeneag, oneiric writing contains "themes of repetition, eternal wanderings, and loops" like in music. There are "returns" that are "trap words" and these returns amount to certain immobility. (Interview).

Considering Tsepeneag's theory and his visual mode of writing, which coincides with C.G. Jung's creative "visionary," instead of 'psychological' mode,

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<sup>83</sup> Dreams have been evoked in literature as well as in mythology since classical antiquity. They were considered supernatural revelations until Freud's revolutionary book, *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published in 1900.

<sup>84</sup> A prominent Romanian writer, Dumitru Tsepeneag explains that surrealist artists such as Jackson Pollock, Renè Magritte and Giorgio de Chirico produced at the "level of representation, mimesis, while the artist Salvator Dalí contradicts representation and creates a shock. ... The Oneiric group rejected these strategies and began to re-imagine surrealist paintings" (Interview).

Tomizza's creative way to express Stefano's complicated psychic activities is a visionary rendition (especially the last thirty pages of his novel). Stefano's diary has many repetitions and "trap words" which bring the reader back to his childhood, to his native Giurizziani, to his family names and to his friends. The 'immobility' of which Tsepeneag speaks, illustrates Stefano's impossibility to go back to his old peasant way of life and to his old mother 'Demetra,' his land. Stefano is stuck in a 'loop,' a repetitious cycle. He cannot let go of his past and of his guilt. With the last entry, in an oneiric way, he is trying to reconcile with his father and with the shadows of his past.

Alessandra Locatelli states: "I sogni sono confinati ad appendici diaristiche come in *L'albero dei sogni* ... [dove] il narratore [esprime] sogni che freudianamente concretizzano desideri repressi e inconfessabili che lo stato di veglia reprime con l'auto-censura"<sup>85</sup> (qtd. in Deganutti 203). Aliberti claims that the dreams project Stefano's "inguaribili istanze interiori ...attraverso cui riemergono impressioni, sentimenti e ideologie (scandite come un diario), dove la spinta della fantasia si rivela ancora più concreta della realtà e ricompone il dissidio bruciante in disperato, quanto ricercato e confortante abbraccio tra due creature surrealisticamente vive" (*Fulvio Tomizza e la frontiera dell'anima* 48 ). Deganutti argues that "la natura frammentaria [si addentra] in profondità nella dinamica del sogno, modalità che può dirsi 'consustanziale all'opera di Tomizza.' Il sogno tra l'altro, permettendo di inoltrarsi in dimensioni che sottraggono alla logica e alla

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<sup>85</sup> Tomizza knew Freud's works. In an interview with Riccardo Ferrante he states: "Io ho respirato questa cultura triestina, molto freudiana. L'ho assimilata in maniera spontanea. ... L'ho adattata." (*Destino di Frontiera* 81)

linearità, concede a Tomizza la possibilità di elaborare [il tema] con maggiore libertà.” (27)

In a recent article Leoncini states:

Il diario onirico, a cui si assimila la stessa terza parte del romanzo, costituisce non un’ “appendice,” ma una “premessa”: infatti, lo scandaglio nella dimensione inconscia perviene, nella pagina finale del romanzo, all’emergere della riconciliazione col padre, all’affiorare di una coscienza germinale, su cui la scrittura si può commisurare . (qtd. in Deganutti, 177)

Most critics, thus, refer to the last section of *L'albero dei sogni*, with its “illogical non-linear” dimension, as a textual space that allows the writer more freedom to explore and experiment with concepts such as death, existence and time.

With regards to the psychic processes involved in artistic creation, Jung remarks:

In case of the work of art we have to deal with a product of complicated psychic activities, but a product that is apparently intentional and consciously shaped. In the case of the artist we must deal with the psychic apparatus itself. In the first instance we must attempt the psychological analyses of a definitely circumscribed and concrete artistic achievement while in the second we must analyze the living and creative human being as a unique personality. (152)

From Stefano’s entries, emerge images of profound depth that often conjure up remote times and a mythical past. Analyzing them is an irrefutable challenge, even though their interpretation may not necessarily bring out the author’s intention.

These dreams are expressions of the artistic psyche which André Breton called ‘automatic writing,’<sup>86</sup> where past and present fantasies coincide and overlap. For example, as Stefano describes a bus trip where an accident occurred, the narrator confesses: “Conto i minuti che ci dividono da Capris, andrò dai pompieri o dalla

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<sup>86</sup> “A method of composition that tries to dispense with conscious control or mental censorship, transcribing immediately the promptings of unconscious mind. Some writers in the early days of Surrealism attempted it, notably André Breton.” (Baldick, Chris. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* 22)



milizia, senza colpe questa volta connesse col padre”(267). The reference to ‘pompieri’ – firemen , may symbolically denote extinguishing his fire – perhaps the anger in him. The present is bringing up the past, reviving his guilty feelings for disclosing to his friend Valdo where his father had hidden the weapon.

