USA: IDENTITIES CULTURES
AND POLITICS IN NATIONAL
TRANSNATIONAL AND
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
XIX BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

A.I.S.N.A

Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani

Proceedings of the XIX Biennial International Conference
Macerata, October 4-6, 2007

Edited by
Marina Camboni
Valerio Massimo De Angelis
Daniele Fiorentino
Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh

eum > lingue letterature culture moderne

eum > lingue > letterature > culture moderne

USA: Identities, Cultures, and Politics in National, Transnational and Global Perspectives

A.I.S.N.A. Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani
Proceedings of the 19th Biennial International Conference
Macerata, October 4-6, 2007

Edited by Marina Camboni, Valerio Massimo De Angelis,
Daniele Fiorentino, Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh

eum

Isbn 978-88-6056-230-2
Prima edizione: dicembre 2009
©2009 eum edizioni università di macerata
Centro Direzionale, via Carducci 63/a – 62100 Macerata
info.ceum@unimc.it
http://eum.unimc.it

Stampa:
Tipografia S. Giuseppe srl
Via Vecchietti, 51 - 62010 Pollenza
tsg@tsgsrl.191.it

Questo volume è pubblicato con il contributo dell'Università di Macerata e della Banca delle Marche

Editing and copy-editing: Lisa Kramer Taruschio

Contents

11 Foreword

Lectures

Paul Giles, Oxford University

15 International American Studies and the Question of Circumference

Maurizio Vaudagna, Università del Piemonte Orientale

31 Looking Inwards, Looking Outwards: The United States and the World in the Tradition of American Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

William Luhr, Saint Peter's College, New York

55 Researching a Moving Target: *Film Noir*, Generic Permutations, and Postwar US Social History

Workshops

Smuggling Across the Atlantic

Coordinators: Sonia Di Loreto, Cinzia Schiavini

77 Introduction: Sonia Di Loreto

Mara De Chiara, Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"

79 On the Road Again. Renee Tajima-Peña's *My America… or Honk if You Love Buddha*

Sonia Di Loreto, Università di Torino

85 "The Poor Christians and Those Hellish Pirates": A Sea Full of Smugglers

Cinzia Schiavini, Università Statale di Milano

91 Smuggling Identities, Myths and Goods across the Atlantic: Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* and Jonathan Raban's *Hunting Mr Heartbreak: A Discovery of America*

“The Passing” (Alive) through the Conspiracies of Time: Contemporary Transitions from Bill Viola’s Video-Art to Bob Dylan’s Songs
Coordinators: Angelo Capasso, Marina Morbiducci

105 Introduction: Angelo Capasso, Marina Morbiducci

Angelo Capasso, Università di Roma “La Sapienza”
109 Liquid Borders: Matthew Barney and Bill Viola Between Cinema and Video

Fiorenzo Iuliano, Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”
119 Queer Transitions and the Conditions of Loss

Barbara Montefalcone, Université Lumière, Lyon 2
127 “Celebrating the Instant”: Robert Creeley and Marisol Escobar’s *Presences*

Marina Morbiducci, Università di Cagliari
139 The Times, Are They A-Changin’?

Mariangela Orabona, Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”
149 The Aesthetic Traces of the Absent Body

A New Babel: Multilingualism and Transnational Identities in US Literature and Culture
Coordinators: Valerio Massimo De Angelis, Anna Scannavini

159 Introduction: Valerio Massimo De Angelis, Anna Scannavini

Gabriela Seccardini, Università di Macerata
161 Eva Hoffman and Elmaz Abinader: Two Women’s “Lives-on-the-Hyphen” in Modern-Day United States

Felice De Cusatis, Università di Salerno
173 “To live in the Borderlands means you”: la “border tongue” di Gloria Anzaldúa

Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh, Università di Macerata
181 Autobiography in Translation: Anzia Yezierska’s Fables of Identity

Elèna Mortara, II Università di Roma “Tor Vergata”
195 “Worthy Editor”: Language Wars in Immigrant Families and in the Literature of the 1930s

Valerio Massimo De Angelis, Università di Macerata
211 Diasporic Identities: Multilingual Biographies in Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*

Letters Across the Ocean

Coordinators: Marina Camboni, Renata Morresi

Marina Camboni, Università di Macerata
223 Bryher's Letters to Amy Lowell; or, How to Desire America, Build the Poet, and Promote Transatlantic Literary Relationships

Gigliola Sacerdoti Mariani, Università di Firenze
241 "We Need to Make the Connections": The Correspondence of Muriel Rukeyser and May Sarton

Teresa Scordino, Università di Catania
255 Dialogizing about Culture and Politics: Dos Passos's Correspondence across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

Bruce C. Swaffield, Regent University, West Virginia
265 Letters on Italy: From Casual Perspectives to Familial Perceptions

Algerina Neri, Università di Pisa
271 Letters Home: Elizabeth Seton and Her Circle

American Poets Abroad

Coordinators: Gregory Dowling, Francesco Rognoni

285 Introduction: Gregory Dowling, Francesco Rognoni

Antonella Francini, Syracuse University of Florence
287 Multilingualism and Structural Drama in Jorie Graham's Poetry

Paola Nardi, Università Cattolica, Milano
295 Elizabeth Bishop and Canadian Space

Gregory Dowling, Università di Venezia "Ca' Foscari"
305 "The Whole World's Wild": Richard Wilbur's War Poetry

Francesco Rognoni, Università Cattolica, Milano
317 "A More Real Monument of Triumph": Roman Scenes in Hecht's Poetry

Massimo Bacigalupo, Università di Genova
325 Italophile American Poets

Literary Criticism: Its Transatlantic Past and its Future
Coordinators: Pia Masiero Marcolin, Mena Mitrano

343 Introductory Remarks: Mena Mitrano

Anthony Louis Marasco, Università di Venezia "Ca' Foscari"
345 The Antiquarian Moment: A Note on New Historicism

Roberta Fornari, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
351 Adorno in America: A New Beginning for Criticism

Paola Loreto, Università di Milano
361 Lyric Address: A.R. Ammons's Theory and Practice

Pia Masiero Marcolin, Università di Venezia "Ca' Foscari"
369 Criticism in the Classroom: A Theory in Practice

Salvatore Proietti, Università di Roma "La Sapienza", *Igina Tattoni*, Università di Roma "La Sapienza", *Caterina Ricciardi*, Università di Roma Tre
377 What Lionel Trilling Might Mean to Us Today: A Dialogue

Peace, War and International American Studies
Coordinators: Giorgio Mariani, Stefano Rosso

Laura Salvini, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
395 Sheila Ward-Cloutier: The Inuit Way to Environmental Peace

Massimo Rubboli, Università di Genova
403 Patriotism and Religion in the American Civil War

Richard T. Kidder, Università della Calabria
419 "Be Done by as You Do unto Others": Joe Haldeman's *Forever Peace*

Stefania Porcelli, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
429 Language and Violence: Hannah Arendt and the American Sixties

Return of the Natives: Italian Americans and Italy in the Era of Globalism
Coordinator: John Paul Russo

441 Introduction: John Paul Russo

Theodora Patrona, University of Thessaloniki
443 "Hunger Is a Harsh Master"; or, the Struggle for Social Justice in Tony

Ardizzone's *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*

John Paul Russo, University of Miami, Florida
453 The Nostoi of John Ciardi and Jorie Graham

Self and Others in the Twentieth Century: from William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore to the New Italian American Poets
Coordinator: Lina Unali

469 Introduction: Lina Unali

Lina Unali, II Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"
471 Moral Purpose in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore

Franco Mulas, Università di Sassari
479 Un'altra "Imitation" di Robert Lowell

Elisabetta Marino, II Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"
487 An Italian American Poet between the Family Circle and the Outside World: Maria Mazziotti Gillan

Constructions/Deconstructions of the Self in Twentieth-Century America: History, Literature and the Arts
Coordinators: Francesca Bisutti De Riz, Gigliola Nocera

Alessandro Clericuzio, Università di Perugia
497 Dramatizing the Process of Americanization: Contemporary Asian American Theater

Marina Coslovi, Università di Venezia "Ca' Foscari"
505 Old Sentiments, New Rules: The Issue of Feminine Identity in Dorothy Parker

Stefano Luconi, II Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"
515 Italian Americans' Self-Representation at the Dawn of the 21st Century

Franco Minganti, Università di Bologna
527 Black Holes and Dark Sides: Notes on American Comics from Art Spiegelman to Art Spiegelman (via Tom Tomorrow)

Rosella Simonari, University of Essex, Università di Macerata
539 "After Great Pain, a Formal Feeling Comes": Emily Dickinson's Figure and Poetry in Martha Graham's *Letter to the World*

Where Angels Dare: American View(s) of Post September 11. Scenarios in Literature and Other Media
Coordinators: Stefano Asperti, Mario Corona

Paolo Simonetti, Università di Roma "La Sapienza"
555 "There's an Empty Space Where America Used to Be": Art and Terrorism in Thomas Pynchon's *Against the Day* (2006) and Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007)

National Ideals and International Interactions Between the United States and Italy, 1848-1948
Coordinators: Daniele Fiorentino, Marco Mariano

569 Introduction: Daniele Fiorentino

Andrea Di Stefano, Università di Teramo
571 United States Diplomatic Relations with the Holy See, 1848-1867: An Appraisal

Paola Gemme, Arkansas Tech University
585 Drawing the Revolution: Thomas Nast's Sketches of Garibaldi's Conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for the *New York Illustrated News* and the *Illustrated London News*

Marco Mariano, Università del Piemonte Orientale
603 Mid-19th Century Italian Views of America: The Case of Piedmont, 1815-1861

Daniele Fiorentino, Università di Macerata
611 International Design: US-Italian Relations During George Perkins Marsh's Tenure in Italy, 1861-1882

Foreword

Hosted by the University of Macerata on October 4-6, 2007, the nineteenth AISNA biennial International Conference *USA: Identities, Cultures, and Politics in National, Transnational, and Global Perspectives* was animated by approximately two hundred scholars involved in a debate rich in methodological and critical approaches and fertile in interdisciplinary crossings. The issue of identity for a nation like the United States, a multiethnic society rooted in a variety of traditions, languages, and histories, and also interwoven in a complex network of associative as well as antagonistic relationships, has never been a simple one. Though the national narrative, until the 1960s had tended to underrate or under-represent the richness of the contributions of the so-called minorities, and had underplayed the relevance of social and cultural hybridity, such is no longer the case, and has not been for a number of years now. Through the 2007 Conference AISNA associates, however, also sought to engage the international critical debate over American identities in relation to the role the USA plays in a globalized world. 2007 was a critical year and it should not be surprising to discover that a distancing response to American 'unilateralism' and 'superpower nationalism' is a common thread that runs through many of the papers presented at the Conference and published in this volume.

The three key-note lectures highlight the role a transnational critical 'perspective' can play in re-locating the relative space American language, literature and culture should occupy in a globalized world (Paul Giles); in keeping American universalizing practices of national values well separated and distinct from present-day 'rooted' cosmopolitanism (Maurizio Vaudagna); and in reconstructing the transcontinental roots of cultural genres like Film Noir, usually considered typically, and representatively, American (William Luhr). The entire volume bears witness of the number of issues that were brought under scrutiny, and read through national, transnational and global lenses, in and across the 14 workshops of the conference. It also bears witness to the will in Italian and European scholars to debate the key issues of the conference both as Americanists wanting to investigate their object of study in dialogue with international scholars, and as active participants in the construction of a common European identity in dialogue with individual and national historical and linguistic differences.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Rector of the University of Macerata, Prof. Roberto Sani, the Dean of the School of Letters, Prof. Gianfranco Paci, the Director of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Prof. Luciana Gentilli for both their willingness to host AISNA's Conference and financially support it, and for the warm hospitality they offered to the Conference participants in the Palazzo Ugolini and Palazzo Morbiducci and the beautiful Italian garden between them.

Thanks also go to the United States Embassy, Public Affairs Office of Rome, and to their representatives Anne Callaghan and Mark Smith, for their continuous support and for the grant that allowed the Association to invite American scholars and to implement the participation of younger scholars in American Studies.

Regional Institutions also responded positively to our requests and in different ways contributed to the success of the Conference. The Comune and Provincia di Macerata, and the Regione Marche granted their patronage while the Camera del Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura di Macerata also extended economic support. Publication of these proceedings was co-sponsored by Banca delle Marche.

My heartfelt thanks finally go to my collegues, and conference co-organizers, Valerio De Angelis, Daniele Fiorentino and Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh, and to Rosaria Grottola, Renato Picchio and Viviana Taffetani, who worked hard to transform an intellectual project into a great and memorable event.

Marina Camboni

Lectures

Paul Giles

International American Studies and the Question of Circumference

Although the term "American literature" was first used in the 1780s, in the immediate aftermath of the country's political separation from Great Britain (Spengemann 1989, 152), the first university course in this subject was not taught until 1875, by Moses Coit Tyler at the University of Michigan (Graff, 211). Tyler also published in 1878 the first *History of American Literature*, intended originally to be a "history of American literature from the earliest English settlements in this country, down to the present time" (though the later parts of this survey were never completed). Tyler took as the parameters of his first two volumes the years 1607 through 1765, a chronological span which, of course, preceded the birth of the new nation. His project thus anticipated the style of prolepsis that was to become characteristic of American literary scholarship, since, in the interests of what he called "unity and completeness," Tyler re-read "early" American literature so as to bring it forcibly into alignment with the post-Revolutionary world, in order to create discursive space for his narrative centered upon an emerging "single nation" (Tyler 1879, v-vi). This nationalist agenda, in different guises, was also to inspire key critical works in the early part of the twentieth century, when there was a consistent attempt to explicate American arts and letters by setting them in the context of cultural conditions constitutionally different from those of Europe: we see this in V. L. Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927-30), in *The Reinterpretation of American Literature* (1928)—which was edited by Norman Foerster on behalf of the newly-formed American Literature group of the MLA—and in F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941). After 1945, these systematic mappings of American literature in relation to domestic culture were often mediated institutionally through the academic practice of American studies, an interdisciplinary matrix predicated upon what Vicente L. Rafael has described as an "integrationist logic," through which a science of society might shed light on cultural matters (Rafael 1994, 98). The purpose of American studies in the decades after the Second World War was to mediate between disciplines, examining African American traditions and issues of civil rights, for example, within a holistic framework through which the literary and historical dimensions of US culture would mutually illuminate each other.

Since the beginning of the Reagan era in the early 1980s, however, American studies has often seemed like an extended dirge for the loss of that progressive idea associated with “America,” an iconic investment that sustained the subject through its golden years in the 1950s and 1960s. The JFK Institute at the Free University in Berlin, for example, was founded in 1963, a few months after Kennedy’s famous visit to that city, at a time when the youthful exuberance of American democratic polity seemed to offer a compelling alternative to the exhausted conditions of post-war Europe. Indeed, the 1960s have now taken on for American studies the character of an Ur-decade, the point of reference to which subsequent analysis inexorably returns. The 1996 novel by Chinese-American author Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land*, pointedly sets itself in this utopian location of 1968, drawing upon the iconography of a “promised land” to evoke a world where the fluidity of social and ethnic transformation (in this case, a metamorphosis of Chinese into Jewish) can be valorized: “Tell them this is America,” says the heroine’s best friend, “anything is possible” (Jen 1996, 84). The notion of a promised land is associated here with old American pioneers such as Lewis and Clark (Jen 1996, 148), with the “spirit of the day” as manifested in the hippie paradise of Haight-Ashbury (Jen 1996, 84), and ultimately with Ovid’s testimony to the powers of change, flux and motion, as cited in the novel’s epigraph (Jen 1996, viii). It is also noticeable how much of Jen’s narrative takes place in educational settings, both Mona’s high school and her elder sister’s Harvard, thus creating for this rite-of-passage novel something like a pedagogic imaginary, where coming of age involves being initiated into the moral circumference of American civic life. Even Ovid is being read in Mona’s high-school English class, and indeed at one point the novel draws this analogy between education and civic life directly, saying how Mona “understands that this is how life operates in America, that it’s just like the classroom. You have to raise your own hand—no one is going to raise it for you—and then you have to get ready to stand up and give the right answer so that you may gulp down your whole half-cup of approval” (Jen 1996, 67).[1]

It is true that there are in Jen’s novel elements of pastiche and irony hedging in all of these invocations of a promised land, which is both evoked and revoked simultaneously. What this book does suggest, however, are the powerful institutional and pedagogic reasons for wanting to cling on to an idea of American promise, even at a time when the theoretical premises of US exceptionalism have been all but exhausted. In his response to the 2006 address by the president of the American Studies Association, JFK professor Winfried Fluck brushed aside the "transnational turn" as merely "an extension of [the] romance of . . . intercultural space beyond the borders of the nation-state" (Fluck 2007, 26) and he talked instead about the necessity for American Studies scholars to focus not on perspectives from the "outside" but on the traditional "center" (Fluck 2007, 28). But it is precisely the burden of transnationalism that binary oppositions between inside and outside, center and margin, have become increasingly difficult to quantify, and Fluck's nostalgia here for a mythical center, apparent also from his tribute to the "still exemplary" status of de Tocqueville (Fluck 2007, 29), is of a piece with the retrospective projection of 1968 in Jen's novel. The utopian narratives of the 1960s have, of course, modulated into the dystopian narratives of today, which ritualistically indict the folly and stupidity of George W. Bush, as though his policies of a drive for global supremacy in political and economic realms and an equally powerful desire not to lose the sense of America as a privileged and protected space were the result of some private madness, rather than a structural inconsistency arising from the contradictory nature of the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This is not, of course, to seek to justify Bush's programs. It is, though, to suggest that to regard them simply in dystopian terms is merely to perpetuate (by reversal) a utopian impulse that seeks still to read US culture in mythical terms, as promise or jeremiad. Such a formulation ignores the complicated and unstable ways in which US culture has entered into negotiations with globalization, preferring instead to shore up its nation-based analysis of what Fluck calls "the cultural sources of American power"—a phrase which in too many cases needs to be understood self-reflexively, implying as it does the cultural sources of American *studies* power.[2] It is of course by now well known that the development of American studies after 1945 was underwritten by US diplomatic missions, and half a century later the need to attract funding for institutional centers continues to skew the academic agendas of American studies programs in unaccountable ways.

What I am suggesting here is a division between the civic pressures of American studies on the one hand and the subject's intellectual evolution on the other. The issue here revolves around cultural protectionism, which might be seen as an analogue to US attitudes toward free trade in the economic sphere. As Joseph Stiglitz has remarked, although Washington supports free trade in theory, when a poor country finds a commodity it can export to the United States, domestic protectionist interests are quickly galvanized, as for example in a tariff of 350% on steel imports from Moldova (Stiglitz 2002, 269); not surprisingly, these fair trade laws are known outside the United States as "unfair fair trade laws" (Stiglitz 2002, 172). Similarly, much of Paul Gilroy's work since *The Black Atlantic* (1993) has sought to dissolve the concept of racial and national identity by focussing on a shift away from the molecular scale, a transition deriving partly from "biotechnological" developments (Gilroy 1993, 201) paving the way for more mutable and "postracial" forms of genetic science (Gilroy 1993, 218), and partly from globalization; however, as Kenneth Warren has acknowledged, there has been a tenacious desire, not only among African American critics, to retain categories of racial and ethnic identification for strategic rather than strictly intellectual purposes, a paradoxical cycle that has led to a partial rehabilitation in Southern studies of old-fashioned white scholars on the grounds that "black distinctiveness is preserved by rediscovering the southernness of America" (Warren 2003, 76-77).[3] Again, one reason for this clinging to "distinctiveness" is the civic imperative: as the economy has moved from a manufacturing to a knowledge base, so the Fordist regime of industrial production, which David Harvey described as lasting until about 1973, has now been displaced from the factory shop floor to higher education, so that universities have become the places where future American workers get their credentials certified (Harvey 1989, 140). An openness to questions of diversity has of course become a key component of this information economy, which is one reason for the widespread visibility of eminently teachable works such as *Mona in the Promised Land*.

The interface between local and global cannot, however, always reconcile itself comfortably to these narratives of liberal accommodation. In 1950, Lionel Trilling was able to write persuasively of a "liberal imagination," through which the domestic virtues of flexibility and open-mindedness would counter the deterministic dogmatism of social conditioning, a philosophy at that time popularly associated with the malevolent power of the Soviet Union. But, as Martin Jacques has noted, such conceptions of liberalism have tended often to be regarded by the West "in a strangely ahistorical way" (Jacques 2004, 17), and the shift from a twentieth-century liberal consensus to the kind of "neo-liberal hegemony," in Harvey's phrase, prevalent at the beginning of the twenty-first has radically altered cultural conditions within America (Harvey 2003, 96). Most of these social and economic developments are familiar enough, at least in broad outline. Saskia Sassen, for whom "the global age launched in the 1980s" (Sassen 2006, 143), has discussed the reshaping of the modern state away from assumptions about stable full employment and the pre-eminence of nuclear family households toward a condition in which the mobility of international capital and the circulation of global commodities typically engender more short-term, contractual labor arrangements. The displacement of economic activity offshore, in other words, has contributed to the displacement of the factory and of state government, which during the twentieth-century "hypernational era" (Sassen 2006, 140) were the key strategic sites where the structural dynamics of the Fordist regime were regulated; instead, "global cities" (Sassen 2006, 54) have taken over as the crucial nexus of social process and power. The formulation in the mid-twentieth century of a national public through network media has also been supplanted by a proliferation of television (and, increasingly, Internet) outlets dominated by transnational media interests.

None of this has rendered the idea of the nation redundant, of course, but it has brought about what Sassen calls "a debordering of the liberal state" (Sassen 2006, 410), a process of "denationalization" within which any national narrative now finds itself needing to engage with the pressures of globalization (Sassen 2006, 233). Richard Sennett has written of how, as production of all kinds has become increasingly automated within the framework of what he calls the "new capitalism," the old pattern whereby experience gained in the workplace was conducive to a "sustaining life narrative" (Sennett, 5) has been superseded by a situation in which 20% of the U.S. labor force are employed on short-term contracts and a further 20% of men in their fifties are under-employed (Sennett 2006, 49, 102). 9/11 contributed massively to this general sense of insecurity and displacement, exemplifying Etienne Balibar's point about the increasing difficulty of differentiating inside from outside and of how, within the transnational domain, borders are "dispersed" everywhere, rather than being situated just "at the outer limit of territories" (Balibar 2004, 1). As David Simpson noted, the Iraq war and the Abu Ghraib photographs that came to epitomize it, also heightened a sense of uncertainty among Americans "about who 'we' are and what 'we' stand for" (Simpson 2006, 109); those comfortable binary oppositions between "us" and "them," integrated immigrant and hostile alien, that propped up the spirit of American exceptionalism during the Cold War era have been thrown increasingly into disrepair. The less obvious but potentially much more sinister threat to the nation of global warming, in the light of which the scientist Paul Brown has claimed it is not worthwhile for anyone under the age of 30 to save for a pension (Brown 2006, 13), has also contributed to this sense of a world spinning out of national orbits. Environmental change, like multinational corporations and global terrorism, is an operation that recognizes no state boundaries.

My purpose here is neither to construct apocalyptic scenarios, nor to propose solutions to these problems, but, more impartially, to consider ways in which they have entered into the realms of everyday experience and therefore impacted upon American literature and culture. One key word here is *representation*, encompassing both aesthetic and political representation, categories running theoretically in parallel to each other that globalization has rendered equally problematic. Politically, the dilemma is, quite straightforwardly, that the most urgent issues of the day are no longer susceptible of being resolved through national jurisdictions, even though, as Caren Kaplan has observed, national governments have been intent upon using every “tool in their bag of tricks” to stave off threats to their sovereignty (Kaplan 2002, 39). The bottom line here is the tax system, the capacity of a state to gather revenue in order to enact policies based on government decisions that themselves arise out of processes of democratic representation; however, this virtuous circle has come under threat not only from the global mobility of capital, which has forced down the highest domestic tax rates and thus substantially reduced the proportion of GNP available to any given administration, but also from the increasing mobility of citizens in an international labor market, many of whom no longer feel inclined to stay put and passively accept whatever tax regime a government may choose to impose upon them. A few political philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas have explored the possibility of “postnational” systems of governance, but in political life generally there has been a massive failure to confront these issues. Such unwillingness can certainly be explained by a natural reluctance on the part of career politicians to canvass election by addressing the limitations of their own power, but it has also contributed to an increasingly distorted process of democratic misrecognition, where lines of authorization between electoral choice and political agency have become blurred, and where the relationship between the American people and their political representatives has become increasingly less transparent.

The problem of how to reconcile “global multilateral institutions with democratic accountability” is, as Joseph J. Nye Jr. acknowledged, one to which there is no easy answer (Nye 2002, 168). George Soros, who has argued for some kind of structures of international governance to provide a more systematic approach to issues bound up with each other on a global axis, has talked of the United States as “a ‘feel-good’ society, unwilling to face unpleasant reality” (Soros 2006, xxiii); and while such an analysis may be unduly simplistic, it does highlight a deeply-felt constitutional disinclination to surrender the sense of individual and national agency that is traditionally held to be part of the American birthright. There is also a marked generational conflict beginning to become evident here, with older Americans who grew up within a different model of fiscal insurance now finding themselves protected by relatively comfortable schemes of social security, while younger workers have developed much more unstable ties with the labor market, with the result that their pensions and medical provisions are correspondingly weaker. From this perspective, American paranoia around the question of homeland security might be understood in allegorical terms, as an epitome of its anxieties about global displacement more generally; to refurbish Voltaire's Enlightenment quip about God, if al-Qaeda did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it. Monolithic conceptions of American empire, and of President's Bush's preference for appropriating the entire globe as an extension of the homeland security state, would seem in this light to be misleading, since they overlook the impact of globalization upon America itself, those structural adjustments endemic to the twenty-first-century world economy and balance of power which, as US government advisers themselves have noted, could ensure a relative reduction in US power, so that by 2020 globalization will "be equated in the popular mind with Asia, replacing its current association with Americanization" (*Mapping*, 12).[4] As Sassen notes, a "lack of legibility. . . is frequently a feature of major social changes in the making" (Sassen 2006, 12), and one of the most revealing aspects of contemporary US discourse is the way it expands and contracts uneasily between national and transnational parameters, manifesting uncertainty about how exactly to describe its circumference.

