

DIALOGUE: CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT A 9 YEARS OLD BOY'S DRAWING AND HIS COMMENTS 50 YEARS LATER

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FOREWORDS

Editor's Introduction

This small book "*L'immagine e l'immaginario*" published in 1995 (Seat Publisher), compiles the drawings and talks about the emotions and the memories lived by a child Marcello, in Rome, during the war years. The intense family life and his parents' political and civil commitment are the elements that caused the strong emotion that inspired the drawings of the child he was then. The book, free from any form of commercial distribution by the author's decision, is again presented in its original appearance, this time with reflections and photographs that increase the historical context. Today, in this celebration moment because of the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Italy's unification, from Turin, its first capital, with flags festively waving, it's more necessary than ever to gather the values of the *Risorgimento* and the *Resistenza*, emphasizing, again, the people's ideals and struggle for the liberation and the unity of their country. It's a duty for all of us to recover our civic sense and the principles of solidarity and unity, foundation of human coexistence that serves to underline the value of a shared national consciousness.

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Author's Preface

It's 1995. After fifty years of the "*Liberazione*", after so many years, I take up again my drawings: I look them back deeply moved reviving, as in a flashback, the events that emotionally marked my war boy's life. Sensations, that were only mine, revive: drawings saved, lost, found again. I've looked at them, trying to identify myself with the eyes of my childhood, and I have succeeded. Documents of those events that left deep traces in our country's history, today come again to the fore thanks to historians, scholars and journalists who, through direct testimonies, images, voices, allow us to go back to that road of suffering and struggle. Whereas, in my drawings the imagination is mixed with reality. Some were made simultaneously with facts, others were inspired by real events, born of news heard on the radio or in the family.

It's, precisely, in this environment, where the memory of my parents appears, capital figures of my childhood and of my development, that lived with passion and determination those days of strong civil and political commitment. Those are the emotions that I show in the drawings of my childhood. The child is grown up, but it's essential in my today's life to keep that boy alive. I realize that emotions and memories take me by the hand and accompany me in an interior journey from which I find it's difficult to part. My earliest memories have to do with my maternal grandparents: Grandpa told me that still being a college student in Naples, he had acclaimed with patriotic enthusiasm Garibaldi when he was visiting the city of Naples. My grandmother was very religious: how many prayers and masses I heard in the Parish Church of Santa Teresa in Corso d'Italia, and how lovely memories I keep of that slow night procession, walking beside her in the neighborhood streets taking in my hand a small candle lit.

An event remained in my memory: the visit of Mussolini and Hitler to the Borghese Museum. People were expecting to see them. I was also there with my grandmother. Here they are, they go out: they have the uniform of military parade on and get rapidly into a convertible car escorted by a great display of the fascist army that pays them military honors. We are at the end of May 1938 and this meeting will be the fundamental stone of the *Pact of Steel* between

Italy and Germany. Although I was only four years old, this episode is etched on my memory.

For Hitler's visit to Rome, illustrious guest, all was presented in a magnificent and spectacular way, great parades, demonstrations, scenarios ...

Some corners of the old city, considered not enough presentable, had been hidden with large panels of painted cardboard. It circulated in this regard a sonnet in Roman dialect attributed to the great Trilussa:

*Travertine Rome / remade with cardboard
Greets the wall painter / his next boss⁶*

The poet with an affable and ironic tone had already understood how things would keep going.

Foreword of the Commentators Translators
(Marcello Cossu Giri and Delia Torres)

*The child is grown up, but it's essential
in my today's life to keep that boy alive
Marcello Cossu*

A picture book whose purchase price had been "half of the kingdom", is mentioned in an Andersen's tale. Everything in it was alive. "Birds sang, people left the book and spoke". But when the princess turned on the page "they came back jumping in, not to provoke disorder," This is what Walter Benjamin⁷ teaches us and that's the magic recreated in this book by Marcello Cossu L'Abbate. The drawing becomes the language with which the thought is formulated.

A biography is written, it speaks about things that no longer exist. Can there be an autobiography that relates the adventures of a self whose unity is non-existent and to ascribe truth to its saga?

⁶ *Roma di travertino/rifata de cartone
saluta l'imbianchino/suo prossimo padrone*

Hitler was called "l'imbianchino" (wall painter) because during his youth he had wanted to be an artistic painter but he was a very bad one. In Italian *painter is an artistic one and imbianchino is a wall painter.*

⁷ Benjamin. W. (1989) *Panorama del Libro Infantile. Escritos.* Nueva Visión, Buenos Aires 1926.

This book gives us the improbable chance of finding an own subjective truth from the space created between the *disegni* on one side and, on the other, the author's reflections about them written fifty years and fifty-nine years later and published in successive editions. Space suitable for our reflection as psychoanalysts, since in his drawings, as in his comments, we observe the same emotions of those moments so hard to Rome, Marcello and his family.

Both editions, the second enlarged, allow to observe the complexity of an initial drawing, without perspective, when he was 7 years old, that expresses different loss situations with which the child identifies himself: all Italian possessions in Africa and its unconscious meanings, that M. adult mentions, the mourning for thousands of Italians killed at war, all subjects that pervade his family atmosphere and that we can see interwoven with his pulsional life.

We see a child, that as Gulliver, visits Africa where he attends to political meetings, puts order in his country directing the traffic, gets plenty of food for his house, the Pope's presence fascinates him, he changes the direction of the street to wall the family home and looks at us proudly from the third floor because the Wehrmacht has fallen into his sidewalk, he makes live a fascist leader, that receives the latest informations from a *camicia nera*, in his home office.

