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## In Her Place: Subverting the Woman/Terrorist Binary in Marco De Franchi's *La Carne e il Sangue*

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## **In Her Place: Subverting the Woman/Terrorist Binary in**

**Marco De Franchi's *La Carne e il Sangue***

**Claire Buckley**

Gli estremi si fronteggiano, come al solito, e come al solito nessuno si accorge di quanto siano vicini, e grottescamente simili, gli uni agli altri.

(De Franchi, 2008: 260)

Women terrorists tend to be sensationalized or vilified by the media, frequently depicted as being doubly deviant; first, for committing a crime against the state, and, second, for having transgressed the boundaries of acceptable female behavior.<sup>1</sup> Though statistically the number of women involved in political violence is fewer than men, women do also communicate dissatisfaction with their political and social environment through the means of violence. While these women have been the subject of much media attention, their representation is often rife with oversimplified notions regarding the motivations for their involvement. In media discourse, deviant terrorist women are characterized as the exception to well-established gender norms and are punished both for the offence and the gender transgression involved (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007: 9).

Similarly, in literary portrayals of women terrorists, there is a tendency to emphasize *exceptionality*, rather than an attempt to examine if the women may be rational actors. De

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd examines the treatment of violent women by the criminal justice system and by society as a whole. While violent behavior in men is generally disapproved of and punished by society, it is not considered unnatural for a man to display aggressive tendencies. A woman who commits a violent act is seen as doubly deviant as she has, firstly, committed a criminal offence, but also because she has transgressed societal codes of behavior that insist that women are passive and nurturing. Ann Lloyd notes, "It is 'inappropriate' women, who are not passive and conformist but wanton, combative and unconventional, who end up in prison" (Lloyd, 1995: xi).

Franchi chooses an alternative approach in his crime novel, *La carne e il sangue* (2008), focusing on *commonality*, rather than *exceptionality*, in his depiction of the militant woman, Lucia. Serena, a police detective in charge of this case, continues to ponder what she would do if she were in Lucia's place. Lucia, wife to Stefano and loving mother to 9-year-old Valerio, works as a nurse in a hospital in Florence and appears to lead a normal middle-class life. However, unknown to both her husband and son, she is also an active member of a left-wing terrorist group, slipping into the role of "Federica", her alter ego, when called to action.<sup>2</sup> While she attempts to keep her two identities separate, a blurring of Lucia's two roles takes place. In this essay, I analyze the character of Lucia, and examine her role as a liminal figure who navigates the space between woman and terrorist. As militant women's roles tend to be particularly essentialized during periods of social unrest, I consider questions of identity and conflict within the context of the regional space of Tuscany, at a time when it was feared a wave of political violence was about to re-emerge. Using spatial theory, I examine the author's treatment of Tuscan space as a means of delineating his protagonist's psychological state. I explore how the protagonist negotiates space during the transition from mother to militant by considering the relationship between the body and public space. As sufferers of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder often perceive public space as threatening, I question whether Lucia's perception of the Tuscan *capoluogo* as forbidding is symptomatic of trauma resulting from her militant role.

The character of Lucia is actually based on a woman from Grosseto named Cinzia Banelli who was a member of the Tuscan branch of the New Red Brigades from the late 1980s until her capture in 2003. The Red Brigades for the Construction of the Combatant Communist

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that it was not unusual for members of the Red Brigades to have two separate identities. It was normal practice for members to adopt a *nom de guerre* to protect their real identity.

Party (BR-PCC) assassinated professor Massimo D'Antona in 1999 and Professor Marco Biagi in 2002 due to their position as government economic consultants. Cinzia Banelli was implicated in the murder of Marco Biagi, assassinated outside his home due to his role as advisor to Silvio Berlusconi's government. While Cinzia Banelli did not pull the trigger, she did follow Marco Biagi on the night of his murder, communicating his whereabouts to the two New Red Brigade members who took his life. As the original Red Brigades had dissolved in the late 1980s, these new murders resulted in a wave of panic among the Italian public.<sup>3</sup> Fueled by media reports using sensationalist language, the Italian collectivity began to fear that a resurgence of violent political conflict was imminent. It should be noted that the author, De Franchi, tells the story from the view of an insider, as he was chief police detective in charge of the investigation into the assassination of Marco Biagi. While in no way condoning or applauding the female character's acts of violence, the author attempts to re-humanize the figure of the militant woman.

De Franchi subverts the woman/terrorist dichotomy in two ways. Firstly, by depicting Lucia as a nuanced character who is unable to separate her roles as mother and militant. Trauma and memory play a part in her being unable to separate the two. As part of Lucia's initiation to the *Nuove brigate rosse* many years previously, Lucia was sent to observe an armed robbery that the militant group had planned. Sadly, the *esproprio* did not go as anticipated and a policewoman was brutally gunned down by four members of the militant organization. Though horrified by this event, Lucia was instructed by her comrade to watch the woman die. Many years later, the memory of this brutal murder continues to destabilize

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth Glynn describes the media's reporting of the murder of Massimo D'Antona in 1999 as "hysterical" as they dedicated a disproportionate amount of material to an apparently isolated event. Numerous articles were published outlining D'Antona's death as well as many others recalling the violent years of the *anni di piombo*. Glynn notes that journalists employed a "language of nightmare and haunting" in their articles which inferred that the political violence of the lead years was about to make a ghostly reappearance. (2013: 178-9)

Lucia's family life. Secondly, De Franchi dismantles the woman/terrorist binary through the use of the female double, as the detective in charge of the case feels a strong affinity with the female terrorist. Rather than condemning Lucia, the detective Serena tries to understand her motives for joining the militant group. In fact, Serena discovers she has much in common with the woman she is attempting to arrest. Rather uncannily, Lucia and Serena share a common memory, a common trauma, where one of the women has witnessed the death of the other woman's sister. Lucia, for Serena, represents the return of the repressed, as the investigation forces her to work through the grief of her sister Maria's death, killed years before at the hands of the New Red Brigades, as well as Marco Biagi's death, which continues to haunt her.

