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Visual Language of World War I Propaganda on a Symbolical Plane: How a Visual Symbol is Created

Abstract: This work seeks to explore how certain symbols, built over time within a certain cultural context (in this case, said context being the one of western European culture), are re-contextualized within a given situation (World War I) to better serve the means of propaganda. How can a visual representation of a certain symbol, thousands of years old and deeply rooted in cultural heritage, be repurposed and reshaped within months? Also, the article aims to explore the connection between the visual cannon of Orthodox icons and World War I propaganda posters.

Keywords: narrative, visual narrative, *logos*, *mythos*, posters, Orthodox icons, symbols, cultural constructs

1) Mythos and Logos

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος.[1]

As it is obvious from the very beginning of the Gospel of John, the word (or to be precise, the Word) used is *logos*, from the Greek λέγω, *lego*, (I say). It is not λέξις, *lexis* (derived from the same initial word as *logos*), meaning the word in its more precise, narrowly defined manner; *logos* can be translated in over forty different ways, and 'the word' is but one of them. Most commonly, it not only signifies the word, but rather the flow of words, a discourse, even more significantly – a narrative. This is very important, and shall be addressed bellow.

For the moment, let us try to examine why *logos* is chosen to represent God and why the term is given obviously divine virtue. After all, as the very first sentence of the Gospel according to John says, the Word is God and God is the Word. But

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[1] John I:1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

not any word (*lexis*), it is *the Word*. That word sublimates much more than a simple relationship between the sound and the certain meaning it carries. It is a word that, like God, is omnipresent and omnipotent – indeed, it is in the Word, and therefore in the language, that God decides to take form. Meaning, following the reasoning of the Gospel, that it is the language that was there in the beginning, a sort of *ur*-language, (or, arche-language). It is the way the word ἀρχῇ is translated: arche, the beginning, the origin, the first. The idea of the first, especially in this context, is closely linked to the idea of the holy: it is with God that everything begins, and the Christian God (as the Gospel belongs to the *New Testament*, we speak of the Christian God) is the very emanation of the holy.

There is a very important distinction to be made here, and it brings us back to the possible translation of *logos* as a narrative, not only as a single word. The word most commonly used for the story is μῦθος, *mythos,* most commonly translated as 'myth.' "Thus, a genealogy of myth starts with *mythos* meaning simply 'word, speech', as synonymous with *logos*, and ends with the common view of *mythos* and *logos* as opposites, as false and true discourse respectively."[2]

Mythos, as Chiara Bottici explains, is established as an opposite of *logos*. The Christian tradition insists upon the latter term and avoids the first. Indeed, we can go as far as to say that one of the major roles of the *New Testament* (as well as it is of the *Old Testament*) is the negation of the mythical concept of the world and introduction of historical time.[3] The mythical, pre-biblical world (also, that of Greek antiquity) is cyclical in nature; it is heroic, belongs to gods, it is super-natural. Above all, it is *sacred*. On the other hand, the world built by both the Old and the *New Testament* is that of history, that of humans. Time drastically changes throughout the *Bible*, meaning that it assumes a linear, rather than a cyclical motion. *Logos*, standing for reason as much as it does for word (or a narrative), implying a philosophical view of the world, that of coherence, of human standards, therefore of history, stands in opposition to *mythos*. The latter implies the 'old' world, that of heroes, gods, the never-ending cycle, the so-called (in the proper meaning of the word) pre-historical time and pre-historical world. "According to a common view, however, it is the birth of philosophy that, by giving rise to a fundamentally new approach towards the world, determined the eclipse of the old mythological tradition and relegated the semantic ambit of mythos to that of pure 'fiction'. In this view, the activity initiated in the Ionia of the seventh century BC by the first 'naturalist philosophers' represented the exit from the world of myth. For the first time, thinkers such as Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes searched for a rational underlying principle of the world (*arché*) identifying it first

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[2] Chiara Bottici, *Philosophy of Political Myth*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 21.