The almost total absence of color creates an atmosphere of sadness and pain. No smiles, no games, no parties, the *disegni* have concentrated, tense, worried characters, they live the invasion of their city by the enemy, they fight, they flee, they suffer, they hide themselves, they try to survive, they die.

Here the first exchange between Delia Torres and Marcello Cossu L'Abbate author of *L'Immagine e L'Immaginario*.

Dear Dr Marcello Cossu L'Abbate

I had the opportunity of getting to know your beautiful book through your namesake nephew Marcello Cossu Giri.

Although in our field drawings made by children during the Second World War, are known, as far as I believe, none of these drawings are accompanied by comments, emotions and thoughts of the authors 50 years later.

That's why your book is of a great interest to all those, that like us, are interested in the feelings and psychic pain that every war causes and the ways that we, human, have to process so much suffering. From our psychoanalytic perspective this work is done through dreams, drawings and stories.

L'Immagine e L'Immaginario, also has the added value of providing a four years sequence; those are many years when dealing with the first decade of life!

In your work a growing child is seen, he moves himself and makes us feel sad within a family that lives, that gets passionate and transmits to their children commitment, responsibility and solidarity when facing one's own pain and that of their fellow men. From this perspective is impressive the seriousness and the empathy of each character represented. There is no a smile in his work, perhaps Scontro's horse in Via Po has a mischievous and joyful expression, but ... It can't smile because it has no mouth! Although even though, some applauses are outlined all around and for a good reason!

In Scontro, via Salaria is also marked. Maybe, then, you already dreamed, as well as your parents, when looking the Via Salaria's "Guglielmo Marconi" of your adolescence. Your *ginnasio* that is the "backdrop" of *Manifestazione Studentesca per Trieste Italiana*.

There are also the drawings that could not be drawn but that you still, clearly, continues seeing and tells us about them on page 40.

A "non picture" that you associated with *PATRIOTTI .TALIANI IRROMPO. NO IN UN GARACC*.

You close your book commenting with humor your "*olocausto de su penna (penare?) stilografica*" for Italian Trieste.

I think that your suffering is related to the loss of childhood, the onset of puberty. One of his emblems was the fountain pen which in those days was a valuable and desired symbol of adulthood.

Quid Pro Quo?

I believe it's not that. With many other analysts I think that childhood is not merely an evolutionary stage but a state of mind, timeless, ineffable in perpetual renovation and creative potential. By this I mean that your "spoiled" pen is not

lost but still alive, permanently changing in this your book so sensitive, so imaginative and so courageous.

Borges said about someone "he took the precaution of being eternal before dying " idea perfectly suitable to childhood and to your book.

Thank you very much for sharing your experience with us.

Delia Torres Aryan

Buenos Aires

February 2012

Dear madame

My namesake nephew has told me of your interest about my *disegni* made during the war.

I am at your disposition to answer your questions via email.

I send you the latest edition of the book that has just come out and that contains, besides historical insights, further emotions and memories of my adolescence that resurfaced along the years.

You can use it in the way you consider most appropriate, without any restriction, freely.

I agree with any type of diffusion you propose. I attach some journalistic notes and reviews on the work that, as cultural volunteer even today, I carry out in schools.

I keep waiting for news and I wish you a pleasant job.

With all my respects M C L '

March 2012

Dialogue:

(We look at the author's drawing – Fascisti e comunisti)

Delia Faigón: What caught my attention is the subject of the hands that keeps repeating. The first thing that appears in the description is the communist's hand, the one with the red cap, whose right hand is actually a left one; afterwards we also see behind the communist the child painter whose left hand is also a right one and I would add that death's left hand is also a right one, because it's placed on top of the handle of the scythe.

Delia Torres: I asked if he was left-handed but no, he is right-handed.

Delia Faigón: Actually I took it as a situation of confusion or indiscrimination, as of someone who feels he's tied up, if someone is attached he's like that ... (he crosses his wrists) and if one is tied up it means that he's tied up violently, that is to say, with the aspect of something that hasn't to go out, something that has to be kept hidden.

Delia Torres: Exactly.

Raul Levin: we can also consider the possibility that the drawing was made as if he were looking the scene in a mirror, which is a form of keeping a certain distance in a very distressing situation, where he divides himself and puts some distance as if he were seeing an image that is far away from him.

I think that the subject of his anguish, which is quite concealed by the perfection of the drawing and the attention to every little detail, is in some way seen as, for example, the threatening right hand of the communist coming out in a very strange way because it's birth is not consistent with what is the shoulder girdle and the upper arm joint. That arm that at the same time is threatening, also it's inserted in such a way that seems to be half immobilized.

Delia Faigón: I thought it as having already been cut by the scythe ... like the scythe is up there, it seems that the arm was already detached.

Raul Levin: Maybe.

Delia Torres: What you say about being prisoner of an imposition situation, we had thought it from the way in which someone violently crossed out what he had written as a title and that doesn't allow to see what's behind.

Delia Faigón: "Communists."

Delia Torres: Sure, the word "communist". We asked what it was that he had put and the word was "socialist." Then someone -he doesn't know who he is or when- modifies the drawing, in such a violent way as to wash his mouth with soap, as it was used to do before.