As Don H. Doyle has argued, in the long run of American history the idea of universalism has perhaps been more important than exceptionalism; the Declaration of Independence was based upon universal ideals—"We hold these truths to be self-evident"—rather than upon any supposed distinctiveness of the American people, and Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* proposed America as an asylum not just for Americans, but for all mankind. In this sense, to map ways in which the United States interfaces with a global matrix is to invoke a long and venerable heritage, one which the liberal traditions of patriotic empathy that developed in the nineteenth century did much to obscure. Commenting on the emergence of this kind of liberalism, Ian Baucom has suggested how conceptions of shared sentiment and fellow feeling arose largely in reaction against the global system of slavery that was integral to the movement of international capital in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: "liberalism," he remarks, "is constitutively guilty in conscience" (Baucom 2005, 238). To see the latter-day American studies movement as linked genealogically with white abolitionism would help to explain its resistance to repositioning locality in relation to a wider circumference, since the abolitionists naturally viewed global exchange as a potentially dehumanizing prospect. The missionary qualities of American studies were addressed in a 2002 piece by Allan M. Winkler from Miami University, who recalled teaching for a year on a Fulbright grant at the University of Nairobi: "Kenya is a developing country," he said. "It is also a country nominally democratic, but governed by a longtime dictator. My job was to teach American history broadly defined in such a way that it was really American Studies, in an effort to encourage some sense of civic responsibility and commitment to democratic involvement" (Lenz 2002, 100). But this assumption that American studies should be synonymous with "civic responsibility" and "democratic involvement" is intellectually naïve at best. It is easy to see here the heavy hand of US diplomatic agencies seeking to spread their political gospel across the world, as they have done systematically since 1945; but more disturbing is the apparent willingness of Winkler to foreclose analysis by simply assuming that "civic responsibility" is a lesson Americans need to export to Kenya. Rather than interrogating associations between Africa and America, Winkler takes it for granted that American studies should by definition incorporate a certain set of enlightening values. Nor is this attitude, though it often takes ostensibly more progressive forms, at all unusual within the American studies community. At the American Studies Association convention in San Francisco in 2006, international members were asked by one domestic participant what they hoped to "get out" of American Studies if they were not committed to it, as was this ASA member, to further the spirit of activist engagement and democratic community.

The point here is neither to demean political activism on its own terms, nor to suggest that ideological neutrality or detachment on this or any other subject is ultimately possible. It is, though, to suggest that insisting a commitment to democracy be a prerequisite of American studies scholarship is like insisting that you have to be a committed Christian fully to understand medieval English culture. This is, to use Werner Sollors's phrase, the kind of "claim to speak from a privileged 'in-group vantage point'" that, in medieval studies, used to hold sway in the days of C. S. Lewis, but which has long since become anachronistic (Sollors 1989, xix). When Gayatri Spivak writes about the need for "greater transnational literacy," her concern is with ways in which local experiences have been at least partially determined somewhere else, with ways in which the local and the global are often obliquely intertwined (Spivak 1999, 399). Although Spivak defines "transnationality" as an effect of the "financialization of the globe" (Spivak 1999, 3), it is not necessarily the case that any narrative of globalization must therefore be a hostile master narrative, coded masculine, which seeks simply to eradicate local difference; instead, a critical narrative of international American studies would seek to locate precisely those junctures where the proximate and distant illuminatingly converge and diverge. Over the past hundred years or so, in the wake of Arnold Toynbee and his like, "world history" has acquired a not undeserved reputation for being vague and amateurish, as academic historians have increasingly turned to specific areas of professional specialization; but, as recent work in postcolonialism has amply demonstrated, any circumscription of an area of expertise in this way necessarily risks occluding geometries of power that would spiral beyond its narrowly drawn circumference[5].

Looking back from 2004, Malini Johar Schueller observed that the "'postnationalist' agenda of the New Americanists in 1992 was to question the coherence of national identity and to demonstrate its constructedness based on an exclusion of raced and gendered others, not to broaden the field beyond the nation" (Schueller 2004, 163). Since that time, however, many of the most interesting studies of American culture have engaged with points of encounter and crossover between domestic and foreign territories: Brian T. Edwards's *Morocco Bound*, for example, traces the complex interconnections between US and Maghreb culture in the middle years of the twentieth century, while Brent Hayes Edwards has written compellingly about the francophone aspects of black internationalism in the 1920s. More fundamentally, however, what such works imply is both the allegorical dimension of American studies as a discursive phenomenon and also ways in which this allegorization has been suppressed in the interests of advancing a naturalized version of the subject, where particular objects could emerge in an unmediated way as symbols of the national heritage. This, of course, is precisely the Whitmanian tradition: eschewing the distractions and estrangements of allegory, Whitman in "Song of Myself" sought to position himself as a natural embodiment of an emerging American national consciousness, and the pedagogic imaginary of American studies has willingly encouraged such an apparently intuitive bond between producer and consumer: "what I assume you shall assume" (Whitman, 28). But as Brent Hayes Edwards notes, the whole process of linguistic translation disrupts such tautological cycles by implying a wider "process of linking or connecting across gaps—a practice we might term *articulation*" (Edwards 2003, 11); and part of this articulation of internationalism involves a reverse projection that throws light on the forms of alienation that have always been implicit within romantic forms of nationalism, including the Whitmanian paradigm. Francophone black internationalism, in other words, effectively throws shadows on the construction of US literary modernism, showing what it deliberately included or left out.

To reconceive American literary studies in global terms, therefore, is not to reject the significance of spatial location or corporeal embodiment, but to make place contingent. American literature has always sought to find space for itself, to locate the grounds on which the authenticity of its voice is predicated, but there have been tensions between an inherent partiality of perspectives and a desire to achieve the status of discursive synecdoche, to speak symbolically on behalf of the nation. This rupture between allegory and symbol has become even more marked in the era of globalization, when writers invested in the idea of America have found themselves increasingly perplexed about the coherence or otherwise of the term. Marjorie Perloff, for example, has expressed skepticism about the idea of "global consciousness"

(Perloff 1995, 181)—how many languages and cultures, she asks, can one possibly know?—but the crucial factor here is not what we know, but what we know that we do not know: the interplay, the Derridaean *brisure*, between circumference and its insufficiency. Thus, an international reading of American literature should not seek simply to abolish phenomenology, nor to minimize the value of its thick descriptions of various kinds. Rather, such a reading should demystify metaphorical maps of the world that position the USA at their subliminal center, a cartographic model that has frequently taken on a normative character, and replace them with an alternative grid in which relations between text and place are theorized more self-consciously.

In intellectual terms, as Amanda Anderson has noted, there is a long tradition privileging an "ideal of critical distance" (Anderson 2001, 4) stretching from eighteenth-century conceptions of cosmopolitanism through the Victorian dandy and Jew to more recent articulations of queer theory (Anderson 2001, 26). With respect to American literature, though, such categories of alienation are often seen as potentially disruptive because they threaten to interfere with that constitutional romanticism that would identify a subject as the source of its own integrity. We see these kinds of tensions emerging in the late work of Adrienne Rich, who in an essay written in 2000 expressed discomfort with the "feverish new pace of technological change" and complained of "how profit-driven economic relations filter into zones of thought and feeling" (Rich "Foreword," 1, 4). Citing Marx on the alienation of the senses, Rich chose explicitly to position her poetic language as a form of resistance to such a "calculus" (Rich "Foreword," 1), an attempt deliberately to reclaim the human body. What gives Rich's poetry its frisson, though, is precisely the conflict between a drive for democratic forms of emancipation on the one hand and various threats of corruption within language and society on the other. Rich looks back to Whitman as the guarantor of her assertion that poetry should be "liberatory at its core" (Rich "Poetry," 116): Whitman, she remarked in 2002, is one of America's true Founding Fathers, unlike the slaveholding politicians usually credited with that title (Rich "Six Meditations"). But for all of Rich's invective against "the compression of media power and resources into fewer and fewer hands, during and beyond the Reagan years" (Rich "Foreword," 3), along with her disgust at the "self-congratulatory self-promotion of capitalism as a global, transnational order" that she judged to be characteristic of the Clinton era (Rich "Arts," 147), the force of her aesthetics lies in the way her poems textually embody internal dialogues that speak to a decentering and fracturing of the self by the very forces the speaker herself abhors. We see this most overtly in the "Contradictions: Tracking Poems" section of *Your Native Land, Your Life* (1986):

> Don't let the solstice fool you:
> our lives will always be
> a stew of contradictions
> the worst moment of winter can come in April. . .
> (Rich *Your Native Land*, 83)

This is not, of course, to underestimate the strength or simply to bracket off the significance of Rich's political commitments. It is, though, to suggest how powerful has been the tradition within American literature linking what she called in a 1984 essay "a politics of location" with the authenticity of a discursive subject, something apparent within the symbiotic equation that comprises her book's title: "Your Native Land, Your Life." Rich's poetry is thus torn compulsively between place and displacement, with her personal investments coming reluctantly into collision with a wider geographical consciousness:

> As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government or by saying three times 'As a woman my country is the whole world.' Tribal loyalties aside, and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create. (Rich "Notes," 64)

As someone who dates individual poems assiduously and often locates them geographically—as, for example, in "Baltimore: a fragment from the Thirties" (Rich *Your Native Land*, 69)—Rich specifically endows her poetry with an open-ended quality which exposes it to temporal change, while also charging it with the dynamic of spatial relativity. Rich's poetry thus rotates upon a rhetoric of contradiction, and the richness and complexity of the internal dialectics within her poetry testify to ways in which globalization and American literature need not be mutually exclusive terms.

To reconfigure American studies for the twenty-first century, then, is not to understand the idea of America as inherently emancipatory, nor to outline the convergence of different disciplinary discourses so as to produce an interdisciplinary synthesis centered upon an American national model. Instead, it is to bring near and far into juxtaposition, to remap the field according to a logic of parallax so as to elucidate spaces where local, national, and transnational overlap, often in potentially troublesome or even incoherent ways. Bercovitch's argument that "America," in the wake of Biblical typology, has traditionally conceived of itself not as "a territorial definition. . . but the symbol of an ideological consensus" (Bercovitch 1978, 161) needs to be set against a counternarrative of "geographical materialism," in David Harvey's term, where the relative position of the United States on the world map is made plain (Harvey 1989, 359). One repercussion of the increasing consciousness of globalization within the United States has been to bring the whole idea of mapping more into the public domain, since it has become generally apparent that people tend to operate, either implicitly or explicitly, with imaginative conceptions of borders. This visibility has manifested itself at various times in art and culture, as for example in Jules de Balincourt's 2005 series of paintings *US World Studies*, which delight in reversing received assumptions about territorial locations and hierarchies (*USA Today*, 36-39). De Balincourt's paintings provocatively and colorfully resituate the United States in relation to the rest of the globe by imagining what the map of the country would look like if turned upside down or inside out. To re-read American cultural texts in the light of this global consciousness is to illuminate their "blind boundaries," in Julia Kristeva's term, the often problematic and uncertain way in which they locate themselves, consciously or unconsciously, between proximate and distant (Kristeva 1981, 124). American literature is, in other words, not just a natural growth from a particular place, but also a discursive phenomenon that makes the idea of place contingent. Instead of being understood simply as a narrative of national affiliation, whose teleology is directed inexorably toward emancipation, the circumference of American literature should rather be described on an international axis, as a field whose perimeters expand and contract in accordance with the maps it projects and the particular atlas it is enclosed by. To draw a global map of American literature is to suggest how the subject could be configured differently, while to restore a cartographic dimension to American literary studies more generally is to highlight ways in which these maps have changed, and are continuing to change, over time.

Notes

[1] Jen's earlier novel featuring the same Chinese-American family, *Typical American* (1991), similarly focusses on rituals of assimilation during the 1950s.

[2] Tellingly, Fluck cites in a footnote how "the institute at which I am teaching in Berlin—the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin"—has recently "developed a graduate program" funded by the German government "that will focus in systematic fashion on the analysis of contemporary American society and culture." He goes on to suggest it "is hard to imagine such a comprehensive approach taken in an American studies program in the United States at the present time, where American studies has progressively dissolved into programs for the study of particular ethnic or gendered groups, a development that would be further intensified in hemispheric or similar studies" (Fluck 2007, 31-32).

[3] Warren cites in particular Houston Baker's argument for a return to W.J. Cash's *The Mind of the South* as a way to understand the "psycho-dynamics" of contemporary America (Warren 2003, 76-77).

[4] On the global security state, see Pease 2004, 193.

[5] On the theory of world history and the problems associated with it, see Geyer and Bright 1995, 1036.

Works cited

Anderson, Amanda. *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Balibar, Etienne. *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Baucom, Ian. *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

Brown, Paul. *Global Warming: The Last Chance for Change*. London: A. C. Black—Guardian Books, 2006.

Cash, W. J. *The Mind of the South*. 1941. London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.

Doyle, Don H. "American Nationalism and the Dark Side of Idealism." Rothermere American Institute, University of Oxford, 26 April 2007.

Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Edwards, Brian T. *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Fluck, Winfried. "Inside and Outside: What Kind of Knowledge Do We Need? A Response to the Presidential Address." *American Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2007): 23-32.

Geyer, Michael and Charles Bright. "World History in a Global Age." *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (1995): 1034-60.

Gilroy, Paul. *Between Camps: Race, Identity, and Nationalism at the End of the Colour Line*. London: Allen Lane, 2000.

_____. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993.

Graff, Gerald. *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. 1998. Trans. Max Pensky. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2001.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.

_____. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Jacques, Martin. "Democracy Isn't Working." *Guardian* (London), June 22, 2004: 17.

Jen, Gish. *Mona in the Promised Land*. New York: Knopf, 1996.

_____. *Typical American*. 1991. London: Granta, 1998.

Kaplan, Caren. "Transporting the Subject: Technologies of Mobility and Location in an Era of Globalization." *PMLA* 117, no. 1 (2002): 32-42.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. 1977. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981.

Lenz, Günter H., Allan M. Winkler, Bruce Tucker, and Masako Notoji. "Transculturations: American Studies in a Globalizing World—the Globalizing World in American Studies." *Amerikastudien* 47, no. 1 (2002): 97-119.

Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2004.

Matthiessen, Francis Otto, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1941.

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Parrington, Vernon Louis. *Main Currents in American Thought*. 3 volumes. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927-1930.

Pease, Donald E. "The Extraterritoriality of the Literature for Our Planet." *ESQ* 50, nos. 1-3 (2004): 177-221.

Perloff, Marjorie. "'Literature' in the Expanded Field." In *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer, 175-186. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Rafael, Vicente L. "The Culture of Area Studies in the United States." *Social Text* 41 (Winter 1994): 91-111.

Rich, Adrienne. *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations*. New York: Norton, 2001.

_____. "Arts of the Possible." 1997. *Arts of the Possible* 146-167.

_____. "Foreword." *Arts of the Possible* 1-9.

_____. "Notes toward a Politics of Location." 1984. *Arts of the Possible* 62-82.

_____. "Poetry and the Public Sphere." 1997. *Arts of the Possible* 115-119.

_____. "Six Meditations in Place of a Lecture." Clark Lectures, University of Cambridge, 6 May 2002.

_____. *Your Native Land, Your Life: Poems*. New York: Norton, 1986.

Sassen, Saskia. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Schueller, Malini Johar. "Postcolonial American Studies." *American Literary History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 162-75.

Sennett, Richard. *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

Simpson, David. *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Sollors, Werner. "Introduction: The Invention of Ethnicity." In *The Invention of Ethncity*, ed. Sollors, ix-xx. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Soros, George. *The Age of Fallibility: The Consequences of the War on Terror*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2006.

Spengemann, William C. *A Mirror for Americanists: Reflections on the Idea of American Literature*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Stiglitz, Joseph. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. London: Penguin, 2002.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. New York: Viking Press, 1950.

Tyler, Moses Coit. *A History of American Literature, I: 1607-1676*. London: Putnam, 1879.

USA Today: New American Art from The Saatchi Gallery. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006.

Warren, Kenneth. *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Whitman, Walt. “Song of Myself.” In *Leaves of Grass*. 1855. Ed. Sculley Bradley and Harold W. Blodgett, 28-89. New York: Norton, 1973.

Maurizio Vaudagna

Looking Inwards, Looking Outwards: The United States and the World in the Tradition of American Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

This essay[1] discusses different interpretations of the intellectual and political history of American nationalism, patriotism, and cosmopolitanism in the postwar years. As a result, it will briefly examine the following:

a. the scholarly unwillingness to discuss an American nationalism in the context of the exceptionalist interpretation of U.S. history from the 1950s to the early 1960s;
b. the controversy between liberal and radical historians over the assessment of American nationalism from the 1970s through the 1990s;
c. the rise of a cosmopolitan-oriented critique of nationalism, particularly that of the United States in the 1990s;
d. the controversy, among present-day progressive scholars and public intellectuals, between those who assert the need for a "patriotic Left" and those who take a cosmopolitan perspective and criticize the rise of patriotism and nationalism that resulted from 9/11.[2]

For quite some time after the Second World War, the notion of nationalism was rarely attached to the United States. When the great historian of world nationalism and western civilization, Hans Kohn, published *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay* in 1957,[3] his attempt was rather unique. As Boyd C. Shafer, another distinguished historian of nationalism who gave only passing attention to the United States, commented in his review, "It is surprising that American historians have so far done so little work upon it" (Shafer 1958, 577-578).

In the fifties, the memory of the dramatic outcomes that European nationalisms had led to in both world wars was still fresh. Even if Kohn himself was developing a notion of "civic nationalism," which he identified with the liberal West and which would *then* enter the language of the trade, nationalism was still mainly a disparaging, aggressive concept, one whose main feature was, as Shafer put it: "the doctrine that the nation (the nationalist's own) is or should be dominant if not supreme among other nations and should take aggressive action to this end" (Shafer 1955, 37). "If nationalism was mainly that of 'blut und boden'," as a famous line goes, then it was typical of a "society united by a common error as to its origins and a common aversion to its neighbours."

Until the 1960s, the prevailing sense among both conservative and liberal historians was that the notion of nationalism would not fit the American experience, imbued as it was with the universalist values of the Enlightenment and its constitutional tradition, and free as it was from the romantic mythologies of the organic, superior nation that had framed the dangerous brands of European nationalism. The so-called insular/continental theory of nationalism seemed to strengthen the point about a non-nationalistic America. Continental states, with many nations placing pressure at the frontiers, would be more authoritarian, nationalist, and war-prone. "Insular states" like Great Britain and the United States—with maritime frontiers and fewer, weaker neighbors—would instead be more peaceful, more liberal and less nationalistic.

As the "European pathology" that historian Charles Maier identified with the first half of the twentieth century in the Old World receded in time, nationalism came to embody new meanings and new value implications. According to Hutchinson and Smith, "it is really only since the 1960s, after the spate of anti-colonial and ethnic nationalisms, that the subject has begun to be thoroughly investigated by scholars from several disciplines" (Hutchinson and Smith 1994, 3).[4] Out of these new scholarly interests emerged a revival of the subjectivist interpretation that defined nationalism not in terms of the alleged objective commonalities of a human group, such as language, ethnic origins, or shared culture, but as the personal and group perception of belonging to a common type of community called "the nation." The subjectivist interpretation, which Ernest Renan first advanced in 1882 using the impressive image of the "daily plebiscite" (Hutchinson and Smith 1994, 15), became increasingly popular after the 1960s and achieved a triumph in the famous 1983 book *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson[5]. After a timid start in the fifties, "civic nationalism" grounded "in the aspirations of its people for democracy and equal rights for all" (Bodnar 1996, 3)[6] became more popular too. An unanticipated revival of nationalism and particularistic ethnic demands in Europe, together with the breakdown of the communist world, risked transforming the dangerous flames of ethnic nationalisms into new tragedies, as has been the case with civil wars among former Yugoslav countries.

Because of these trends, nationalism became an ambiguous, multi-faceted term that could be turned into a positive or a destructive force depending on the meaning it came to assume, instead of a disgrace. National identity, patriotism and other words now appeared together with nationalism, formerly the dominant word, as strategic analytical terms with subtle differences in meaning.

After the critical sixties and seventies and the "Vietnam syndrome," interest in American nationalism experienced a revival in the eighties and nineties. It was probably unavoidable in a country where, according to the Gallup Poll, in 1994 more than 60% of the population defined themselves as very or extremely patriotic, whereas only about 30% of the sample said that their interest in national patriotism was average or scarce (Bodnar 1996, 16). Was it possible that such a large portion of the American population was prisoner to a combative ideology, inimical at some deeper level to the rest of the world? How could one assess the legacy of Wilsonianism—a major example, according to Liah Greenfeld, of the non-particularistic brand of nationalism that had become so rare after the tragedies of the twentieth century—in which a supposedly universalistic set of values with great potential for exportation to the outside world became the distinguishing feature of American national identity?

This presentation focuses on two postwar phases of historiographical and public controversy over American nationalism: that which coincided with the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, when the radical "new historians" revived the study of American nationalism and redefined its meaning; and the two-to-three-year period after 9/11, which witnessed a great surge of nationalism and patriotism after the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. One of the intellectual consequences of the latter was that it revived the controversy over both the relationship between nationalism and patriotism and that between nationalism/patriotism and cosmopolitanism, which first emerged in the 1990s. What followed was, among other things, a heated debate among progressive intellectuals—those who Richard Rorty in *Achieving Our Country* has called the "cultural Left"—over whether to use the patriotic/nationalistic framework to expound their goals or whether to embrace a cosmopolitan perspective in American public conversations. An attempt will be made to relate these cultural and historical controversies to public issues and events, as another example of the "public uses of history." This presentation, furthermore, will attempt to place the reading of postwar intellectual attitudes towards American nationalism in the context of what young Italian scholar Marco Silvani has said about the nature of nationalism: "[It] has always pursued two goals, one domestic and one external (or international)" (Silvani 2003, 37). American nationalism and its study will be viewed as a pendulum swinging from a prevalent, early interest in the international scene of the 1940s and 1950s, to the main domestic focus of the 1970s and 1980s, back to the revival of an international perspective after 9/11, even if the dichotomy is more a matter of nuance since the two sides of nationalism are so closely related.

The concept of nationalism, as opposed to that of "national identity," which is less geared to a spirit of militant separateness from other nations and peoples, has remained rather controversial among many American and foreign U.S. historians, as well as most of the American public, down to the present day. Until the late 1960s, the prevalent scholarly opinion was that the idea of "American exceptionalism" made the category of nationalism inapplicable to the American experience. However, the rapid process that in some thirty years destroyed huge European empires in the name of anti-colonial nationalism spurred a revival of scholarly attention to studies of nationalism, which could not help but deal with the United States as well.

At that point, the scholarly conversation shifted and American nationalism became a controversial issue between liberal historians and the radical so-called "new historians," because the notion of exceptionalism was being increasingly abandoned by most of the Americanist historical profession. Many liberal historians accepted that an American nationalism did exist, but it was then portrayed as drastically different from the dangerous, romantic, ethnic, and organic European versions. The notion of "civic nationalism" that Hans Kohn developed in the 1950s to identify its democratic brand, which in general had not been applied to the U.S., became the prevalent opinion of the trade. For example, George Mosse, a major authority on the history of nationalism who has devoted almost no attention to the United States, said in 1989:

> This nationalism, [that of the United States] . . . had a different flavor than the European . . . the very structure of American society, its multiethnic composition and its strong regionalist character required the keeping of a national conscience based on universal values and on an individualism based on the Enlightenment (and according to the language of the Enlightenment, individual liberty and self-determination were sufficient warrant of justice and progress). (Mosse 1989, 14)

The Enlightenment stopped being the reason for the absence of American nationalism and became the foundation of a benevolent, different kind of nationalism, one that went hand-in-hand hand with the principle of democracy. The result, as Marco Silvani says, is that:

> Domestically, [democratic nationalism] has been a struggle to give people a sense of unity through the vesting of democratic rights in all individuals. Internationally, the principle of national self-determination of the people allows for national independence and a foreign policy of the nation-state based on popular will without interference from other states. (Silvani 2003, 37, my translation)

A fundamental characteristic of US-style civic nationalism was the merging of nationalism and pluralism, itself a central feature of liberal democracy. For example, in a recent, fundamental book on comparative nationalisms, Liah Greenfeld says of the United States:

> Yet although America was now seen as a unitary polity, rather than as a federation of states, it differed significantly from unitary continental nations in Europe, for it still was an association of individuals and therefore a composite body rather than a higher individuality. Underneath the nation in the singular, the original nation in the plural remained. In contrast to the European nations, where the primacy of the nation over the individual imposed general uniformity, the unchallenged primacy of the individual allowed—even guaranteed—plurality of tastes, views, attachments, aspirations and self-definitions, within the shared national framework. Pluralism was built into the system. (Greenfeld 1992, 482-483)

In his recent book *The Liberty of Strangers: Making the American Nation,* British sociologist Desmond King shows the strength of group affiliations that are supposedly inimical to a unified, collective national identity yet characterize US nationalism. He stresses the persistence of group loyalties that have often been treated in the past as excluded, racialized communities in a highly hierarchical understanding of American identity. According to King, nowadays the new definition of American nationality is characterized by the persistence of group loyalties, brought together by the sharing of constitutional principles and democratic procedures.[7]

Add the trend toward enlarging the ranks of political, economic and social citizenship to the virtues of civic nationalism, and the result is that universalism, pluralism, inclusion and loyalty to democratic institutions became the defining features of liberal (and American) nationalism and basically reiterated the main qualities of liberal democracy. Since, in the great debate over the wars of the twentieth century, democracy was understood to be peaceful and totalitarianism aggressive, the marriage of democracy and nationalism was seen to tame the latter's "animal instincts," which had instead had full sway on the dictatorial European nationalisms of the early twentieth century.

The radical "new historians," whose scholarship peaked in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, brought about a double shift in the former notion of American nationalism. On the one hand, they helped re-legitimize its use as a strategic category in the socio-historical reading of the American experience.

Yet their studies were more often directed toward domestic issues than toward the more traditional areas of international relations. Merging ideals of popular pluralism, people's empowerment, and a prevalent focus on the lower, marginalized ranks of American life, these historians, who profoundly changed the view of the American past with extraordinary vigor and skill, concentrated more on domestic issues than international ones. Scholars like John Bodnar, David Waldstreicher, Gary Gerstle, and, much more recently, Patrice Higonnet, have re-examined the place of American nationalism in U.S. society. On the one hand, Gerstle for example has found out that in the 1930s, industrial workers could use the language of Americanism, as opposed to what many consider the unavoidably conservative, even reactionary, nature of nationalism, to foster progressive, egalitarian causes in an effort to expand the rights of American citizenship. On the other hand, a number of events and trends in American history, from the racialized ideologies of late-nineteenth-century imperialism, to the Ku Klux Klan trying to purge "real America" of blacks, Jews and Catholics, to the popular protests under the American flag against "antiwar hippies and radical blacks" of 1976, show that ethnic, racial nationalism is far from absent from the American experience. The result of these "dreams of power and dreams of fairness," in the words of John Bodnar (Bodnar 1996, 14),[8] is the contradictory, ambiguous character of American nationalism in terms of both the trend toward mental and social unification—one of the main features of nationalism in general—and the effort to encompass all the members of a national community in the "circle of we." As Gerstle commented:

> Any examination of American nationalism must, sooner or later, contend with its contradictory character. On the one end, it offers a civic creed promising all Americans the same individual rights, irrespective of colour, religion or sex. That creed has strongly influenced American policy and society, imparting social cohesion to a sprawling, heterogeneous population and inspiring countless democratic movements. On the other hand, American nationalism has long harbored racial ideologies that defined the United States and its nation in ethno-racial ways and have sought to prove American racial superiority through economic might and military conquest. (Gerstle 1999, 1280)[9]

In *The American Prospect* (1999), Robert B. Reich, President Clinton's former Secretary of Labor, had this to say:

> There are two faces of nationalism: one negative, one positive. The negative face wants to block trade, deter immigrants, and eschew global responsibilities. The positive one wants to reduce poverty among the nation's children, ensure that everyone within America has decent health care, and otherwise improve the lives of all our people. (Reich 1999, 64)

The double nature of nationalistic politics with a domestic focus seems to be the main contribution made by the "new historians" to the study of American nationalism and patriotism.