[3] Great studies of the subject matter were done by Northrop Frye in his seminal work Northrop Frye, *Le Grand Code*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1984, as well as René Girard in work of no less importance – René Girard, *Les choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*, Paris, Grasset, 1978; Also interesting and very insightful work on the subject is Danièle Chauvin, André Siganos et Philippe Walter, *Questions de MYTHOCRITIQUE, dictionnaire*, Paris, Editions Imago, 2005.

with water (Thales), then with *apeiron* (Anaximander). In so doing, they rejected all mythological explanations and opened the Western road from *mythos* to *logos*."[4]

There is one major issue with this division. We have said that the 'new' world, that of the *Bible*, and especially that of the *New Testament*, is holy and also divine. However, it is not *sacred*. And here we arrive at the main issue of *logos*, of the language, and ultimately of the role of visual representation. The God of the *New Testament*, Christ himself, is holy – but not sacred. As Freud and Girard explained,[5] the sacred as a quality comes from the sacrificial mechanism, from the blood sacrifice. As Girard arguments in *Les choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde,* Christianity as religion fundamentally resides with the abolition of the sacrifice. That is the reason why Christ, the Son of God, and the God incarnate (the Word) sacrifices himself – to abolish and do away with all of other sacrifices. In doing so, he does abolishes the notion of the *sacred*, and introduces the notion of the *holy*.

Following this line of reasoning, we arrive at Georges Bataille and his idea, presented in *L'Erotisme*, that the 'holy' is a milder, we dare say gentrified version of the 'sacred'. It is a quality of a different level and of an entirely different scope. Quite like Christianity in regards to Judaism, however,[6] the 'holy' needs to adhere to the previously existing 'sacred.' *Logos* needs to lean on *mythos*, drawing its essence from it. The word, and so the language, carries within itself all of the previous meanings, roles and contexts. What is now holy was once sacred – what is now cleansed of violence[7] was born out of violence and terror in their purest forms. On a smaller scale, that is the relationship between the *Old* (very violent) and the *New Testament* (with Christ's sacrifice final, and until the Second coming of the Christ, the burden of violence lifted from men and the *New Testament* made with God).

But the narrative is the one that carries the values, the core ideology, the idea (in itself a narrative, in Derridian terms) of the state and of the structure of the world hence that function goes to *mythos* rather than to *logos*. In that respect perhaps we can even speak of a certain regression on that diachronic line (from *Old* to *New Testament*, from myth to history, from sacred to divine, from time of heroes to time of men). Therefore is also necessary, one cannot stress enough, that the *logos* be rooted and based in *mythos* (like the *New Testament* is rooted in the *Old Testament*).[8] So says even Plato, great opponent of fiction and poetry: "Not only that Plato recognized the importance of mythical narratives for the transmission of moral models, as is shown

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[4] Chiara Bottici, op. cit., 21–22.

[5] Following a line of anthropological study that started with Frazer, but more broadly indeed even with Nietzsche, followed by Freud, Lévi-Strauss and finished by Girard and Bataille.

[6] Notion explained with great success by Northrop Frye in his seminal study *The Great Code*: Christianity needs to draw its legitimacy from the Hebrew religion, therefore symbolically and structurally the *New Testament* is made using rehashed motifs, topoi and narrative lines from the *Old Testament*.

[7] See Freud's *Totem and Taboo* for a better explanation of the role of violence in the creation of taboo and religion built around it. See also Girard's *La violence et le sacré*, a necessary study in understanding of this phenomenon.

[8] See Northrop Frye's *The Great Code* on the subject.

by the fact that he recommends myths to the rulers as a helpful means to promote social cohesion (Resp. III, 414c, 515d), but he also uses myths as an important medium for discussing crucial philosophical issues."[9]

It is exactly for this purpose that the *logos* needed to come instead of *mythos* – to acquire its aura of the sacred and to be the instrument of the rule and legitimization (as it was the case in the medieval period when only the religious authority, such is a pope, could bestow a crown and make a king). The political dimension of language, be it a visual language or a verbal one, is of the greatest importance: "The connection between domination (Herrschaft) and the sacred (das Heil) not only goes in the direction of the instrumental use of the sacred in order to uphold political domination, but also works the other way round: it is the political institutions that, by shaping the contexts, help to create certain attitudes toward the world. The sacred not only produces domination, but is, at the same time, its result."[10]

With this the (seeming) paradox of Christianity must be pointed out: it negates a certain cultural construct while simultaneously seeking legitimization from it, as it does with the *Old Testament*. Negating the *mythos* in favor of *logos* can only go so far; *logos* is dependent on the much older and more deeply embedded idea of the 'sacred', connected to the ritualized violence and of the mechanism of sacrifice that produces taboo, as explained by the line of anthropologists from Frazer and Freud to Lévi-Strauss and Girard.