The "painter" of the drawing has the same face that the author has nowadays. 8 years old Marcellino, wanting to represent himself as a grown-up man, draws the face he has now: his face drawn with adult traits turned out to be as that of someone very similar to the author now .

(We look at the author's picture as a child and now)

We are talking about being prisoner. Death's ribs also show a closed chest.

Raúl Levin: I think that's a conventional drawing of death, very well drawn. It really looks like a conceptual drawing, it isn't only based on the expression, but on what it testifies, nevertheless, some things are overlooked, for example it seems to me that in the skeleton's hands some finger is missing, as if there were an exposed wound somewhere, in the same way that also the other arm is paralyzed because it's in a wrong position. This means that from the anatomical point of view there are small changes that make us think that the scene is as if it were restrained, that is another way of taking distance from the distressing effect that the drawing can produce. What strikes me is that it's full of symbolic elements scattered ...

Delia Faigón: It's like a game. It comes to what you said, right? To take distance. All this is a game: there are cards...

Raul Levin: Yes, but there are also the sickle and the hammer... I don't know what it means, I don't want to interpret more than I should..

Delia Faigón: And what is next to the sickle and the hammer, on the top?

Delia Torres: It is the symbol of fascism, the "*fascio*".

Raul Levin: It's like a drawing where he tries..., mostly as a defense against the anguish -well, I have an hypothesis about his anguish- but he tries to leave a testimony, as here, among us, Cándido López left testimony of battles, that were like drawn maps of how soldiers were moving... the characters always displaced on geographic or geodetic form keeping a certain distance between them, with a certain inexpressiveness; always getting distant from affections.

My hypothesis is that for him the subject of the people they protect, which surely meant a death threat -like so many other death threats that a family had at the time- , also means fear for himself, fear of what could happen to him.

Delia Torres: Of course, he tries to allay his anguish.

Delia Faigón: Yes, he also says that Mortara is the name of the city of origin.

Raul Levin: There is a testimonial level: Mrs. Mortara is the anguish, the family benevolent attitude, protection, etc., etc. testified here. The second level is the most selfish, the childish one or the one of self preservation ...

Delia Faigón: "Because of them we are going to be caught."

Raul Levin: Exactly, and not just "we", "I". The narcissistic selfishness, one thinks about oneself first, and more in the case of a child.

Delia Torres:

There is also a family that is under a lot of pressure: keeping the secret, being "very careful with what is said outside," what we have at home and that no one must find out; the boy also faces a significant pressure. Moreover, at the time food was rationed, then what was to be done when more food was needed and no one had to notice it?

This is the first subject of the first drawing of the series, which is *Lining up to get food*, what we see is the absence, no person is there, a food basket is coming closer to get some food, the basket is there, but not the person, no one is present, it's a basket hanging in the air, on the other hand there is a man who's throwing his basket from the balcony to the sidewalk of his house in order to get some food. That drawing can be seen in association with this one because both have the same symbols: cereals, the ace of clubs.

(We look at Lining up to get food)

Delia Faigón: *Lining up to get food* also resembles the drawing of the Last Supper by the people's disposition.

Raul Levin: This drawing (*Lining up to get food*) also has a very interesting thing, that kind of catafalque under the table. That is to say that when anguish is repressed, somewhere, it reappears; it appears, even in a very conceptual drawing.

Delia Torres: With regard to the catafalque under the table the author told us: "Potatoes are being distributed and this, what you call the catafalque, it's already empty". We asked him for the basket that hung from the void, what he could think about it and he answered by talking about this shape, which I agree with you, it's coffin-shaped, it associates the hidden person with the shape of the "coffin".

That that looks like a coffin is what he answered as the association to the not drawn person who would be hidden, Mrs. Berta Mortara. Another repeated element in the drawings is that there are people watching without being seen, hidden, there is always someone who is looking hidden.

At that time, in Rome, there were many hidden people, Jews and non-Jews, for example, people who had not gone to the battle front, people who had escaped from the battle front ... in *Lining up to get food* is drawn the home maid, Maria Antonia that comes to get food for the family.

Delia Torres' comment after the meeting

Raul and Delia F. had not seen all the drawings, I had already seen almost all. At this time, as in the analytic session where situations, memories of other sessions come to the analyst's mind, "appears" the association with another drawing and we will see it. As in a supervision the transference field reopens. Raul and Delia F. bring new perspectives, as that of a hidden child's coffin, the fact of having the hands tied, etc

Delia Faigón: Was he 10 years old at the time?

Delia Torres: It's March '42, in that drawing he was 8 years 9 months old, he was born in June '43.

Delia Faigón: It's a thorough drawing for that age, isn't it?

Raul Levin: I think it's like a mural painting showing an entire heroic deed with a certain distancing and where –obviously- the return of the repressed by somewhere appears, it's there.

I compare him with Cándido López who demonstrated what the battles of the war against Paraguay were; he doesn't draw in perspective because it's a way that in the drawing, just as it is, there wouldn't be nothing ahead or behind but all deployed in a plane. It's more like an example of the situation where one is. **Delia Torres:** he includes himself when he draws, but in *Communists and fascists* the boy wearing a painter dress is him, he puts his name and he looks just like him. Look at the aggression that is there; it's a painter but he has a bloody dagger in his hand.

(We look at *Lining up to get food*)

We have the present associations with our questions about *Lining up to get food*; there is a girl with whom he is identified; it's his representation. We asked him who this baby was and he said that when food was distributed there was a terrific fuss because it never was enough for everyone, and that this girl cut in line next to the police to be protected. Now that I'm looking at it again, I realize she has pants under her skirt.