Other entries illustrate Tomizza’s use of oxymoron, which show the dichotomy first accentuated and then resolved: “Non era lui, ma era lui. Incominciò a reagire” (263). The admission ‘ma era lui’ is resolved with ‘Incominciò a reagire.’ Other examples are: “Un’ampia chiesa o un castello rostrato di aquile bicipiti. Un enorme gufo o un uomo in elmo, corazza e barba mi fissava dominante da una nicchia; ma aveva dell’uccello, pronto a spiccare il volo e calarmisi addosso con le ali nere” (267). Again, there is a dichotomy between ‘gufo’ and ‘uomo’ and the ‘uomo’ becomes an ‘uccello’ with the ‘ali nere’. This ‘image’ could represent a fallen angel (a devil) or a saint but Stefano’s subconscious is transforming it in a threatening presence. Another example, which is a reference to the foibe and death, is “Una galleria o una delle grotte carsiche?” (265) and:

Secondo il partito [la chiesa] consisteva nel poter dimostrare anche praticamente che nei sotterranei non esistevano più monaci. Dietro l’altare, dove un tempo si scendeva alle celle, ci invitavano a gettare tondi ciottoli di fiume, come dentro a una voragine carsica, per saggiare noi stessi l’assenza, sotto, di anima viva. I sassi precipitavano rimbalzando con un suono metallico lungo l’ellisse che quasi inavvertitamente conduceva alle dimore dei sepolti vivi. ‘Non ce ne sono, provate,’ ci incitava la guida. Aveva ragione dal profondo, rimasta muta la pietra, proveniva un sordo stillicidio, un’ arcana presenza di acque. (273)

The denial of the foibe massacre by the communist is present and superimposed to a setting where a tour guide in Bucarest or Sofia tries to convince the travellers that

even if the ‘stagnant water’ is removed, the ‘monks’ do not live in the pits. This is an allusion to the fact that, the tragedy of the Istrian people cannot be proven.<sup>87</sup>

The image of death is very much present in all the entries, even when their subject is historical. One of the passages recounts ancient tales of resistance:

L'ordine preciso era di suicidarsi. Troppo comodo attendere i reparti austriaci o italiani nel fango, tra baracche più trincee o in un accampamento di gialle tende turche, e venire ammazzati e magari fatti prigionieri. Alzare alla tempia la pistola-scimitarra, anche donne e bambini, inutile scappare strisciando lungo i fossati scavati nella necropolis di Nesazio, poveri istriani pazzi d'orgoglio che piuttosto di consegnarsi ai romani buttarono dalle mura le mogli, i pargoli.(283)

Here recent and remote past intersect. The legendary story of Nesazio during the Roman conquest of Istria is mirrored in the Turkish raids and then superimposed on World War I. All these images are imbued with Istrian sense of pride and sacrifice.

Stefano's oneiric entries can be approached from different angles. Critic Zivko Nizic suggests that in *L'albero dei sogni* there is a message “della maledizione del confine” (*Istarske I Dalmatinske Teme – Temi istriani e dalmati* 168) or as he implies, that Nesazio's story, a mass suicidal story, alludes to the destiny of the Istrian border land.

Most of the entries contain paradoxes and are difficult to analyze. Jung states: “Every interpretation [of a dream] is hypothetical for it is a mere attempt to read an unfamiliar text. An obscure dream, taken by itself, can rarely be interpreted with any certainty. However, with a series of dreams we can have more confidence in our interpretation” (14).

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<sup>87</sup> Reference to the denial of the foibe was discussed in Chapter One.

Reading Stefano's dreams one is faced with enigmatic messages that his subconscious holds. While some dreams contain symbolic images, others may appear meaningless. However, Stefano's anxiety and repression are repetitious enough to prove that the collision of unresolved conflicts is external, as in the case of the border: "Per farlo passare oltre il confine in due grandi valigie avevamo dovuto dividerlo a metà [il corpo nella cassa] – 'Ma proprio tagliarlo, sai' si lamentava il fratello 'segare le ossa'" (285). The conflicts are also internal, as seen in the next entry, for which I would like to use Jung's symbolism to interpret Stefano's visions. Stefano is in the city of Sarajevo and the scenes are kaleidoscopic. The color red is predominant – 'violet red' and 'passionate red.' A vendor is selling hats, but a woman is persuading Stefano to buy "un' agnella che penzolava sanguinante dalla mano. Diceva di averla ammazzata perché aveva il fegato corrosivo – e me lo mostrava rosso e mangiucchiato come una spugna. Me lo metteva sotto il naso, e sulla mia camicia di Prometeo caddero gocce rossissime" (270).