De Franchi depicts the militant Lucia as a liminal figure or Derridean “undecidable” who disrupts existing gender norms by being involved in both roles. For Derrida, an “undecidable” is anything that disrupts a binary category. Rather than reversing the binary pair to favor mother over terrorist, the author uses overlap to demonstrate mutual contamination and deconstruct the hierarchical ordering. To deconstruct is to go beyond rigid conceptual opposites by recognizing that each apparently contrasting category contains a trace of the opposite category. While Lucia tries to keep her two roles separate, both her family life and terrorist life become permeated by each other.<sup>4</sup> She is criticized by her companions for being late for appointments and not showing up to pre-arranged activities. Lucia insists that she is completely dedicated to the cause but is occasionally forced to miss

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<sup>4</sup> After seeing Biagi's dead body on the ground, Lucia struggles not to think about her husband Stefano and son Valerio. Though she wants to compartmentalize her militant and familial roles, she is unable to do so: “Una parte di lei pensa soltanto a questo, osservando l'immobilità ormai irreversibile di quel corpo scacciato sul selciato. Un'altra parte, in una zona adesso più piccola e meno illuminata, sta combattendo con irritazione altri pensieri: quello di Valerio e Stefano, per esempio. Della loro affettuosa e ingombrante presenza” (2008: 47). Another more light-hearted example is when Lucia is waiting to meet one of her *Nuove BR* comrades and begins to admire the latest steam irons on display in the shop window: “Si è dedicata all'osservazione delle vetrine. Strano, aspettare un compagno brigatista ammirando quella vaporella all'ultimo grido, che sarebbe *così utile* per le camicie di Stefano, *così comoda*. Strano, ma divertente, in fondo” (2008: 62).

appointments for unavoidable family emergencies. While much of her difficulty in separating her two roles stems from the practicalities of trying to balance family life with a full-time job and her militant role, the greatest obstacle to separating her two roles is due to a re-emergence of traumatic memory.<sup>5</sup> As explained in Catanzaro's study of the Red Brigades, the repression of traumatic memory is common among terrorists, something which becomes evident in their difficulty in speaking about their involvement in acts of violence (Catanzaro, 1991: 175).<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, while Lucia spends time with her husband and son, memories of her violent past suddenly erupt with such intensity that she is hurled back to the original site of trauma. The novel mimics the symptoms of a traumatic attack in that violent images of Lucia's militant past intrude increasingly in the narrative without being given meaning. According to Kaplan, traumatic attacks are characterized by visuality, bodily sensations and the absence of symbolization (2005). Descriptions of an apparently serene family life are abruptly interrupted by the corporeal memory of her involvement in Marco Biagi's murder in Bologna, a memory that she has tried to repress. On the day of his death, Lucia followed the professor as he cycled through the streets of Bologna, and communicated his whereabouts to her *compagni* who then shot him dead. On Christmas day, Lucia is in her warm house in Florence

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<sup>5</sup> Lucia/Federica's dedication to the militant cause is questioned by her *compagni* as she frequently misses appointments due to family commitments. As this is seen as putting the organization's operations at risk, Lucia has to explain her situation to her comrades at an internal trial. After missing an important appointment, Lucia clarifies why she sometimes has difficulty in balancing her two roles: "Ho fatto tutto per essere puntuale all'appuntamento. Non ce l'ho fatta. Ci sono ragioni familiari che ti spiegherò, che spiegherò a tutti quanti [...] io ho a volte impegni che non posso derogare. Dovrei dare spiegazioni, dovrei inventare scuse" (2008: 26).

<sup>6</sup> In his interviews with Red Brigade members, Catanzaro notices that they have great difficulty in articulating their own involvement in episodes of violence. Rather than giving complete accounts of these events, the BR members tend to gloss over the episodes by omitting significant details. This would indicate the presence of perpetrator trauma where the subject avoids confrontation with the distressing memory of having inflicted pain on another human being.

surrounded by family and friends. Though the atmosphere is festive and joyful, Lucia struggles to block the unrelenting memories of that terrible day:

Lucia abbraccia Stefano e ride insieme a lui, la bocca piena, il cuore pieno, la mente altrove. Sempre più in un *altroquando*, ultimamente, come direbbe suo marito, divoratore di fantascienza di edicola. Però non oggi, per favore. Non qui, tra familiari e amici [...] Adesso infatti, improvvisamente, è freddo e si sta facendo buio. Un cielo cupo spruzzato anche da qualche goccia di pioggia. Residui di maltempo. E le luci delle auto che ti abbagliano impietose. Lucia sente il gelo del muro a cui è appoggiata. Non riesce a fermare un leggero tremito alle mani e il battere dei denti, non solo per colpa dell'aria gelida [...] Marco Biagi pedala lentamente (De Franchi, 2008: 29-30).

The scene is both visual and visceral, closely mirroring the experiences of those who suffer from traumatic attacks. No explanation or symbolic meaning is ascribed to the image allowing the reader to experience the episode as a sufferer of trauma would. This dramatic scene is just one of a multitude of examples in the novel where Lucia's family life is interrupted by traumatic memories of the past. The other recurrent memory that assaults her daily is the horrific event that took place during her initiation into the New Red Brigades. Even today, Lucia wonders why she vividly remembers the *physical* sensations of that day. She remembers the cold under her jumper, the cold in her stomach, the cold air around her. For sufferers of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, flashbacks often emerge as a corporeal memory, a physical manifestation of a painful memory from the past (Etherington, 2003: 22). The most disconcerting aspect of these bodily memories is that they seem totally unrelated to what is happening in the present moment. By intersecting Lucia's family life with traumatic memories of her terrorist activities, De Franchi demonstrates the cross-contamination of the terrorist/woman binary.