Somewhere in the background, looking out of the window ... we find him in all the drawings, not as a central character.

Raul Levin: In *Fascists Communists*, the same time is paralyzed. This picture is very similar to one used by doctors, it was a drawing that was in many offices; on one side, the patient and on the other the doctor with a skull that he was trying to move away, as if he were fighting against death.

There is a situation of persecution that is cooled with the perfection of drawing and with its conceptualizing.

For example, here there is another faulty action: it's that in the hearts card instead of being one heart opposed to the other, they are as chasing each other.

Delia Torres: scopone is the *escoba** game; it isn't played with French cards, it's a slip, it's a faulty action.

Delia Faigón: The Communist is fingerless or may be the fascists clenched fist.

* *Escoba* is a variant of the Italian fishing card game *Scopa*, which means "broom". The game is usually played with a deck of traditional Spanish playing cards, called *naipes*.(N de las T)

Raul Levin: Psychoanalytically, we could think about castration.

Delia Torres: Now, these droplets of the communist here? Is he peeing here? ... because it's not the blood of the dagger's point but there are a few drops in the crotch, and always the difference of the pants, in one pair of pants one leg is different than the other, I think it's an element of the castration anguish, and also the skeleton that has different knees.

Raul Levin: Besides, to the skeleton is missing a finger.

Delia Faigón: It means that castration works from several sides.

Delia Torres: And with good reason, isn't it? His representation behind the main scene is, also as the return of the repressed from behind.

Raul Levin: apparently he is the one that brings material with that bucket ...

Delia Faigón: Not only with the bucket but with the cap that is made out of journal and it's written.

Raul Levin: I also wanted to emphasize that the right arm is disappearing as if it were disappearing in the fly. Again, this sort of vagueness or of ambiguity, as the drawings of Leonardo regarding sexuality where there is a huge repression.

Delia Torres: Yes, now, there is a card here, in front of the genitals, supported by the right hand?

Delia Faigón: I thought that combined with the whole situation of anguish by the external, something pre pubertal due to age must be mixed.

Delia Torres: He has 8; he would be in full latency.

Delia Faigón: Yes, a little early for pre pubertal, but because of the whole thing of fear of castration and all that that's working.

Raul Levin: Colored, only the cap is important; I usually relate it to the attempt to intellectualize.

Delia Torres: the red of the communist, in fact, they were told "red".

Delia Faigón: But here also death is with red, the stick of the hoe is red.

Delia Torres: And the hammer has the handle red. The hammer, the stick of the hoe, a card that is French –it doesn't match- and the communist cap that is well marked

Raul Levin: I think despite the age that the pre pubertal movement is anticipated psychologically long before, and especially when there is a threat. None of us believe in latency, so I think that when there is a threat it's felt as a threat of castration.

And it is remarkable because it's true, the handle of the hammer, the handle of the sickle ... the hat has a pretty big resemblance to testicles and a penis put on the head ... as well as a return of the repressed.

I mean, somewhere the libidinal part that is at stake in all this escapes, despite the attempt -which I think it's always an adequate defense against the traumatic- that is the evidence, to bear witness; is what many have made in concentration camps carrying out diaries or even drawings such as drawings of the boys of Terezín, which is an attempt to bear witness –we don't know why or for whom- but it calms the anguish.

I would like this person could know Cándido López pictures, who during the war got his right arm amputated and, when because of his amputation he got his discharge, he devoted himself to draw about the war against Paraguay with his left hand. His paintings are as deployments like these, which look like deploying on the surface not by the perspective method but as if it were a distribution on a map. And I think this child became stronger or relied on the evidence as a way to fight against the fear and the tremendous anguish he felt.

Delia Faigón: Now the evidence has, among other things, an element of salvation, it's something of his own that in the future will survive; and that also will counteract the fear of death.

Delia Torres: The evidence has to do with construct oneself in an identificatory way after trauma, those that leaving the concentration camps, at a given moment, feel the need to put the experience into words, telling or writing. Hitler was called "the painter", there is an allusion to Hitler here.

Delia Faigón: Now, why Hitler if who was there was Mussolini? Why introduce Hitler there?

Delia Torres: In that time Italy was as a German province, it was part of the empire and Hitler was in command: he is the one that demanded the expulsion of the Jews, Mrs Mortara.

Delia Faigón: It doesn't seem very convincing to me because –for me- that's really far... Hitler is so far away.

Raul Levin: I think that there is something methodological: we take a drawing in a wider context that we don't know, or we take the picture itself as a starting point.

I only could see Hitler in this moustache of the communist, perhaps as saying, "the danger is on one side and the danger is on the other."

Delia Torres: Hitler had already been in Rome. In every ugly thing in the city curtains were painted so that Hitler wouldn't see it; he was called "the painter" since then; he had worked as a painter, and Marcellino remembers how impressed he was when, hand-in hand with his grandmother, he saw Hitler with Mussolini; in 43, 44 Hitler was omnipresent, he was a nightmare, also for the fascists.

Delia Faigón: I think the drawing tells us many things, but we have to put it in context.

Raul Levin: But we don't have a context, we didn't read the book.

Delia Torres: We asked him about the bouquet that is under the hammer and the sickle...

Delia Faigón: On the floor, as trampled by the communists. In the flowers I see another thing of puberty and a sexual uncertainty.