If this dream is dissected and if we focus on particular words, such 'agnella,' 'sanguinante,' 'ammazzata,' 'fegato corrosivo,' 'mangiucchiato,' 'rosso,' and 'Prometeo' we can reconstruct, with these building blocks, the Greek legend of Prometheus.. The archaic images of lamb, blood, and fire are part of the "collective unconscious". Stefano could be said to assume the role of the 'sacrificial lamb,' according to the Christian imagery, and the role of the pagan Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus and brought it to humanity. Stefano is Prometheus, who brings light to humans, but the price he pays is the punishment of the Gods, who are 'una forza

oscura del destino di frontiera.' The future of Istria or of any artificial border is bleak.

In my interpretation the last entry is the key to the entire narrative of *L'albero dei sogni*: guilt must be expiated. After many years of suffering from guilty feelings, Stefano finally reconciles with his father in the oneiric dimension. The last entry reads:

Ho mai provato gioia più fonda? È venuto, non più ombra, cara ombra, dal suo sanatorio in collina. ... Tra il gruppo di parenti, fra mia madre e il fratello che pure amavo rivedere dopo tanto tempo, apparve. Pallido ma più in vita delle altre volte; sarebbe vissuto ancora con noi, e in pace. Tutti si fecero da parte per assistere: l'abbraccio fu lungo, pieno, da farmi svenire dalla gioia, sapendo lui tutto di me, del mio disperato cercarlo fra le ombre e dell'avvenuta resurrezione che mi ero finalmente meritato avendo spontaneamente offerto la mia vita per la sua, e un buon Dio ora mi ricompensava, salvandoci entrambi, restituendoci l'uno all'altro, riconciliati. (292)

This ends the diary part of *L'albero dei sogni*. Leoncini wonders if it is an "Evento explicitario o nucleo germinale?" (Deganuti 173). This question was an important one for me, because it directed me to look into another dimension of Stefano's unconscious. While Erikson's psychosocial theories help me to gather information about Stefano's developmental stages and his subsequent identity crisis, the oneiric writing exposes the hamartia which looms over him and his beloved land. To resolve his conflicts with his father is impossible. He can only aspire to a reconciliation through the wish-dreams that his oneiric writing allows. Stefano's joy and peace, in Leoncini's words, is "a nucleo germinale."

## CONCLUSION

Forging one's individual identity is an unsettling process, which involves risks. Fulvio Tomizza takes such risks with his literary characters which he explores and on whom he projects his own psychological tensions.

His works foretells recurrent themes of guilt, shame, betrayal, doubt and loneliness. My study questions these psychological states and the related emotional behaviors of the characters. To understand why these issues are so prominent, where they originated and whether they were resolved at each stage of his characters' identity development, I embarked on a systematic analysis by examining two of Tomizza's autobiographical works: *La quinta stagione* and *L'albero dei sogni*.

Psychologists concur that a person is accruing positive and negative experiences from infancy to adulthood, which influence the formation of one's ego identity. This individual identity is neither 'deictic' (Joseph 2) nor biological, but it is a constructed identity which one presents to others and which one may or may not believe to be his own. Stefano Marcovich, the main character of both novels, is considered Tomizza's alter ego. Stefano's emotional state is laden with conflicts which he cannot resolve: he repeatedly seeks to answer the pressing question, "Who am I?"

To find an answer to Stefano's quest, I employed Erik Erikson's, instruments of psychosocial approach, which he provided in his analysis of the psychosocial development stages of human life cycle in the early 1950's. His theory was further expanded by his followers such as Marcia, Kroger, and Giddens, who offer additional tools to explore Stefano's developmental stages. In Erikson's epigenetic chart there

are eight developmental stages, that I used as a frame to classify Stefano's experiences during his childhood and adolescence. These stages coalesce with Erikson's theory of the development of childhood and adolescence. Consulting psychosocial theories a consensus emerges on the assumption that by the end of the adolescent stage, most individuals achieve a basic structure of their ego identities. However, in Stefano's case, at the end of *l'Albero dei sogni*, the conflicts and contradictions of his adolescence stage are still unresolved. This is especially evident in the last pages of *Frammenti di diario*, where the narrator dips into oneiric solutions to bring surrealistic peace and tranquility to his guilt feelings, but without appeasing his conflicts.