The rise of neoconservatism, the insistence on military solutions to international issues, the new threats of the post-Cold War world, the sense of unlimited discretion held by the leaders of the "only superpower" and in particular the terrorist attack of 9/11 have led to a new, drastic change in the prevailing understanding of American nationalism and patriotism. In his latest book, David Farber has moved the point of view from the domestic to the international and has analyzed how the United States is assessed and viewed worldwide. Consequently, it is not by chance that in a recent paper of his he invited scholars to focus on a new type of American nationalism, which he has called "superpower nationalism." As he writes in his paper:

> We need to accept that the fundamental role the United States government, supported by a great many Americans, has played as world hegemon and as creator of a domestic security state has become a central aspect of American nationalism. (Farber 2007, 2)[10]

As Bodnar has stressed, "most nationalisms…have emerged from encounters with external forms of power and fears of further domination by others" (Bodnar 1996, 7). A focus on the transnational dimension is therefore somewhat inbuilt in the very idea of nationalism. It would be surprising if neoconservatism, international turmoil, the terrorist attack of 9/11, the prevalent international tinge that has characterized the Bush administrations, and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in the context of the "global war on terror" had not affected the perception of American national identity and the studies thereof. John Bodnar makes the point very clear in his definition of ethnic nationalism:

> Ethnic nationalism fosters the idea that a community of racial, ethnic or religious groups defines the individual and the nation. The fundamental appeal to loyalty is fundamentally made as part of an effort either to defend the political community against external threats or to purify it of unwanted elements within the community. (Bodnar 1996, 6)

The attacks of 9/11 have been the decisive spark that has ignited a change in the attitude of many Americans with regard to the place of the United States in the world, one that had been maturing for quite some time among conservatives and neoconservatives. Going back to conservatives of the 1950s, via Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan and the coming of age of radical republicanism, the rosy vision of America in the world—that which historian Tony Judt has called "optimistic universalism" and has been the legacy of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy but has also encompassed moderate republicans of Ike Eisenhower's brand—has been substituted by a darker vision. In the Wilsonian tradition, the exportable American national identity of democracy and abundance was supposedly easily recognized by world nations because they were essentially inhabited by people of goodwill and good sense. International organizations, multilateralism, and American leadership conducted the world along a path of prevailing peace and economic growth in a paternalistic but helpful hegemony that probably came to peak in the great boom of the western 1950s. The interdependence between the international and the domestic scene in the Wilsonian vision of American nationality was represented by the fact that the same optimism characterized the liberal vision of American democracy, in which a sovereign people of common sense—in Franklin D. Roosevelt's perception of democratic nationalism—could make beneficial decisions for the present and the future of their own country (and of the rest of the world as well). In the 1970s and 1980s, the merging of the cult of the "American people" and the discovery of ethnicity and multiculturalism caused the nation and internationalism to magically join hands and appear to work once again. Since the American people were part of a "melting pot" in which they encountered many cultures and ways of life from all over the world, each contributing its own richness and creativity to the common American "fatherland," then the meeting between America and the world allowed for the merging of populist, pluralist nationalism on the one hand and multilateral internationalism on the other.

With the decline of liberalism, its global optimism has been challenged by a neoconservative mental landscape that has picked up the basic pessimism of the conservative tradition and has redesigned it in radical terms. In the new rationale, the global thrust of America is not taking place in a world of goodwill, but one of alleged hostilities, third-world anti-Americanists, "Euroweanies," unfair East Asian competitors, "rogue states," and Muslim terrorists. International aid, nation building, multilateralism, and the international community have allegedly been of little help, and the United Nations is an (ineffective) stage from which to voice anti-American invectives. America has had to be pre-emptive, unilateral, counting on its military superiority to discipline a threatening world gone astray.

As with Wilsonian optimistic liberalism, neoconservatism too has extended the pessimism of the conservative tradition to the domestic scene: the vision is that popular sovereignty is a fiction, that wise decisions are for the elites to make, and that democratic consensus and elections do not register "real" needs, preferences and values but are instead a matter of competing skills in publicity and campaign management. Since the post-1989 world, against all hope, has turned out to be one full of tension, the tragedy of 9/11 has given this vision and its consequent foreign policy a legitimacy it had never gained at the polls.

Shifting focus through the multiple meanings of the word, the neoconservative vision of the United States tends to move the understanding of American nationalism dangerously close to hegemonic and neo-colonialist perceptions. The danger is in reviving the sense of hostility, the superiority complex vis-à-vis other peoples and nations, and the "intimate connection between nationalism and war" (Hutchinson and Smith 1994, 9), which are all part of the multiple interpretations of nationalism and have emerged from time to time throughout American history. Deeply rooted in notions of nationalism is the concept of separateness, "a heartfelt detachment from other peoples" (Trommler 1998, 21), a longing for exclusive loyalty, for freedom from external constraints, that feeds into ideas of international hierarchies, differentiated dignities, and unequal human values. The notion of equal nations coming together in brotherhood that has characterized the brightest moments of the cosmopolitan, universalist nationalism of the nineteenth century, as in the work of Giuseppe Mazzini and Johann Herder, runs the risk of being replaced again by one based on enmity and inequality, as in many tragic moments of the twentieth century and, as far as the United States is concerned, in the peak years of the imperialist pressure between the Spanish-American War and World War One. As Philip Schlesinger has stressed, national identity is an individual and collective perception that may or may not be part of a nationalist program, while "nationalism…tends to carry the sense of a community mobilized…in the pursuit of a collective interest". (Trommler 1998, 28)

The terrorist attacks on 9/11 caused a sudden surge of patriotism and have confirmed that patriotic temperature peaks in times of war and armed conflict, when a human group has the sense of being under attack. The results of intense patriotism are well known: a strong support for the incumbent president, an enhanced spirit of cooperation and community among citizens, a stronger sense of belonging, exemplified by the slogan "United We Stand," and the ubiquitous showing of the flag. In general, the United States is one of the most patriotic/nationalistic countries in the world, but the 9/11 terrorist attacks intensified its patriotic heat. Patriotic mobilization in the U.S. has obviously benefited incumbent officials, it has legitimized a very assertive (to say the least!) foreign policy, which never received support from voters before 9/11, and it has stabilized the "rally around the flag" effect of perceived violent threat. Looking at Bush's support rate after 9/11, political scientists Marc Hetherington and Michael Nelson have said:

> The September 11 rally effect is distinctive for at least three reasons. First, of all the recorded rally effects, it is the largest. Bush's approval rating soared in the Gallup Poll from 51% on September 10 to 86% on September 15. This 35-point increase nearly doubles the previous record, the 18-point boost triggered by his father's launch of Operation Desert Storm of January 1991. Second, the further increase in Bush's approval rating to 90% on September 22 represents the highest rating ever recorded for a president. Third, the September 11 rally effect has lasted longer than any in the history of polling. As of November 10, 2002, Bush's approval rating was 68%-22 points below its peak but still much higher than his rating 13 months earlier. (Hetherington and Nelson 2003, 37)[11]

The Bush administration has interpreted the aerial attack as an "act of war," the answer to which could not but be a "war on terrorism," instead of a matter for international criminal police. The purpose of the "act of war" interpretation of 9/11 was, among other things, to mobilize and then stabilize over time the increase in patriotism, to make it the "normal" context of a "long war," not the frenzy of an emergency. However, according to writer Susan Sontag, we are dealing with a "phantom war": "real wars have a beginning and an end; Bush's war has neither. This is one sign," says Sontag, "that this is not a war, but, rather, a mandate for expanding the use of American power". (Sontag 2002, 32)

In the months immediately after 9/11, dissenting voices were few and the later *mea culpa* of some leading newspapers, wondering whether they had accepted a wartime discipline and adhered to the administration's political goals in the name of security, was a symptom of patriotism as silencer. Calls for national cohesion and critics being blamed as "anti-patriotic" and "anti-American" were frequent and basically successful. "Describing America's new foreign policy," added Sontag, "as actions undertaken in wartime is a powerful disincentive to having a mainstream debate about what is actually happening . . . Those who objected to the jihad language used by the American government (good versus evil, civilization versus barbarism) were accused of condoning the attacks". (Sontag 2002, 32)

However, as 9/11 has receded in time and there has fortunately been no successful terrorist action on American territory since—contrary to what most Americans expected initially—the atypical nature of the "war on terrorism" has come to light. This has made it impossible to sustain a long-term consensus, as has often been the case with traditional wars. As the public has become increasingly aware that the issue of terrorism has been used to legitimize the assault on Iraq, the "war" has essentially come to mean the invasion of foreign countries: the less domestically fought-over Afghanistan, and the increasingly controversial Iraq. Alleged ties between Saddam and al-Qaeda have not been proved, weapons of mass destruction have not been found, and a sense of shame and regret has hit at least part of the American public vis-à-vis prisoners being mistreated and tortured at the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo detention centers. Then President Bush boldly proclaimed that the war in Iraq had been won while at the same time continued infighting proved that armed confrontation was anything but over. Furthermore, the present chaos and quasi-civil war in Iraq shows that reasonable plans to manage the country after conquest were either non-existent or amateurish, to say the least, as meanwhile a trail of blood from people of every nation has accompanied the "coalition forces" in their attempt to keep the country under control. All of this brought the former patriotic unity to an end. "Gitlin and his wife took down the American flag," says reviewer Neil McLaughlin of Todd Gitlin, the former SDS leader, historian of the 1960s and pundit of communication studies at Columbia University who has recently published a book entitled *Intellectuals and the Flag*, "since American solidarity with the 9/11 victims had morphed into nationalist fervor over George W. Bush's war on terror" (McLaughlin 2007, 1). Not every American moved into the opposition camp, even if Bush's rates of popularity plummeted; many Americans believe that, even if the security dividend of the Iraq invasion is in utter doubt, as long as "the boys" are still over there and putting their lives in jeopardy, then a decline in the support of the war would basically imply a price to be paid in

American lives. Critics of the war, however, are now in the majority: they stress that not only has the war most probably been lost, but it has been an unjust war from the very beginning and American lives need to be rescued by withdrawing U.S. troops away from “the mess.”

In the context of the hot patriotic temperature of the period immediately following 9/11, a rather bitter controversy emerged over how the American intellectual “Left,” both inside and outside the Democratic Party, would interpret patriotism. Was it a value to be shared per se, for its intrinsic worth, as a potential avenue for progress and justice, as democratic nationalism had allegedly been in the past? Was it to be embraced for reasons of political expediency, which suggested that a public and progressive discourse could have some impact on the larger public opinion only if it set itself within the vast moral and mental arena of American patriotism? How much overlapping, proximity or distance was there between patriotism and nationalism, and how could the cultural Left avoid being swallowed up by a conservative neo-nationalism which was exclusionary domestically and “muscular” internationally? Cosmopolitan values also came to the fore: were American progressive intellectuals to share a patriotism that was in any case based on the preference given to one’s own nationals vis-à-vis the whole of mankind? Should they embrace instead a cosmopolitan point of view based on the equal worth of all human beings, which in the past had been advanced by pacifists and international democratizers who wanted nations to obey international laws and put an end to their anarchy and violence? Was cosmopolitanism still an abstract, elitist, uprooted vision, distant from people’s real life, as critics had often objected in the past?

The controversy was not new: it had already emerged in the 1990s, and was revived in new terms after 9/11. There were two sides to it: one was the relationship between patriotism and nationalism, and the other the contrast of the former and the latter with cosmopolitanism. In the 1990s, the discussion was launched because of a new set of events: globalization, the new assertive American foreign policy, and the disillusionment caused by the fact that the end of the Cold War had not inaugurated an era of peace and world harmony as had been predicted in high political and intellectual circles in the wake of the western victory over communism. However, the most important area of controversy was the insistence of both conservatives and many traditional liberals on a renewed sense of national pride against the “politics of difference” advanced by multiculturalists and ethnic pluralists. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.’s *The Disuniting of America* of 1992, against the supposedly fragmenting effects of institutionalized and politicized ethnic affiliations, was the pivotal intellectual voice of the new insistence on national identity. Its supporters stressed the alleged precondition of a unified notion of "one people," objecting to the multiple affiliations that progressive historians and social scientists have identified as typical of American nationalism(s).

Another new development consisted in the emerging of novel social groups whose culture, education, social and economic positions would—it was hoped—lead cosmopolitanism to rely on larger constituencies than just the pacifist intellectuals of the past. These included a new breed of young people who had familiarized themselves with many countries and peoples: the supranational community of research technology, those involved in culture and the media, the transnational managerial stratum of the multinational corporations, and the new migrations ultimately connected distant countries and continents. It is interesting to note that some of the leading voices to uphold cosmopolitan values in recent years, like Edward Said or Kwame Anthony Appiah, are themselves of post-ethnic origins that are difficult to place in a definite national context (Said for example is Palestinian-British, Appiah is Ghanaian-British, and both have lived at different times in Africa, Europe and America).

In the 1990s the most notable intellectual criticism of nationalism, national identity, and patriotism, and their American versions in particular from the vantage point of cosmopolitan values, occurred in the fall of 1994. It was then that the distinguished political philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who shared the worldwide cooperative ideal of Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, had herself worked on global issues at the United Nations and had close ties with Indian culture, published an essay entitled "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" in the *Boston Review*, which was later reprinted and commented on in the well-known book *For Love of Country*. Nussbaum's piece has remained central to the framing of some fundamental principles and morals of the so-called "globalists," while the post-9/11 intellectual champions of "patriotic progressivism" have tended to cite her as the standard-bearer of the opposing opinion.

Citing Rabindranath Tagore, Nussbaum stressed the moral primacy of cosmopolitanism, based on the equal dignity of all human persons and the moral duty of giving our primary loyalty to the "imagined community" of mankind as a whole. She has outlined a "citizenship of the world" that would prevail over national citizenships:

> I believe . . . that this emphasis on patriotic pride is both morally dangerous and, ultimately, subversive of some of the worthy goals patriotism sets out to serve; for example, the goal of national unity in devotion to worthy moral ideals of justice and equality. These goals. . .would be better served by an ideal that is in any case more adequate to our situation in the contemporary world, namely the very old ideal of the cosmopolitan, the person whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings. (Nussbaum 2002, 4)

Caring for "one's own sphere" (Nussbaum 2002, 13) can certainly be justified in universalist terms, Nussbaum added as she engaged in the never-ending effort of cosmopolitans to match the worldwide ideal of general humanism with the specific pressures, relations and potentials of everyone's immediate environments; but, she continued, the utmost care should be taken so that local or national focus does not give rise to a set of principles encompassing unacceptable hierarchies of dignity between "my own nationals" and all the rest of mankind. In spite of the attraction of "the warm, nestling feeling of patriotism" (Nussbaum 2002, 15), the "politics of nationalism, is self-defeating." "To worship one's country as if it were a god is indeed to bring a curse upon it" (Nussbaum 2002, 16), as it encourages inclusive nationalism to shift towards exclusion and make those very ideals of justice and equal citizenship proclaimed by civic patriotism impossible.

With her essay, Nussbaum tried to carve out a "third way" in a debate that was juxtaposing the supporters of the "politics of patriotism and national identity" against the partisans of the so-called "politics of difference," based on the multiple contributions to "what it means to be an American"—to cite a famous essay by Michael Walzer (2004)—from different ethnic, racial, gender and religious groups. If Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s 1992 *The Disuniting of America* was a pivotal, early statement of the national "patriotic" stand, Nussbaum's criticism was especially directed at philosopher Richard Rorty's article of February 1994 (which then became a book entitled *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*). In it, he argued that the American intellectual "Left" (meaning radicals and leftist-liberals) had caused its own marginality, political impotence, and intellectual disaster by rejecting the basic patriotism of the American people and the values embodied in the American experience. Rorty held that national pride was the political equivalent of individual self-respect and that it was impossible to criticize America unless one also "rejoiced" in the common American identity (Rorty 1994, 27). Nussbaum retorted by saying that "[Rorty] nowhere considers the possibility of a more international basis for political emotion and concern" (Nussbaum 2002, 4).

It was in the 1990s, under the influence of global issues, anti-global and peace movements, the controversy over the nature and political color of globalization, and the growth of NGOs, that the old traditions of pacifism and internationalism were redesigned in terms of what has been called a "rooted cosmopolitanism," which has now found significant social bases and new, mobilized avenues to express efficient political criticism. The new social bases of the cosmopolitan worldview could be an answer to Robert B. Reich's objection, put forth in an article significantly entitled "The Nationalism We Need," that "pure globalists have noble values…but I worry that globalists may feel less compelled to act than people whose sentiments are more rooted . . . For most of us it is easier to empathize with compatriots than with humanity as a whole . . . ” (Reich 1999, 64).

All observers are unanimous in stressing the intense surge of patriotism that developed in the United States in the wake of 9/11. How profound or enduring that patriotism will prove to be is a matter of some discussion. For some, like Amy D. Burke, it has mainly concerned symbolic acts, with little change in everyday habits (Burke 2002, 44-46). For others, it has at least temporarily revived the ties of commonality among Americans. Its rise, however, has been unmistakable. According to poll data, in the eighties the United States led the list of the most patriotic countries, or at any rate was always in second or third place. Harvard sociologist Theda Skocpol has stressed that “in the days and weeks after 9/11 more than four fifths of Americans displayed the U.S. flag on homes, cars, trucks, and clothing” (Skocpol 2002, 537).

Because of the surge in patriotism after 9/11, the discussion of the 1990s has been revived in scholarly circles and among public intellectuals over whether the “cultural Left” should embrace patriotism as a moral duty of national solidarity and as a way to prevent marginalization in the national conversation. In the context of this particular controversy, “the Left” is meant to identify the intellectual milieu found in academic departments, in reviews like *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *Dissent*, and among the more thoughtful leaders of American radical and left wing liberal movements and political associations. Editors and collaborators of *Dissent* have been spearheading an attack on the so-called “anti-American” Left, vindicating instead what they call a “patriotic left.” Historian Michael Kazin has been most sanguine in stressing American-dream-style progressivism. One of his *Dissent* articles opens with a sort of declaration of faith:

> I love my country. I love its passionate and endlessly inventive culture, its remarkably diverse landscape, its agonizing and wonderful history. I particularly cherish its civic ideals—social equality, individual liberty, a populist democracy—and the unending struggle to put their laudable, if often contradictory, claims into practice. I realize that patriotism, like any powerful ideology, is a “construction” with multiple uses, some of which I abhor. But I persist in drawing stimulation and pride from my American identity. (Kazin 2002, 23-24)

“Unfortunately,” Kazin adds, “this is not a popular sentiment in the contemporary Left.” From allegedly uprooted, elitist intellectuals like Noam Chomsky, who denounced the silencing and disciplining effect of patriotism, to writer Katha Pollit, who said in an article in *The Nation* that “The globe, not the flag, is the symbol that’s wanted now,” (Kazin 2002, 41) the patriotic spirit is allegedly—in the opinion of most *Dissent* editors and other former or present-day radicals—the target of elitist contempt among left-leaning intellectuals. Americanism, says Kazin, has been the guiding star leading progressive radicals and liberals to pursue and achieve a higher degree of justice, with the result that “the gap between promise and fulfillment is narrower for Americanism than it is for other universalist creeds such as communism, Christianity, and Islam” (Kazin, 42). On the other hand, the widespread patriotic ethos of Americans makes the anti-patriotic left out to be a bunch of “the rich and famous” who cherish an irrelevant cultural cosmopolitanism that elicits Kazin’s disdain:

> Disconnected as they are from any national or local constituency, global leftists now live at risk of being thrust to the margins—abstract sages of equity, operatives of nongovernmental organizations engaged in heroic but Sisyphean tasks, or demonstrators roving from continent to continent in search of bankers to heckle. (Kazin 2002, 43)

Along similar lines, Todd Gitlin joined in inviting the cultural Left to share in the patriotic ranks. Together with the editors of *Dissent*, Gitlin has stressed that the globalist Left will never be credible to American public opinion as long as it “expresses only a pro forma concern for the actual and potential victims of terrorism”(Gitlin 2006, 42). As a result, the “patriotic Left” embraced the “war on terror” and the need for military action, albeit with many reservations. Michael Walzer, a leading public intellectual and himself an editor of *Dissent*, discarded the argument that security against terrorism was a matter for global criminal police, and in the spring of 2002, said that large sections of the antiwar movement were “indecent” for their lack of focus on the threat to American lives (Walzer 2002, 1).

The appeal to a “patriotic Left” that *Dissent*, among others, launched in a controversial seminar held in New York in October 2002 provoked an intense reaction among other progressive scholars. They challenged the wisdom of the patriotic stand as potentially subservient to conservative public discourse and ready to embrace a kind of realism that would cause the basic principles of progressivism to be relinquished. Citing Mark Twain, who in 1908 called patriotism a “grotesque and laughable word” (Wreszin 2003, 83) historian Michael Wreszin wrote a letter to *Dissent* entitled “Confessions of an Anti-American,” in which he radically criticized the project of the “patriotic Left.” “Must one display the flag,” wondered Wreszin, “before criticizing one’s country or engaging in a protest?” (Wreszin 2003, 83). He stressed the risk of acquiescence and extolled the duty of “critical independence” to counter the argument that public marginalization would result from an internationalist viewpoint:

> I can still recall Irving Howe’s piece in the *Partisan Review* in the winter of 1954 on the *Age of Conformity*. It was a lament for the acquiescence of intellectuals in accepting much of the rampant nationalism, even patriotism of that time. He reminded his readers that the glorious vision of intellectual life was a “readiness to stand alone” and to nourish a healthy skepticism: “The banner of critical independence, ragged and torn though it may be, is still the best we have.” (Wreszin 2003, 86)

Howe notwithstanding, as Nussbaum already said in the 1990s, the social vision held by the "patriotic Left" is outmoded, since globalization causes cosmopolitan-leaning social groups to emerge in the post-national society. People like Noam Chomsky and Edward Said (the two villains of Gitlin's book), many journalists from *The Nation*, historian Eric Foner and others have, according to Wreszin, "disavowed a patriotism that demands conformity and acceptance" (Wreszin 2003, 84) in favor of the principles of justice and democracy, while Walzer and the "patriotic Left," in Wreszin's opinion, "have been intimidated by the increasingly strident nationalism in the country". (Wreszin 2003, 84)[12]

The relationship between patriotism and nationalism is a locus of uneasiness and controversy for members of the "patriotic Left." The word "nationalism," in spite of all its reinterpretations, still sounds somewhat sinister both in intellectual circles and even more in public conversation. Some of the supporters of patriotic progressivism are acutely aware of the issue, especially at a time when the field of American nationalism seems to be dominated by conservatives who tend to revive its assertive, militaristic, and exclusionary features. Central to Rorty's book is the question of how American patriotism and national sentiment have come to be regarded as an endorsement of atrocities, of what Theodore Roosevelt, when dealing with the Philippines, called "attendant cruelties," from the slaughter of Native Americans to the curse of slavery, to the Vietnam war, to the Abu Ghraib scandal, to the rape of the environment. How is it, wonders Rorty, that "the only version of national pride encouraged by American popular culture is a simpleminded militaristic chauvinism?" (Rorty 1998, 4).[13] Various answers have been put forth. In 1995, for example, Italian intellectual Maurizio Viroli, then at Princeton, wrote a treatise of significant scholarly success entitled *For Love of Country*. The text was based on the notion that civic patriotism was totally different from nationalism and was in fact a desirable alternative that, vis-à-vis the new nationalist wave engulfing the Old World, could spare Europe from the returning threats of its traditional ills. Viroli's book was actually a comprehensive history, one that has sometimes been criticized in terms of the mission determining the analysis, of the distance between and opposition of nationalism and patriotism through time. While his essay would resonate in Europe, his argument also added to the ammunition of American patriotic radicals.[14]

The relationship between patriotism and nationalism is, however, more complicated than Viroli claims. For example, an online definition of patriotism picks up the point:

> Patriotism is closely related to nationalism. Differences between the two are commonly claimed to be that patriotism is primarily emotional and related to positive attitudes to

> one's own community, while nationalism combines both positive attitudes to one's own community and negative attitudes to other communities and is related to war. ("Patriotism," *All Experts*)

The proximity between nationalism and patriotism has been especially problematic for liberals and patriotic radicals. Conservatives often posit the identity of the two without any conflict. Samuel P. Huntington, one of the clearest "neoconservative" (or what he calls "doctrinaire conservative") minds, is adamant on this point. In a 1999 article in the *National Interest*, he outlined a conservative foreign policy program based on a "Robust Nationalism," as the article is entitled. "Like liberals," says Huntington, "neo-conservatives wish to use American power to promote the American dream abroad" (Huntington 1999, 7). The two strategic values held by conservatives to further the "global mission of promoting good abroad" (Huntington 1999, 7) are religion and patriotism: "conservatives rank devotion to country along with the devotion to God. Patriotism is perhaps the prime conservative value. Conservatives give their highest loyalty to their country, its values, culture and institutions" (Huntington 1999, 10). Nor is Huntington reluctant to embrace the military aspect of nationalism/patriotism: "Neoconservatism emphasizes the role of United States as global policeman, liberalism its role as global social worker" (Huntington 1999, 7).

While in the seventies the so-called "new historians" attempted to identify an American nationalism that furthers reform and justice at home, after 9/11 the focus has moved full swing back to the world scene and what has been called a "superpower nationalism." The way to legitimize the use of force by the "lonely superpower" is engineered by Huntington through the "normalization" of war. While he concedes that for liberals war is an aberration that should be eliminated, Huntington approvingly cites an article by Robin Fox in the *National Interest*:

> Wars are not a disease to be cured, but a part of the normal human condition. They stem from what we are, not from some contingencies of what we do from time to time ("history"). They are, like religion and prostitution, basic responses to basic human fears and hopes. (Huntington 1999, 10)[15]

The idea that the continuation of the present state of affairs lies at the foundation of conservative thought, be it the essentialist "human nature" or the refusal to see human ills as problems to be cured, is crystal clear in these citations. They are also a notable program of what has been called "Wilsonianism with boots," despite the fact that the merging of Wilson and boots seems quite paradoxical, since the purpose of Wilsonian internationalism was to realize the slogan "A war to end all wars" and advance perpetual peace.

The interdependence between domestic and international aspects of nationalism is also reaffirmed. The reappearance of an assertive, foreign-oriented nationalism in the United States leads, furthermore, to the re-emergence of an exclusionary vision of American national identity in the domestic arena that recreates the logic of stratified, racialized communities and attempts to homogenize the definition of the American nation in one, imperative, hierarchical meaning. Huntington, who has been a major spokesman for this interpretation of American nationality, has publicized what he considers the merits of an exclusionary, unifying definition of the American identity in *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* of 2004. In it, he portrays America as a "Protestant settlers" (not immigrant) society, one that has developed the defining values of Americanness in terms of representative institutions, religious beliefs and work ethic, all of which are foreign to Mexican-Americans and dual citizens, cosmopolitans in the intellectual and corporate worlds, and "deconstructionist" politicians and thinkers from Bill Clinton to Michael Walzer, who support the allegedly fragmenting and destructive vision of a pluralist American self. Reassured by the image of Ronald Reagan, the cowboy president, neoconservatives have revived a vision of the "American people" that has reverted back to a "Waspier" core, one in which anti-intellectualism, the idea that becoming American means adhering to a unified, mainstream identity, and a fear of "un-meltable ethnics" have enjoyed new favor (Huntington *Who Are We* and "Dead Souls", 5-18).