"With Christianity, the term acquired a completely new meaning, one that, apparently in continuity with the past, in fact had a revolutionary impact: In the beginning there was the Word [*logos*], and the Word [*logos*] was with God, and the Word [*logos*] was God. (John I: 1) The overwhelming power of the transformation brought about by Christianity is inscribed in this beginning of the Gospel according to John. Here the *logos* is not only the structure of being: *logos* is the Word of God, a Word which has been written in the will of God since the origin of time. And where the *logos* became the word of God, a word that *is written*, and is written in a definitive form because it is the *Sacred* will of God, there tends to be no space for the recognition of myth."[11]

Here, we move away from Bottici's view of the phenomenon. She does not use the same distinction of the 'holy' and of the 'sacred' as we do, but rather stays with a more common view of these two very different states, not differentiating between them.

Therefore, it is all but necessary to do away with the old world and its cyclical, polytheistic, heroic values. The new God is here to simultaneously negate the old order and draws its legitimacy from it. The way to do so is to assume form – for the Word to become Flesh and become embodied. The very fact that the John insists upon

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[9] Chiara Bottici, op. cit., 34.

[10] Ibid., 49.

[11] Chiara Bottici, op. cit., 45.

the Word becoming flesh[12] gives appearance to the divinity, gives it its visual aspect, its manifestation, makes it possible for us to speak of these notions – *logos*, *mythos* – in visual form. Let us analyze the following lines, again from the gospel according to John: οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσι δι᾽ αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός. ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον.[13]

The light, in this case, as well it its facticity, is not only visible,[14] but is indeed the agent of visibility, what allows us vision. We see things – their shapes, colors and forms – because light exists. As in the physical world, so it is metaphorically: the light of God is very close to the idea of *logos,* the word (in this case, a sign) that holds everything within itself and *is* everything. We are within it. The light, the agent of the visual, symbolically and factually allows for (and makes obvious) the fact that the God became flesh – visible, tangible, real, and human. The God thus becomes the Word and also the Image. To better understand this, it is useful to address Peter Osborn's view of the phenomenon of localization and de-contextualization. Although he addressed post-1960s art, his interdisciplinary approach is applicable to other periods as well.[15] We can also use the approach proposed by Milica Ivić regarding the relationship between the function and the manifestation of the image.[16] These approaches thus create the possibility of making an interdisciplinary connection between analyzing a picture, be it a painting (in this case, an icon) or a poster, with a medium dealing with words.

A represented object initially exudes the sacred.[17] A visual representation, made possible by light, is thus connected to the notion of the word (*logos*). That much is clear from the narrative structure of all of the Gospels, not only that of John. But in itself, while doing away with it, it carries *mythos* – the quality of the old, violent, and ultimately sacred. This relationship of the new principle (the new law), taking over the old one (but in doing so, taking the old principle and incorporating it in itself, willingly or not) is evident in the subject matter of the war poster and its register of meanings.

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[12] John, I: 1.

[13] Ibid, I: 7-9: "The same (John) came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

[14] Also, the word and the light are in the intimate relationship from the very beginning of the *Old Testament*. As it is written in the Genesis I: 1-3: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep water. The Spirit of God was hovering over the water. Then God said, 'Let there be light!' So there was light." The very first command issued by word was the creation of light. Thus, the very first word was therefore, light. It is important to understand this so we could better understand the cultural basis of the visual representation of both the sacred and of the holy.

[15] Vesna Mitar, "Peter Osborne, Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art", London, Verso, 2013 (review)", *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 7, 2015, 116.

[16] Milica Ivić, "Mimi Mercedez and übermateriality of sex work", *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 8, 2015, 95.

[17] Georges Bataille, *L'Erotisme*, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1957/2011, 97.

2) The Old and the New in the context of Orthodox icons and war posters

The above text was necessary to establish a basic understanding of the relation-ship between war posters and the cultural heritage of Orthodox icons. Namely, the way that *logos* adheres to *mythos*; the *New Testament* to the *Old Testament*; the history to the myth;[18] the holy to the sacred; this is how war posters of the World War I (and other wars), adhere to and depend upon the canon established by the early Christian (and later Orthodox) icons.