As well as overlap, there are also traces of the uncanny and the *doppelgänger* in the novel, which prove effective in dissolving any fixed assumptions that the reader may have regarding the female terrorist's identity. Freud's essay "The Uncanny" is primarily concerned

with the process of revelation, of bringing to light what was once concealed. For Freud, the *Unheimlich* is the return of the repressed and refers to a feeling of disconcertion when something long forgotten and repressed comes to light. A feeling of uncanniness is experienced when something once familiar now appears strange, leading the self to question how fixed one's identity really is (Royle, 2003: 108). Firmly committed to this process of revelation, Serena D'Amico is a police investigator who has dedicated her life to the cause of anti-terrorism. She has just moved to Florence as she is chief investigator on the Marco Biagi murder case. Her relationship with her partner Maurizio has just ended, as her dedication to her work in anti-terrorism leaves her no time for a personal life, thereby fitting the mould of the 'lone detective' stereotype (Burns, 2011: 31). Her task is to investigate Biagi's murder and to give a name and a face to the mysterious woman who goes under the *nom de guerre* Federica. What initially appears to be a straightforward case becomes an obsession for Serena as she comes to realize that she feels a strong affinity with this elusive character, later discovering that in fact they have much in common. In opposition to her fellow police officers, Serena suspects that terrorists are not the monsters they are commonly depicted as in the media. As the investigation continues, Serena makes the shocking discovery this woman witnessed her sister Maria's death at the hands of the New Red Brigades many years before. For Serena, the encounter with Lucia/Federica represents the return of the repressed. Though she had attempted to block out any emotion relating to her sister's death, this investigation forces Serena to confront the traumatic memory and come to terms with her grief.

Similarly to Lucia, Serena finds herself on the threshold of time and memory, as she, too, is living in a present that is dominated by traumatic memories of her past. For Serena, there are two memories from the past that emerge and disrupt her present day: one is the memory of her sister Maria's death, killed by the New Red Brigades many years before. The



other is related to the investigation into Marco Biagi's death. As part of the investigation, Serena looks at CCTV footage of the professor walking through the train station minutes before he was killed. While watching the ghostly blurred images of the lone professor walking unknowingly to his death, Serena begins to shiver:

Un Marco Biagi sfuocato, in bianco e nero, scende dal treno [...] Intorno, uomini e donne in bianco e nero come lui, con occhi in bianco e nero, pensieri in bianco e nero. Questo Marco Biagi, sempre fuori fuoco, si incammina lungo la Galleria 2 Agosto, Stazione di Bologna. Gli scatti che lo inchiodano in quell'assenza di colori sembrano dedicati solamente a lui, tra la folla, quasi provenissero da telecamere dotate dal potere di prevedere il futuro e stabilire che soltanto quest'uomo grigio, dallo sguardo mite, meriti, al momento, il loro interesse. Perché fra un po' non sarà più [...] Continua ad attraversare quello spazio digitale, a scatti, come un fantasma. (De Franchi, 2008: 70-71)

Serena registers the disembodied images as a traumatic memory, which returns to haunt her long after she has viewed the CCTV footage. Hermann (1992: 140) has written of the danger of trauma's contagion, of the traumatization of the ones who listen or, in this case, of the ones who see.<sup>7</sup> The reproduction of Marco Biagi's image through the cinematic medium of the CCTV camera becomes a vehicle for the contagion of trauma. By viewing the ghostly images day after day, Serena is vicariously or indirectly traumatized, and this episode invites her to confront, rather than repress, the memory of her sister's death.

The second memory that haunts Serena is more personal as it is directly related to her sister's death. Like Lucia's traumatic memory of the very same event, Serena experiences a strong corporeal memory of the cold when she remembers the day her sister died. In keeping with the notion that traumatic recall can also take the form of cinematic flashbacks, Serena's vividly visual memory appears like the scene of a film, which then dissolves and disappears

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<sup>7</sup> Kaplan explores the traumatic impact of material of a distressing nature on readers and viewers. Kaplan argues that the reader or viewer of films of a traumatic nature may be vicariously traumatized (2005:39).

from the screen. Her sister Maria's body takes on the uncanny appearance of a broken doll lying discarded on the street:

Serena guarda il suo corpo, ancora per terra, che sembra una bambola a cui hanno spezzato braccia e gambe [...] ed è brutta sua sorella morta, bruttissima per quanto era bella prima, ed è difficile reprimere l'urlo che le nasce dentro, la paura, la rabbia, l'impotenza (De Franchi, 2008: 76).

The images of her sister Maria lying on the street and of Marco Biagi walking towards his death continue to burst into Serena's consciousness when she least expects it. The appearance of *revenants* from the past is an indication of melancholia in the present, a sign that the grieving subject has not elaborated loss. Maria's death, a painful past event, is a memory that re-occurs in the present, through the police investigation into the BR-PCC's activities. This confrontation with her past forces Serena to go through the grieving process and eventually leads her to let her specters go.<sup>8</sup>

During the investigation into Biagi's death, Serena reads letters written by a female Red Brigade member who was recently arrested by the police.<sup>9</sup> Known to the police as a "brigatista irriducibile," Adriana is believed to be the head of the *NBR* and has been a fugitive a number of years.<sup>10</sup> This fictional character, Adriana, is based on New Red Brigade member,