While Huntington's hardened vision of patriotic conservatism may have no problem equating patriotism and nationalism, liberals and patriotic radicals who belong to a tradition that is deeply influenced by pacifist ideals definitely have problems accepting their similarity, particularly at a time when American nationalism seems to embrace a spirit of superiority. As a result, many leftist-liberals and radicals, and in particular the intellectual leaders of the "patriotic cultural left," refuse even to consider the issue in order to avoid the persistent taint of aggression that accompanies nationalism in everyday language. A short search through relevant *Dissent* articles reveals that neither is the proximity between nationalism and patriotism dealt with, nor does the notion of an American nationalism appear in the language of the review.

The embarrassment of the "patriotic Left" is also due to the fact that their preferences are critically appraised by globalists and cosmopolitans. There are many critical points. In addition to subservience to conservative nationalism and to the George W. Bush administration's interpretation of security and the use of force, two critical points on matters of principle are worth recalling in particular. First is the need for nationalism to appropriate and particularize values that belong to the generality of human beings, a position that has been exemplified by the question posed by Yale philosopher David Bromwich: "if we can get people to like the good things better with American names, then why not call the good things American?" (Bromwich 1998, 586). Second is the point made by Nussbaum in the 1990s that civic and ethnic nationalisms are not polar opposites, as most scholars have said in the past. They are complementary and feed into each other. If the universality of mankind begins with subdivisions within its overall unity into Americans, French, Italians etc., then there is no intellectual obstacle; in fact, there is a psychological inducement to subdivide further: Chinese-Americans, white French, Northern Italians, and to therefore start framing an ethnic, geographic, social or religious brand of nationalism.

The lack of focus on the interaction between nationalism and cosmopolitanism on the part of the "patriotic Left" is, however, regrettable, because that particular relationship is pivotal to both visions. In the twentieth century, cosmopolitanism and nationalism were frequently at odds. This was not always the case in earlier centuries, particularly the nineteenth when nationalism and cosmopolitanism actually went hand-in-hand with the right of all humankind to have a nation, as in the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini and some of the German patriots. Political philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has reconstructed that identity by looking at the "spirit of cosmopolitanism" in the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois and retracing the origins of his allegiance to both a black American identity and a humanitarian cosmopolitanism to his studies in Germany: "The European nationalism of the nineteenth century, at least in the elevated and philosophical formulations that Du Bois would have studied, as in the form he experienced, and more directly in Berlin, recognized that the demand for national rights only made sense as moral demand if it was claimed equally for all people" (Appiah 2005, 37).[16] Appiah approvingly cites, as had Du Bois, a line from Friedrich Meinecke in a book significantly titled *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, in which he said that "cosmopolitanism and nationalism stood side by side in a close, living relationship for a long time." However, twentieth century nationalism became much more threatening than the brotherly-oriented nineteenth century liberal version. Consequently, the opinion that "cosmopolitanism—the idea that all human beings are, in some sense, fellow citizens of the world—is the very opposite of nationalism" (Appiah 2005, 35) has taken the upper hand.

Many Americanists have stressed both the importance of 9/11 as an intellectually ordering date and the need for scholars to ponder the new duties, issues, and methods emerging from it. Yet the intellectual "patriotic Left" does not seem to be a powerful source of new ideas. Their adaptation to the prevailing patriotism seems to lean more towards traditional intellectual categories, like neo-exceptionalism, than towards creative new insights. Yet cosmopolitanism seems to be on the rise. Its ability to find new constituencies, its ability to avoid entrapment in the ambiguities of the new nationalism, its potential to give a moral, intellectual and political vision to people in the post-national era ("post-national" as a trend, certainly not as a full-blown state of affairs), seems very fruitful and promising. Scholarly books and articles on cosmopolitanism and its multiple dimensions have increased. Present-day public needs seem to vindicate the relevance of this trend of thought. In Appiah's recent book for example, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006), he holds that the cosmopolitan worldview and moral ethos is greater than liberalism or nationalism in that it embraces two seemingly contradictory principles: that of a "universal concern" for all humanity above nation, individual, and family, and that of "legitimate difference." Instead of the hostile potential of nationalism, cosmopolitanism takes an optimistic view of that which human beings have in common, such as fundamental notions of good and evil, in spite of multiple differences and varieties. To be sure, cosmopolitans cannot and should not try to reduce multiplicity to shared universal values. They can, however, install 'habits of kindness' towards strangers that makes for a more peaceful and cooperative world (Appiah 2006).

It remains to be said, however, that the clearest recognition of the rising importance of cosmopolitan ideas is the relevance given to them by their archenemy Samuel Huntington. In his article "Robust Nationalism" Huntington made cosmopolitans (in his view transnational intellectuals and managers of multinational corporations) some of his major villains. He framed his attack on the principle that the general people, who are nationalist and American-focused, are the polar opposite of the cosmopolitan elite. If popular support is the fundamental source of legitimacy in a democracy, then cosmopolitan ideas in the United States are, according to Huntington, irrelevant and uprooted. He therefore concluded: "American national identity is under challenge from a multiculturalism that subverts it from below and a cosmopolitanism that erodes it from above" (Huntington 2009, 12). There can be no more blatant compliment to the rise of cosmopolitans and globalists in the present-day United States. Who, in the 1990s, could ever have equated multiculturalists and globalists as villains of the same weight?

It seems to this writer that cosmopolitan notions are more fitting for the problems of tomorrow.

The twentieth century, Appiah has said, was "undeniably a Century in which more of the cosmopolitan spirit—a little more in respect, that is, for difference and a little more concerned for the moral interest of strangers would have made a huge difference for the better . . . . if I were asked for an enemy of human hope for our new century, I would say it was anti-cosmopolitanism" (Appiah 2005, 39). These principles also suggest a lesson for non-U.S.-based Americanists. Is it not a dignified civic purpose for these scholars to solidarize with American citizens, as with the citizens of the whole world, for their security and their rights? Is it not, indeed, our duty to remind them, from out of our tiny corner of the world, that as citizens of the superpower they have a particular responsibility to foster the values of peace, democracy and development (a Wilsonianism without boots indeed) that have characterized the most brilliant pages of their history?

Notes

[1] Let me thank AISNA, its board and its president for inviting me to give this presentation at the Macerata conference in October 2007. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Macerata coordinating team, especially Marina Camboni and Daniele Fiorentino. This article has been written before the election of President Barack Obama whose access to the Presidency has deeply modified the public conversation on American patriotism.

[2] Some of the most important books on American nationalism are the following: Zelinsky 1988, Wiebe 2002, Shafer 1955, Tonello 2007, Fousek 2000.

[3] See also Kohn 1945 and 1972. On Hans Kohn see Liebich 2006.

[4] See also Cohen 1996, 323-339.

[5] See also Muller 2005.

[6] See also Bodnar 1992.

[7] See King, 2000, 2005.

[8] See also Waldstreicher 1997.

[9] See also Gerstle 1989, 2001.

[10] See also, Farber 2006.

[11] See also AA.VV. 2002, Hall 2002, and Skocpol 2002.

[12] For an answer to Wreszin's position from an editor of *Dissent*, see Barkan 2003, 91-92.

[13] See also Higonnet 2007.

[14] For a review of Viroli's "For Love of Country," see *Political Theory* 27, No. 3, June 1999: 379-397. On the history of American patriotism, see O'Leary 1999.

[15] On neoconservative foreign policy, see Del Pero 2006.

[16] See also Yeĝenoĝlu 2005, Roudometof 2005, Michalak 2004, and Muller 2005.

Works Cited

AA.VV. "How Americans Responded: A Study of Public Reactions to 9/11/01." *PS Political Science and Politics* (September 2002): 511-516.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

_____. "Ethics in a World of Strangers: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Spirit of Cosmopolitanism." In *Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism and the Politics of Difference. Reconfigurations in a Transnational World*, eds. Kwame Anthony Appiah, Seyla Benhabib, Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, 15-43. Berlin: Humboldt-Universitaet zu Berlin, Oeffentliche Vorlesungen, 2007.

Barkan, Joanne. "Letter to a Former Subscriber." *Dissent*, Spring 2003, 91-92.

Begala, Paul. “Sunshine Patriots.” *The American Prospect*, November 19, 2001: 23-24.

Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.

_____. “The Attractions of Patriotism.” In *Bonds of Affection. Americans Define their Patriotism,* ed. John Bodnar, 3-18. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Bromwich, David. “Review of Richard Rorty’s *Achieving Our Country.” The Journal of Philosophy* 95, no. 11 (1998): 585-590.

Burke, Amy D. “Patriotism and Community.” *Dissent*, Spring 2002: 44-46.

Cohen, William B. “Nationalism in Europe.” In *Bonds of Affection. Americans Define their Patriotism,* ed. John Bodnar, 323-339. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Del Pero, Mario. *Henry Kissinger e l’ascesa dei neoconservatori: Alle radici della politica estera statunitense*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2006.

Farber, David. “American Nationalism in the Age of Empire: Power, Order and Security” Paper given at the Conference *Issues in American Studies Today: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Tokio, March 11-12, 2007: 1-10.

_____. ed. *What They Think of Us: International Perceptions of the United States Since 9/11*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Fousek, John. *To Lead the World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Gerstle, Gary. *Working Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City,1914-1960.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

_____. “Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism.” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999): 1280-1307.

_____. *American Crucible. Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Gitlin, Todd. *The Intellectuals and the Flag*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Greenfeld, Liah. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Hall, Jane. “Coverage of George W. Bush.” *Press/Politics* 8, n. 2 (Spring 2002): 115-120.

Hetherington, Marc J., and Michael Nelson. “Anatomy of a Rally Effect: George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism.” *Political Science and Politics*, 36 (2003): 37-42.

Higonnet, Patrice L.R. *Attendant Cruelties: Nation and Nationalism in American History.* New York: Other Press, 2007.

Huntington, Samuel P. “Robust Nationalism.” *The National Interest*, January 12, 1999, 1-10 of the on-line version in http://www.nationalinterest.org.

_____. *Who Are We?: The Challenges to American National Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

_____. “Dead Souls. The Denationalization of the American Elite”, *The National Interest*, January 3, 2004, 5-18 of the on-line version in http://www.nationalinterest.org.

Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith, eds. *Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Kazin, Michael. “A Patriotic Left.” *Dissent*, Fall 2002: 41-44.

King, Desmond. *Making Americans: Immigration, Race and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

_____. *The Liberty of Strangers: Making the American Nation.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Kohn, Hans. *Nationalism in the Atlantic Community*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1945.

_____. *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay*. New York: Macmillan, 1957.

_____. *The Age of Nationalism: The First Era of Global History*. New York: Harper, 1972.

Liebich, André. “Searching for the Perfect Nation: The Itinerary of Hans Kohn.” *Nation and Nationalism* 12, no. 4 (2006): 579-596.

Lind, Michael. *The Next American Nation. The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

McLaughlin, Neil. “Review” of Todd Gitlin’s *The Intellectuals and the Flag*. *Canadian Journal of Sociology Online*, July-August 2007, 192.

Michalak, Stanley. “Post-Democratic Cosmopolitans: the Second Wave of Liberal Internationalism.” *New Internationalism*, Fall 2004: 593-607.

Mosse, George L. “L’autorappresentazione nazionale degli anni trenta negli Stati Uniti e in Europa.” In *L’estetica della politica: Europa e America negli anni trenta*, ed. Maurizio Vaudagna, 3-23. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1989.

Muller, Jan-Werner. *Constitutional Patriotism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *For Love of Country*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

O’Leary, Cecilia Elizabeth. *To Die for: The Paradox of American Patriotism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Reich, Robert B. “The Nationalism We Need.” *The American Prospect*, December 6,1999, 64.

Rorty, Richard. *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Roudometof, Victor. “Transnationalism, Cosmopolitanism and Glocalization.” *Current Sociology* 53, no .1 (January 2005): 113-135.

Schlesinger, Arthur M. Jr. *The Disuniting of America*. New York: Norton, 1992.

Shafer, Boyd C. *Nationalism: Myth and Reality*. London: Gollancz, 1955.

_____. “Book Reviews - Hans Kohn, American Nationalism: An interpretative Essay.” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44, no. 3 (1958): 577-578.

Silvani, Marco. *L’idea di nazione in Italia e nel Regno Unito: Indagine sui manuali di storia della scuola secondaria dell’obbligo*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 2003.

Skocpol, Theda. “Will 9/11 and the War on Terror Revitalize American Civic Democracy?” *PS, Political Science & Politics* 35 (Summer 2002): 537-540.

Sleeper, Jim. “Whose Elephant? Civic Nationalism and the Left.” *Dissent*, Winter 2003: 37-42.

Sontag, Susan. “How Grief Turned into Humbug.” *New Statesman*, September 16, 2002: 32-33.

Tonello Fabrizio. *Il nazionalismo americano*. Grugliasco: Liviana, 2007.

Trommler, Frank. “The Historical Invention and Modern Reinvention of Two National Identities.” In *Identity and Intolerance. Nationalism, Racism and Xenophobia in Germany and the United States*, eds. Norbert Finzsch and Dietmar Schirmer, 21-42. Washington, DC: The German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Viroli, Maurizio. *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism (1776-1820)*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Walzer, Michael. “What Does It Mean To Be an ‘American’?” *Social Research* 57, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 591-614.

Walzer, Michael. “Can There Be a Decent Left?”*Dissent*, Spring 2002, 1-5 of the on-line version http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=598.

Wiebe, Robert H. *Who We Are: A History of Popular Nationalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Wreszin, Michael. “Confessions of an ‘Anti-American’.” *Dissent* (Spring 2003): 83-88.

Yeĝenoĝlu, Meyda. “Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in a Globalized World.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 103-131.

Zelinsky, Wilbur. *Nation into State: The Shifting Foundations of American Nationalism,* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

William Luhr

Researching a Moving Target: *Film Noir*, Generic Permutations, and Postwar US Social History

I am grateful to professors Marina Camboni and Charles Affron for their vision and hard work in sponsoring the AISNA conference and similar events, as well as professor Tatiana Petrovitch Njegosh for her generous technical help.

1.

This address draws upon research for a book I am currently writing on *film noir,* an increasingly fertile topic that illuminates major shifts in both American cinema and social history, with strong transnational implications, over the past seventy years. Researching *film noir* is a complex undertaking because the topic is not a fixed, widely agreed-upon entity, like Greek tragedy or the works of Dante, Shakespeare, or John Ford. There is considerable debate as to its very nature: some call it a genre, some a style, some a transgeneric phenomenon and a few have even dismissed it as a mass illusion. To further complicate things, its canon is constantly shifting. Neo-*noir* films are regularly appearing while works from *film noir*'s canonical era (early 1940s to 1960) are continually being reevaluated.

Film noir has become a catchphrase for an almost bewildering diversity of films and aesthetic categories. One valuable book that addresses the complex cross-currents of the form is James Naremore's elegant *More Than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts.* Criteria for what constitutes *film noir,* even during its canonical era, vary widely. For some, the term means thematically grim films about tormented figures that were photographed primarily on studio sound stages using low-key lighting with heavy shadows and disorienting camera angles, like *Phantom Lady* (1944) or *Scarlet Street* (1945); for others, it means violent, hard-boiled detective films that explore criminal and perverse behavior, which may (as with *Murder, My Sweet,* 1944) or may not (as with *The Maltese Falcon*, 1941, or *The Big Sleep,* 1946) employ expressionistic visual strategies. Other critics include films with an altogether different visual style, such as semi-documentary films that do not have a dominantly expressionistic "look" but rather use considerable out-of-studio, "location" cinematography (like *The House on 92nd Street*, 1945, or *The Naked City*, 1948). Rather than focus on individual dilemmas, many of these films deal with governmental investigative agencies like the FBI, emphasizing their corporate structures and state-of-the-art surveillance technology.

Most of the films cited as *noirs* are set in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s but, where some explore profound psychic disorientation and sexual torment, others show little interest in psychological issues and focus more on criminal or treasonous conspiracies. Some place great emphasis on glamorous style, with seductive women, witty wisecracks, elegant night clubs, art deco luxury apartments, and stylistics of a bygone age; some, however, focus on the hardscrabble lives of the socially dispossessed, and others on the desperate, brutal, and delusional lives of petty criminals. Some have a contemporary socio-political focus and deal with Nazis, anti-Semitism, political or industrial corruption, or Cold War anxieties about communism or nuclear power. Many include character types like a *femme fatale;* a hard-boiled detective; a successful businessman whose life is falling apart; a charming but possibly criminal nightclub owner; an organized crime boss; a corrupt police official; a desperate man or a young couple fleeing the police.

Many of the people who worked on these films during their canonical era (including directors like Edward Dmytryk and actors like Robert Mitchum or Marie Windsor) subsequently commented that they had no idea that they were making *film noir* when they were making *film noir.* They were accurate. No person or studio during *noir*'s canonical era set out to make a *film noir* simply because no such category existed in the United States. The filmmakers generally felt that they were working in established genres, such as melodramas, detective films, thrillers, social commentary movies, dark romances, or police procedurals. Many did, however, contemporaneously refer to the trend for "dark" or "tough" films during the era. The form was retrospectively categorized by critics who felt these movies embodied a significant shift in the tone of Hollywood film during and after World War II. The fact that the filmmakers did not contemporaneously have a term for the cultural changes in which they were participating does not mean that their work does not reveal those developing perspectives. The term, *film noir*, was seldom used in English until the 1970s. After that time, however, those who made what have been called neo-*noir* films, such as *Chinatown* (1974), *Body Heat* (1981), *Mulholland Falls* (1996), or *Sin City* (2005), could no longer credibly claim that they were unconsciously working in the *noir* tradition; in fact, such filmmakers had little interest in making such a claim. Many neo-*noir* films evidence an intense self-consciousness about their evocation of *film noir*.

The diversity of ways in which *film noir* has been and continues to be categorized can be bewildering. To research *film noir* is to research a moving target.

2.

This introductory address makes no attempt at comprehensiveness but is instead organized around a few touchstone scenes that illustrate significant trends in what has arguably become the most influential American film form, more so even than the Western. It focuses upon aspects of the influence of *film noir* over the past 60 years, its origins and development, its generic permutations, and the historical/cultural era in which it emerged.

Consider the opening, pre-credit sequence from a recent neo-*noir* film, *Sin City* (2005). An attractive woman in an evening gown stands alone at the railing of a large apartment terrace looking out at a city at night. We hear a man's voice-over: "She shivers in the wind like the last leaf on a dying tree..." A reverse angle shot shows the man suavely approach from behind and offer her a cigarette. The scene has a dreamlike quality. Its cinematography is primarily in black and white, with the exception of the woman's bright red dress and lips and, briefly, her green eyes. The smoke from her cigarette drifts languidly in the air. The slow, reflective tone of the man's voice-over gives the impression that, although he speaks in the present tense, he is describing events from long ago and far away, filtered through the mists of memory. Although the couple seems to be meeting for the first time, they have an instant rapport. She appears inexplicably expectant as she smokes and looks in his eyes. He tells her she is everything a man could ever want. They embrace and we suddenly see them in a dramatic long shot as stark, white-on-black silhouettes. Rain has begun and soon falls heavily. As they kiss and his voice-over says, "I tell her I love her," we hear a muffled shot; he has shot her. An overhead shot then shows him gently holding her limp body, her red dress spread out like a pool of blood. His voice-over says that he holds her close until she's gone, that he'll never know what she was running from, and that "I'll cash her check in the morning." Suddenly we hear pounding music and the camera rapidly flies up and whirls around the city. Blood-red letters form and announce the film's title, *Sin City.*

After the credits, the film moves on to other, more violent stories, loosely connected by their location in this dark, corrupt city. All share themes of eroticism, betrayal, violence, and death.

We never learn more about the woman in the opening sequence. Apparently she had paid the man to kill her, and he did so with an unexplained compassion. But what is most apparent in the sequence is its aggressive stylization—its use of black and white cinematography with bold slashes of color, its moody voice-over narration and dialogue, its erotic tension, its shift from representational figures to stark silhouettes, its atmospheric use of cigarette smoke as well as falling rain, its ominous sense of mystery, of danger, of abrupt betrayal as well as of unexplained murderous complicity. It should be apparent that, from the outset, *Sin City* is not only telling its own story but it is also inviting us to recall a tradition of films of the past, particularly films of the 1940s and 1950s—*film noir*.

This clip is not unique. I could have as readily cited segments from films like *No Country for Old Men* (2007), *Cache (Hidden)* 2005), *Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang* (2005), *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2005)*, Eastern Promises* (2007)*, A History of Violence* (2005), *Derailed* (2005)*, The Ice Harvest* (2005)*, Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* (2004), *Collateral* (2004), or *Twisted* (2004). We could have gone back a bit to movies like *Out of Time* (2003), *Minority Report* (2002), *The Salton Sea* (2002), *Memento* (2000)*, Kill Bill, Volumes 1* (2003) and 2 (2004), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), the *Matrix* films (*The Matrix,* 1999, *The Matrix Reloaded,* 2003, *The Matrix Revolutions,* 2003), *This World, Then the Fireworks* (1997)*, L.A. Confidential* (1997), *Fargo* (1996), *Heat* (1995), *Dead Again* (1991), *Kill Me Again* (1989)*, Blood Simple* (1984), *Blade Runner* (1982), *Body Heat,* or *Chinatown*. The list goes on and is not confined to American film. *Film noir* influenced and was influenced by many national film traditions, such as the French New Wave, the New German Cinema, Italian neorealist and *Giallo* films, Latin American *noir*, and the Hong Kong action cinema.

It appears everywhere and not only in films. It has influenced television series since the 1950s (such as *Peter Gunn*, *Dark Angel*, the multiple *CSI* series, or *Crossing Jordan*), narrative radio since the 1940s (such as *Richard Diamond, Private Detective* or *Philip Marlowe*), fiction such as the novels of Walter Mosley or James Ellroy, video games, graphic novels (*Sin City* was, in fact, based on a series of graphic novels with that title by Frank Miller, a co-director on the film), theater, ballet, advertising strategies, graphic design, and music. There is even a *film noir* lipstick.

Film noir emerged in the mid-1940s and, with the collapse of the Hollywood studio system and the supplanting of black and white by color cinematography, among other things, died out as a commercially viable form around 1960. It reemerged around 1970 in a nostalgic mode, called neo-*noir* or retro-*noir*, and has remained potent ever since. Intriguingly, of the three credited directors of *Sin City*, Robert Rodriguez, Frank Miller, and Quentin Tarantino (who is credited as "Special Guest Director"), two were born after the initial phase of *film noir* ended. Only Miller was alive during its dominant period, and he was three in 1960. Most of the people making neo-*noir* films now were not even living when the form they are memorializing appeared; these filmmakers are invoking nostalgia for a form they never experienced first hand. So what is that nostalgia for? Is it for the American 1940s and 1950s, for Hollywood filmmaking practices of the classical era (1930s through the 1950s), for black and white cinematography, for a lost style of masculinity and femininity, for the possibly simpler evils of a bygone age?

The question of what neo-*noir* filmmakers are attempting to evoke from the past is complicated by the permutations within what has come to be known as *film noir*, by the fact that the term is commonly used as if it referred to a single, widely agreed-upon entity rather than a cluster of intersecting, but often diverse, meanings. The term was initially seen as referring to studio-bound films with dark, chiaroscuro lighting that dealt with doomed, often sexually tormented characters. But by the late 1940s, some of the films operated on entirely different imperatives. At times they appear conspicuously anti-*noir* in their visual strategies and themes. Many employ a brightly-lit, semi-documentary look and represent "slice of life" social issues rather than individual torment. Instead of voice-over narration by tormented characters, many films employed oratorical "Voice of God" narration speaking for governmental law-enforcement agencies like the FBI or the Treasury Department. And yet these films have also been frequently categorized as *noir.* Some of these films addressed contemporary political issues, like anti-Communism, disease control, or nuclear anxiety.

Nearly all *films noirs* of the canonical era were set in the era in which they were made. Their initial audiences would have seen little difference between the look, dress, and behavior of the characters in the films and those of people on the street when they exited the movie theater. The films were about their "today."

This is not the case with many neo-*noir* films. Some are "period" films like *Chinatown*, set in the past, and those that are not, like *Sin City*, evoke an earlier era, or filmmaking practices of an earlier era, in numerous ways. Both *Murder, My Sweet* and *Farewell, My Lovely* (1975) are based upon Raymond Chandler's 1940 novel, *Farewell, My Lovely*, both are set in Los Angeles in the early 1940s, and both have roughly similar characters and plotlines. But where *Murder, My Sweet* was set in the time in which it was made, *Farewell, My Lovely* is a "period" picture. By 1975, the early 1940s was a past era. Unlike *Murder, My Sweet,* which was about "today," *Farewell, My Lovely* is about "yesterday." Its costumes, hairstyles, and automobiles looked nothing like what 1975 audiences would have seen when they exited the theater. Neo-*noir* films are nostalgic in ways that films of the canonical era never were and have very different agendas. They employ technologies and representational strategies largely alien to canonical *films noirs,* such as color cinematography, graphic violence, profanity, explicit sexuality and nudity and, perhaps most extreme, nostalgia.

Neo-*noir* films are more temporally and generically fluid than their predecessors. They are not only set in past eras but also include futuristic science fiction films like *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report,* and even contemporary Westerns like *No Country for Old Men*.

During three distinct eras since its inception, the term *film noir* has signified a very different relationship between the form and contemporary film culture. The first era came in the mid-1940s when the French critics who coined the term were describing a new, unexpected maturity in Hollywood films, a maturity that was still developing. By the 1950s the term began to be widely used in Europe. The first respected book on the topic, *Panorama du film noir Americain* (*A Panorama of American Film Noir*)*, 1941-1953* by Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, appeared in Paris in 1955. During this second era, the term referred not to an emerging but rather to an established trend in American film. By the third era, from the late 1960s to the present, *film noir* has come to mean a trend of American film history. It is neither associated with the evolving future of American film as in the first phase, nor with a vital, contemporaneous genre, as in the 1950s, but rather with a past, nostalgic form.

But to return to the question of what neo-*noir* films are attempting to evoke, of why the makers of these films consider it useful to align them with their own perception of *film noir* (particularly since many of the filmmakers have differing perceptions of it), let's go back to the beginning.

One of the earliest, canonical *films noirs* was *Double Indemnity* (1944). It was based upon a novel by James M. Cain and, even though Hollywood had optioned the rights to some of Cain's work in the 1930s, its content then was considered too scandalous and depraved for film adaptation. Cain's *Double Indemnity* was part of the "hard-boiled" tradition that would provide major sources for *film noir*. This fiction, emerging from semi-reputable "pulp" magazines of the 1920s and 1930s, often used the harsh, proletarian vernacular to deal with topics, like manipulative sexuality, violence, corruption, and depravity, in what were contemporaneously considered sensationalist ways. But however disreputable, hard-boiled fiction produced writers whose literary reputations have grown substantially over time, like Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Cornell Woolrich, Jim Thompson, David Goodis, and James M. Cain.