At the very center of the phenomenon of the Orthodox icon is the notion of the canon – an established set of values, significations and symbols. Icons are seen as the emanation of the divine light (the same one we quoted earlier from the Gospel of John). Although technically paintings and works of art, they are much more than that. They are a direct contact with the divine, a window from reality to supra-reality, communication between these two worlds (that of Men and that of God).[19] As such, they are always within the frame of the canon, a set of rules defining symbolism and meaning of gestures, colors, shapes – in short, all of the visual aspects of an icon – as well as which image – can be represented and which cannot. Our hypothesis is that it is exactly this 'symbol pool' that war posters also link themselves to. It is therefore why we insisted on presenting the very character of the 'holy' and that of the 'sacred.' We shall deal with the posters that, by linking themselves to the heritage of the Orthodox icons, aim to legitimize themselves and acquire these very qualities for their represen-tations and, by analogy, for the ideological agenda they propagate.[20]

Visual language can be compared to the verbal. While there are many differ-ences between the two, there are also important similarities. One of the major ones would be the creation of a particular symbol and how that process is accomplished. Much like in the manner already shown above, the meanings one symbol holds are predefined either by the corpus of the author himself (a very rare occasion) or, more often, are the product of a very long and very layered cultural construction, where one meaning (or a set of meanings) adheres to the previous one(s). The symbol, by its very nature a figure or style of a sign that points towards many different significations, must have those significations already present in order to make sense. Meaning, that those significations the symbol is pointing towards must already exist. Our hypothesis is that those significations are built in previous times, and that they are in the same relation of *logos* to *mythos*, the *New Testament* towards the *Old Testament*, etc. The newly produced material is based upon and is drawing its legitimacy, as well as a set

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[18] In my doctoral thesis *La construction du mythe national dans l'oeuvre de John Ford et Veljko Bulajic*, defended at Université Paris Sorbonne, 2014, there is an entire section dedicated to this problem – history and myth and how they are mutually dependent.

[19] Milos Janković, "Teologija i simbolika ikone [Theology and Symbolism of the Icon]", Belgrade, http://kul-turniheroj.com/?p=1705, ac. 27 February 2016.

[20] A shorter work dealing with a similar subject, regarding Nazi and Soviet war posters of World War Two, can be found here http://libartes.com/2012/decembar/slika_i_misao.php, ac. 20 February 2016.

of meanings, from the already existing source material. In this particular case, it is the relation between war posters and Orthodox icons.

The resemblance is quite obvious. Not only from the resemblance of most of the postures, but essentially from the usage of colors and their canonical meaning: the symbolical signification of the color blue (heavens, calmness), red (earth, life, suffering) and gold (eternity, perfection, divine light). The resemblance between visual harmonies and compositions is striking and all-important. The images are often or always static, centrally placed, monumental, simple, elegant, and reduced. These qualities make them appear unnatural, as is their likely intention and purpose. Stylization of the icon is such that the character represented attests rather to the idea of eternity and perfection (hence the golden background and the intentional lack of perspective) than the idea of factual resemblance to actual human appearance. The same can also be said of war posters, which always represent either highly idealized images of the human appearance, or, differently but equally unrealistic, highly stylized depictions of a bestial, dehumanized enemy.

Why is this of such great importance? There are many answers to this question. The first was already given, and it represents our basic hypothesis: symbols always reside in the past, as previously-made significations, and as words (as etymological analysis can sometimes lead to surprises) they carry those significations through different iterations of the language in use. Furthering that thought, the symbols used in war posters must be easily recognizable and immediately understandable. Let us consider the historical context of World War I, during which time European literacy rates were not high and audiences would more likely react to posters' visual aspects, and therefore visual symbolism, than anything written.

That fact brings us back to the very function of Orthodox icons, as they were meant for exactly that purpose – conveying the message to those who could not read nor understand the mass (the liturgy). The visual language of the Orthodox icon was therefore made to be clear, effective, and above all to carry within itself the previously-established meanings that would immediately resonate with the people. In other words, the meaning the Orthodox icon is meant to convey would have to be defined by the presence of *archetypes,*[21] a word composed of ἀρχῇ, arche, the *first*, the *beginning* (also present in the first line of the Gospel of John, with which this essay was opened) and τύπος, typos, a *type*, a *model,* a *form*. It is therefore the very necessity of the (visual) medium to be linked to the already established pool of significations, meanings and symbols of the archetypical nature. Not only Orthodox icons attest to this, but also Catholic religious paintings, while developing through different artistic formations (such as the Renaissance, Baroque, Mannerism, etc.) maintained the archetypical elements of the canon, for example, the garments of the Virgin Mary typically being a red dress and a blue cape, and many other examples.