Raul Levin: Anyway they are as very symbolic icons. The written evidence facing trauma is, to put it in our terms, a way of elaborating trauma and often there are aspects that are not fully elaborable at the time but that stay represented by icons that sometimes are quite difficult to decipher or that takes a long time to decipher. This happened a lot in classical painting: certain things we didn't know what they were after thinking over and over -and, sometimes decades or centuries after painted- their meaning is discovered. But here he leaves many cryptic messages to the beyond, so to speak.

Delia Torres: We asked him in relation to the bouquet and he said: "The bouquet is an ear of wheat under the sickle, expression of the agricultural world."

Potatoes that are distributed in *Lining up* are also the agricultural world..

Delia Faigón: The basket of potatoes.

Delia Torres: There we can see Mariantonia, the home maid, overflowing breasts- penises, the image that the boy had.

So, now here there is a crushed Ceres, the cereals, "the agricultural world," crushed by the struggle.

Raul Levin: I don't know if they are breasts or penises, if it's not a complete phallic woman, that prevents, that protects the whole with all that phallicism.

Delia Torres: Sure, that idealized image of overflowing Mariantonia is crushed now by the communists, by the fascists, because of the fight at the time food had finished... There are subjects that keep on relating and appearing modified. (We read the addition to the second edition of Davide Tagliacozzo History, 9 years)

"I met Davide Tagliacozzo after the war, we were the same age. He told me how he escaped the police dragnets. One day, in the first light of dawn there was an intense activity on the street; Jewish families were taken away from their homes, pushing them into trucks. His father immediately understood the situation, the great danger, and he hid his wife and two children on a balcony of the house where they stayed ducked down, terrified, in silence. He closed the balcony doors, made the unmade beds and he reported to the gendarmes. They had a list of the family members. "Where are the others?" "They went to the country to a relatives' house." His father never came back. "(Addendum to the Second Edition).

Raul Levin: Sure, there is continuity between his life and obviously the evidence of the events that are happening, that are passing in his life. (We look at "*Lining up*" again)

Delia Torres: The ace of clubs –he said- is "a trump card and represents the club used by the fascists".

Raul Levin: Here I would say that on one side there is the threat, the club and on the other side, the promise the food, and people looking at the side of the promise.

Delia Torres: On the side of the promise, as you say, there is the idealization of the woman who feeds everybody, she would be breast, penis -all- super abundant, complete.

Raul Levin: And people is looking toward that side but feeling the threat of the club.

Delia Faigón: Besides, it's a club with nails, spiked.

Dr. Raul Levin: Yes, there are many constants. Anyway, what impresses me most it's this down here... it reminds me of the Millet's picture *The Angelus*. It was discovered that under the ground there was the body of the dead son, which he had covered with paint, in the most hidden place, there where you wouldn't look at, there is the body of the dead child.

Delia Torres: At that moment 220,000 Italians had went to North Africa; 80,000 came back and the news arrived.

I read what he said: "The French card suits represent a cards confusion of mine to exemplify the representation, highlighting the club, symbol of violence. Around the hammer, the worker symbol, there are some nails. Mortara is the name of a town of Piemonte, many Jewish surnames derive from the names of towns that show the family origin, Piacenza, Volterra, Bogliera, Terna".

Delia Faigón: In Italian Mortara is death; it's surprising that the town is called Mortara.

Delia Torres: This zone is in the Piemonte. In relation to the painter, he says: "The represented character is a painter. To avoid his hair to get dirty he makes a peculiar cap with a piece of newspaper. The children enjoyed making themselves the same hat and using it also as a boat or to playing war. Early Origami. The concrete bucket becomes a working tool. "

Delia Faigón: But it's with paint, if he is a painter...Hitler was a painter also, there is identification with the aggressor to be saved. The fact of being behind suggests that someone is suffering a frontal attack, and moreover with a knife instead of a brush.

Delia Torres: Did you see that the knife is completely backwards? There where it says Marcello Cossu, completely backwards, in mirror as Raúl says

Raul Levin: Another thing that I find interesting is that it seems as if death had the trump card, versus love -represented by hearts- that is on the floor and on the other side.

Delia Torres: it's also significant that his name is three times there.

Raul Levin: It's a way to reassure what we are talking about, his belonging and his permanence.

Delia Faigón: His future.

Delia Faigón: The friend fits in the whole pubertal thing. I continue with the pubertal thing and the libidinous thing. The hideout also belongs to that period; it's a hideout to spy not only to hide

Raul Levin: Besides, I think it's a cultured family and in many of these paintings there are certain lines that link to classical painting; in classical painting there is often a God who is not seen, who is offering something to the ones that are within the painting... There is some classical structure, lightings for example.

Delia Torres: There can be no doubt that it's a boy with a very careful education, trained to capture minute details.

Delia Faigón: But this child also has a special aptitude for drawing.

Delia Torres: Sure, in the foreword he is being asked: "Why you didn't write?" he says, "Because everybody was telling me that I drew well, it was hard for me to write while drawing was easier..."

Raul Levin: That's another discussion: how to bear witness is better?

Delia Torres: In what sense?