The censorship climate in Hollywood was changing during the war and Billy Wilder decided to take a chance and adapt *Double Indemnity* for his third American film. His writing partner at the time, Charles Brackett, wouldn't touch it, so Wilder hired the hard-boiled novelist, Raymond Chandler, to write the screenplay with him. Then he had trouble casting the movie. Although Barbara Stanwyck saw its potential and was on board from the beginning, the leading actors at Paramount turned it down. Wilder finally approached George Raft, who asked him to summarize the story. As Wilder was doing so, Raft interrupted him, asking, "And when do we have the lapel?" Wilder did not understand what he meant, so Raft told him to continue but would periodically ask, "Where's the lapel?" When Wilder finished, Raft said, "Oh, no lapel." Wilder said, "What is a lapel?" Raft said, "You know, at a certain moment you turn the hero's lapel and it turns out that he's an FBI man or a policeman or someone who works for the government—a good guy really." When Raft learned that there was no lapel, that the main character really was bad, he declined the role. Wilder finally got Fred MacMurray, whose career playing happy-go-lucky saxophone players in light comedy was on the decline at the time, to take the role (Grass 1977, 48-49).

The notion of "no lapel" defines much of *film noir*. Hollywood films at the time were produced under strict censorship of their moral content, codified in the "Production Code," which was adopted by the powerful Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association in 1930 and strictly enforced after 1934. Much of *film noir* challenged or violated its rules. Central characters became involved in anti-social, self-destructive or criminal behavior; the films often explored the dark side of life without a safety net, without a "lapel." They often ended very badly for nearly all involved.

This exploration of troubling aspects of human behavior reflected cross-currents of American wartime and postwar anxieties as well as diverse intellectual influences of the time, such as Freudian theory, naturalist and modernist literature and film, and the emerging Existentialist philosophical tradition. The movies were the product of a society successively traumatized by three troubled historical periods—the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. Many of the films generate a numbing sense of anxiety, foreboding, and doom, a sense that something has gone terribly and irrevocably wrong.

Consider the mood that the credit scene opening *Double Indemnity* sets for the film that will follow it. Under the credits, the silhouette of a man on crutches ominously approaches the camera, finally filling the entire frame with his darkness. Something is wrong—with the man's legs, with the man, with what will follow these credits—and the grim orchestral music accompanying the image reinforces this impression. The silhouette applies not to a single character but to three men in the film: one a murderer, one his victim, and the third an innocent man set up to take the blame for the crime. All three are drawn into this ugly vortex by the same desirable woman who exploits them and orchestrates their doom. The dark silhouette also menaces the viewer's space—it comes at us, it somehow involves us in whatever is to happen, and whatever it is won't be nice. Something is wrong.

That mood reflects cultural imperatives of the time. More than sixty years have passed since the end of World War II and differing perspectives upon that era have emerged. The US television news commentator Tom Brokaw's popular 1998 book, *The Greatest Generation*, depicts the American World War II generation in heroic terms as one that, responding to the global menace posed by the Axis powers, selflessly united in common cause to triumphantly win the war and pave the way for a wholesome future. This perspective also appears in films depicting the era that appeared at around the same time the book was published, such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *Pearl Harbor* (2001), as well as television shows like the mini-series *Band of Brothers* (2001). *Film noir*, however, depicts precisely that same generation in a radically different light. The characters in these films are not united in common cause, they are isolated; they are not engaged in productive social activity, they are self-destructive and dysfunctional; they are a doomed generation without a viable future. The ideology of the "Greatest Generation" celebrates the ascendant and utopian American Dream; that of *film noir* laments that dream's failure. Where the "Greatest Generation" gives us the world found in many of Norman Rockwell's paintings, *film noir* gives us the world of Edward Hopper.

A couple of paintings by American artists illustrate this. Norman Rockwell's brightly-lit "Freedom from Want" (1943), for example, depicts a family gathered around a dinner table cheerfully awaiting a turkey dinner, and his "Homecoming G.I." (1944) shows members of a working class community jubilantly welcoming a returning soldier home. These paintings celebrate an integrated, purposeful society—cheerful, energetic, mutually supportive people with a bright future. In contrast, Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks" (1942) depicts isolated, affectless people in an urban coffee shop at night. They and their environment appear flat, drained of vitality, static. Hopper's "Early Sunday Morning" (1930) shows a street devoid of people. Both paintings imply a desolate social environment that offers little sustenance, and isolated, affectless people. The paintings give the sense that there is little difference in the environment if it is day or night, if it is inhabited or not. Where the Rockwell paintings imply both a meaningful past and a future, those by Hopper do not.

3.

The sense of devastated lives, of people whose future is behind them, is reflected in the very narrative structure of much *film noir.* The form is associated with numerous innovations, one of which is the extensive use of flashbacks accompanied by retrospective, voice-over narration. A central character, often facing death, recounts to the audience how things ended up this way. Such a narrative strategy obviously eliminates the kind of suspense traditionally associated with detective or crime films since the audience knows from the beginning how it will all turn out. The film's narrative progression is really a backwards movement, by means of flashbacks, into its failed past. Unlike the situation with traditional crime films, most of what we can expect to see has already happened. The films offer no real hope for a "lapel" scene because they begin when their stories are nearly completed. After its credit sequence, *Double Indemnity* begins this way, with the character George Raft did NOT choose to play, confessing his crimes into a Dictaphone. He makes the recording to tell Barton Keyes, his supervisor and best friend, that he committed murder for money and for a woman, and that he didn't get the money and he didn't get the woman. The film then shifts into a flashback to the time when he met the woman he didn't subsequently "get." Consequently, we see two Walter Neffs. The one who narrates the movie and exists in the film's present tense, is exhausted, sweating profusely, depressed and has a bloodstain from a bullet wound on his left shoulder that expands through the film. He is probably dying. But we also see the Neff of a few months earlier; cocky, optimistic, oozing sleazy seductiveness. However, as viewers, we know from the beginning that everything the younger Neff attempts is doomed. We have no traditional sense of anticipation while watching the film since we know all along that it will end badly, and such fatalism provides a dominant mood for *film noir*. As with the opening story of *Sin City,* we are introduced to a character whose doom has already been sealed. Furthermore, both stories climax in a similar manner. Like the man in *Sin City*, Neff will shoot his lover as he embraces her.

This sense of doom is often apparent to the characters themselves, even at times when they feel they are succeeding in their endeavors. This is evident in the scene occurring just after Neff has murdered his lover's husband and everything in his plan seems to have gone off perfectly. In a final move to establish his alibi, he leaves his apartment and walks down the street. As he does so, we hear his voice-over: "That was all there was to it. Nothing had slipped, nothing had been overlooked, there was nothing to give us away. And yet, Keyes, as I was walking down the street to the drugstore, suddenly it came over me that everything would go wrong. It sounds crazy, Keyes, but it's true, so help me. I couldn't hear my own footsteps. It was the walk of a dead man."

This mood, despair at the moment of success, repeatedly appears in postwar movies. While many Hollywood films of the era certainly celebrated the Allied victory, many others reflect emptiness, loss, and dislocation. We see it in numerous movies about returning veterans, such as the one that swept the 1946 Academy Awards, *The Best Years of Our Lives* (it received seven awards). It depicts the homecomings of three veterans, one of whom has lost his hands. All feel great anxiety about returning to the land for which they fought and sacrificed. They fear that their homeland has gone on without them, that they will be irrelevant to the postwar world. A more bitter film from the same year is *The Blue Dahlia*, which begins as three veterans return home to Los Angeles. No parades are there to welcome them; no one even notices them or seems to care about their sacrifice. When they go into a bar for a farewell drink, their leader, played by Alan Ladd, gives a melancholic toast, "Well, here's to what was." He then returns home to find that his wife has been having an affair with a man who didn't serve in the armed forces and who grew rich during wartime. Soon after this, she is found murdered and he is blamed. He becomes a fugitive. His long-anticipated homecoming, the fruit of victory, then, has become a nightmare.

The above-cited statement from *Double Indemnity* in which Neff says that he could not hear his own footsteps, that it was the walk of a dead man, points to a major pattern in *film noir*—the pervasiveness of what might be termed post-mortem characters, of people who are virtual zombies with no expectation of a viable future. It is all behind them. The very title and the opening of the 1950 film, *D.O.A.* (meaning "Dead on Arrival"), make this clear.

Under the credits, the camera follows a man walking purposefully into a large municipal building at night. Accompanied by pounding, orchestral music, it continues to follow him through the building's corridors and into an office marked "Homicide Division." Finding the detective in charge, he tells him that he wants to report a murder. When the detective asks who was murdered, the man replies, "I was."

The man's purposeful movement in this sequence echoes the movement of the silhouette in the opening of *Double Indemnity*, only here he walks away from the camera. But he is equally doomed and even speaks of himself in the past tense. We don't even see his face until he announces that he was murdered. He has been poisoned and spends the film frantically trying to learn who has poisoned him and why. Although he eventually learns these things, it is to no avail; at the end of the film, he dies. The whole film, then, unfolds in a kind of fruitless, post-mortem, depressive space. We see this pattern again and again in *film noir*. John Garfield's narrator in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) is about to be executed; William Holden's narrator in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) is, bizarrely, already dead; *The Killers* (1946) begins as its central character, Burt Lancaster, inexplicably awaits his own murder.

Reflective of this mood is an exchange between Robert Mitchum and Jane Greer in *Out of the Past* (1947) as Mitchum watches her at a gambling table. He says, "That's not the way to win." She asks, "Is there a way to win?" and he replies, "No, but there's a way to lose more slowly." That fatalistic sense applies to the scene and to the overall film. And of course, Mitchum and Greer are doomed.

The vision of life as a nightmare reflects the contemporary influence of Freudian theory. Although Freud's theories had been considered radical early in the century, they had filtered into mass culture by the 1940s and often provided models in movies for character motivation as well as narrative construction. Important tenets of these theories were that dreams were not meaningless, and that darker realms lay within all of us. Life itself could resemble a nightmare.

Psychoanalytic criticism has provided important tool for investigating *film noir.* Two particularly useful books elucidating this, among other issues, have been Frank Krutnik's *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* and E. Ann Kaplan's *Women in Film Noir: An Anthology.* Both illuminate the significance of gender representation in *film noir*, with particular attention to its preponderance of weak men and powerful women. Such gender images destabilized widespread presumptions about "proper" gender norms for the era. The very image of the figure on crutches that opens *Double Indemnity* suggests an emasculated man, and the three men in the film to which that image refers are deprived of their potency by the movie's *femme fatale.* As will be discussed later, a major motif of *film noir* is that of men who fail to measure up to society's model of dominant masculinity. At the same time, *film noir* produced many images of dominating women who, thereby, did not "know their place" and proved themselves more powerful than the men. Some have called *film noir* a misogynistic form because of the severe punishment it regularly heaps upon such women by the end of the films, but important feminist scholars like E. Ann Kaplan have also pointed out that, while the films certainly characterized such women as villainous, they also, perhaps unconsciously on the parts of the filmmakers, rendered those women equal or superior to the men in intelligence and in their ability to succeed at power politics. In many ways this acknowledgment of intellectual equality, however left-handed, marked a major advance in the depiction of women in film. But, for many in mainstream culture, this gender imbalance also contributed to the sense the films generated of a society turning topsy-turvy, of "normal" life collapsing into a nightmare and bordering on realms traditionally reserved for horror films.

The nightmare worlds of many Hollywood horror films of the 1930s were presented as "other" worlds—exotic, foreign places containing strange characters and forces. This also reflected the xenophobia evident in many American films of all genres during that time. It was not unusual for films like *The Maltese Falcon,* for example, to characterize its villains by associating them with foreign countries and cultures, implying a morally righteous "here" in the U. S. as opposed to a decadent "there" in other places. By the 1940s, however, a cultural space had also opened up to acknowledge that those dark forces might not be inherently foreign but might also reside within the United States, and that awareness is evident in *film noir* as well as in contemporaneous horror films. In such films, our darkest fears are actualized not only in foreign, "other" worlds but also in "normal," middle-class American life.

Some films, like those produced by Val Lewton at RKO (such as *Cat People*, 1942*, I Walked with a Zombie*, 1943, and *Isle of the Dead*, 1945), can as readily be called EITHER horror or *film noir* because they are carefully ambiguous about the origins of their grim events. While those events may have been caused by supernatural forces, they may also have resulted from human psychological dysfunction. Intriguingly, many of the directors who made such movies for Lewton went on to make important *films noirs,* such as Jacques Tourneur (director of *Cat People)* with *Out of the Past* and Robert Wise (director of *The Curse of the Cat People*, 1944) with *The Set-Up,* 1949.

The retrospective narrative structure of many *films noirs* (like *The Killers, Out of the Past* or *Double Indemnity*) also parallels the structure of popular perceptions of the psychotherapeutic interview, in which someone delves into his/her dark and possibly repressed past for the clues to his/her troubled present. However, where the strategies of psychotherapy have popularly been presumed to increase self knowledge and lead to a "cure" for psychological troubles, in *film noir*, such retrospective explorations are often useless. There can be no cure. In *D.O.A.* the central character finally learns who poisoned him and why but, since he soon dies, even that discovery becomes irrelevant.

4.

Why did all of this anxiety, disorientation, and fatalism appear in Hollywood film when it did? Where did it come from? Americans at the time didn't recognize it as an emerging trend. It took European critics to classify it. The French had long been great cinephiles but the war prevented them from seeing American films from 1939 through 1945. In the spring of 1946, when wartime Hollywood films appeared in Paris for the first time, the French devoured them. In August, the critic Nino Frank wrote in an influential article, "An Exciting... Put-You-to-Sleep Story," that he noticed a sea change in American films, a new maturity that had emerged in the early 1940s; he called this new quality *film noir*. Others, such as Jean-Pierre Chartier, rapidly followed him with this perception. The term means black film and the blackness applies not only to the grim themes of many of the movies but also to their visuals. Many used chiaroscuro lighting, sometimes called "mystery lighting," or "Venetian blind lighting" to create an ominous darkness, a sense of something sinister just beyond the shot's framelines. The look had appeared in earlier films like *Citizen Kane* (1941) and was inspired by the visuals of German Expressionist films of the 1920s, itself a cinema obsessed with madness, disorientation, and loss. That cinema had emerged in a devastated Germany following World War I, just as *film noir* would appear in the wake of World War II. Hollywood had appropriated the Expressionist look in the 1930s for horror films like *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1932), *The Old Dark House* (1932), and *The Island of Lost Souls* (1933). A decade later, *film noir* would also appropriate that look, not for the exotic or supernatural, but for the everyday, for the ambient doom pervading everyday, middle-class life. The troubled characters inhabiting *film noir* did not look like exotic, foreign monsters but, rather, just like the people that the initial audiences would have seen when they walked out of the theaters in the postwar era—themselves.

A larger canvas frames these issues. In *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way*, the social historian Lary May argues that a convulsive transformation in American culture and politics occurred during the post World War II era when the US shifted away from the 1930s New Deal ethos of ethnic pluralism, pro-labor inclusiveness, and acceptance of the diversity of modern life, and moved instead toward becoming a monolithic postwar national culture. This shift involved a fundamental redefinition of the US national character, one that led some people of the era to feel that their society was changing around them in disturbing ways.

May argues that the national movement toward consensus during World War II led to the gradual abandonment of governmental policies of the 1930s that had encouraged ethnic pluralism and a broadly inclusive populist agenda. At its worst, this drive for consensus led to social repression, racial segregation, xenophobia, and the compromise of individual liberties. Many considered such measures an unfortunate wartime necessity but presumed that, once victory was achieved, they would be abandoned. However, the postwar era did not bring a dissolution of the national drive toward consensus and, with it, a return to New Deal pluralism as many had expected, but a reformulation of that imperative toward consensus into a Cold War against the Soviet Union. This imperative was buttressed by Keynesian economic theories supporting deficit spending and a permanent wartime economy as well as the National Security Act of 1947, which substantially reorganized the US armed forces, its foreign policy, and its intelligence community (forming the Central Intelligence Agency) in light of Cold War policies. Although those policies promised global peace and a domestic consumer paradise, many found that they also supported an intolerant national culture. People whose values had been formed and nurtured by the national mood in the 1930s found themselves stigmatized for those very same values and labeled communist supporters during the postwar years. Those who had supported the US wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and the opening of a second front against Hitler in Europe, for example, later found that this endorsement of their own government's policies was used during the McCarthy Era to indict them for holding "anti-American" leftist sympathies.

Although the postwar public image of the US currently valorized by "Greatest Generation" ideology was of a nation victorious in war and prosperous in peacetime, erosive signs of discontent were bubbling up from below the surface from the beginning. Images of individual dislocation in *film noir* correspond with this growing social instability. Repeatedly, we see that the accomplishment of earlier national goals, such as freedom from economic depression and war, were failing to produce a contented society. Many Depression era films give the impression that, if only prosperity would return, economically deprived people could again find happiness; many wartime films give the impression that, if only victory could be achieved, people could again live full, happy lives. The Depression ended and the war ended, and it wasn't enough. In the postwar era, people were noticing a disturbing gulf between the resolution of national traumas and personal fulfillment. And at times, even people who were supportive of the national ideology and agenda felt guilty about NOT being happy, adding to their anxiety.

This discontent appeared in numerous forms outside of *film noir*, from labor unrest and racial turbulence in the late 1940s to the Beat Generation and images of rebellious teenagers in the 1950s. It finally came to the surface and, paralleling student revolts in Europe after 1968, exploded with the counter-culture of the 1960s, a time when the youth of the US was in open rebellion against the values of their parents' generation, against the Vietnam War, against the national government, even against John Wayne. The nation that had been united during World War II had become a nation divided only a quarter of a century later.

The counter-culture generation was the one that revived *film noir*, which had been considered a dead form in the 1960s. Part of its appeal for that generation was that it showed the dark side of their parents' lives. These were not upbeat Alice Faye/Don Ameche Technicolor musicals depicting a benign, happy-go-lucky world but rather a tortured prism into the dark corners of their parents' reality.

In laying bare many of the anxieties of the wartime generation, the films gave the counter-culture both ammunition against and empathy with the images their parents had constructed of the era of their youth. The movies enabled some of the youth of the 1960s to gain a greater understanding of the older generation and of their own connection with it. Major sources of anxiety for the postwar generation, for example, involved a perceived sense of the erosion of individual agency and of masculine vitality. Some could not understand how, after defeating global fascism, they were not feeling empowered and triumphant but rather that they were losing control of their lives. One highly publicized masculine fear involved losing individuating potency and becoming simply a "number," an "organization man," a corporate "man in a gray-flannel suit." Numerous books appearing in the postwar era focused upon the theme of loss of individuality; they include David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950), Sloan Wilson's 1955 novel and co-authored 1956 film, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956), and Elias Canetti's *Crowds and Power* (1960).

Many people feared external forces, like Soviet communism and the threat of nuclear war, which led to a trend in the 1950s of building home fallout shelters. There was also, from the late 1940s on, an exponential increase in UFO sightings. Other fears, however, involved not what was "out there" but, rather, what resided within one's own home, particularly the growing concern about the ability of the World War II generation to control their own children. The figure of the rebellious teenagers of the 1950s, who openly rejected their parents' values, was a new and highly publicized cultural menace. Many of these anxieties are reflected in the pervasive images of doomed, impotent, and demoralized men in many *films noir.*

5.

Much of neo-*noir* went farther in its social critique than *film noir* ever did in explicitly condemning major national institutions like the FBI and ideologies like patriarchy. Although *film noir* of the canonical era dealt with political corruption, it seldom questioned the rectitude of the federal government or the righteousness of white patriarchy. Neo-*noir* regularly does this. In *Chinatown*, for example, John Huston's patriarch stands at the center of the film's public and personal evil. A powerful, ruthless business leader, he secretly profits from ruinous urban corruption and is also the incestuous rapist of his own daughter. In *L. A. Confidential*, the all-white, all-male LAPD scapegoats people of other races and cultures for crimes that they, themselves, are systematically committing. One of the corrupt detectives in the film acts as an advisor for a fictional television series, *Badge of Honor*, which strongly resembles the popular 1950s series, *Dragnet,* which glorified the LAPD. The heroic way in which the LAPD is characterized in *Badge of Honor* stands in harsh contrast to the systematic corruption the film depicts. Furthermore, when the show's detective advisor attempts to repent, he is murdered by his superior officer. *Mullholland Falls* details profound corruption within three layers of postwar patriarchy—the LAPD, the FBI, and the US military. Each has become so consumed with its own sense of power and entitlement that they war with one another. *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995) depicts such corruption from an African American perspective, showing not only the effects of systematic racism on African American life but also how such racism erodes the presumptively empowered racial class.

I will close with reference to a film that satirized *film noir*. *My Favorite Brunette* appeared in 1947, just a few years after the birth of the form. Its very existence points to the widespread influence of *film noir* almost immediately after its appearance. It would make no economic sense for a major studio like Paramount to produce a film starring one of its biggest stars unless its directors felt confident that a large audience would be familiar with the form the film satirizes. In fact, its opening—ominous, exterior shots of San Quentin—is almost indistinguishable from the opening prison shots in *Brute Force*, a brutal *film noir* about prison injustice appearing that same year.

After the opening shots of *My Favorite Brunette*, we see a prison warden solemnly walking into a cellblock to escort a condemned prisoner to the gas chamber for execution. Everything about the scene—the warden's grim demeanor, the barred cells, the comments of other prisoners, and the oppressive environment—recalls "death row" films of the era. But when we arrive at the condemned prisoner's cell, we see that he is played by Bob Hope using the goofball, smart-aleck film persona for which he was widely known in 1947. The film's mood abruptly changes. Although its story is still about a prisoner awaiting execution, Bob Hope's star persona undercuts everything about the situation. This is a comedy. Soon he is being interviewed by reporters in a cell outside the execution chamber. His prison clothes, the dialogue about execution, the images of him through prison bars, all recall dark films of the era. And like the doomed characters in so many *films noirs*, this ostensibly condemned man begins to recount his story in flashback. However, the comic tone makes the cinematography, the voice-over narration, and the grim images both recall, and satirize, the dark openings of many *films noirs*.

In his flashback, Hope's character invokes other *film noir* conventions. He is a professional baby photographer who yearns to be a hard-boiled detective. He idolizes the private detective in a nearby office, played by Alan Ladd, an actor then known for such roles in many *films noirs*. But where Ladd's character embodies the tough guy role, Hope's character pathetically fails to do so. He can't drink hard liquor without choking, he drops the pistol he has bought—he simply looks silly when he tries to emulate the tough guy. And of course, when Ladd leaves, a beautiful and mysterious woman walks in, mistakes Hope for Ladd, and the story begins.

My Favorite Brunette satirizes the narrative structure, the anxieties about masculinity and femininity, the malevolent environment, the visual strategies, and the mood of *film noir*. Bob Hope wants to be a He-Man but is an apparently doomed loser, like many of the men presented seriously in *film noir.* Intriguingly, however, in his very failure to live up to the image of masculinity he so admires, he in fact resembles many of *film noir's* men who might appear tough on the surface but are, internally, desperate and doomed. Although the movie is clearly played for laughs, it also points to the centrality of doom, failed ambitions, and delusional desire to the form. In certain ways, given the complex nature of *film noir,* there is little difference between the real thing and the satire.

Works Cited

Borde, Raymond and Etienne Chaumeton. *Panorama du film noir Americain, 1941-1953*. Paris: Les Editions du Minuit, 1955. English language edition, *A Panorama of American Film Noir*, translated from the French by Paul Hammond. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002.

Brokaw, Tom. *The Greatest Generation.* New York: Random House, 1998.

Frank, Nino. "An Exciting… Put-You-to-Sleep Story." *L'Écran français* 58, August 7, 1946, 10. Translated from the French by Connor Hartnett in William Luhr, ed., *The Maltese Falcon: John Huston, Director,* 130-131. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Gross, Miriam, ed. *The World of Raymond Chandler*. New York: A. & W. Publishers, 1977.

Kaplan, E. Ann, ed. *Women in Film Noir: An Anthology*. London: The British Film Institute, 1978 New edition, 1984.

Krutnik, Frank. *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991.

May, Lary. *The Big Tomorrow: Hollywood and the Politics of the American Way.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Naremore, James. *More than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Workshops

Smuggling across the Atlantic

Coordinators: Sonia Di Loreto, Cinzia Schiavini

Sonia Di Loreto

Introduction

This workshop focuses on the notion of smuggling across the Atlantic. The term "smuggling" holds a number of fascinating connotations, and it is a challenging and fit paradigm to describe possible practices and trajectories between—or among—territories, but also relations between or within texts, and it functions both as a metaphor and as praxis.

As some of these papers underline, the act of smuggling can become a practice adopted by hegemonic systems, made of exploitation, conquest and disruption; but it could also denote a non-linear, non-hegemonic (even counter-hegemonic) resistant practice of using the same economic and natural routes, for example, to smuggle merchandise, people, ideas and texts to bring forth the hidden, subterranean, and untold. We are also interested—naturally—in the metaphorical level of the term, and the papers in this workshop show how the perspective of "smuggling" could be a useful critical lens, since they offer a varied range of possible readings of this notion, including "smuggling" as a metanarrative, textual strategy, that challenges the traditional borders that separate fiction and non-fiction. In addressing, in fact, transatlantic forms of smuggling, all the papers tackle problematic rewritings of texts and identities: they describe purloined texts, ideas or genres; or even more radical contrabanding of identities in transition.

Mara De Chiara

On the Road Again. Renee Tajima-Peña's *My America… or Honk if You Love Buddha*

In *My America… or Honk if You Love Buddha* (1996), Japanese American director Renee Tajima-Peña chooses to inscribe her biography in the script of one of the best known texts of the Beat Generation period, Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.

In her film, Renee Tajima-Peña sketches a sort of 'auto-ethnography' where she is in search of her own cultural origins: her journey, as she declares, is above all a search for Asian America. We are not presented here, however, with the search of the immigrant's physical body just arrived on foreign shores after suffering innumerable troubles, for recovery and food. Nor are we provided dates and statistics about the numbers of foreigners trespassing dangerous frontiers. We are, though, provided with the many voices and images assembled by Tajima-Peña to express her own personal dilemma regarding the possibility of finding hospitality in a foreign country. Here the place in question should not be truly foreign for her, as she was born in Chicago. And yet, the question most often asked of any Asian American seems to be the age-old "Why don't you go home? You don't belong here." This question, as the film shows, runs deeply through the racist cultural foundation of the United States.

Commencing with her grandfather who in 1909 left Japan, Tajima-Peña's journey begins immediately as a Californian journey, given that her grandfather moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles in search of the "promised land." Unfortunately, that promised land would turn into a nightmare for many Asian Americans during World War II. Peña's father, like many others, had joined the Army to fight the Nazis overseas; meanwhile, her mother was spending her teenage years behind barbed wire, in one of the internment camps set up by the American government to detain Japanese Americans. For so many immigrants, who had come to the States to work the railroads and the canneries, their visions of liberty and equality were deeply frustrated.