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<sup>8</sup> At the end of the novel, Serena is alone in her office in Florence trying to come to terms with the death of her partner, Andrea, who was killed by Lucia while following her through the center of Florence. Both Andrea and her sister Maria appear to Serena as ghostly figures: "La porta, dietro di lei, sbatte di nuovo. Ancora vento nella stanza [...]. La voce di Andrea Maltese le raggiunge alle spalle, dolce e pacata come sempre. "Non è colpa tua. Dico davvero, non se ne faccia un cruccio." [...]. Si volta. Ed eccolo lì, Andrea Maltese, che pare le sorrida ma forse è il riflesso del sole che muore sul suo volto di fantasma. Non è solo. C'è anche Maria. Ed è una sorpresa. Non aveva più pensato a lei. Non più, dopo che l'amore per Stefano aveva oscurato ogni cosa. Ma anche Maria non la guarda con rancore [...]. "Mi dispiace..." dice. [...] Maria e Andrea scompaiono. Risucchiati" (2008: 263-264). For Derrida, it is important for grieving subjects to *speak* to the ghosts that haunt them, so that grief can be dealt with and the *revenants* released. In expressing her remorse at not having been a 'good enough' partner and sister, Serena releases her feelings of guilt and lets the specters go.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that the investigators track down Biagi's killers by analyzing magnetic traces left on the phone cards used by the BR members while planning and executing Biagi's death. Like Derridean traces or ghosts, the BR members manifest themselves as presence yet also absence. Though without a face or a voice, the magnetic traces eventually allow the ghosts to appear.

<sup>10</sup> For Lucia, Adriana is an inspirational model of a female revolutionary, as she manages to integrate her feminine and militant roles: "È che Adriana per lei è e sarà sempre l'incarnazione viva della rivoluzionaria cui lei

Nadia Desdemona Lioce, who was arrested following a shoot-out on a train travelling from Rome to Florence in 2003. Both Nadia's comrade, Mario Galesi, and police officer, Emanuele Petri, were killed. Lioce's arrest was significant to the Biagi investigation as she was carrying documents, mobile phones and computers, all containing information vital to resolving the case. De Franchi's novel borrows much from real events, depicting the fictional Adriana as carrying a bag containing the very same objects. In an attempt to understand the workings of the Tuscan section of the *Nuove Brigate Rosse*, Serena reads the documents and letters that were written by the militant group's leader:

Si sorprende a intravedere squarci di umanità, ricordi veri, di carne e di sangue, che fanno sembrare la compagna Adriana uguale a tutti gli altri. Così tremendamente simili anche a noi. Ecco, è questo che la attanaglia, che la fa stare male. Adriana, è una brigatista e probabilmente anche un'assassina. Eppure ha provato e prova dolore. E forse compassione. E, ancora, è e resta indistinguibile da tanti di noi. (De Franchi, 2008: 81)

Serena is surprised to find signs of real humanity making the woman seem the same as everyone else. She realizes that though Adriana is a terrorist and possibly a killer, she feels pain, like everyone else. Noticing the great interest Serena demonstrates in reading the letter, her partner Andrea teases her that she would like to actually be one of them and to see through their eyes. While Serena refutes this, she admits she suspects terrorists share many important personality traits with the police in charge of their capture.<sup>11</sup> In attempting to put a face to the elusive New Red Brigade member “Federica/Lucia”, Serena meets with her fellow

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semplicemente aspira. E poi arriva un gesto talmente grazioso e femminile e anche la militante combattente scompare, inghiottita dalla donna che la ospita” (2008: 42).

<sup>11</sup> Serena's partner Andrea suspects she would do anything to try to understand the militant men and women, suggesting she'd like to exchange places with them, just for a moment. Though she vehemently denies this, Serena does wonder if there really is any difference between the militants and the police officers that are on this case: “C'è anche qualcos'altro, pensa Serena, qualcosa che ha a che fare con la materia di cui sono fatti questi brigatisti e che sembra la stessa con cui sono fatti i poliziotti che danno loro la caccia. Sono davvero così diversi? Questa è la domanda che la tortura” (2008: 84).

detectives to piece together a psychological profile of this woman. Serena comes to the conclusion that Federica is just like one of them, in fact, just like her.<sup>12</sup>

As the investigation progresses and the identity of the mysterious woman is nearing disclosure, Serena experiences sensations that occur when a person is about to meet their shadow. Serena begins to feel nauseous and full of anxiety before she first comes to see a picture of Federica/Lucia, her female double. A literary trope used in gothic literature when a character is about to confront their *doppelgänger* is in the act of looking into a mirror. When Serena takes the lift up to the office where the photographs of the terrorists are displayed, the reflection of her face takes on a deathly pallor.<sup>13</sup> The time has come for her to confront the terrorists she has feared:

I nomi dei militanti dell'ultima colonna delle Brigate Rosse si stanno componendo davanti ai loro occhi, giorno dopo giorno. Prodotti dalle analisi sfrontate e seducenti degli uomini di Bologna, arrivano momento dopo momento, le facce e i riscontri, i profili e gli indizi gravi. Eccoli, i terroristi. Eccoli le Br che lei tanto ha temuto. Sono uomini e donne apparentemente normali. Spesso, poco più che ragazzi. Ma anche assassini. (De Franchi, 2008: 119)

Like ghostly figures, the names of the New Red Brigade members appear seemingly out of nowhere day after day. Moment by moment, their faces, their profiles gradually emerge one by one. When Serena looks at the pictures of these young men and women, she is surprised to see that they all look strangely normal. Lucia's photograph stares at her from the wall. Gazing at her face, Serena tries to understand why Lucia has taken such a path. Though a visit to the suspect's house is not part of the official police investigation, Serena

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<sup>12</sup> "Io penso che si voglia dire che Federica non è proprio una teorica, ma piuttosto una pratica. Una che è entrata nelle Br sicuramente perché ci credeva, ma magari anche perché non ha avuto né abbastanza cultura né abbastanza coraggio per fare una scelta diversa. Insomma una che si fa trascinare... forse ammaliata da una figura di brigatista mitizzata più che pensata ... Io penso che Federica sia ... come una di noi." Poi si è lasciata sfuggire: "Sì, come me..." Ma nessuno l'ha sentita" (2008: 88).