I divided my thesis in three chapters: the first one deals with Fulvio Tomizza's dilemmas with his identity. His claim of 'non-identification' with the nation finds a counterpart in his identification with the Italian language. "The encounter with language ... enables us to form a conception of self rather than simply being ourselves." (Joseph 11) In an interview Fulvio Tomizza was asked, "Stretto tra due nazionalismi com'è avvenuto il recupero di questo senso di inappartenenza?" His answer was:

Ho vissuto fino all'estremo l'assurdità dei nazionalismi. La discordia ha creato due gruppi di persone consanguinee e la Guerra li ha fatti scontrare: recriminazioni, delazioni, vendette, il farsi del male. ...Non mi sono mai identificato bene né con l'Italia né con la Jugoslavia. Io ho sangue slavo, mentre la mia educazione è tutta italiana. (*Destino di frontiera* 36)

Thus, with Tomizza there is no nexus Nation-Language. He manifests his identity and views it through the Italian language.

In the second chapter, I first analyzed Stefano Marcovich, within the framework of Erikson's first four phases of Childhood: Infancy, Early Childhood, Play Age and School Age. In the third chapter I continued exploring Stefano's Adolescence stage, which I divided, according to Kroger's scheme, into Early adolescence, Mid-Adolescence and Late Adolescence. The last segment of my dissertation is an analysis of Stefano's oneiric diary, which is presented as an addendum to the book *L'albero dei sogni*.

Before performing my analysis, I needed to give the reader an overview of the geographical, historical and political map of Istria so that she/he could comprehend Tomizza's works portraying his native land, as well as the 'contadini' in the region of Venezia Giulia, the north-eastern corner of the Adriatic Sea. I felt that the reader may find difficulty with the geographical locations, political systems, and the language itself. As I stated before, Tomizza created a style of writing that can be obscure at times, especially when he suddenly inserts words of his Veneto or Croatian dialects, or in his Italian prose shares an element of local cultural traditions or alludes to historical events.

Chapter One draws examples and discusses some other works by Tomizza, such as his first novel, *Materada*, where the political change, the annexation by military force of Istria by Yugoslavia, caused a historical break as well as a break in the archaic farmer system enforced by the superimposed new Communist economic reform. This drastic change, together with the political strategy aimed to erase any Italian vestige, forced many Istrian farmers to leave in mass, abandoning their land, their homes, their belongings and their dead. Tomizza's narrative portrays the

pliability of nationalism and the twists and turns of ideologies which created havoc among a population who only sought peaceful coexistence - a better way of life. Tomizza, as a cantor, in his epic story, tells the tragedy of the exodus of his people and the drama of keeping a steady national identity. The topics Tomizza addresses in *Materada* are contemporary issues of people living on the borders. In some other works, such as *Franziska*, he not only deals with the dire effects of nationalism, but also with the difficulties language can pose to the shaping of individual identity. The conflict between national and linguistic identity is not unique to Tomizza's narrative but can be found in works of other writers, such as Jean-Marie LeClezio and Gezim Hajdari, who could not identify with a nation, but did identify with its language and who felt that the power of language is an important factor in forging one's identity.

In the second chapter, I examined the childhood of Stefano Marcovich. Some of the drastic political changes and consequences of the Second World War are seen through the eyes of a child: the German invasion, the overtake by the partisans, the foibe massacres, the vendettas dividing families and friends, the economic changes, the Istrian mass exodus and the long border dispute. Stefano as a child, learned early not to 'cross lines,' but also to erect a "psychological personal barrier." (Nizic, *Lo scrittore e i suoi confini*) In view of his border experiences, I claim that feelings of doubt, hesitation, ambiguity, and conflict between Italy and Yugoslavia contributed to his identity confusion. His ambivalent feelings often concern his "odiosamata" Italia, since love and hate coexist in his mind. However, I concentrated on the



description of Stefano's childhood stages as outlined on Erikson's epigenetic chart, with special attention to his Infancy stage.

Focusing on the negative psychosocial outcomes of each phase of his developmental stages, I surmised that his mother was at the core of his basic mistrust. Based on Erikson's theory that a child's balanced basic trust depends on maternal care or on a caregiver (63), I believe that the quality of maternal care was crucial in forging Stefano's personality. His mother was a good business lady who dutifully provided for her family. She was a good disciplinarian, as expected by her culture who taught by punishment. However, throughout Stefano's childhood and adolescence he describes his relationship with his mother as cold, unloving -- negative.

The subsequent three stages of Stefano's childhood do not produce Erikson's anticipated positive 'outcomes' either. For example, his early childhood is permeated with negative 'outcomes' of shame and doubt. During the 'Play Age,' when the conflict 'Initiative vs. Guilt' develops, Stefano accrues more sense of guilt than spirit of initiative. A significant example is when Stefano accidentally shoots the servant Dina. The feeling of guilt and the harsh beating by his father are central to Stefano's psychosocial crisis. During Stefano's school age stage his feelings of inferiority resurface. While examining *La quinta stagione*, I have also addressed the psychological explanations for emotions such as shame and guilt and the difference between them as well as their origins. Tangney's and Dearing's empirical research helped me delineate differences and similarities between shame and guilt, which I applied to Stefano's 'phenomenological experiences.' Chapter two ends with

Stefano's leaving Giurizziani at ten years of age with a baggage of negative outcomes which, in the next stage of adolescence, will continue to interfere with the achievement of his ego identity.