We follow Renee Tajima-Peña in her journey: to Chinatown (New York), Louisiana (New Orleans), home of the oldest Asian pioneers—Filipinos who arrived in 1765—Mississippi, where there had once been the model camp towns for interned Japanese; then Florida, Minnesota, Seattle (among the Korean communities), and, finally, California. On the way, we discover that Asian Americans were indeed an *alien nation* inside America.

However, in her Californian memories, Tajima Peña remembers when she was younger, in the Seventies, and had joined the libertarian struggles and demonstrations for civil rights. In those days, the Black civil rights movement was doing much work for Asian Americans, too. And those were the days, she says, when she knew for the first time that she belonged in America, and felt comfortable in her own skin.

In San Francisco, Tajima-Peña interviews Victor Wong, an actor in the famous movie *Chan is Missing*. Wong, a Chinese American, had been a *beatnik* in the Fifties, but states that he failed to realize his rebel dream, his 'on the road' life script. Speaking of his marriage to an African American woman, he comments: "We thought there might be a New World, but America was not ready yet."

The text chosen by Renee Tajima-Peña to track her cultural journey, *On the Road*, published in 1956, is considered the *cult* text of the young American generation of the Sixties. It narrates Jack Kerouac's wanderings, in company of his friend Dean Moriarty (Neal Cassady), from opulent American bourgeois society towards a much freer and uninhibited south represented by Mexico, which will soon become the favourite destination of most of Kerouac's journeys. Kerouac had created a new lifestyle for the beatniks when he declared to one of his friends and a literary critic: "I will choose trucks, where I don't have anything to explain and nothing is explained, and everything is just real" (Pivano 2005, 288). Taking to the road, to be free of the constrictions of American society: that was the message.

As an "authorial" reference, *On the Road* is certainly the cultural manifesto for a whole generation of young people who wanted a better and freer world; but, at the same time, it repeats a quite traditional literary repertoire, which portrays America as the land of innocence, of independence and individualism, of moral quest and the spirit of adventure, and finally, America as the land from which you could journey from bored "modernity" towards a more natural and "wild" south (the journey is in fact from the States to Mexico).

In Kerouac's *On the Road*, behind the apparent staging of America as the "land of the free," we definitely feel that America is also the centre of ethical and existential signification, that is to say, America incarnates a Western 'humanism' largely constituted against the body of the exotic "other," the body of the "black" man, of the "wild" man, the not-yet-free, the not-yet-civilized.

The very title chosen by Tajima-Peña for her film, *My America… or Honk if You Love Buddha*, points explicitly to this dialectic, with its reference to

Buddhism as the spiritual destination for all *beatniks* searching for spiritual truth, trying to find that truth "on the road." Kerouac had been, in fact, profoundly influenced by Buddhism, which was widely diffused in San Francisco, especially within the Japanese district (Pivano 2005, 292), and Buddhism, in its exotic appearance, incarnated the Western desire for another place, for a place of authenticity and truth.

But, as *My America…* shows, the authorial text recalled, Kerouac's *On the Road*, cannot be appropriated by the protagonist; she cannot really 'appropriate' this mythical narration of the American spirit, that *on the road* spirit. She remains excluded from it, an outsider to this narration. Her attempt to appropriate the role of the *beatnik* fails. In other words, a text has been surreptitiously 'stolen' by the protagonist of the movie, but she cannot fully identify with the story. Her face, her Asian features, exclude her from that great American text of the Beat utopia. In other words, Tajima-Peña tries to insinuate herself into that original text of American innocence, pretending that she can incarnate the dream of a free and liberal America. But she soon finds out that she is an intruder in the land and in the text.

In fact, she comes from other clandestine, cultural pasts, different from those of the official American past. She has no authority to re-write the same text—is in fact excluded from it, because America, as the scholar José Saldívar explains, transforms immigrants into human beings without documents and identity: it transforms "people between cultures into people without culture" (Saldívar 1997, 8).

In her book *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*, the feminist critic Susan Friedman insists on the centrality of "narrative" in the construction of identity. Indeed, rhetorical strategies are at the basis not only of textuality, but of the subject itself, which is always constructed as if following a more or less precise script: what is experienced as real life is, in fact, transformed into formal and linguistic aspects.[1] In this construction of a "script" for the subject we often find mythical texts, which dictate cultural and literary canons. In Tajima-Peña's case, the mythical text in question is Kerouac's *On the Road*, but we soon discover that her narrative is made of discontinuous fragments which do not allow any coherent, confident, stable and linear narration.

This may mean that the more urgent question which can be posed today by theory, and especially by postcolonial theory, is aimed at the whole nationalistic foundation of American literature which manifestly believes in one subject only, one that is still "white" and preferably "male." Excellent work, in these directions, has been done by postcolonial scholars who have largely questioned these concepts, insisting, for instance, on the Atlantic dimension of forced enslavement and the complicated master-slave relationship;[2] on the diasporic and migrant movements from the ex-colonies to the motherlands, and their impact on the idea of nation as a homogeneous and coherent body;[3] on cultures as "border" spaces and the coexistence of plural voices and traditions;[4] on the transnational and transatlantic dimension of cultural and economic politics in the United States.[5]

After the so called *linguistic turn*, which since the Seventies has invested many disciplinary fields through psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, we now witness to a sort of *spatial turn,* to borrow the term used by Nigel Thrift and Mike Crang in their book *Thinking Space*, published in 2000. This theoretical "spatial turn," which emerged during the second half of the Eighties, has been responsible for the enormous proliferation, especially in the field of human sciences, of titles which insist on terms like "mapping," "cartography," and "location." In his *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*, published in 1997, José Saldívar helps us better understand the meaning of this "spatial turn." Saldívar insists on the relevance that a geographical location, specifically the border between Mexico and the United States, has acquired, especially in most recent critical theory, within both *cultural studies* and American Studies, which now tend towards a more transnational perspective. The border becomes a paradigm of crossings, of intercultural exchanges, of circulation and resistance, of negotiations and conflicts, but, above all, it undermines the presumed homogeneity of US nationalism, revealing the wide gap existing between nation-state and cultural identity (Saldívar 1997, ix). Reflecting on many cultural and artistic instances, as well as on current immigration policies, Saldívar exposes the deep racism still present in the so-called legality which condemns and punishes Latino immigrants, Chicanos, Mexicans, Central Americans, and Asian Americans, all considered an 'alien nation' which is polluting the US territory.

These perspectives, which interpret US culture through its European and continental interconnections, have strongly contributed to de-provincialize the United States and the field of American Studies from their national myth of 'exceptionality,' pushing it towards an intercultural comparative approach (Izzo, Mariani 2004, 95). Following this new development, it is possible to re-read the powerful myth of American innocence and imagine the end of American exceptionality.[6]

In this context, Renee Tajima-Peña's film can be read as a real "traveling theory,"[7] in which the subject protagonist continues to explore more or less familiar territories, transforming her narration into a "critical geography." In her journey, which is mainly a modern identity quest, Tajima-Peña also exposes the specific gender oppression which her own cultural traditions impose on women; for gender oppression, as scholar Susan Friedman maintains, differs according to the many cultural contexts which constitute our identity.[8]

Tajima-Peña's narrative condemns in many ways the traditions of cultural isolation and racism of her Japanese ancestors: they were, in fact, obsessed by the need to maintain their "purity" and their "race," horrified at the idea of mixing with people who had darker skin, including Mexicans. Asian communities, in fact, as the film shows, did not intermarry. They were strongly prejudiced about race. But the film ends with a happy wedding scene: Renee Tajima-Peña finally marries a Mexican American man.

I would like to conclude with another "spatial" metaphor, this time by Nobel Prize novelist Toni Morrison. In her essay on racist America, *Playing in the Dark* (1992), she says that, in order to extend the study of American literature into "a wider landscape," she wants to draw a map "of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World—without the mandate for conquest" (Morrison 2000, 3). This might also be taken as Tajima-Peña's message, in her subtle smuggling of an American text into her private Asian America.

Notes

[1] On this aspect, see also Smith 1993.

[2] See, for instance, Gilroy 1993 and Fernandez Retamar 1989.

[3] I am especially referring to Stuart Hall's work on diaspora, cultural identity, and new ethnicities; Bhabha 1994; Anderson 1983.

[4] I would suggest here Anzaldúa 1987 and Chambers 1994.

[5] See, for instance, Saldívar 1997.

[6] On the myth of American exceptionalism and the still pervasive idea of "manifest destiny," see Stephanson 1995.

[7] I am appropriating here the term that Susan Friedman borrows, in her *Mappings*, from Said 1983.

[8] Friedman especially acknowledges Anzaldúa's seminal work *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), for its special attention to the "cultural geographies of the encounter." *Borderlands/La Frontera*, with its metaphors of *borders* as conflicting spaces of encounters, has provided, since its publication in 1987, a very specific language for the theoretical debates in cultural studies, postcolonial studies and gender studies.

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera*: *The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Chambers, Iain. *Migrancy*, *Culture*, *Identity*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic*: *Modernity and Double-*Consciousness. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Izzo, Donatella and Giorgio Mariani, eds. *America at Large: Americanistica transnazionale e nuova comparatistica*. Milano: Shake, 2004.

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. London: Picador, 1993.

Pivano, Fernanda. *Pagine americane*. Roma: Frassinelli, 2005.

Retamar, Roberto Fernández. *Caliban and Other Essays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Said, Edward. "Traveling Theories." In *The Word*, *the Text and the Critic*, 226-247. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Saldívar, José David. *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Smith, Sidonie. *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995.

Tajima-Peña, Renee. *My America... or Honk if you Love Buddha*. 1996.

Thrift, Nigel and Mike Crang, eds. *Thinking Space*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Sonia Di Loreto

“The Poor Christians and Those Hellish Pirates”: A Sea Full of Smugglers

In an early part of his story, one of the first modern English novelistic characters,[1] Robinson Crusoe, describes “the unhappiest voyage that ever man made,” when he was a Guinea trader and his ship, while sailing between the Canary Islands and the African shore, was attacked by what he defined “a Turkish rover of Sallee” (Defoe 1985, 40). The implication was that a ship sailing from Morocco, a location known at the time to be a haven for Barbary pirates, could only mean trouble:

> to cut short this melancholy part of our story, our ship being disabled, and three of our men killed, and eight wounded, we were obliged to yield, and were carried all prisoners into Sallee, a port belonging to the Moors. The usage I had there was not so dreadful as at first I apprehended; nor was I carried up the country to the emperor’s court, as the rest of our men were, but was kept by the captain of the rover as his proper prize, and made his slave, being young and nimble, and fit for his business. At this surprising change of my circumstances, from a merchant to a miserable slave, I was perfectly overwhelmed. (Defoe 1985, 41)

Like many other sailors and merchants of his time, Robinson Crusoe was “perfectly overwhelmed” by his new station in life; his professional career had taken a plunge—so to speak—when he found himself a captive and hence, at least temporarily, a slave.

Along with the imaginary Crusoe, and probably less fortunate than the fictional Englishman on his way to acquiring an empire, a great number of sailors were captured by Barbary pirates: between 1785 and 1815 some thirty five American ships, manned by seven hundreds sailors, were captured by the so-called Barbary States, which consisted of the independent Sultanate of Morocco and the three Regencies of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, which were quasi-independent entities nominally belonging to the Ottoman Empire. Algiers took twenty-two ships, Tripoli six, Morocco five, Tunis two large numbers for a nation like the United States to lose.

The capture of American ships by North African powers signals important shifts in how the United States was internationally perceived during this period. On the one hand, it confirms international recognition of American independence (the former British colonies of North America could no longer count on the protection of the British navy), and on the other hand it illustrates the United States' weakness as a player on the international stage, and especially its absolute inadequacy as a maritime power, having in fact no navy to speak of.

As Robert Allison explains in his *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815*, the United States, along with other less powerful nations like Denmark, Sweden, and the states of Italy, was constantly threatened by the Barbary States of North Africa. The British did not waste time informing Algiers when the United States became independent, and in 1785 Algiers captured two American ships and eleven more in 1793 (See Allison 1995, xv).

Becoming a captive, falling into the hands of the "Barbary pirates," was a professional hazard for sailors at that time. The Mediterranean was populated by all sorts of vessels, privateers, and representatives of various allegiances, as John Foss's eventful travel back from captivity amply demonstrates:

> On the 2nd of April [1797] I embarked on board the Madona del Rafario and fan vincenzo[2] faeraro of Ragusa, in the capacity of a passenger, bound to Philadelphia, and sailed on the 4th, and on the 11th was captured by a Spanish privateer, and carried into Barcelona; was cleared on the 12th and sailed again, and on the 20th was captured by a French privateer and carried into Almeria . . . . On the 29th the wind having been contrary for several days, we run into Malaga, where we waited for a fair wind until the 21st of May. We then sailed and on the 22nd was boarded by his Britannic Majesty's ship Petterel, treated very well and permitted to proceed on our voyage. On the 23rd . . . was boarded by two Spanish privateers . . . and carried into Ceuta. (Baepler 1999, 101)

The Mediterranean was indeed crowded, and American sailors (like others) were constantly at risk of being carried into unfriendly ports.

As the same John Foss recounts when describing the capture of his ship, it was almost impossible to decipher the danger signs on the seas, and to discern who were friends or who enemies. While sailing in the Mediterranean in 1793 Foss and his comrades

> saw a strange sail . . . she had the English flag displayed at her peak. We supposed her to be an English Privateer. . . . By this time we could see she was a Brig; and discerned by the cut of her sails, that she was not an English vessel, although had still the English flag flying; we then supposed her to be a French Privateer, hoisting the English flag to deceive their enemy. . . . When she came near enough to make us hear, she hailed us in English . . . The man who hailed us, was dressed in the Christian habit, and he was the only person we could yet see on her deck. By this time the Brig was under our stern, we then saw several men jump upon her poop . . . and saw by their dress, and their long beard, that they were Moors, or Algerines. (Baepler 1999, 75)

Not only did sailors need to try cross-referencing different identification signs to make sense of the scene before them. They also had to second-guess the intentions of the opposite party. Adding to the confusion, if no flag, language, or dress could identify the parties involved, it became even more difficult for American sailors to extricate themselves from this plethora of uncertain signs. Furthermore, the United States at the time offered no help in clarifying the sailors' position or their identity. There was in fact a substantial difference between other nations and the newly formed United States. Unlike other countries, the United States did not have official political and diplomatic procedures to deal with illegal captures or, specifically, with the Barbary States. As Allison tersely put it, "Americans neither prepared for war nor negotiated a peace" (Allison 1995, 11) when dealing with the States of North Africa.

The United States, in fact, was completely lacking in terms of political and military protection of American captives, was absent as a negotiator, and was indeed an unreliable source of authority. Consequently the captives were left to fend for themselves, making the most of their situation and trying not only to survive, but to develop an image of themselves that would be acceptable and recognizable as American.

James Leander Cathcart's story, published posthumously as *The Captives, Eleven Years as a Prisoner* in Algiers and now collected in *White Slaves, African Masters. An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* is an excellent case in point. Captured as a young sailor in 1785, he was finally able to return to Philadelphia in 1796. His narrative has the trajectory of a success story, a veritable from-rags-to-riches paradigmatic story, the *Bildung* of an individual who, unhindered by national limitations, language, religion, and ultimately, by the fear of death (as he argues at the end of the narrative, when he describes the outbreak of the plague in Algiers), could pursue a career in Algiers, climbing all the economic and social steps allowed a Christian until he became—within the Barbary state—the secretary of the Dey, and who, once returned to the United States, was appointed the diplomat in charge of establishing a treaty between Algiers and the United States. In a sense, Cathcart's narrative, along with similar stories, could come into existence and could be expressed precisely because of the absence of the United States as a weighty political power, the lack of the U.S. political and diplomatic response to the Barbary States, and the lapse of time between captivity and liberation. The American weakness in terms of political influence and its absence in terms of authority allowed for a space in which these captivity narratives could be told.

Unlike the Puritan Indian captivity narratives, the Barbary captivity narratives seem to abandon a transcendental (or typological) mode of writing in favor of a substantially pragmatic position. The central ideas and *topoi* in these narratives draw from the economic and mercantile world, representing material conditions rather than spiritual states of being. For this reason, these narratives have some traits in common with the "involuntary migrants narratives" written by indentured servants, who often wrote with a very specific marketing and financial goal in mind. In both cases (in the Barbary captivity narratives, and in the indentured servants narratives) the story is driven by a desire to show not only the hardships suffered by the character, but also how he was able to overcome these and be somewhat successful in navigating a hostile economic context.

Whether the tale of captivity in one of the Barbary States was written during the captivity or recollected afterwards, the moment of publication signaled the public appeal by these individuals to an authority (be it the U.S. Congress, the general public, or the diplomats in charge of paying the ransoms) often embodied by what Cathcart, in his narrative called "my dear but cruel Patria" (Baepler 1999, 141), an abstract entity that was supposed to recognize these people as its children, redeem them from their captors, and embrace them again as citizens. The interesting paradox inherent in this situation is that the absence of the "patria" allowed for the creation of two spaces: on the one hand it produced a discursive space in which the captivity narratives could be written; and on the other, it established an economic space where the captive, in his incarnation as "homo oeconomicus," could rise to economic independence and success, becoming an individual capable of acquiring the means to survive. In some cases the individual even thrived in his imposed exile. The captives' temporal and spatial idiosyncratic repositioning (the captives were outside both national borders and national time, since they were ignorant of events occurring contemporaneously in the U.S., and therefore could only hope for future liberation, never for a present and immediate one), interestingly complicated their self-representations and elicited curious responses to these projections of American identities. Furthermore, it allowed for encounters and crossovers between the domestic and the foreign.

In some of the captivity narratives, such as the one written by Cathcart—certainly one of the most entertaining and fascinating—despite being detained as captives, the American sailors seemed to be holding onto a sense of participation in the American revolutionary ideal, hence finding in American emancipation from Britain a promise of a personal redemption from captivity. In many instances the captives used the topos of the American Revolution to locate themselves within a continuum strongly projected into the future. The continuity between their situation and the American Revolution is expressed quite explicitly by Cathcart in more than one instance. During the early stages of his captivity he states that their

> captivity was really not so bad as we had expected, and that we had not been used worse than many of our fellow citizens had been during the Revolutionary war in the different British prisons, and, being confident that our country would immediately redeem us, I resolved to bear my captivity with as good a grace as possible. (Baepler 1999, 111)

But posing as a graceful captive was not always a viable option for Cathcart. In another passage of his narrative he eloquently expressed not only an obvious attachment to the US, but also articulated a range of feelings, including bewilderment and disbelief at the “cruel Patria”’s failure-bound dealings with the Barbary states concerning the captives:

> I could never have endured the anxiety and degradation under which I labored for any length of time had I not placed the greatest confidence in the generosity of my country. I thought it impossible that a nation just emerged from slavery herself would abandon the men who had fought for her independence to an ignominious captivity in Barbary, when they could be immediately redeemed for less than $ 50.000. (Baepler 1999, 119)

The failure of the United States to pay the ransom was not only threatening Cathcart’s release from captivity, but also undermining his self-representation as an American citizen naturally endowed with rights. In the confused Mediterranean sea, and on the tricky coast of North Africa, Cathcart’s attempt to sustain an integral self-representation of the exemplary American citizen was at risk of destabilization.

Indeed, his predicament—finding himself outside the nation-state and attempting to trace a personal link with the American revolutionary ideal of enfranchisement and independence—provided him with insight into the not-so positive consequences of the revolution: “I hesitate not to assert that no class of men suffered in any degree so much by the consequences attending the American Revolution as those who were captured by the Algerines in 1785” (Baepler 1999, 119).

Along with doubts about American foreign policy and the authentic status of the captives as American citizens, Cathcart’s self-representation was shaken to its roots by his captors. His personal quandary and his condition as a Christian captive involved a radical role reversal: instead of being recognized by his captors as the American individual he claimed to be, he found himself recast in the image of the exotic, racialized, ethnic native. This is quite clear in his account of the meeting between the captives and the Moors:

> The next day we were taken, in a kind of procession, to several of the Grandee’s houses whom we had not visited on our arrival and who were curious to see Americans, having supposed us to be the aborigines of the country, of which, some of them, had an imperfect idea from viewing figures which ornament charts of that continent, and were very much surprised to see us so fair or, as they expressed themselves, so much like Englishmen. (Baepler 1999, 110)

Rather than acceptable instances of the Indians represented in the maritime maps of the time, the hopeful American captives turned out to be disappointing likenesses of the same Englishmen they wished to be distinguished from.

Notes

[1] Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* was published as a fictional memoir in 1719.

[2] I believe that there are some misspellings in the transcription of manuscript, caused by print conventions in the Eighteenth century, so this part should read "Madona del Rosario and San Vincenzo."

Works Cited

Allison, Robert. *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World. 1776-1815*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Baepler, Paul, ed. *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999.

Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*. 1719. Reprint, London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Cinzia Schiavini

Smuggling Identities, Myths and Goods across the Atlantic: Hector St John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* and Jonathan Raban's *Hunting Mr Heartbreak: A Discovery of America*

This essay focuses on the textual, cultural and economic relations between the Old and the New World in Hector St John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) and Jonathan Raban's *Hunting Mr Heartbreak. A Discovery of America* (1990), and in particular on the two different forms of smuggling these texts stage: the construction (and deconstruction) of a national identity largely based on a trans-Atlantic cultural milieu nourished by European hopes and fantasies; and the interweaving of hidden social and economic forces that apparently menace the United States borders but ultimately lead to the creation of border zones where smuggling is finally unveiled first as an act of resistance to the American social pressures, and second as an unofficial practice disquietingly colluded with the national economy.

De Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* has long been seen as one of the most important literary praises for "the new American man." The text consists of twelve letters written by a fictional American farmer, James, addressed to a European nobleman who is interested in the geography, culture and economy of the colonies. James first describes his life in the Northeast, then in the Southern states and finally ends with the wish to move westward to the unsettled regions on the frontier. Although *Letters* has been long perceived as a positive depiction of the life in America at the end of the 18th century, this text incorporates and stages the contradictions that undermine the ideological background of the new nation—its cultural, economic and political principles. Many critics have recently emphasized how *Letters* follows a model of decline, shifting from optimism to pessimism as far as the future of the colonies is concerned. The first eight letters depict the life of the American farmers in enthusiastic tones, while subsequent letters unveil the disadvantages, rather than the advantages, of life on the new continent.

Two hundred years later Jonathan Raban, a "sophisticated" English traveller (as Paul Fussell would define him[1]), decides to follow de Crèvecoeur's footsteps and relates his experience in *Hunting Mr Heartbreak. A Discovery of America*, a first-person travelogue in which Raban recounts his journey from the shores of England to New York and then across the Unites States—first to the South, then the Northwest, and finally south again to the Florida Keys. Even though Raban does not seem to follow merely his predecessor's path, his fidelity to de Crèvecoeur's search is unquestionable. The similarities between the two quests extend well beyond geography. Aside from the general outline of the journey (from the Northeast to the South and then westward), parallels of themes and structures indicate that Raban's interest also lies in the process of construction and de-construction of the mythic American background. His travelogue dissects the ideological and economic short cuts de Crèvecoeur suggests in his narrative, and their evolution in contemporary American society.

My analysis is divided into three parts, each related to a distinct form of trans-national exchange that these texts outline: the sharing of myths; the cultural and economic creation of new identities; and finally the economic smuggling across political borders.

Smuggling Myths

Both de Crèvecoeur and Raban well know that the idea of "America" was born outside its borders, well before its discovery. This imaginative realm has long been a magnet that has attracted Europe to America, fostered in great part by the geographical distance between the two continents. It is precisely in the void of the ocean that what Malcolm Bradbury defined as the "transatlantic mythology" that bonds America to Europe lies:

> these explorers, migrants and travellers have long been drawn not only by realistic needs and interests—the search for freedom, the hope of opportunity, the hunger for wealth—but by an elaborate and dense body of notions that seated themselves first in the European, and then later in the American mind . . . Over the centuries the most important trade has been, in mutual fantasy, the barter of myths and illusions: American dreams, American Nightmares, European Fantasies. (Bradbury 1993, 1)

Despite the long, continuous encounter between the Old and the New World during the last four centuries, even in recent times the United States has again been perceived and represented as a hyper-real environment, the summa of multiple simulacra and virtual realities.[2] While the two continents have often been represented in oppositive terms, the mutual debts and deep connections between the two Atlantic shores play a fundamental role in American history. The incorporation or exclusion of these transatlantic exchanges are crucial in de Crèvecoeur and Raban's narratives, since the hidden forces of this mutual exchange surface in the texts and break apart the image of the Atlantic as an insurmountable barrier that divides the historical contingency and the utopian elsewhere.

An opposition between Old and New World is the textual strategy chosen by de Crèvecoeur at the beginning of his tale. The pleasures of the new life on the American soil are emphatically stressed in the first letters. de Crèvecoeur's choice of a fictive open interaction with an addressee across the Atlantic seems to emphasize even more the opposition between Old and New World. At the beginning of the *Letters*, de Crèvecoeur identifies America with the future. James, who feels inadequate writing letters to a cultivated European nobleman, is finally persuaded to recount his experience by the Minister, who suggests to him that "[the nobleman's] imagination, instead of submitting to the painful and useless retrospect of revolutions, desolations, and plagues, would, on the contrary, wisely spring forward to the anticipated fields of future cultivation and improvement, to the future extent of those generations which are to replenish and embellish this boundless continent" (de Crèvecoeur 1782, 12). De Crèvecoeur's tale begins with a resurrection: James is (or has already become) an American, one who waits for the arrival of European emigrants at dockside, considering them "a valuable cargo" (de Crèvecoeur 1782, 74). Europe and the Atlantic crossing remain invisible in the text: instead of the glittering fiction imagined by the emigrants, de Crèvecoeur closes focussing on the distressed, pale and emaciated appearance that the Old World (and the journey) has impressed upon them.

While de Crèvecoeur has already turned into an American at the beginning of his narrative, looking forward into his new life, Raban's glance is backward-oriented. He devotes the first part of his travelogue, "The Atlantic passage," to a re-creation of the immigrants' transatlantic journey on a cargo ship from Liverpool to New York. "Before it was anything else, America was the voyage itself," Raban states. "Few of the emigrants (and very few of those who traveled in steerage) could think sensibly beyond their coming trial-by-water. Many of them, from landlocked villages and towns in central Europe, had never seen the sea before this day. The United States was a sketchy, if glittering, fiction, its unreality sustained by the ungraspable breadth of the ocean" (Raban 1990, 3).

Raban stresses connections rather than divisions, and underlines how the Atlantic incorporates both the immigrants' fantasies about the United States and the images of the real world they were leaving:

> My ghostly fellow travelers were *emigrants*; they were not, or at least they were not yet, *immigrants*. At ten degrees west, America was still an empty hypothesis; it was the land, the family, the village or the city they were leaving that must have occupied their thoughts at this stage of the voyage. They were making their exit—a phrase which, in *Roget's Thesaurus*, leads straight on to "resign, depart the life, die." (Raban 1990, 17)

To Raban, as to the poor immigrants of the past, crossing the Atlantic by boat is a *travail*; however, unlike de Crèvecoeur, Raban includes and analyzes the event and the dreams that continue to fill travelers' minds two centuries after de Crèvecoeur's journey.