Raul Levin: From each one and according to one's own life. For example we who write a lot, it happens to me that I have a testimony notebook with drawings -for example- of dreams...I don't write my dreams, I draw them... But I think it's interesting the classical structure of these drawings, with their icons, with their mysteries, with cryptic things, with religious things like that that comes from the top and one doesn't know what it is; which is also part of the elaboration to assume that there is a supreme being who is not within the picture to which we have, cognitively, access

(We look at "*A raid*")

Delia Torres: I was very much impressed by this one that's called "*A raid*". They are taking Italians, catching them at random, to the concentration camps. It also refers to Mrs. Mortara's drawing, who escaped a raid. I think these expresses his feelings, these two Italians already climbed into the truck; this one has an angry face, and this one, doesn't he look like the face of Picasso's *Guernica*, isn't it?, that mix of pain and astonishment, of jellyfish, of still image...

Raul Levin: I repeat that I find it very interesting from the point of view of the drawing itself; how he doesn't use perspective.

Delia Faigón: All is in one plane.

Delia Torres: But this one spying isn't he on another plane?

Raul Levin: Yes, but he is bigger than those that are further forward, and that's from the religious painting, the size is what gives the importance, for example in that Masaccio's painting that is in Florence, God is further back of all on the altar and he is much bigger than all those that are forward.

Delia Torres: I understand your contribution. What seems to me is that the ratio depends on terror, for example in many drawings there are Nazis trucks in the invaded Rome, and here the truck is huge compared to this man's size...

Delia Faigón: And also compared to the car that is forward.

Delia Torres: Sure, the place of the emotional situation, the terror is represented by a giant truck.

Raul Levin: We totally agree, what happens is, that in a religious picture, God is what's more important; in a picture elaborative like this the most important thing is terror, so terror is enlarged, the law of mathematics perspective isn't maintained and expresses with the size what's more emotionally impressive for him.

Delia Torres: in the different drawings the size of German cars -trucks or whatever it might be- is directly related to the terror of the moment. This one wasn't a time of terror, so the car is smaller...

*(We look at Patriotti .taliani irrompo no in un Garac)**

Notice here how the title begins, the small letter... he made a mistake, here it should say: "Patrioti italiani" he swallowed the "i", "irrompono" is to burst into, but he doesn't write it correctly, he separates the "no" then it means " I don't come in ", if I write "irrompono" it would be they come in; if I write "irrompo no" I would say I don't come... in a garage. And notice that the garage is written as the surname Cossu, with double "s", with the c and the s he made a condensation. That's to say that I think this has a sexual content that is the drive that, as the title's font size, begins tiny and overflows.

Raul Levin: Those that are the most important are bigger and again they are behind.

Delia Faigón: It's striking that there is one with eyeglasses – I didn't see them all-, but this one with eyeglasses has a greater size than all the others.

Delia Torres: Yes ... he looks like the father, the one that made him the joke of calling him "fascist hierarch".

Delia Faigón: But besides he is trampling on this soldier...

Delia Torres: Yes...

On the other hand the comments to a drawing, are infinite... Anyway I think each picture is interesting in itself, without seeing all the others, because it has his associations.

* In English: "Italian patriots burst into a garage" (N de las T)

Raul Levin: And the interesting thing is to compare his associations with what we said.

Delia Torres: There is coherence between what we are seeing and what he associates.

Delia Faigón: Except for the libidinal part.

Delia Torres: war has a *prägnanz* and a force that one forgets that this is an entirely imaginary level of his libidinal life, because if you were in session with this drawing you would be thinking of him, the primal scene where is the father, where is the mother, where he is located..., that's to say, another dimension. But that is also very impressive, I think it's also a teaching because if we would do that, we couldn't do it... because if we have Hitler and we have the Communists, and we have death that is Mrs. Mortara -for us, in one of the levels- that has a *prägnanz*, as probably in the psychic life facing the war or any sustained trauma situation, in which the libidinal must stay,...

Raul Levin: Waiting.

Delia Torres: I don't know if to say waiting ... how could we say?

Raul Levin: Because we can't say that it disappears, it's not eliminated.

Delia Torres: It doesn't go away ... we want to make the effort with Marcello when we translate and comment, because the comment is a drawing description. Then I say where the libidinal is? And you can't...maybe it says... a couple...

Raul Levin: So I say penis with testicles in the hat. I don't think you can remove it, it's very repressed.

Delia Torres: the *prägnanz* of trauma is huge; they are throwing a bomb, then what's libidinal remains...

Delia Faigón: Waiting

Raul Levin: Yes, but somewhere it may appear -for example in a drawing- and I think that another interesting theoretical subject for us is to go back to the first Freud's instinct theory, when he spoke of the instinct of self-preservation and the selfishness of the instinct of self-preservation; at that time a lot of things are put in "delete" because the first thing is to survive. And I think these drawings show a lot of it and a lot of capacity in this kid for that too.

Delia Torres: Totally... and no matter how hard one wants to make an effort and to say: let's "set the fascism aside" and let's take care of the libidinal, it's not possible.

Delia Faigón: No, and there is no reason.

Raul Levin: We agree that we didn't talk about primal scene.

Delia Torres: I think that when the bomb explodes as in the transference, sexuality... is elsewhere, not there...

Fascists and Communists October 1943

M C L 9 years old

A 50 years later comment

Another person came into the family: Mrs. Berta Mortara alias "Aunt Rosinella". It's an old friend, who, providentially, escaped from arrest and deportation of Jews in October 16, 1943. She took refuge in our house and she lived with us until the liberation of Rome in April 1945, under a false identity, as my mother's aunt.

She returned the gesture keeping company and helping my grandmother Laura, who was immobilized on a couch because of a paralysis.