<sup>13</sup> "L'ascensore interno che conduce Serena al secondo piano vanta un vecchio specchio senza misericordia che le regala la solita immagine sbiadita, uno sguardo sconnesso, occhiaie incolori. Anche i capelli, riflessi in quella indemoniata superficie tragica, hanno perduto la vita e la fanno sembrare una morta con la testa in disordine" (De Franchi, 2008:118).

goes to Lucia's home. Filled with curiosity about how Lucia's husband could be totally unaware of his wife's terrorist activities, Serena decides to find out the truth. It should be noted that it was not unusual for New Red Brigade members to have families who were oblivious to the fact their loved ones were involved in terrorist activities. They often had husbands, wives, partners and parents who were completely in the dark regarding their loved ones' double lives. Adopting a false identity, Serena finds herself in Lucia's sitting room chatting to the militant woman's husband and little boy.<sup>14</sup> This is unusual as traditionally the darker side of the angel/monster dichotomy threatens to enter the home of the so-called angel.<sup>15</sup> In this case, it is reversed with the 'angel' entering the home of the 'monster' without her knowledge. In fact, this kind of audacious behavior is out of character for Serena. Since encountering her double and the uncanny, Serena behaves in ways which previously would have been unthinkable for her. As the uncanny evokes feelings of uncertainty regarding one's identity, it results in Serena finding her sense of self strangely questionable (Royle, 2003:1).

<sup>16</sup> While in Lucia's home, Serena notices she has read many of the books that are on Lucia's

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<sup>14</sup> Without revealing her whereabouts to her colleagues, Serena goes to the swimming pool where Lucia's husband Stefano has taken Valerio for a swim. Later, Serena spots them on the side of the street as their scooter has broken down. Without thinking, Serena offers them a lift which results in her being invited to their home for a drink. When asked about her profession, Serena tells Stefano she is a kindergarten teacher.

<sup>15</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine the images of "angel" and "monster" in nineteenth century literature in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, a hallmark of second-wave feminist criticism first published in 1979. They posit that all female characters in male-penned novels of this period could be classified as either angelic or monstrous; pure and submissive or rebellious and wild. The angel/monster binary was so pervasive in nineteenth century male-authored novels that few women writers were successful in going beyond this representation in their own writing. Gubar and Gilbert urge women writers to metaphorically kill both figures to allow for a more nuanced female character to emerge (2000:17).

<sup>16</sup> Serena is initially depicted in the novel as a responsible, hard-working police investigator, who dedicates herself to her work so entirely that she has no energy left for a social life or a relationship. In her quest to discover more about Lucia, Serena takes such risks that she puts her professional life in jeopardy. By engaging in a relationship with the prime suspect's husband, Serena risks damaging the integrity of the case. As part of the investigation, the police put Stefano's mobile phone under 24-hour surveillance. Desperate to speak to Stefano, Serena still calls him, though aware that her colleagues would listen to the conversation. This kind of imprudent behavior is very unusual for the dutiful investigator. When Serena first goes to Stefano's house under false pretenses, she questions her motives for being there: "Di nuovo quel groviglio di apprensione nell'intestino. Di nuovo la vocina maledetta, che sembrava scomparsa: *cazzo fai?*" (2008: 148).

overflowing bookshelf. She almost screams when she sees her favourite book, Buzzati's *// Deserto dei Tartari*, lying tattered on the shelf.<sup>17</sup> Noticing Serena's interest, Stefano confirms that it is, in fact, his wife's most loved novel. Knowing that both of them were moved by the same words, for perhaps the same reasons, Serena comes to the conclusion that they are the same person: "Allora è vero, si ripete, che anche io sono un po' Federica. E come lei, anche io potrei ingannare quest'uomo innocente e buono e, anzi, lo sto facendo. E lo sto facendo così bene che davvero non c'è più alcuna differenza, adesso, tra me e lei"<sup>18</sup> (De Franchi, 2008: 147). While perhaps not quite as dramatic as when Catherine proclaims "I am Heathcliff" in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, it is nevertheless an indication of the presence of the double. As in Catherine's experience, self-identity for Serena is not only affirmed through the mirroring of self in the other, but also through the self *being* the other.

According to Mazzoleni, a city, along with its architecture, is an extension of the body, a mode of self-expression for the inhabitants of that space (1993: 289). In literature, a character's narrated space becomes a symptomatic marker of his or her emotional state. More than a mere backdrop for the action of a story, the portrayal of place can reveal much about a character's sense of self. De Franchi explores the connection between emotion and place in the portrayal of his protagonist Lucia. Each time Lucia sheds her role as mother for that of terrorist, the city of Florence transforms before her eyes. Depicted in ominous tones, the Florentine cityscape and its inhabitants take on a menacing appearance, echoing the deep

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<sup>17</sup> "Quasi le sfugge un grido di meraviglia quando nota quel *Deserto dei Tartari*, deliziosamente fuori posto, così rovinosamente invecchiato da essere la testimonianza stropicciata ma evidente di una lettura mai esausta e ripetuta fino alla consunzione e dunque amata, sentitamente amata. 'Il preferito di mia moglie' conferma Stefano, notando il suo interesse. Ed è strano, perché quello è un libro che ha adorato anche lei, e la disturba, d'un tratto, pensare che sulle stesse parole, sulla stessa medesima meravigliosa sintassi, per ragioni simili se non identiche, abbia palpitato il cuore suo e quello di un'assassina di uomini" (2008: 147).