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[21] Pierre Brunel, *Mythocritique, Théorie et parcours*, Paris, Presse Universitaires de France, 1992, 81. Also see Gilbert Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Paris, DUNOD, 11ème édition, 1993, 65, and Joseph Campbell, *Le Héros aux mille et un visages*, Paris, Editions Oxus, 2010, 39.

Following the analogy that we established, as the posters rely on Orthodox icons to link to their significations, so did Orthodox icons rely upon the previously established set of significations drawing on the relationship between the *New Testament* and the *Old Testament*; much like there is a connection to be established between the *Old Testament* and the signification it drew from Babylonian, Egyptian and Mesopotamic myths and fragments of narrative, that were themselves also a continuation of previously-existing narratives, and so on. The symbol is (in this case) nearly always set in the past, previously-defined signification. Let us take another example,[22] the visual representation and usage of Saint George in the imagery of World War I posters. One adequate example is an Orthodox iconic representation with the well-known motif of Saint George slaying the dragon. Then, there is the common and frequent use of this motif in the posters produced during World War I. It is interesting to note that these images hail from different countries; warring sides do not hesitate to use the same symbol and indeed the same sets of symbols;[23] (as well as parts of this narrative).

We have thus established the grounds to hypothesize that the purpose of the propaganda war poster is similar to that of the Orthodox icon. It is to convey a clear, immediately understandable message, the likes of those that transcend social status, level of literacy or that of education. It is the very function of archetypes, in which both the icons and the posters deal in – to be universally recognizable, to stir the emotions of the audience, to be impactful. To do so, it relies upon the previously established significations and tropes. It is the same with both visual and symbolical aspects of posters regarding to icons. They link themselves to a former, previously established, already existing pool of meanings and significations that are carried by the current ones. Without the aura of holiness, reflected upon them from the Orthodox icons, these posters would not be as impactful – just as the icons themselves would not be as impactful without their aura of holiness, carrying within itself the reflection of sacredness – and the sacredness carrying within itself, as was shown many times over by Bataille,[24] and also Blumenberg: "Without the memory of terror and the constraints it surmounted, the freedom of myth in this specificity – the joy of variation in face of the power of repetition – is incomprehensible. The aestheticization 'achieved', does it not erase all the memory of terror, so well that we could even say that the myth

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[22] We could also name a number of posters where, following this closely knit relation between Orthodox icons and war posters, a figure of Virgin Mary was taken from the Orthodox iconic imaginary and used in the posters of both World Wars; but we have already touched upon that subject in this essay http://libartes.com/2012/mart/slika_i_misao/boris_petrovic.php, ac. 27 February 2016. and from a different angle at a conference *Les classiques aux Amériques* organized by Université Paris-Sorbonne in October 2013. Suffice to say that the link in question is well established and well known.

[23] The same can be said of the images of the snake, of the eagle, and many other archetypical representations.

[24] Georges Bataille, op. cit., 86–93.

has come to its end, has become purely 'literary'?"[25] Meletinsky,[26] a disciple of the great Vladimir Propp, has shown that all of the mythical narrative, spawn of *mythos*, goes through stages: from the sacred based in rationalized violence of the blood sacrifice, through deritualization, desacralisation, weakening of faith in the authenticity of the myth, disappearance of the concrete ethnographical elements, substitution of the mythical figures of heroes with ordinary people, disappearance of the etiological foundation of the narrative, transition from the cosmic to individual, and finally to the everyday, the quotidian, the banal. Girard[27] and Freud[28] have shown that the initial terror, the absolute horror of the pre-taboo world had no sense nor structure whatsoever, and was, as such, completely and without exception filled with the purest and therefore most terrible form of sacredness. These war posters carry that notion, as well as Orthodox icons, be it in smaller quantities and diluted versions.