Chapter three examines Stefano's adolescence. Its early phase is troublesome and ends with his expulsion from the seminary school of Capris at the end of the first year. The following year he is transferred to another seminary in the city of Gorizia from which he is also expelled at the end of the school year, with negative effects on his psychosocial development. As a consequence, he returns to the school of Capris which was by then under the Communist administration: this forces Stefano to succumb to yet another adjustment. The transfer to Capris coincides with his puberty and the beginning of his mid-adolescence stage. As predicted by Erikson's and Kroger's 'tasks of adolescence,' developments such as peer relationships, love relationships and relationships with family are important during this stage. Throughout this period he continues experiencing different conflicts. The most significant of them is the contrast between parental values and the young adolescent's emerging values. At this time Stefano learns of his father's terminal illness and suddenly shifts his almost infantile surroundings to real life conditions, causing his guilt feelings, his betrayal and confusion to intensify. In Stefano's case the feeling of betrayal is ambiguous, and it needs to be studied according to the gravity of the situation. Stefano is also highly sensitive to morality and any violation to trust for which he often blames himself and feels betrayed. A significant example is the betrayal he feels towards his father and his father's ideals. Stefano's sense of betrayal is complex and I claim it does stem from his basic lack of trust. The death of

his father completely overtakes his emotional state and his preoccupation with guilt, remorse and betrayal causes him to continuously dream of him.

The end of his schooling in Capris coincides with the stage of his late adolescence, which is described by psych socialists as the stage in which an adolescent is concerned with professional exploration and seeks intimate relationships. Again, we see that neither of these two tasks ends in a positive, satisfactory outcome in this stage of identity development for Stefano.

He, however, continues to search for his identity, but in a different direction. This time he is looking to find reassurances in his Slav ancestry and he enrolls at the university of Belgrade, in Serbia. However, after less than a year, his attempt fails and he returns from Belgrade to Giurizziani, disappointed by the cultural collision and the estrangement he has experienced. As he finds himself alone in his native village he keeps asking himself questions such as: “In nome di Dio chi ero?” and “Perché sono sempre solo?” Clearly this existential cry proves he has not solved his conflicts. He has not achieved his ego identity. A quote from Paul Tillich on aloneness may shed some light:

He [the individual] asks why he is alone and how he can overcome his being alone. He cannot stand it; but cannot escape it either. It is his destiny to be alone and to be aware of it. Not even God can take away this destiny from him. (qtd. in Seepersad 1)

Sean Seepersad's critical analysis of the theories of loneliness also explains possible developmental origins of loneliness by using “attachment relationship” theory: “as an evolutionary mechanism developed for survival ... helping offspring maintain close proximity to a caregiver”(4). This again helped me to understand the origins of

Stefano's loneliness and made my belief stronger. It all started in infancy with a weak or non-existent relationship with mother/caregiver, as reported earlier.

The last, unsolicited opportunity for Stefano's search for identity occurs when he is invited to work as a filmmaker in Lubiana, Slovenia. Even though Slovenian culture was closer to his own, he continues to feel estrangement, loneliness and inability to sustain a love relationship. Overwhelmed with negative emotions, he returns again to Giurizziani. As he is at the threshold of young adulthood, he soon decides to leave behind his native land and move to Trieste, Italy.

In my research, I have not only evidenced Tomizza's reasons for embracing his "non-appartenenza" to a nation, but also I have provided an argument for Tomizza's attainment of full identification through the Italian language. I have employed psychosocial instruments to analyze the developmental stages of his literary character. In particular, I employed the ethical beliefs of guilt and remorse (innate feelings,) as expounded by Waddington and McKenzie. I concluded that Stefano's (Tomizza's alter ego) unresolved conflicts are due to the following reasons: (i) a predisposition factor for guilt, which negates a key ingredient for building a healthy ego identity, (ii) the 'situational factor, namely "historical time and space;" and (iii) the failed development of basic trust in Stefano's infancy. These fundamental links to trust, self-esteem, and confidence are lacking and they are the primary causes of his conflicts and his inability to answer the question "Who am I?"

Anthony Giddens echoes Erikson's theories on basic trust and adds:

Trust in the existential anchoring of reality in an emotional, and to some degree in a cognitive, sense rests on confidence in the reliability of persons,

acquired in the early experiences of the infant. ... Basic trust forms the original nexus from which a combined emotive-cognitive orientation towards others, the object world, and self identity, emerges. ... The experience of basic trust is the core of that specific 'hope' and what Tillich calls 'the courage to be' (38).