Although James' perspective is future oriented while Raban's Europeans seem to look behind them, from the moment the glances of Raban's immigrants and those of de Crèvecoeur's Americans meet on the New England shores their paths prove similar. Both writers take their first steps in the new continent in the Northern regions, even though their ultimate geographical destinations are quite different: de Crèvecoeur focuses mainly on Nantucket (five letters out of twelve are devoted to this small island) while Raban describes his uneasy encounter with New York and life in that metropolis. However, in the East James feels bonded by too many ties: to the new country and to his mother country as well; to local society and to the international society of intellectuals. Raban also has many ties although, as we will see, the English traveller is forced to confront something more tangible than de Crèvecoeur's intellectual worries.

After their experiences in the North, the second stage in both authors' journeys are in the Southern rural communities. First, de Crèvecoeur describes his sojourn at Charlestown (de Crèvecoeur 1782, 159), and then Georgetown. The image of a New Eden already corrupt from its very beginnings is suggested by de Crèvecoeur's descriptions of poisonous snakes (an element reintroduced by Raban in his account). But natural perils are only the initial difficulties de Crèvecoeur must face. More important, he cannot avoid noting the paradox of a democracy that tolerates slavery within its borders, and his account of witnessing a slave imprisoned in a cage and left to die for killing an overseer (de Crèvecoeur 1782, 173) becomes the epitome of Southern violence and injustice.

In the smalltown of Guntersville, Alabama, Raban too tries to relive the Jeffersonian pastoral ideal. The author's utopian fantasies are bolstered by the image of a town that "is not the end of the world, but you can see it pretty good from here" (Raban 1990, 123). The centrality of the self in a community based on the sense of individual identification, with minimal references to social and political institutions, allows Raban construct a new life in six hours: a rented house, a rented dog, and immediate acceptance by Guntersville society. This freedom to settle, however, has its dangers, as the author will soon find out. Raban too must face a segregated society, where blacks live in a poor neighborhood outside the town (Raban 1990, 165). Xenophobia seems to be the prevailing heritage: many Guntersville citizens literally hide a double life in their closets, where KKK robes hang among everyday clothing (Raban 1990, 179).

After the disappointment and the dangers of life in the South, de Crèvecoeur decides to re-enact the dream of a new life in a virgin land and pursue his fortunes in the West. The myth of the frontiersman is well embodied by James, who feels the pioneer's restlessness and discontent . Torn by too many loyalties, he decides that self-preservation is the only solution, and leaves for parts unknown in the hope that his children will not be too taken with Indian ways of life and will retain their "culture."

Like James, Raban moves to the place that, at the end of the twentieth century, can be perceived as "the last frontier": the Northwest. Although Seattle becomes the final destination of Raban's "private" journey (the author moved there for good shortly after the release of this book), this epilogue would not serve as a faithful reassessment of Crèvecoeur's travelogue. Because James's experience on the frontier causes him both hope and trepidation, Raban pursues de Crèvecoeur's in both directions, and his narrative bifurcates into two different endings: the author contrasts Raban/Rainbird's brand new life in Seattle with the consumpted existences he finds in the Florida Keys. While Seattle re-enacts the dream of a new beginning, these islands represent in many ways "the end of America" (Raban 1990, 317), as Raban points out:

> Most things came to an end down on the Keys: English drifted into Creole, religion into natural magic, work into play and crime. In the industrious north, I had often dreamed of the Keys as the great American haven of un-American activities. On these islands, loafing in the sun counted as a respectable occupation . . . . People lived under assumed names and carried false passports. Retirees couples with alibis locked themselves into anonymous waterbed motels, for sticky sex conducted behind the shutters under a creaky overhead fan. If there was any place on the map of the United States where the elevated ideology of being an American finally unraveled, it was on the Keys. Morally and geographically, the Keys were *terminal*. (Raban 1990, 318)

The Keys are the place where the American fear of contamination becomes reality, or, as Raban puts it, "the place where you could actually see the South American tail wagging the North American dog" (Raban 1990, 333). Here the façade of the myth crumbles: the Keys undermine United States integrity but, as we shall see, they also reveal more disturbing evidence of the permeability of national borders that reach down deep into the United States past.

Smuggling Identities

While the myth of a democratic and wealthy American society remains only a fantasy in both authors' work, there is another crucial element in the immigrants' expectations that progressively turns from dream to bargain: the search for new lives and new identities across the ocean. The hope of a new life is probably the main reason why emigrants made the transatlantic crossing, and both authors weave this hope into their texts as a fundamental thread in the fabric of the relationship between Europe and America. Like their fictional counterparts, both authors chose to move to the United States[3] and treat in their texts their diasporic sense of belonging to two different continents.

The quest for a new identity and the diasporic tensions are represented by de Crèvecoeur and Raban first through the ambiguous interplay between the authors and their fictional alter-ego(es). Here again, the textual strategies they adopt differ considerably. While de Crèvecoeur chooses a neat dichotomy and fictionally opposes himself (the French author) to his American alter-ego, Raban states his aim to explore the continuity between Old and New World and the hybrid nature of trans-national identities in the wake of de Crèvecoeur's journey in the title of his work itself: the hunted "Mr. Heartbreak" is clearly the English translation of his predecessor's surname; "Heartbreak" is an entity already suspended between two continents, the ambiguous yet powerful synthesis of James the narrator and de Crèvecoeur the author. Moreover, while de Crèvecoeur 'smuggles' a European identity into an American character, once in the United States Raban postmodernly multiplies de Crèvecoeur's James into a series of alter ego(es)—Alice, Trav, Rayburn, Rainbird—who resemble their author more and more as the narrative proceeds. Raban's deconstruction of de Crèvecoeur's James into multiple identities aims at representing what an immigrant can hope to become in America at the end of the twentieth century. Every place Raban visits corresponds to a new identity, a new mask he wears, a new life and new habits he adopts to plunge more deeply into the local environment. As soon as Raban arrives in New York he becomes Alice, the urban, middle class/new age/cultivated metropolitan dweller who lives in a cubicle in the trendy neighborhood near Irving Place. When the author leaves New York heading South, he turns into Trav, the proletarian, *main highways* rider, who listens to rock music and uses a gutsy slang. If these first two masks remain just fantasies, from here onward Raban tries to adopt not only a name, but also a new life that makes it real.

As soon as the author arrives in Guntersville, he becomes John Rayburn; his new identity derives from the mispronounciation of his surname by Southerners. The Raban/Rayburn dichotomy contains the discrepancy between original (European) and hybrid identities, which turn out not to be the traveler's choice, but are imposed by society—as often happened to immigrants once they reached American shores. Whereas a new surname may not have practical consequences, other involuntary switches of identity can turn into dangerous thefts. Shortly after Raban moves into his new house, he is persecuted by the previous owner's acquaintance, "Bri," a dangerous figure Raban imagines and describes quite vividly:

> It was one thing to play at being Alice; quite another to be taken for Bri. I was seriously scared of being Bri. I knew Bri, or at least Bri's kind. He'd been twenty-three, maybe twenty-four, with skinny whippet bones, thin fair hair spread over his low forehead like stalks of moldy hay, no lips, chips of dull flint for eyes, cheek bones like ax-blades. Bri was the kind of person who gets killed in back alleys outside bars. (Raban 1990, 134)

Here the author's new life turns into a dangerous attempt to walk in another man's shoes. A "new life" seems here available only nominally: the identity Raban chooses is not vacant. Bri's presence threatens him as a memento of the past and of the history of the place—a ghost that destroys the illusion of a new beginning in the southern community.

The two final destinations in Raban's journey stress the polarization of a positive/negative ending also as far as the individual search is concerned. When the author reaches Seattle, the fictional identity he adopts is the one closest to Raban himself: the writer/journalist J. Rainbird (another misspelling of his surname) "was trying to turn Seattle into the kind of inky, bookish city he knew best. Charmed by the view, by Seattle's seeming ease and openness, he was seriously wondering if he could make a convivial living here" (Raban 1990, 282).

While Seattle encompasses the promise and premises of convivial living, in the Florida Keys Raban meets people who do not look for a new life, but rather seek escape from their previous lives in the perfect hideaway that is the labyrinthic geography of the archipelago:

> *Last I heard of him, he was down on the Keys* was a sufficient epitaph. You plopped into the silvery liquid air, and that was that. You entered a Limbo between the Americas; a place where social security numbers were in short supply and final demands from the I. R. S. were returned to sender, marked NOT KNOWN AT THIS ADDRESS. (Raban 1990, 318-319)

The Keys are a place where identities are not created, but erased; here the author himself turns quickly into a nameless, disquieting outcast: "With his bloodshot eyes and patchy, graying stubble, he looked criminalized" (Raban 1990, 355) Raban comments, staring at his image in the mirror. It is not surprising that, among the outcasts who hide in the archipelago, Raban meets his most dangerous alter-ego, Bri, the presence that haunted him in the rural community of Guntersville (Raban 1990, 366). While in Seattle Raban had managed to plan his new life; on the Keys he can only organize his own death, and he tries to buy a tomb on one of the islands.[4] Instead of brand new names, in the Keys Raban finds only remnants of consumpted lives that are virtually nameless, with only "*aka* s" (Raban 1990, 338) which are again not the runaways' choice, but the consequence of their social and economic status which profoundly conditions the process of "becoming other."

It is precisely the nature of the social and economic forces that mold new American identities that Raban investigates as soon as he arrives in New York:

> Identity in Europe wasn't a matter of individual fancy. Even if you had the money for the materials, you couldn't dress as an aristocrat simply because you liked the look of the local nobleman's style. If you were Jewish, you couldn't even pass yourself off as a gentile without incurring punishment under the law. Every European was the product of a complicated equation involving the factors of lineage, property, education, speech and religion. . . . For anyone brought up in such a system, arrival in New York must have induced a dizzy sense of social weightlessness. Here identity was not fixed by society's invisible secret police. The equation had been simplified down to a single factor —dollars. (Raban 1990, 50)

Since the reduction to a single economic factor implies the possibility for every immigrant to buy a new identity, it is not surprising that Raban sees the most famous department store, MACY's, as a goldmine of identities for new immigrants, "not so much a store as *the* store of American life—a three-dimensional encyclopedia, in commercial and vernacular form" (Raban 1990, 53). The summa of mainstream models is here at its best: the *consent*, the acceptance of a common way of being American, is subtly mixed with the "*just for you*" (Raban 1990, 56) whispered to buyers by every object on sale. Even the desire for a strictly Anglo-Saxon aristocratic past is commercialized and sold here—through the allusion to the fake tradition of the *good old days* that the *elite* brands rely on, from Ralph Lauren on, culminating with the antiqued portraits of false forefathers painted by an American painter. However, Macy's "just for you" whisper turns into a "not for you" in the streets outside the store. Beggars, recent immigrants and everyone "who'd fallen short of the appallingly high standards that Manhattan set for staying properly housed and fed" (Raban 1990, 64) fill the streets of the metropolis. This process of exclusion soon involves the author too: Raban realises that Alice's identity is economically beyond his reach and he, as a writer/journalist, cannot afford to live in Manhattan.

The economic pressures leading to the creation (and the erasure) of identities are reversed in the Keys: here the outcasts are often *nameless* precisely because of their active role in illegal economic practices and their non-existence within legal economic exchange as "producers" and as "consumers" as well (only few goods are needed to live on the islands). Not only do the Keys subvert the economic dynamics related to the reinvention of the self; they also fully reveal illegal, transnational practices dangerously conniving with the national economy.

Smuggling Goods

For both de Crèvecoeur and Raban economic practices have played a key role in the definition of national identity from the very beginnings of US history. According to de Crèvecoeur's farmer James, being an American means owning land, and he considers this ownership as the basis for liberty and power (de Crèvecoeur 1782, 25, 41). Two centuries later, Raban depicts property (and, in general, economics) as a useful instrument for investigating the United States' internal fractures and its ambiguous relations with outer spaces.

The interest in economic practices may account for the geographical discrepancies in de Crèvecoeur's and Raban's routes in the North. As already shown, while the Frenchman focuses in particular on Nantucket, the English traveller chooses New York as his first stop-over. The choice is determined by the economic significance of the city. New York is for Raban what Nantucket had been two centuries before for de Crèvecoeur: first, the symbol of American enterprise and dynamism, the capacity of the nation to produce wealth. Even more important, both Nantucket and New York are clearly economic frontiers, that is, they represent the junction between national and international markets and exchange. In his text, de Crèvecoeur suggests that the prosperity of the colonies derives mainly from international routes of commerce. Describing Nantucket, he underlines how its economic welfare comes from the exploitation of the sea and from trade with other countries (England in particular). It is precisely the exploitation of outer spaces that allows American society to prosper from its very beginning without creating social inequalities.[5] In contrast to the self-contained political system of the independent farmers de Crèvecoeur apparently portrays, American economic prosperity clearly has a transnational basis. The minefield of the discrepancy between the economic and the political borders explodes with the War of Independence. Like James, Nantucket too is torn between political loyalty to the New Republic and its economic relations with England.

These transnational continuities and internal fractures created by the economy are investigated two centuries later by Raban, who shows how geographical distances can be bridged by a similar economic status, and, *vice versa*, how geographical contiguity can be rent by economic differences. Raban deconstructs New York spaces and their dynamics of inclusion and exclusion along economic lines. In the American metropolis, class strata turns into spatial strata: the poor live in the streets, while the upper class lives in skyscraper penthouses. These two extremes of New York society are so distant that, to 'Air People' the streets are "as remote as Beirut and Teheran" (Raban 1990, 69). The society of air people is a transnational one—like the society of intellectuals Crevecoeur's farmer feels he belongs to. But Raban makes explicit how the cultural common background is only the surface of an economic system that redefines and crosses geographical borders, and threatens to tear the city apart: “This New York, the city of Air People, was straining to break free of that other, accursed city of the same name. One day, perhaps, you’d feel a tremor under your feet and hear a sudden cracking and tearing as the fibers of steel and concrete gave way…” (Raban 1990, 72).

If the commercial system of the Northern economy leads to a series of fractures within American society and to the strengthening of international relations, the South becomes for both authors the place where economic exploitation is even more explicit. de Crèvecoeur notes how the economy of the Southern states relies on two different modes of exploitation. The first is obviously slavery: the opportunity of a new life for immigrants as property owners (which James supports) is here set against a system that turns human beings into property. The second form of exploitation is the depredation of South American countries for raw materials (mainly gold and silver), reopening the question of boundless prosperity derived, once again, from outer spaces. Unlike Nantucket’s, however, the economic system of the Southern states explicitly violates the principles of the new nation.

Raban shows how even nowadays Southern rural communities rely on questionable international markets: Guntersville and the surrounding towns prosper thanks to the armament industries in the area, one of the most important weapon-manufacturing sites in the United States. The contrast between principles and economic forces generates the paradox that “the Arcadian peace of Guntersville… was actually sustained by the Cold War… There were people who were eating their fingernails behind their mosquito screens at the thought of what *glasnost* and *perestroika* might come to mean for Guntersville. To the morning commuters on the bridge, the idea of Mutually Assured Peace was just the thing to spoil a perfectly good breakfast” (Raban 1990, 161).

It is precisely the conflict between the national and international scenarios, between ideals and historical contingency, between politics and economics that brings James, the American farmer, to leave all properties and move westward, to regions that had still to be reached by society. But there are no such spaces in Raban’s United States. The only place that breaks free of the rules of society is probably the Keys. Economically, however, this is not a virgin land: “the tourist industry, the retirement industry and the cocaine industry had all done their worst” (Raban 1990, 332). The Keys reveal the multiple leaks in the economic network: the only escape from the grip of the economy is to enter into a counter-economy, that relies on… *smuggling*. Many inhabitants of the Keys are floating outlaws who earn their living by smuggling—drugs, arms, aliens: “Any fool with a boat could turn a few thousand easy bucks by running drugs, arms or aliens across the Gulf Stream" (Raban 1990, 318), Raban points out. Illegal trade dominates in the Keys—yachts with cargoes of drugs and illegals that reach, daily, every port on the islands (Raban 1990, 333), despite patrolmen's effort. Here smugglers have also learned how to conceal smuggling, as Swart Robinson, a customs investigator, explains to Raban: "There used to be a smuggling profile—you know: two males alone, grubby people, grubby boat—those are the ones we used to go for on a cold pop. Then they wised up. They all got girls. Well—I'm human. I'd sooner stay up on deck looking at a girl in a bikini than be down sniffing shit in the bilges" (Raban 1990, 361).

The Keys Raban describes fully reveal the permeability of political and economic borders by the international illegal network. Worse, Raban notes how the patroling and militarization of the borders generally prevent only minor traffic, like the marijuana trade, while big deals (like cocaine) continue undisturbed, sometimes with the complicity of institutions. Legal and illegal economies seem to get too close to each other here, to have too much in common; and while minor forms of smuggling remain an illegal (and persecuted) activity, big-time smuggling penetrates not only America's borders, but also its national economic system.

While de Crèvecoeur underlined how America's undeclared cultural and economic debt to the transnational network led to the short circuit between national and international systems, and to the paradox of a country where myths and economic forces follow opposite routes, Raban's text broadens the analysis of the cultural and economic dynamics hinted at by the Frenchman, and their consequences in contemporary American society. Raban declares explicitly what de Crèvecoeur suggests in his text: that American cultural and economic systems are based on the largely clandestine and sometimes downright illegal crossing of political borders. From an unrecognized cultural and economic debt to the international network described in de Crèvecoeur's narrative, smuggling in Raban's United States becomes both a form of resistance and of escape and, at the same time, a hegemonic economic practice.

Notes

[1] See Fussell 1980.

[2] Bradbury writes: "Life seems insistently plural, parodic, fictional, and without benefit of substance. Culture is any history that confers self-esteem on its creator, value is what sells. But if this is it, the late modern way, to the contemporary stranger it no longer appears distant, strange exceptional or simply the product of only one continent. Such is the power of the modernizing and Americanizing progress that it simply reflects the world as the world, in its form as a global equivalence of all cultures. Once more it is possible to go to America in order to see more than America, to travel in hyper-reality. And once more America is not so much different as exemplary, the ultimate case of that state of multiple simulacra, semiotic excess, virtual reality, extravagant fantasy in which much of the world thinks it now lives" (Bradbury

1995, 463-464). See also Kohl 1990.

[3] De Crèvecoeur moved to the New World well before the composition of the *Letters*, around 1760, and was naturalized in 1764. Raban moved to Seattle shortly after the release of this book, after many years spent traveling back and forth between England and United States.

[4] Here again Raban fails: the cemetery employee informs him that there is a lot of demand, "'You think you can hold for two years?'" he asks Raban, who quietly replies "'Well, I can try'" (Raban 1990, 372).

[5] See Jehlen 1979.

Works Cited

Alvarez Saar, Doreen. "'How Europeans Become Americans:' Reading Labor into the Code of Consent." *MELUS* 17 (1991): 37-49.

Ben-Zvi, Yael. "Mazes of Empire: Space and Humanity in de Crèvecoeur's *Letters*." *Early American Literature* 42 (2007): 73-105.

Blanton, Casey. *Travel Writing: The Self and the Word*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Bradbury, Malcolm. *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies & the Novel*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1995.

de Crèvecoeur, Hector St. John. *Letters from an American Farmer*. 1782. Reprint, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1912.

Fussell, Edward. *Abroad: British Literary Travelling between the Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

_____. *The Norton Book of Travel*. New York: Norton, 1987.

Holbo, Christine. "Imagination, Commerce, and the Politics of Associationism in de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*." *Early American Literature* 32 (1997): 20-65.

Jehlen, Myra. "J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur: A Monarcho-Anarchist in Revolutionary America." *American Quarterly* 31 (1979): 204-222.

Kohl, Stephan. "Travel Literature and the Art of Self-Invention." *Anglistentag 1989 Würzburg*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1990, 174-183.

Philbrick, Nathaniel. "The Nantucket Sequence in de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*." *The New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 414-432.

Raban, Jonathan. *Hunting Mr. Heartbreak: A Discovery of America*. New York: Harper Collins, 1990.

Zuckerman, Michael. "Identity in British America: Unease in Eden." In *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, 115-158. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

“The Passing” (Alive) through the Conspiracies of Time: Contemporary Transitions from Bill Viola’s Video-Art to Bob Dylan’s Songs

Coordinators: Angelo Capasso, Marina Morbiducci

Angelo Capasso, Marina Morbiducci

Introduction

In this workshop we tackle time and its conspiracies. Our title is derived from Bill Viola's art video "The Passing," which investigates death. "The Passing" conveys notions of passage, transition, ephemeral movement—the irreversible motion which, although we are doomed to it, also shows how the condition of transitoriness, statutory to our existence, embodied and disembodied in products of art of any kind, whether through medium or form, stimulates the creative drive.

In Western culture, from mythology to epic, from poetry to cinema, "passing" has always been seen as the main source for creation, the pivotal point between life and death, the axis of movement—the threshold beyond which we slip into either nullity or being. In Derek Jarman's *Blue*, the artist/director tells us in his own voice, offscreen, about being on the verge of dying. Onscreen we see only a blue screen. Borders are blurred and the field of energy melts by implosion, diluting separations.

Angelo Capasso, in his paper titled "Liquid Borders," points out the state of fluidity that movement implies, and its artistic manifestations. Paradoxically, according to Zygmunt Bauman the condition of liquidity is the only possible defining trait of modernity. Such a concept undermines every illusion of durability, uprooting all forms of social construction and enduring structures. By way of Bill Viola's "The Passing," and Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* cycle, Capasso approaches "Liquid Modernity," describing the forces that make our mutable existence undefinable/unconfinable, even within the digital experience and the perfomativity of contemporary art forms. From "painting light" to "making time" the transition takes place. "I felt pretty certain that ending in the middle would be the way to finish," Barney explains. In the video he acts out his own visceral (literally) metamorphosis, and from being a sculptor, becomes the sculpture itself, the re-creation. In this whole complex process, the only material sedimentation is the passing time: "liquid borders."

To further pursue the issue of temporal liquidity, Fiorenzo Iuliano takes into consideration Derek Jarman's movie, *The Angelic Conversation*, where several Shakespearean sonnets are juxtaposed to images of white male bodies. Both authors, however different, seem to share the same fascination with male corporeality, (homo)sexuality, and with the provocative aesthetical use of the male body. Starting from the essay on Shakespeare's sonnets published in 1985 by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Iuliano's intervention highlights several crucial points: the legacy of modernity and its disciplining role in the framing of subjects and cultures; the emergence of "queer" elements capable of disturbing and disrupting these consolidated certainties (the role of gay sexuality, the raise of transnational (or post-national) agencies), and the impact of the colonial (and neo-colonial) encounter.

In "Celebrating the Instant: Robert Creeley and Marisol Escobar's *Presences*," Barbara Montefalcone describes instead how American poet Robert Creeley and New York-based Venezuelan sculptor Marisol Escobar jointly conceived *Presences*, a book published by Charles Scribner (1976). Characterized by an experimental prose text alternating with black and white photographs of Marisol's installations, *Presences* celebrates the instant as a dimension where contradictions are solved and opposites coexist. The Present is thus shown as a liminal, unstable time, not ruled by stasis but which must, of necessity, be considered the dimension where time's many undercurrents meet and coexist. By studying the structure of Creeley and Marisol's book, Montefalcone underlines the formal strategies used by both writer and artist to translate the compression of time and space within the instant as well as to emphasize the inner message of their work. By celebrating the present, Creeley and Marisol succeed in creating a work of art that, by its very structure, challenges and subsequently defeats time.

Working with the same thought, in her paper "Aesthetic Traces of Absent Bodies" Mariangela Orabona juxtaposes the work of Ana Mendieta, a Cuban American artist whose work focuses on questions of exile, identity, and gender, with the work of Lorna Simpson, an African American artist dealing with questions of identity and gender. Tracing the work of Mendieta and Simpson, Orabona's intervention reveals deep insight into the politics of representation of the female body in American society and its redefinition through the aesthetics of the ephemeral dimension, framed within the culture of fluidity, in contemporary artistic practices. Simpson's and Mendieta's art exceeds the boundaries of representation, stressing the importance of art as a *process*.

Connected to this last theme—time's processuality and its "passing" as caught in art forms—in her paper "The Times, Are They A-Changin'?" Marina Morbiducci approaches Bob Dylan's long artistic career from the early folk-inspired songs (1962) to *Modern Times* (2006), with references to the films *No Direction Home* (Martin Scorsese, 2005) and *I'm Not There* (Todd

Haynes, 2007)—filtering these artistic experiences through the agency of the "passing of time" as the pivotal element. Quoting from his textual repertoire, in particular from the album *Time Out of Mind* (1997), she attempts to show how intimately his artistic inspiration is woven into the motifs of time's elusiveness, mutability and intangibility.

Angelo Capasso

Liquid Borders: Matthew Barney and Bill Viola Between Cinema and Video

The expression "liquid borders" recurs quite frequently in journalism with reference to illegal immigration and the easy possibility of crossing borders. The expression covers both the conditions of attack, and the state of being under attack. It was coined after two suicide bombers infiltrated the Israeli port of Ashdod in a shipping container in March 2004, which exploded before the bombers could find their target, causing the deaths of most of the afternoon shift of port workers as well. This is one threat that largely eradicates the solidity of mega-states after the 9/11 attacks. Containers ebb and flow through international shipping ports night and day, and whether a container is truly empty is mere speculation. In June, 2004, Turkish authorities uncovered sophisticated missiles hidden on the Maltese carrier *Breeze*. In April a fishing boat loaded with explosives destroyed a US navy patrol vessel off the Iraqi coast near the Basra oil terminal; and the Filipino terrorist group Abu Sayyaf claimed responsibility for a bomb that exploded in the Philippines, killing more than 100 passengers and crew.

"Liquid borders" is an image that conveys a state of mobility only conventionally transformed into solidity. The state of liquidity is also part of the definition that sociologist Zygmunt Bauman relates to modernity (see Bauman 2000). Bauman's concept of liquid modernity suggests a rapidly changing order that undermines all notions of durability, implying a sense of rootlessness in all forms of social construction. The concept challenges the meaning of modernization as an effort to establish enduring structures. By applying the concept to development, nuances of social change in terms of the interplay between the solid and liquid aspects of modernization can be addressed. *Liquid Modernity,* then, is a theory that deals with the forces that render our flexible existence insecure and uncertain. Though Bauman never abandons the terms "modernity" and "modernization," the concept is nonetheless chronologically and conceptually related to the idea of postmodernity. For Bauman, what is novel about the present moment is the sense that old bonds of family and community that once held society together are being replaced by concepts of identity that are by their very nature fluid and flexible.

Modernity originally aimed at breaking primordial social bonds only to reform and relocate individuals in even stronger, new bonds (such as the nation, or the nuclear family). "Liquid modernity," however, means that strong bonds are obsolete; it conveys the concept of inconsistency that blurs rigid forms and distinctions.

The distinction between Cinema and Video Art, or rather between Film and Video, rests on liquid borders in terms of the new digital experience through which the two meet in one main stream of floating images. Although the former is limited to the screen, and the latter to a more generic idea of space (videos are often a part of Installation Art and consequently have a multidimensional implication in space), the distinction between Cinema and Video blurs both in the artist's and the audience's experience and ever-increasingly exists only in the rapidly changing realm of the medium (and of technology). Both experiences concern the construction of time sequences through images, and therefore through space that is constructed using a sequence of stills (Film) or a sequence of dots and bits (Video).