Having this in mind, it is interesting to compare Western war posters to their Eastern counterparts. Namely, to compare the French, German, English, etc. posters to Russian ones. The first thing we can notice is the visual difference and the fact that the Russian posters more closely resemble their inspiration – Orthodox icons. This is visible in several different aspects. Firstly, visually speaking, the Russian posters rely more upon the simple, canonical colors. Western posters are more open and freer in that regard. The fact is that western posters draw their inspiration from the neoclassical cultural heritage (the main idea being the perpetuation of the Roman Empire, in many iterations, throughout European history); which, in this case, comprises very specific neoclassical aesthetics.

We see that the Western posters draw their symbolical potency from Christian and neoclassical sources alike – thus, the heritage of the Orthodox icon is 'diluted' with imagery invoking the cultural, historical and ideological context of the Roman Empire (especially given their colonial expansions), whereas on the other hand, the Eastern ones (in this case Russian) rely more 'purely' on the heritage of the Christian icon. We don't find as much neoclassical imagery or symbolism, and the simplicity and the straightforwardness of the icon are preserved.

Here again is a variation of the familiar Christian imagery of Saint George (in this case, a Russian knight) slaying the dragon, in this case a three-headed monster, its faces representing Russia's enemies. The entire warfare is again framed in the context of a religious affair (the war for Christian values, a war in defense of Orthodox Christian tradition).

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[25] "Sans le souvenir de la terreur et des contraintes qu'elle a surmontées, la liberté du mythe dans sa spécificité – comme joie de la variation face à la puissance de la répétition – est incompréhensible. L'esthétisation 'achevée' n'efface-t-elle pas tout 'souvenir' de la terreur, si bien qu'alors on pourrait effectivement dire que le mythe est 'porté à sa fin', devient purement 'littéraire'?" The term 'literary' signifying a phenomenon belonging to the realm of literature, of fiction. Sylvie Parizet, (sous la direction de), Jean Claude Monod, *Mythe et littérature*, Paris, SFLGC, 2008, 172.

[26] Danièle Chauvin, André Siganos, Philippe Walter, op. cit., 61.

[27] See his entire study on the subject, *La violence et le sacré*.

[28] See the entire study on the subject, with which Girard polemicizes in *La violence et le sacré*, *Totem and taboo*.

To conclude, we can establish a clear difference in proximity regarding the Eastern and the Western usage of Orthodox icons. Western posters do repose on these grounds and do draw some of their symbolical potency from the notions of the holy (as we stated it to be the case in the context of the Christian religion) but are equally reposing on neoclassical imagery. On the other hand, the Eastern posters are more close to the Christian source, their visual language as well as overall symbolism is more deeply involved with Christian heritage and is less so influenced by neoclassical imagery. Their connection to the 'source material' is clearer. We could draw a comparison between the Eastern and the Western posters, built upon the dichotomy that we have established earlier in the work. Depending on the level of aesthetisation of myth that has taken place, we can speak of 'the sacred' and 'the holy', the 'old' and the 'new', the Eastern and the Western. In this comparison, the Orthodox religion that serves as a symbolical base of these Russian posters would take the place of the 'old', as it is the unreformed, truer-to-the-original version of Christianity (ὀρθοδοξία, orthos doxa, meaning the right, the true religion) as opposed to the 'new', Catholic religious context of the Western war posters. Strangely so, the Russian posters, while closer to the original version of the 'holy' (as in, purified from the violence), insist on the war-like, Crusade-inspired quality of the holy warriors (the paladins), that seems to be the most important inspiration for these posters. The notion of violence is therefore re-introduced in what is supposed to be the originally Christian, Orthodox context – in theological terms, and true to the message of Christ, a very radically non-violent religion.

On the other hand, while the war posters based in the cultural context of the Catholic religion (including all the religions that have further stemmed from Catholicism, like the Anglican Church in Great Britain and various branches of Protestantism in the United States of America) are supposed to act as the 'new' in the dichotomy that we have formed; (therefore, following our analogy, the more aesthetisized notion, 'the holy' as compared to the Orthodox 'the sacred', the *logos* to the *mythos*), they do not. The imagery is clearly amalgamated with that of the neoclassical cultural context, therefore introducing the pagan element that is clearly more akin to the notion of the 'sacred' in its pagan form. In both cases, we can clearly see the lines where the practicality of the images and their necessity in a given historical and ideological context has skewed their symbolical and religious clarity and structure.