Addition to the second edition 2011

Mrs. Berta had an old maid, Gigia; they had lived together during many years and she has stayed looking after the Mortara's family home. One day Gigia appeared to greet her "mistress" thoughtlessly putting at risk the safety of all of us. She was severely reproached. There are rewards for who denounces hidden Jews and someone could have followed her. She says all the precautions she has taken: she went to a church through the front door and surreptitiously slipped away through a side door. Berta orders her not to come anymore to our house and the poor Gigia left crying. After the application of racial laws, in November 1938, despite being fully integrated into the civilian community, Italian Jewish citizens are discriminated and expelled from their professions, the public administration, the schools as teachers and students; they are marginalized and humiliated. This violence will become physical persecution after the occupation of Rome by the Germans. After the brutal Nazi dragnets of October 16, 1943, in the area round the synagogue where they

lived for centuries, more than a thousand Jews were sent to Auschwitz. Very few would survive.

Here is the drawing from the story of Mrs. Berta about confrontations between the *Fascist Blackshirts* and the opponents at the beginning of 1920 and the tune of the time:

"Fascists⁸ and communists played scopone⁹ and the fascists won with the ace of clubs"¹⁰

Our comment (Marcello Cossu Giri and Delia Torres)

The drawings, in general, don't represent couples, children playing or familiar scenes. It's as if the occupation of the city by the enemy, the concern about the rationed food that could be not enough, fratricidal tensions, war, death, would filled everything.

In the drawings, the predominant emotions are concern, threat, trauma, pain, fear, anger, imposition.

The enemy is represented directly or symbolically many times; an example are ladders used by artists and painters: "the painter" is Hitler.

The suspicious characters are repeated; they may be partisans, collaborationists, bombers, traitors.

There are scenes described in the accompanying text that are not drawn. People mysteriously hidden and building structures that never existed were represented.

Observers, from outside the main scene, often appear; they watch the reader as sending a silent message in code.

⁸ Fascism was a movement that emerged in the Kingdom of Italy after World War I, giving rise to the so-called fascist Italy. It was born in part as reaction to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and to the strong workers union fights. The name derives from the Italian word *fascio* (Latin: *fascis*). The Voluntary Militia for National Security was a paramilitary body of the Fascist Italy organized by Mussolini as a violent instrument of his movement; then it became a military organization. Its members were known as *Blackshirts* or *squadristi* because of the color of their uniform. The activity of this group lasts from the inter-war period to the end of World War II in the period known as *Fascist Italy*. Its founders were nationalist intellectuals, former army officers, young landowners and juvenile delinquents. They used violence, intimidation and murder against their political opponents. They opposed workers and peasants unions. Among its members there were opportunists and social agitators.

⁹ *Scopone*: This favorite Mussolini's board game is a variety of the Spanish game "escoba de 15". *Scopa* = broom. The ace of clubs is a trump card that in this drawing is in the hands of death.

¹⁰ *Fascisti e Comunisti giocavano a scopone e vinsero i Fascisti con l'asso di bastone.*

The signifier Mortara, the Jewish lady surname is represented in the graphic as death. Death carries the trump card. We think that it expresses the anguish and the fear that M. felt because it was clear to him the risk the family ran with Mrs. Berta at home, anguish that tries to be elaborated and that is mitigated through drawing.

In the title of this drawing, the word *Comunisti* heavily marked with an ink pen doesn't allow to read what is behind it. What fact comes to point out that someone, probably an adult, takes part in the drawing of a boy so imperiously: strong stroke, underlining, not allowing to read what it covers? A concept disappears imposing another. It's not just an imaginary, here we see the intervention of a powerful "adult" that is irritated with M and wants him to know it and probably he will hurt him. That's why it's not enough to say it; it's necessary to leave a mark, to bear witness. M. at the time was subject to an imposition.

What exactly means the anger, which was the fight? Probably different levels at stake, some instinctual, others that come to point out radical political differences that go around generating unease at the time of making the drawing, not only in M and his family but in many Roman families suffering the brutal pressure of war. Maybe that's why little Marcello puts his name on this drawing: Marcello Cossu 3 times. There are three central figures: death, a communist and a painter. Above them the fascist symbol, the *fascio* and the communist, the sickle and the hammer.

Comment by Marcello Cossu L'Abbate to our Review

- The original writing was Socialist. I don't know who made the correction at that time, maybe my brother.¹¹

In a first communication MCL' told us

- "The ace of clubs is the trump card and represents the club used by the fascists¹².

¹¹ The brother was 13 years old.

¹² This club appears in the drawing *Lining up to.....* hold by an angry man because he's afraid not to receive the rationed food that is being distributed.

The suits of the French cards represent a card confusion of mine to simplify the representation, highlighting the club, symbol of violence. "¹³

Later in an informal chat he said instead: "French cards belong to the proletarians, to the workers and the neapolitan, for example, the 5 of gold to death ...". We don't know why the French cards are associated to the proletarians.

We think that the difference between the first and second version is linked to the fact that the first time we sent the questions to be answered in writing and the second was an informal talk more favourable to the expression of the unconscious.

- The little bouquet is an ear of wheat below the sickle, expression of the agricultural world. Around the hammer, working symbol, there are some nails.
- Mortara is the name of a town in the Piemonte. Many Jewish surnames derived from names of cities that point out the origin of the family (see surnames like Piacenza, Volterra, Voghera, Terni etc.).
- The surname Mortara isn't therefore linked to the word death.
- Death shown in the drawing is a representation of fascism as a cause of destruction and death in the tragedy that Italy traversed.