<sup>18</sup> Serena does, in fact, continue to deceive Lucia's husband Stefano, by having an affair with him as a way to find out further information about her female double and to discover whether Lucia did actually witness her sister Maria's death at the hands of the Red Brigades.

anxiety Lucia experiences in her role as militant, and perhaps also reflecting her perception of self as deviant. Lucia/Federica demonstrates how she has internalized societal views of militant women as deviant through her relationship to space.

When in the role of mother, the space around her is described as being leafy, sunny and pretty, indicating that she does not feel 'out of place' as a mother. However, in her role as militant, Lucia is aware she is crossing both moral and social boundaries and projects this perception of herself as deviant onto the physical environment she inhabits. This relates to the concept of psycho-geography which, according to Debord, "is the point where psychology and geography collide, a means of exploring the behavioral impact of an urban place" (Coverly, 2007). Therefore, psycho-geography seeks to study the effect of the geographical environment on the emotions of individuals but it also focuses on how the individual's perception can have an effect on their external world. After kissing her husband goodbye, Lucia leaves her house as she has arranged to meet her fellow terrorists. As soon as she goes outside and psychologically dons her militant role, the physical environment around her as she perceives it begins to change. Each time she leaves her role as mother and wife to enter into the role of *terrorista*, the city changes in conformity with her state of mind. The change happens gradually: "*Le cose si trasformano*" (De Franchi, 2008: 19). It starts with the footpaths that take on the appearance of dark traps that await her capture. The smooth facades of the Florentine *palazzi* become the high forbidding walls of a dark prison. Even the sun appears to loom down like a bad omen. The people are the last to change with their faces becoming distorted revealing themselves as masks hiding soulless androids underneath:

Quelle facce, ora tristi ora felici, sempre un po' comiche e un po' assurde, che si deformano e si trasformano, si ripiegano su se stesse, fino a scoprire l'inganno a svelare il trucco dissimulato facendola rabbrivire. Automi senza anima, inconsapevoli eppure colpevoli. E lei vorrebbe quasi gridarglielo. Ma naturalmente

non può. Si limita a osservarli con disprezzo. Le cose cambiano sempre, quando Lucia esce di casa e diventa quell'altra. (De Franchi, 2008: 20)

As Lucia crosses the border from respectable citizen to deviant other, she sees a city that is turned inside-out, a comment on her having internalized the societal view of militant women as being out of place. As Balaev notes in her article on trends in literary trauma theory, a traumatic experience can cause a reformulation of one's perception of self, but also a reformulation of the perception of the space that the individual inhabits (2008: 163).<sup>19</sup> Lucia's depiction of Florence as a dark, menacing city also brings to mind Defoe's image of a sinister, labyrinthine London in his *Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), a fictional account of the spread of the bubonic plague of 1665 (Coverly, 2007). The narrator's ability to navigate the city of London becomes more and more difficult as the plague spreads through the city and the fear of contamination affects his perception of the city. As the narrator's fear increases, the once familiar topography of London becomes strange and threatening. London's urban landscape is subjectively reshaped through the perception of the narrator as he struggles with the effect of fear on his body and mind (Coverly, 2007). In sum, Lucia's perceptual world can be effectively read as a map, a geographical transcript of her emotional distress. As a result of trauma and anxiety at her role as militant woman, Lucia perceives the Tuscan capital and its inhabitants as the invisible enemy.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The menacing city Lucia perceives Florence to be has much in common with the image of the city found in cyberpunk literature. In cyberpunk, there is usually a system which dominates the lives of ordinary people, be it an oppressive government or a group of large corporations. This technological system expands into its human components through invasive modification of the human body until humans themselves become part of the machine. Cyberpunk fiction reminds us of the astounding rate of technological change in computing, surveillance and biotechnology. It also highlights the way these processes of change reshape the city space and urban life (Graham, 2004: 389). It is interesting Lucia shivers at the sight of androids that are part human, part machine as they too can be classified as Derridean undecidables who defy classification. While *La carne e il sangue* would not be classified as a cyberpunk novel, Lucia, in her role as political activist, shares attributes with classical cyberpunk characters who generally live on the edges of society and try to topple corrupt social orders.

<sup>20</sup> De Franchi's science fiction novel, *Il giorno rubato* (2013) reminds the reader that our perception can profoundly change the way we view the world: "La consistenza di un fenomeno sta nella percezione di chi lo osserva" (2013: 298) going so far as to state that perception is everything, as it clouds our vision as to what is real: "La percezione è tutto. La nostra descrizione del mondo, come diceva Castaneda, offusca la visione del



In accordance with Lucia's view of herself as abject when in her role as militant, her behavior when in this role is very revealing. The locations in which she meets her fellow New Red Brigade members are residual spaces on the outskirts of the city, forgotten places where those who are considered imperfect by mainstream society and by themselves are relegated. On one occasion she meets her *compagno* Mauro in a seedy bar, a desolate place that looks out onto a car park by a train station in the Florentine periphery. Two bare metal chairs sit outside the entrance of the dingy bar, completely empty except for a sleepy barman and a fellow playing video poker. The bleak bar is situated in a kind of interzone between the country and city. Lucia, in the guise of Federica, also inhabits a space of social and moral liminality, due to the opposing roles she occupies in being both mother and terrorist. As Sibley notes, those who pose a threat to dominant groups in society are considered polluting bodies and are therefore placed elsewhere (1995:49).