Stefano never achieved his 'ontological security' as an infant. His recurrent feelings of guilt, shame, betrayal and loneliness cause anxiety, which originates, according to psychological research, in very early stages of infancy, when "the infant is all the time on the brink of unthinkable anxiety." (Winnicott 63]

In *La quinta stagione* and *L'albero dei sogni* Tomizza merges his own experiences with some fictitious elements that Stefano experiences. These two novels, fulfill the "autobiographical pact" (Lejeune), as evidenced by their faithful description of historical facts and geographical locations. Some minor events were altered, such as Stefano's painting of the swastikas on the walls of the Jewish temple in Trieste: Tomizza admits that he did it for dramatic effect. (*Destino di frontiera*) However, in view of the similarities between Stefano's and Tomizza's psychological experiences during the childhood and adolescent stages I conclude that Stefano's negative psychosocial outcomes are parallel to Fulvio Tomizza's unresolved conflicts and that Stefano shows **preowned** feelings of guilt, shame, betrayal and loneliness, experienced by Tomizza.

As an author 'di confine' Fulvio Tomizza echoes Triestini authors who preceded him such as Slataper, Stuparich, and Saba who expressed concerns about the divisions of political borders and the emotional consequences of these experiences. These writers belong to a separate class of writers in Italian literature.

Their city and hinterlands embody a mixture of races, languages and nationalities.

Jan Morris holds a rather negative opinion of the concept of nationality:

Nationality is a cruel pretense. There is nothing organic to it. As the tangled history of this place shows, it is disposable. You can change your nationality by the stroke of a notary's pen; you can enjoy two nationalities at the same time and find your nationality altered for you overnight, by statesmen far away. (112)

Tomizza shares this distrust and his statement, “non posso schierarmi né con gli uni né con gli altri” conveys his refusal to identify with one nation. Tomizza yearns however, to go back to the old civic equilibrium as he states: “vi è in me il richiamo a una possibile e forse mai esistita ‘epoca d’oro’ di una terra senza problemi, di un’Istria dei padri in cui le piccole tradizioni si sviluppano spontaneamente.”

(*Destino di frontiera* 24). I believe that Tomizza recognizes himself in Bardi's poem

‘Anima di frontiera’:

Nelle grandi città illuminate ti ho  
incontrato, biondo, lungo e magro  
frate montenegrino, con le opanche ai piedi  
e il pomodoro in testa,  
venditore di bocchini, specchi, spilli  
e te katzelmacher, macaroni,  
bruno, magro, nervoso, venditore di  
statuine; e vi ho visto mercanteggiare,  
le sere, nei ritrovi, in cui gli altri  
mangiavano Wiener Schnitzel, beefsteak,  
ostriche; fratelli nel pasto di pane e cipolla.

These verses are a powerful reminder of the melting pot of people in the north-eastern corner of the Adriatic, of the region of Venezia Giulia, of Trieste, Istria and the Quarner Islands. Giulio Barni portrays the multi-faceted complexity of this region, the “incontro e scontro” that Tomizza feels can be a meeting point for development of a strong peaceful coexistence and tolerance among people. Today

with the good prospect of a United Europe, Tomizza's works are an inspiration and a hope for the creation of nations without barriers. His painful experience as an exile and the exodus of the Istrian people resonates with the photo below: the 'valigia di cartone' containing a personal history multiplied by an infinite number of exiles' tragic stories.



Photo: Magrit Dittmann-Soldičić

Gren ía ... **VADO VIA**

### Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

The following diagram represents a 'worksheet', according to Erikson's epigenetic chart:

	Stage	Ego Development Outcome	Basic Strengths	Age
I	Oral Sensory	Trust vs. Mistrust	Drive and Hope	0-18
II	Muscular-Anal	Autonomy vs. Shame Doubt	Self-Control, Courage, Will	1.5-3
III	Locomotor-Genital	Initiative vs. Guilt	Direction and Purpose	3-5
IV	Latency	Industry vs. Inferiority	Method and Competence	6-12
V	Puberty and Adolescence	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Devotion and Fidelity	12-18
VI	Young Adulthood	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Affiliation and Love	18-35
VII	Adulthood	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Production and Care	35-65
VIII	Maturity	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Renunciation and Wisdom	65-Death