Clearly the drawing was a way of metabolizing the fears, the deep fear of what represented the presence in the family of a Jewish guest¹⁴. The events described, really caused an aggravation of my unconscious vision of the world.

-The character represented here is a painter. To keep their hair clean, painters made themselves a peculiar hat with newspaper. The children enjoyed themselves making the same hat and also using it as a boat or in addition to playing war. Early Origami. The bucket of concrete is a working tool¹⁵.

- Design of the Italian Card Sardinia's Patron

-Cossu's family is Sardinian

- Marcello Cossu L'Abbate keeps telling us

¹³ The *Scopone* its played with Spanish cards, called neapolitan in Italy.

¹⁴ Guest refers to a wish. Here it means refugee related to a necessary stay

¹⁵ He was asked: why the little figure from behind has a bucket and such a peculiar hat? Who might he be?

I knew how to draw, everyone told me, and it amused me to do it

Besides, one thing is to write, that requires maturity and a flexible use of the language and another one to draw, that for a child is an immediate way of expressing himself. Rather than the word, the pencil stroke is a silent mark, partly reflecting my way of being, and sheds light on my *sardinians chromosomes*: "*L'immagine e L'immaginario*".

The first drawing dates back to March 22, 1942 and I made it in a notebook. I wasn't 8 years old yet and I had already begun to look carefully around me, I was leaving my early childhood, that family affection golden limbo, the maternal grandparents who lived in our house, my parents, my brother and the most faithful and dearest sardonian nurse Mariantonio that would live with us forever as a family member.

I had entered the age of reason: the first responsibilities, the tasks, and the first meeting as a *child of the wolf*¹⁶ in Grazioli Lante della Rovere's courtyard, in Tevere street, that was the state primary school, efficient, ordered, where the Duce's two younger sons had studied.

At home -as our parents were high school teachers in Rome and me and my brother Mario, four years older, their student children- school schedules marked the family life's rhythm. We lived in Po street, Salario neighborhood. Villa Borghese was very close, a favorable field for distractions, new friends and furious football matches in Parco dei Daini, (*the deer park*) with a home made rag ball. That's the way I lived and, a fundamental question, my father was an antifascist, his disagreement with the regime was complete: it wasn't only ideological, since he was liberal, but he felt almost a physical repulsion, he

¹⁶ "Children of the Wolf" refers to the myth of the wolf that would have fed Romulus and Remus. Mussolini with this symbol goes back to the idea of the Imperial Rome as eternal destiny. "Sons of the Wolf" was the name that was given to the 6-8 years old boys when they were compulsorily incorporated to a powerful boy scout type student organization where they were given fascist training. We included the Oath of the "Sons of the Wolf"

considered the fascism the epitome of vulgarity, arrogance and bad taste that hurt his sensitivity .

Full professor for the teaching of Latin and Greek at a prestigious Lyceum of Rome he developed with competence and dignity his didactic "mission", accompanied by his pupils' constant and comforting esteem. The school authorities, that knew about his hostility to the regime, denied him the recognition he deserved, excluding him from the exams final inspection that was granted as an honor, choosing, in his place, young colleagues of known fascist faith ...

He relates to me an episode of those years: the director had recommended him to receive the gold medal of merit because of his value as a teacher. One morning a ministry inspector appeared and witnessed the class seating in the back of the room. When it ended he congratulated him: "Professor it was a very beautiful class, but honestly I have to anticipate you that no recognition will be granted to you because you aren't affiliated to the party"

This dissatisfaction with the regime was reinforced after the alliance with Germany, which led to an invasive war based on hatred, anti-Semitism, racism, principles alien to the feelings of a people basically peaceful, tolerant and deeply catholic.

The most vivid memories of the war years, are the siren's sinister wailings even at night, announcing the danger of air raids: we ran to the basement of our building that had been fitted out as a shelter and there, with the passing of the hours, the cessation of the alarm seemed to take forever, listening to the conversations of increasingly concerned people that in a low voice blamed fascism for the war and the bombing of cities.

If I concentrate myself I hear again the muffled roar of the American planes, the *fortezze volanti* overflying Rome.

I remember some poor food, the taste of *castagnaccio*¹⁷ and that of the tomato jam.

The difficulties caused by the rationing, the blackout, the bombings, and the lack of news from sons and brothers in combat in distant fronts, came to show that beyond the implausible optimism of the war reports, things went wrong. People, even imperceptibly, began to disapprove a war they considered the fascist war ... Mussolini's war.

I felt protected by my family that tried to attenuate with their most loving attitude the difficulties and pains of such a difficult situation.

Then, the graphic sequence begins: my diary that was secret and that I kept at the bottom of the dresser drawer in orderly collection and with naive titles. It didn't have other model than my observations. There is some "neo-realism" in the lines that describe people, in the environment, in the details of reality faithfully referred.

The drawing I prefer? Certainly the Pope's portrait because of the sense of peace that he transmits in the midst of scenes of violence and war, but the one I consider my little masterpiece is the *Retata* that focus the scene on a multiplicity of episodes that reinforce its dramatism.

In this photo it can be seen how the children who were not wearing the fascist uniform are placed on the back and their clothes hidden with a cape.

¹⁷ The *castagnaccio* is a cake based on chestnut flour, the plate is "poor" because chestnuts were basically a peasant food.