As a militant, Lucia perceives herself as an impure element to be removed from the purified space of the leafy Florentine suburbs. The story of the respectable mother and wife, Lucia, and her 'deviant' concealed double, Federica, goes beyond questions of individual identity and hints at a situation of social division within the city. De Franchi's portrayal of the Renaissance city perhaps hints that Florence has a two-fold nature. The grand *palazzi* and leafy suburbs are to be enjoyed by the middle-classes and tourists, all respectable citizens deserving of such beauty, while the bleak periphery becomes a space of abjection more suited to marginalized others. Lucia has clearly internalized the view of militant women as abject or polluting in her depiction of her physical environment when she meets with Roberto, a New

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vero" (130). One example from *Il giorno rubato* of where perception obscures reality is when the protagonist goes to meet a ghostly female figure in a Roman pub. The protagonist's version of events differs notably from the version given by a curious onlooker. While the protagonist Valerio believed he was sitting directly opposite the mysterious woman, the onlooker recalls how the woman had her back turned to him all evening while he continued to talk to her nervously (2013: 130).

Red Brigade member. As the police investigation into the Biagi murder intensifies, Lucia's anxiety increases which is reflected in her perception of space as both defiled and condemning:

Una luce grigia si riflette nel fiume. Lungo gli argini, il movimento lento e sinuoso delle grosse nutrie. Il fango giallo e rosso di Firenze. Il fluire pigro delle onde e dei detriti. Memorie della città che fuggono per sempre nei gorghi tiepidi. Solleva lo sguardo. La facciata austera ma bella della biblioteca nazionale incombe su di lei e sul fiume. Le grandi finestre che sembrano guardarla. (109-110)

The large windows of the national library that seem to look accusingly at Lucia perhaps predict her fate as she subsequently commits a crime that leads to her arrest.

While Lucia/Federica is usually placed in peripheral spaces when in her terrorist role, on this occasion, she is positioned in the Florentine city center, which becomes the place in which she kills a man for the first time. No longer skulking in the dark shadows of the outskirts, Federica/Lucia is re-positioned in the center of the Renaissance city at the moment when her hidden double-life is about to be revealed. Though this visible exposure on the city's center stage results in her committing a crime which leads to her arrest, it is this unveiling that allows her two identities to merge. Well-known streets and piazzas are mentioned, serving as markers of the urban center's historic importance as a Renaissance city, and its present day significance as a vibrant tourist hub. Lucia walks past the elegant shop windows of Via dei Calzaiuoli, one of the busiest and most central streets of the Tuscan *capoluogo's* center. She arrives at Via dei Cimatori and waits for her BR comrade in the midst of tourists, who eat ice cream while admiring the nearby cathedral and Piazza della Signoria. When Inspector Andrea Maltese follows Lucia through the bustling city center, he is unaware that this sublimely beautiful space will provide the spectacular backdrop for his death: "Di fronte, piazza della Repubblica, la splendida via degli Speciali e l'atelier vellutato dei Calzaiuoli. C'è molta gente. Fiorentini e turisti che si mescolano gli uni agli altri, chi per giri frettolosi, chi per

lente passeggiate, chi per visite meravigliate” (De Franchi, 2008: 219). Once Lucia realizes that Andrea is about to arrest her, she takes out a gun and shoots him dead. To the horror of the on-looking tourists and *fiorentini*, the inspector drops to the ground, while Lucia makes her escape through the crowd.<sup>21</sup>

When the police finally have enough evidence to arrest Lucia, they wait outside her house at night. Knowing the police are close to her capture, Lucia surprisingly takes the risk of going home.<sup>22</sup> Though aware of the serious ramifications involved, Lucia feels compelled to see her little boy one last time. As she watches him sleeping alongside his blue Pluto-shaped lamp and Spiderman poster, Lucia starts to cry:

Lucia lo guarda e improvvisamente vorrebbe piangere, come non le capitava da anni. Le lacrime che le salgono agli occhi sono caldissime, quasi brucianti. E il battito nel petto è l'opera di un mantice, che la vorrebbe a terra, sottomessa. No, basta, per carità. Neanche un bacio a Valerio. Neppure una carezza. Andare via, adesso, subito. Non sono più la madre di questo capolavoro, anche se è pure per lui che sono quello che sono. Un'assassina. (De Franchi, 2008: 246)

In fact, it is the interpenetration of her role as mother and terrorist that finally leads to Lucia's arrest. Rather than insisting on a separation of two opposed roles, Lucia states that it is because of her son that she is what she is. It is because of her child that she longs to change the world. Though her choices are undeniably questionable, Lucia's declaration does indicate agency and demonstrates that the motivations for her actions are *both* maternal and

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<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that this particularly dramatic, almost filmic, scene is entirely fictional, as Cinzia Banelli did *not* commit a murder in the Florentine city center or anywhere else.

<sup>22</sup> In the novel, Lucia's husband wakes up and finds her packing a bag about to leave both him and their little boy. This episode is reminiscent of a scene in Marco Tullio Giordana's film, *La meglio gioventù* (2003), where Giulia, a member of a left-wing militant group, leaves her partner Nicola and little girl in the middle of the night. Nicola surprises her when she is zipping up her suitcase and is about to leave. “Hai pensato a tua figlia?” he asks her. She just replies “Fammi passare” and rushes out of the door. There are other scenes in the film where it is evident Giulia struggles with combining motherhood and militancy. Nicola returns home from work to find Giulia in the midst of a meeting with her militant comrades. When Nicola makes it clear that he is opposed to her political activity, a comrade looks worryingly at Giulia's partner and daughter as they leave the house and says “Sentì, Giulia...”. Giulia replies “Lo so, è un problema che devo risolvere” indicating her willingness to choose militancy over her family. On another occasion she confesses to her friend; “Non sono brava a fare la mamma. Non sono capace”.

political. In fact, Glynn notes that many of the women who joined the Red Brigades during the '70s and early '80s decided to become involved in political militancy *because of* motherhood and cites Adriana Faranda who famously stated that she took up arms because of her child (2013:192).