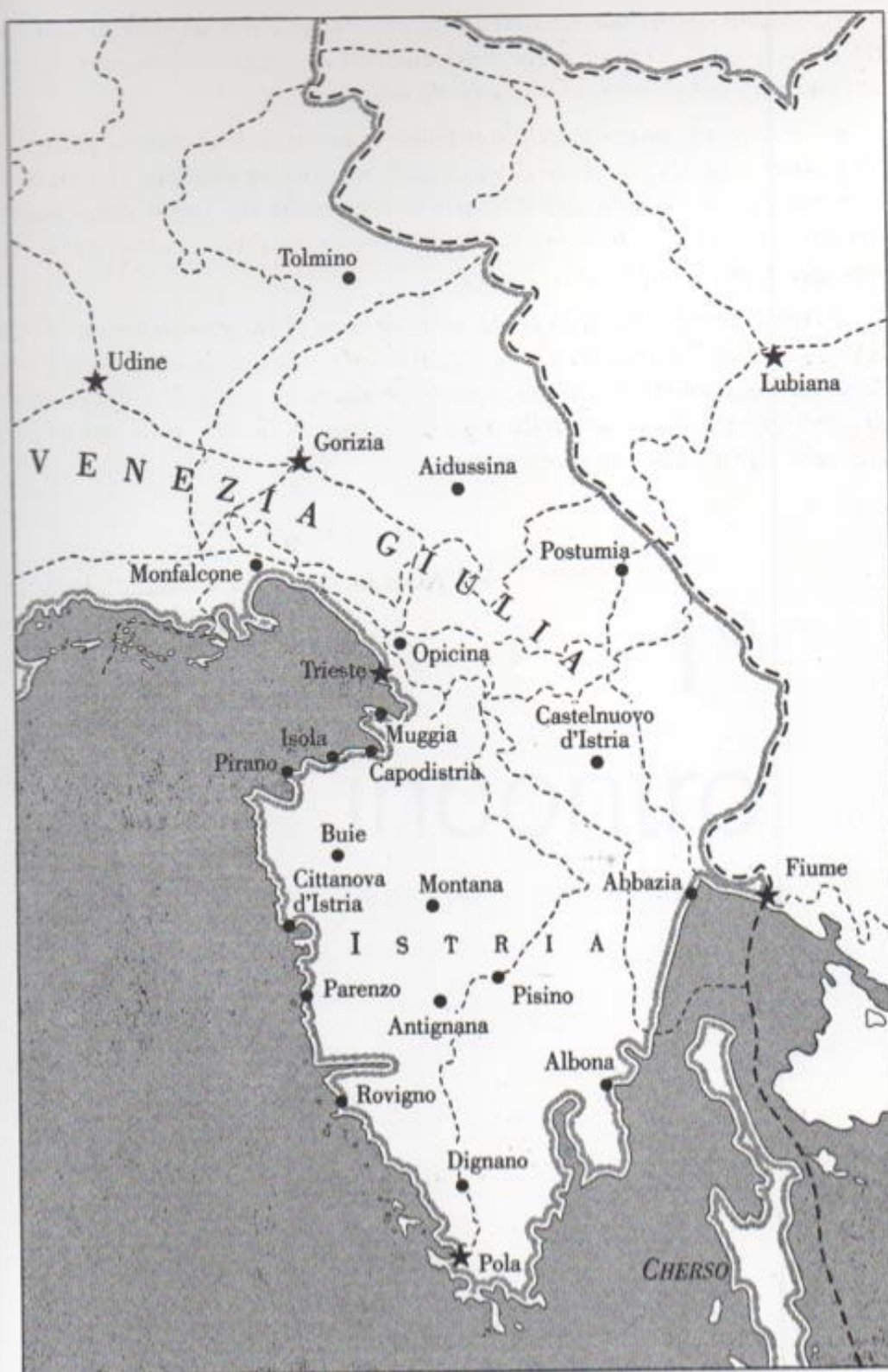
This chart was compiled from Erikson's works: *Identity and the Life Cycle*, *Childhood and Society* and *Identity: Youth and Crisis*.