The novel ends in a courtroom where the New Red Brigades are being tried for their crimes. Serena finally sees her double Lucia in person, surrounded by her companions. Though Serena hopes to make eye contact with her, Lucia seems to stare through her and see nothing. While huddled together in their cages, one of the New Red Brigade members comes to the microphone to ask if he can address the court. Using that strange bureaucratic form of Italian that Sciascia once said was “semplicemente, lapalissianamente, il linguaggio delle Brigate Rosse”, the young man begins to address the crowd.<sup>23</sup> Though Serena and all the members of the courtroom had previously been so curious about the identity of the ghostly terrorists, now that the specters have become visible that curiosity disappears: “Nessuno, in realtà, vi bada più di tanto. È come se fossimo immunizzati. La banalità della rivoluzione è tutta lì, dentro quelle gabbie da scimmie, insieme alla loro pretesa di essere ascoltati e qualche volta capiti” (De Franchi, 2008: 265).<sup>24</sup> The courtroom's lack of interest in what the

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<sup>23</sup> Antonello and O'Leary in *Imagining Terrorism: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy 1969-2009* (2009) explain that Sciascia's statement is not a mere tautology. When Sciascia suggested that the Italian language favored by the Red Brigade members in their documents and in their speech was simply “il linguaggio delle brigate rosse,” he meant that their language no longer reached an audience. It had become a language that only spoke to Red Brigade members and did not communicate in any way to the Italian collectivity. According to Antonello and O'Leary, it had become “a language which at that point was only speaking to itself” (2009: 2).

<sup>24</sup> This scene from the novel is has much in common with an article entitled “La tragica parodia” written by Francesco Merlo in *La Repubblica* (26/10/03). In this article, Merlo writes of the Italian public's refusal to engage with the New Red Brigade members who, he feels, try to portray their violent actions as honorable by borrowing the language of the original Red Brigades: “Sono scimmie di scimmie che cercano di nobilitare la banalità del male con le formulette rubate ai Moretti, ai Gallinari, ai Curcio, che le avevano essi stessi rubate al mondo eroico dei partigiani [...].Ebbene, in queste nuove Brigate Rosse non c'è più nulla di quella tragedia storica [...]. Rimangono tuttavia quelle formulette ‘mi dichiaro prigioniero politico’ che sono le erbacce di un fiume carsico, la polvere di un vecchio monumento, le ultime tossine, la parodia appunto nella quale si rifugiano i nuovi terroristi.”

New Red Brigade members have to say demonstrates that Italy is not yet ready to face the ghosts of its violent past. In fact, Derrida said that specters needed to be engaged if they are to be dispelled. For the courtroom to be immune to what the New Red Brigade members have to say, demonstrates a weariness with the militant group's logic and language as well as a refusal to return to the memories of an Italy marked by violent political conflict.<sup>25</sup>

The physical survival of the New Red Brigade members, their imprisonment and their eventual re-insertion into Italian society is perceived as problematic for the Italian public, as they represent a traumatic past that the Italian collectivity has not yet overcome (Colleoni, 2012: 426).<sup>26</sup> By depicting a scene where the members of the courtroom are unwilling to engage with the perpetrators of violence, De Franchi paints a society not yet fully ready to process the grief of the political violence of the 1970s and clearly reveals a culture still haunted by its violent past. However, through the characters of Serena and Lucia, De Franchi performs the difficult task of seeking justice for the victims while also humanizing the figure of the female terrorist. Through the use of space in the novel, De Franchi depicts the consequences of being labelled Other by society and demonstrates the effects of perpetrator

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<sup>25</sup> De Franchi pays particular emphasis to the bureaucratic language of the New Red Brigades, a language which, he infers, was utilized as a way to mask the horrific, violent nature of the militant group's activities. After Massimo D'Antona's death, a 28-page document was released claiming responsibility for the death, and also announcing that the Red Brigades were back. This militant group chose to give itself the rather loquacious title, *Brigate Rosse per la costruzione del partito comunista combattente*. With a tendency for wordiness, the New Red Brigades followed on the tradition of releasing lengthy communiqués, written in perplexing political jargon now known as “brigatese”. Amedeo Benedetti, in *Il linguaggio delle nuove Brigate Rosse*, examines the language used in the two communiqués released following the deaths of D'Antona and Biagi. He also compares the documents to the communiqués written by the original Brigate Rosse. He notes that the original BR documents contained shorter sentences, more facts and were, comparatively, more succinct. In Benedetti's analysis, the documents released by the New Red Brigades are excessively wordy, repetitive and difficult to understand. These documents were, therefore, wholly ineffective in attempting to promote the New Red Brigades' ideology.

<sup>26</sup> Colleoni examines a number of Italian novels for traces of a ghostly presence, left in the wake of the political violence of 1970s Italy. Drawing on Derridean theory, Colleoni notes that a nation can suffer from collective trauma if the grieving process has not been completed. This produces a kind of “haunting” in the collective memory which cannot be released until the specters are acknowledged. The novels Colleoni analyzes are *Tuo figlio* (2004) by Gian Mario Villalta, *Il segreto* (2003) by Geraldina Colotti, *La guerra di Nora* (2003) by Antonella Tavassi La Greca and *il sogno cattivo* (2006) by Francesca D'Aloia.

trauma on the individual's perception of place. Through the character of Lucia, De Franchi demonstrates that trauma can and does cause a reformulation of the perception of self, as well as a reformulation of the space that the individual inhabits. In conclusion, the simple story of two women on opposite sides of the woman/terrorist binary whose identities overlap enables the reader to deconstruct rigid pre-conceived notions regarding the identity of the female terrorist. By positioning the reader as a witness to trauma in a safe yet effective way, I propose that De Franchi invites his readership to confront their own unresolved grief with regard to the political violence and conflict of the 1970s and 1980s.

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