## VENEZIA GIULIA – ISTRIA and QUARNERO (1918)

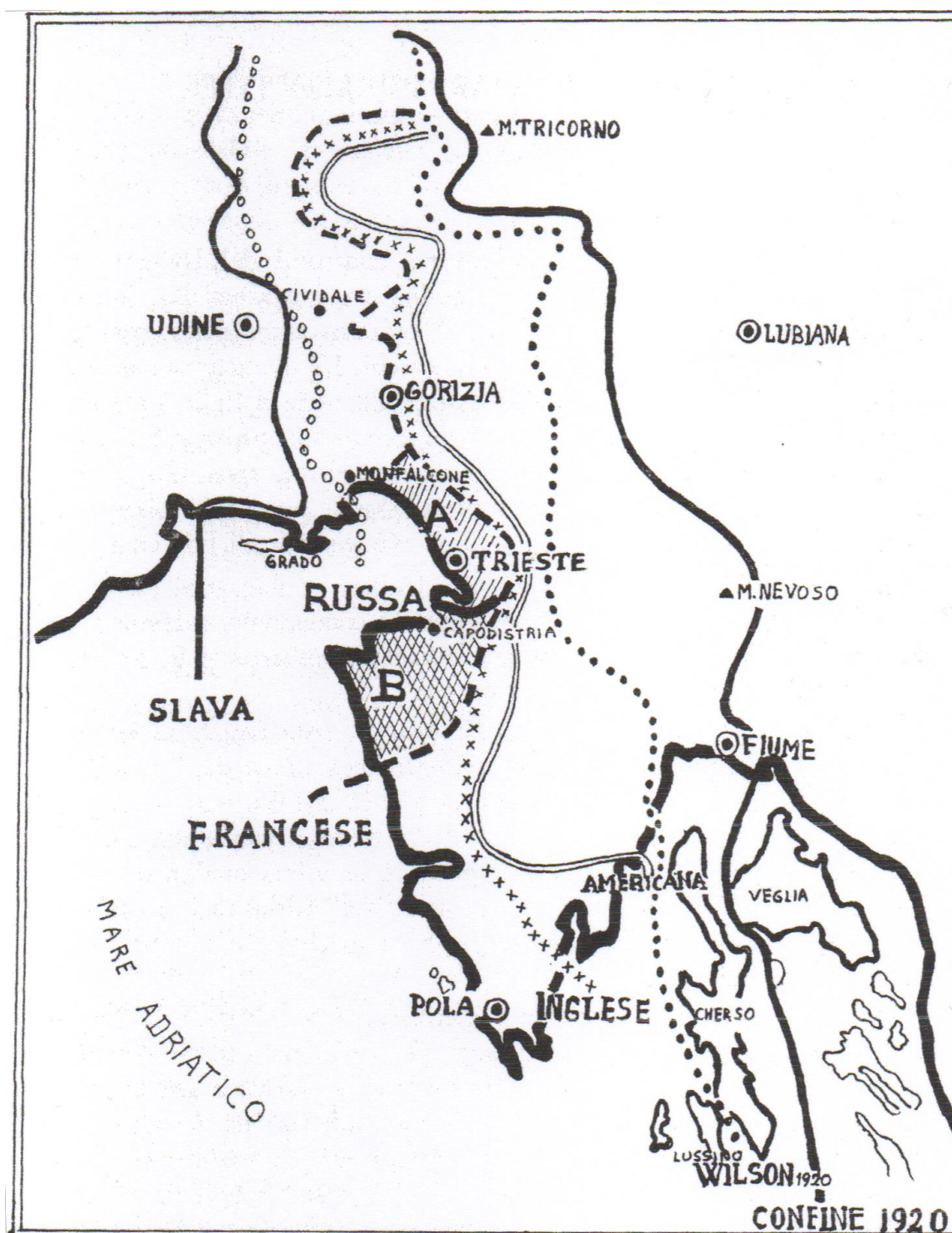


Web. [Italianmonarchist.blogspot.com/p/map.html](http://Italianmonarchist.blogspot.com/p/map.html)



*La Venezia Giulia italiana, 1924-1941  
da R. Pupo, Il lungo esodo, BUR, 2006*





"Da sinistra a destra: linea slava, russa, francese, inglese, americana, Wilson del 1920, confine del 1920". (Rocchi, Flaminio 15)

## CROATIA TODAY



## FULVIO TOMIZZA

Alla finestra della casa di Momichia, presso Materada, alla fine degli anni '80  
(photo from the exhibit "Destino di frontiera," Trieste, 2009)



## Biographical Notes

Fulvio Tomizza was born in 1935 in Giurizziani, which is a small parish of Materada, Istria, that was geopolitically part of the Italian state at the time. His father was Italian, his mother was Slav. He, as a child, spoke Italian and both his schooling and his cultural formation were Italian. In fact, he attended the Seminary school in Capodistria (presently Koper, Slovenia) and in Gorizia. After WWII, at the age of 20, he joined his family, as an exile, in Trieste where he worked for the RAI as a journalist. It was in Trieste that he wrote his first novel *Materada*, which brought him success and established him a “frontier writer.” During his life time he wrote over 40 books including some children’s books and theatrical pieces. Tomizza received numerous literary awards and world recognition for his universality and his humanity. Some of the prizes he was awarded were: ‘Premio selezione Campiello’ for *La quinta stagione*; ‘Premio Viareggio’ for *L’albero dei sogni*, Premio ‘Strega’ for *La miglior vita*, and he received from the Austrian State an award for the European literature.

All of his books, in one way or another, deal with the complex issue of identity, and the dramatic experiences of the frontier people. Tomizza died in Trieste in 1999 and he is buried in his beloved Materada. The inscription on his tomb stone reads “Passato alla miglior vita” in three languages: Italian, Croatian and Slovenian.

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