Matthew Barney and Bill Viola have worked on the fringes of this experience, seeking to extract video from the general idea of installation within a real space, in an attempt to keep it within the context of performativity (see Parker, Sedgwick 1995). Time is not constructed in terms of the dialectic narration/anti-narration. Rather, Cinema and Video meet in the construction of images, and together they move over "liquid borders," borders which are liquid in the sense that they lack a fixed dimension. Cinema becomes an open experience with no final or ultimate results.

History: Video vs. Cinema

The history of the moving image begins in the late nineteenth century with the invention of cinema. Film, powered by electricity and light, allowed the documentation of movement for the first time. The compulsion felt by film and video artists, both earlier in the twentieth century and today, to "make time" by recording something in relation to its temporal possibilities is as powerful as was the desire of the Impressionists to "paint light." Evolving as it did from photography, but with the additional capacity to record movement and visualize the passage of time, film was so revolutionary that it was perceived as a powerful threat to the arts in the twentieth century.

By the mid-twentieth century, the possibilities of film, a costly, cumbersome medium, were expanded by the development of smaller, less costly 16mm, 8mm and Super 8mm film stocks which were accessible to all, including artists—meaning that working in film no longer required the technical or financial support of the motion picture industry. These new film stocks and cameras offered portability, flexibility, and a user-friendly approach. One could even learn to use them without instruction. By the middle 1960s, the artist-as-filmmaker was redefining the tradition of the studio artist, and the genre of avant-garde or experimental filmmaking was born.

The first generation of experimental film makers, including Stan Brakhage and Andy Warhol, favored either the articulation of each frame of the film as a way of moving from representation to abstraction, as in the case of Brakhage, or the repetition of the same frame to emphasize its importance and play with the boundary between film and photography, as in the case of Warhol. All strategies sought to dilate real time, and thus confound one's sense of action in time.

In 1965 Sony Corporation introduced the Portapak, its first portable videotape recorder and player. It was the first video camera aimed at the consumer market, and legend has it that the first "consumer" to buy this equipment and use it was the artist Nam June Paik. Perhaps the most important quality of video was its ability to show in real time on the cathode ray tube what the camera was in fact recording each second. In addition to Paik, many artists purchased Portapaks and took to the streets, retreated to their studios, or began performing in front of the camera to see what new imagery might emerge. Everywhere, artists were fascinated by the possibility of completely reshaping the concept of the moving image, both in popular perception via television and in art. Video has had a different passage into the visual arts than film. The art establishment of the 1960s was suspicious about video's capacity to distinguish itself from television or from the didactic usefulness of the documentary. Perhaps because video was so user-friendly, so convenient, and so democratic in its function, many found it difficult to imagine it generating the "aura" expected from a work of art.

Film was immediately accepted as an art form, and one with avant-garde possibilities at that. Less burdened by functional requirements, film could experiment the outer limits of narrative, technique and formal structure. Film theorists have postulated that film shares a closer relationship to photography than to video because it is based in celluloid. Video, on the other hand, stems from a different branch of the technical family tree. It may be related to both film and photography conceptually, but not formally. Video's origins lie in the magnetic world, not the material plastic one, and it shares its form not with another high art medium but with television. Inherent in video's real time capabilities is a special property that distinguished it from film or photography: its analogy to consciousness and, by extension, to being.

Unlike the other disciplines categorized as visual art forms, both film and video are, at their essence, time-based. While the "story" may not have a specific beginning or end, it is understood to change in some way through the passage of time. It is critical to note that film and video formally share a stronger bond with music and the performing arts, such as dance or theatre. Recently, the marriage of sculpture to film or video has made way for the genre known as video installation.

For centuries, time was connected to the idea of permanence in art history. In the 1960s and 1970s, artists became concerned with time as it related to temporary artworks or types of art, such as performance.

Bill Viola, "The Passing"

"The Passing" is probably the Bill Viola video most concerned with personal events. The 54-minute b/w video tape was produced over a period of four years which included the birth of his son and the death of his mother, events which led the artist to investigate fundamental ontological questions such as "life as a passage." Through the grainy video images, the human body and the materiality of the world take shape and the artist achieves "that unjustifiable certainty of a perceivable world which is common to us all," as Merleau-Ponty described it: "It is the heart of truth within us. When a child perceives before thinking, when it begins to put its dreams into things and its thoughts into others, forming with them a common block of life where each person's perspectives cannot yet be distinguished" (Merleau-Ponty 1965, 204).

Analogously, Bill Viola shows the living human body, being born and dying, and the spiritual body floating in the materiality of the world, conceived as the "passing," or rather a passage, a landscape of shadows moving on the cusp between black and white—juxtaposing aridity and fertility—desert landscapes scattered with bones and gutted vehicles. Traces of civilization and urban landscapes are shown in negative grays disturbed only by meteors of light (in fact car headlights); the sea ("la mer" has a Freudian homophonic linkage to "la mère") flows up to the end, when it washes away installed elements that synthesize the perfect family icon: a chair and rounded sitting room table on which a flower vase rests on a woven towel.

In the video, Bill Viola is present in a recurrent scene in which he is asleep and wakes up suddenly from time to time, as from a nightmare—which is probably the knowledge or perception of his mother dying in her hospital bed. He presents himself as the link between past and future, between the real world and the cosmos; the whole film is carried forward by his breathing, which metaphorically links to his mother's breathing on the hospital bed as she lies dying.

Viola's art deals largely with the central themes of human consciousness and experience: birth, death, love, emotion and a kind of humanist spirituality. Throughout his career he has drawn meaning and inspiration from his deep interest in mystical traditions, especially Zen Buddhism, Christian mysticism and Islamic Sufism, often evident in the transcendental quality of several of his works. Equally, the subject matter and manner of western medieval and renaissance devotional art inform his aesthetic, which inhabits a penumbral world between consciousness and subconsciousness, dreams and reality. These currents of his aesthetic are bought more clearly into focus via footage of Viola's family and are in turn connected to the passage of generations and the ceaseless cycle of birth and death.

The camera itself is the medium through which the idea of passages is expressed and gives form to the borderline between life and death, in its apex: the threshold. How can this threshold—the passing away, the very instant of dying—be given form? Traditionally, the moment has been expressed through symbols or narration, as in the soul being taken from the angels, as depicted in that early twentieth century by Picasso or Chagall, and in Christian traditional iconography as well, or in narrations of dying—for example, Derek Jarman's *Blue*, an updated version of "The Ballad of the Ancient Mariner" in which the artist tells us his story (through a modern "glittering eye": a infinite blue screen lasting 68 minutes) while he is dying of AIDS. Bill Viola attempts to produce the passing as a passage of elements that leads to one end, one conclusion, and which makes us feel that end, that loss.

The notion of the camera as both metaphor and vehicle for awareness and knowledge, transcending mere optical vision, recalls the premise expressed by the radically innovative filmmaker Stan Brakhage in his early 1960s text "Metaphors on Vision": "Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception" (Brakhage 1978, 120).[1] While Brakhage pursues the direct expression of heightened experience uncluttered by cultural prescriptions into film (much as the Abstract Expressionist painters to whom his work has been compared did),[2] Viola's work incorporates both the conceptual metaphors of his chosen medium and the perceptions of the many cultures—ancient and modern, Eastern and Western—in which he has immersed himself. This landscape of elements gives a personal "objective correlative" that dissolves time and experience contemporaneously, and renders the film experience precarious and indefinite, liquid beneath the passing of time.

Matthew Barney's Cremaster

Although he considers himself a sculptor (see Foundas), Matthew Barney is a multimedia artist who works with film, video, installations, photography, drawing, performance art and sculpture. *Cremaster* is a cycle of five films (with a total running time of just under seven hours) that Barney made between 1995 and 2002, in a non- chronological progression (*Cremaster 4*, 1995; *Cremaster 1*, 1996; *Cremaster 5*, 1997; *Cremaster 2*, 1999; *Cremaster 3*, 2002). It is, without parallel in contemporary culture, an odyssey of psycho-sexual drive and desire. Each of the five films is set in a different geographical location ranging from a stadium in his hometown of Boise, Idaho, to an opera house in Budapest. In Cremaster, the passage of time is expressed by geographical movement that explores the various possibilities in which form may contain meaning:

> At least for my understanding of *Cremaster 2*, it is important for that landscape to be drawable as a discrete object. That it should be possible to make a sculptural form from the Canadian Rockies or the Utah Salt Flats, for example. It's the only way that I could make the piece, as a contained form, in the same way that the stadium in *Cremaster 1* is a contained form, or the Isle of Man in *Cremaster 4*, the opera in *5* and the Chrysler Building in *3*. The initial concept was to put together five locations as singular sculptural entities, on a line from west to east, so that a line could be drawn between them—not just by me but by anybody. (Obrist)

Dense, compacted and multi-layered, the *Cremaster* cycle harks back to the mythology, biology and geology of creation and reaches forward into a world of modified genetics and mutating identity. Biologically, the cremaster is a muscle that raises and lowers the testicles. Barney uses the descent of the cremaster muscle as a symbol for the onset of male gender (apparent about nine weeks after a fetus is conceived). The five films progress from a state of undifferentiated gender (a fully ascended cremaster muscle, represented by the floating Goodyear Blimps and other symbols), through the organism's struggle to resist gender definition, to the inevitable point where maleness can no longer be denied (complete descent of the cremaster and release of the testes).

The sculptural project, then, has a traditional anatomic relationship with sculpture: with the human body. But in an updated version. Matthew Barney's beginnings coincide with one latest of post-modern trends in performance art called post-human, a name coined by Jeffrey Deitch. In Deitch's writings, the post human and artificial nature are juxtaposed and show that

> a new post-human organisation of personality will develop that reflects people's adaption to this new technology and its socio-economic effects. . . . Future genetic manipulation may spawn a race of post-humans who are outwardly perfect but whose inner neuroses and

> instincts may not be so easily controlled. Artists are sensitive to this murky underside of displaced urges which not be quite so easy to remould as a pair of flabby thighs. (Deitch 1992, 45)

The post-human deals with the rapid changes into culture that technology provides and the struggles to keep pace with the speed of these developments. Barney's work builds a parallel mythological world that probes deep into the dilemmas and traumas that shape our time.

As a sculptor, Barney does not consider *Cremaster* a movie, but a "sculptural project" with its own codes, signs and forms, almost its own genetic imprint. Yet the building blocks of its "DNA" are easier to recognise than to decode:

> The *Cremaster* cycle tries to take on a cinematic language that I had not dealt with before. I wanted to see how this sculptural project, which is what it is, could align itself with the cinematic form, and still come out as sculptural. And this was also the first time that I had made single-channel pieces, knowing that they would be seen from the beginning to the end in a way that my other work had not. I enjoyed the way the other installations could be seen for a number of minutes, even in the middle of one of the channels, and you could move on to the next channel and gain a perfectly adequate experience from it without seeing all channels in any particular way. *Cremaster* is different. Another shift was in somehow putting a musical narrative on top of the visual narrative and, in the case of *Cremaster 5*, developing the two simultaneously. This really solidified the experiment. Up to that point, I was still straddling two different types of structure. Something changed with *5*, and it probably has to do with the music. It ended up being an opera. We went to Budapest with the finished work of music, where Ursula Andress could lip-sync over the recording. In developing the work in general, it was so helpful for me to have a sense of how it might sound. (Obrist)

The monumental epic film sculpture titled *Cremaster* is a mighty animal that feeds on itself and at times almost devours itself: it is replete with full of recurrent images, topics and issues which are enigmatic and difficult to decode and which create their own grammar and video language . It is an autonomous system but, like every system, every organism, it requires nourishment from without. *Cremaster* ingests material from a dizzying range of sources: Manx, Mormon and Masonic; sporting, cinematic and sculptural. Barney's work feeds voraciously from histories and cultures and regurgitates these back as forms and fictions which portray an absolute idea of the contemporary.

"Is Barney's work a new beginning for a new century?" asks Richard Lacayo. "It feels more like a very energetic longing for a beginning, in which all kinds of imagery have been put to the service of one man's intricate fantasy of return to the womb. Something lovely and exasperating is forever in formation there. Will he ever give birth?" (Lacayo 2003, 9). The post-human (or rather post-modern) re-Creation has beginnings that meld both visual and sound into a new liquid genealogy. Liquids are frequent in the *Cremaster* episodes, as are sounds. Even the casual progression of the episodes expresses the intent of the whole cycle as more musical score than tale. The cycle works on volumes, tones, and timbers which pertain indifferently to colour and sound, and on structural elements such as repetition, pause and acceleration. The cycle is designed to build landscapes using characters, objects, and mixed combinations that concern a world morphing into something radically different from what it is – or is supposed to be.

Barney considers the phenomenon of "hypertrophy" a metaphorical inspiration for much of his work. "Hypertrophy" literally means 'the enlargement of an organ or tissue from the increase in size of its cells": it is a phenomenon of excessive growth. *Cremaster*'s excessive growth germinates from obscure meanings that find only visual light, without any literal meaning:

> Rather than reading *Cremaster*, we are encouraged to consume it as high-end eye candy, whose symbolic system is available to us but hardly necessary to our pleasure: meaning, that is, is no longer a necessary component to art production or reception. Left to its own devices—and it is all devices—*Cremaster* places us in a framework of mutually assured consumption, consuming us as we consume it. (Keller, Ward 2006, 10)

What moves the video to the more cinematic condition of space is the Cinema-like rituality that *Cremaster* implies. While Video Art lives within the word "space," in all its declinations, Cinema is the experience of "space" as "theater," and the experience of vision and voyeurism. This seems an unavoidable pre-condition for building a mythology that has very strong physical implications. We are spectators to transformation; the world as it transforms is like a huge composition of figures that have found movement as a condition for their passing, transforming, morphing condition which expresses the metamorphosis of the human body with technological implications. In this vision, all limbs (outer and inner) are the outer extremities and exist independently as a medium. Therefore, protagonists are conceived as mediums. The medium is not the message but rather a structure of ghost-like presence that transforms the message, transforming solid elements into liquid ones:

> I felt pretty certain that ending in the middle would be the way to finish. There was a kind of system that I laid out before *Cremaster*, which started in a place called "Situation," a sexual place trying to define drive or desire. That impulse would then pass through a kind of visceral funnel, called "Condition," that would shape that raw drive. And then "Production" was an anal or oral output that would be bypassed by connecting those two orifices and making a circular system. "Situation," the sexual station, was always drawn as a reproductive system, before its embryonic point of differentiation between male and female. As for the title, well, I was at my sister's wedding, sitting next to a doctor, Dr Lung, a man I grew up with in Idaho. I was talking to him about this system, about an unfixed, general point of sexuality, and he said I should look at the *Cremaster* muscle, which is associated with but not actually related to the height of the gonads during sexual

differentiation in the womb. A story could be developed about a sexual system that could move at will, and within this fantasy the *Cremaster* muscle would control that, although in fact it does not. (Obrist)

The liquid border principle extends to the artist himself once he is involved in the metamorphosis that is operative in *Cremaster*: the re-creation. Then, where Barney thought of himself as the sculptor, he becomes the sculpture itself. In this entire complex process, the only sedimentation is the passing of time.

Mattew Barney, *Cremaster* (1995-2002).

Notes

[1] Brakhage wrote this essay as early as 1960. Viola discovered the films of Brakhage, Hollis Frampton, Michael Snow, Ken Jacobs, and others while he was a student at Syracuse.

[2] See Sitney 1979, 195-199. The title of Sitney's seminal book, *Visionary Film*, inspired in significant part by Harold Bloom, refers more directly to Brakhage than to any other filmmaker Sitney discusses.

Works Cited

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.

Brakhage, Stan. "Metaphors on Vision." *Film Culture* 30, 1963. Reprinted in *The Avant-Garde Film*, ed. P. Adams Sitney. New York: New York University Press, 1978.

Deitch, Jeffrey. *Post-Human*. Stuttgart: Cantz/Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, 1992.

Foundas, Scott. "Self-Portraiture Meets Mythology: Matthew Barney Talks about His *Cremaster* Cycle." *IndieWire*. www.indiewire.com/people/people_030515barney.html.

Keller, Alexandra, and Frazer, Ward. "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster." *Cinema Journal* 45 no. 2, Winter (2006): 3-16.

Lacayo, Richard. "The Strange Sensation." *Time Magazine* 161 (March 3, 2003): 9.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Obrist, Hans Ulrich. "Hans Ulrich Obrist Interviews Matthew Barney." http://www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue2/barney.htm.

Parker, Andrew, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, eds. *Performance and Performativity*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Sitney, P. Adams. *Visionary Film*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Fiorenzo Iuliano

Queer Transitions and the Conditions of Loss

For Luca, who plays with(in) my memory

I wish to start by quoting a passage from a text by Walter Benjamin, the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," where he states:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was." It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. (Benjamin 1969, 255)

The possibility that memory can be retrieved and reformulated as a perennial and fatiguing transition among bodies, histories, texts, and places, is my central assumption.

I will discuss the issues of belonging and loss, questioning in particular the possibility—or maybe the danger—that any subject position, when related to a specific context and belonging—be it political or cultural or simply personal—could face the trauma of loss. In order to do that, I will refer to some texts that create a fructuous, as well as heterogeneous and to some extent disorienting, connection among different and distant geographical and cultural places.

The condition of loss and mourning has been the crucial turning point in recent American history. In the aftermath of 9/11 America has witnessed the loss of its political and strategic certainties, besides the loss of its primacy in the world. Terrorist attacks have made the United States aware of its own vulnerability, and, on the other hand, have determined a radical reconsideration of America's history and position on the international scene, rendering its historical and political ties with the rest of the world completely visible and problematic.

Overcoming violence and mourning has revealed America's ability to turn upside down the consolidated geopolitical schemes and their national or nationalistic counterparts, exposing the frailty of the very body of the nation. The unexpected loss, and the subsequent task of mourning, hardly possible to bear, has radically questioned the importance and the value ascribed to the very notions of life and humanity. This is why issues apparently very distant, like those raised in the field of biopolitics and other disciplinary contexts (for instance cultural and gender studies) have unexpectedly turned out to be very close to the ongoing debate in world politics.

I will try to go back from the traumatic present to the opposite end of a hypothetical spectrum of history and modernity to better reflect upon the ways in which the themes of loss and belonging have been historically conceived and thematized.

Retrieving memory could be a risky operation if carried out through the uncertain means of poetry and images since, as Benjamin says, the angel of history reminds us of the awesome experience of crossing the lines that divide historical materialism from more uncertain and vacillating counterparts. Paralleling Benjamin's words, I will resort to the evocative power of an angel too, trying to broach recent reflections on the themes of loss and community elaborated by American philosopher Judith Butler in several essays (especially *Precarious Life*) through the movie *The Angelic Conversation*, released in 1985 by British filmmaker Derek Jarman, and through the force of poetical words, the echoing of Shakespeare's sonnets that, following Jarman's detours, will be the mute soundtrack of my words as well. Very different texts in every respect, they share few but significant common traits: both refer to the experience of loss and separation, and both have a clear and immediate connotation in terms of gender and sexual identity, referring to the constitution of gay agency as a significant perspective from which any linear and monolithic historical narrative can be disrupted and radically questioned. Both Butler and Jarman convey similar ideas about the complex and traumatic processes involved in the construction of ties and communities and about the definition of a precarious, vacillating, unstable sense of attachment and belonging.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Judith Butler invites us to reflect on the condition of loss and the task of mourning deriving from that traumatic experience. She speaks of "mourning, fear, anxiety, rage" (Butler 2004, 28), the most common reactions to the loss of lives in the attacks. What Butler suggests is the possibility that the experience of loss can constitute and inform a collective and self-conscious political agency, by rendering vulnerability visible and precariously tangible, and by exposing people to the spectral dimension of their own existence, marked by the disappearance of affective and social bonds. Americans have learned by now what "the loss of their First Worldism" (Butler 2004, 39) actually means.

Loss is not only a political issue: its political stance can be fully understood with the awareness that it can be, in its most crucial respects, experienced through the body and corporeality. Hence, Butler's beautiful pages about how bodies are commonly, daily resignified as the prime sites of frailty and vulnerability, in both an actual and a socio-political sense. She maintains that the exposure and vulnerability of the body are the first dimensions where the constitution of a political agency takes place.

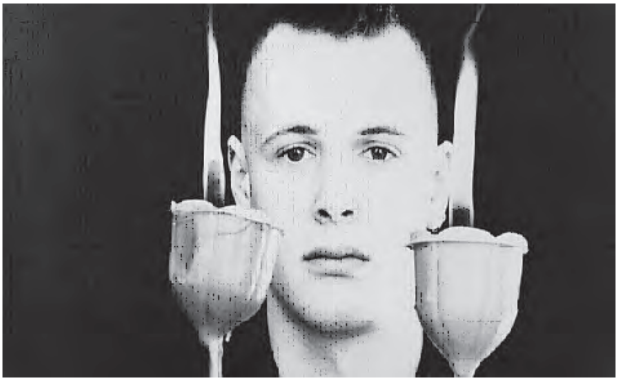
The problematic role of the body is a crucial key to this discussion. The power of violence is exerted on the materiality of the body; corporeality, on the other hand, is the most proximate actual and symbolic locus where the abstract, philosophical notions of individual and individualism, essential legacies of modern thought (in both theoretical and political terms), are substantiated and given—or denied—their own legitimacy. The process of incorporation amounts to the exposure of bodies to the force of history, whose violence works as a painful inscription on the flesh, rendering the body itself the most suitable site to enact the mechanisms that display that very violence:

> This means that each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies—as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure. (Butler 2004, 20)

Diving into the intricate diversions of mourning and melancholia—Freud's presence loudly resounds—Butler emphasizes that corporeality as a mechanism of exposure renders the very notions of belonging unstable and undefined:

> Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. (Butler 2004, 26)

Derek Jarman's movie insists on the possibility that desire and attachment can be experienced only through absence. The male bodies portrayed in the movie are distant, separate, and, in some scenes, they do not even meet; the slowness of motion and the instability of light convey a sense of incertitude and precariousness, the perception of something that acquires its strength and worth insofar as it is negated or continually deferred. Shakespeare's words reinforce this sense of ghostliness. They underline each frame of the movie, representing a material track that informs the images while providing them with the narrative order they lack. They supply images with a story or a narration—in a broader sense, they seem to provide images with a sense of spatiality and temporality that has been forcibly denied and foreclosed, and experienced only as a vague and undistinguished reverie: a recollection that flashes up—Benjamin again.



Derek Jarman, *The Angelic Conversation* (1985).

As a continuous repetition of themes impossible to enclose in a definite scheme of signification, a fugue of motives that will never meet and perfectly overlap, the images of *The Angelic Conversation* return that pale gleam of history and its rapid shifts through the movement of bodies that follow each other. A female voice reads some Shakespearean sonnets, the only device that provides the images with a tone and a possible, although absolutely vague, narrative direction and intelligibility. The images and the words of Jarman's movie participate in a complicated mechanism of possession and simultaneous expropriation: both bodies and words are relegated to the realms of their expected belonging and deprived of any immediate discursive and historical context. Male homosexual bodies are taken away from any regime of political identification; similarly, Shakespeare's sonnets are removed from the solid paradigms of literary excellence to which they have been traditionally confined by disciplinary schemes. A new pattern for the reconfiguration of both bodies and words, and their, so to speak, "official," public, sanctioned counterparts, individuals and poetry, seems to emerge from this modulation among texts and histories.

Desire pervades every frame in the movie. Nonetheless, rather than creating a clear and definite connection among the portrayed bodies, it is defined as the experience of lack (an axiom that conjures up Lacanian suggestions). Political bonds, and in this specific case, male and homosexual bonds, spring not from actual connections, but from incumbent and threatening lack and loss—a moment of danger, to quote Benjamin once more. It is difficult to understand the criteria used by Jarman in his choice of the sonnets for the movie. The opening one, nevertheless, clearly focuses on absence, and is read while on the screen a man directs his gaze towards an undefined, off-screen object: “nor think the bitterness of absence sour when you have bid your servant once adieu.”

Sonnet 57

Being your slave what should I do but tend
Upon the hours, and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend;
Nor services to do, till you require.
Nor dare I chide the world–without–end hour,
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
When you have bid your servant once adieu;
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save, where you are, how happy you make those.
So true a fool is love, that in your will,
Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.

Shakespeare plays a strange role. His sonnets, which Jarman has totally defamiliarized and rendered uncanny, have often served as a starting point for interesting reflections about homosexuality and queerness and the theme of male bonding in American culture. In 1985, the year in which *The Angelic Conversation* was released, American scholar Eve K. Sedgwick published a book, *Between Men*, now considered a pioneering work in the field of queer studies. Starting from a refined analysis of Shakespeare’s sonnets, Sedgwick argues that what she defines “homosociality” is crucial to the construction of the desexualized ties among heterosexual men, which are at the basis of western societies and cultures. Sedgwick’s book was published twenty years before Butler’s, a time span during which queer studies and queer politics broadened their range to include apparently distant issues related to the philosophical and political themes of citizenship and legitimacy—gender is not simply a matter of “private,” personal, or collective, concern, but has acquired sanctioned juridical and ethical implications. In both Sedgwick’s and Jarman’s works, however, Shakespeare’s sonnets have been charged with new potential significations, removed from the realm of aesthetics, and read as a narrative map for the complex and intricate detours of male homosexual desire and male homosocial bonds.

Sonnet 42

That thou hast her it is not all my grief,
And yet it may be said I loved her dearly;
That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,
A loss in love that touches me more nearly.
Loving offenders thus I will excuse ye:
Thou dost love her, because thou know’st I love her;

And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,
Suffering my friend for my sake to approve her.
If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,
And losing her, my friend hath found that loss;
Both find each other, and I lose both twain,
And both for my sake lay on me this cross:
But here's the joy; my friend and I are one;
Sweet flattery! then she loves but me alone.

In any case, Sedgwick overlooks a question that I think is ostensibly underlined by Jarman, that is, the role played by loss and separation. Yet, strangely enough, she starts by quoting an exemplary sonnet: "If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain." Emblematic words that, in Sedgwick's perspective, emphasize the structural relations between men, on which the traffic of women is hinged; but the words also shed a dreary light on the crucial question I am trying to raise: whether it is possible to experience the strength of personal and political bonds without going through the mourning process. Again, Butler's words offer an answer to this conundrum:

> Many people think that grief is privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is, in that sense, depoliticizing. But I think it furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility. (Sedgwick 1993, 22)

However, in her 1993 Preface, Sedgwick recalls the paradoxical experience of writing about something she did not belong to, the gay/queer community that she admits not knowing at all at the time she wrote her book. In a sense, at the core of a book of critical theory about male homosociality lies a significant experience of exclusion, strictly entwined with a strong desire for participation: "The yearning makes . . . the force of the bond with at least some readers equally incredulous at the encounter with the book's own intimate, desiring, direct address" (Sedgwick 1993, ix).

The experience of lack is, on the other hand, crucial to the construction of identity as a theoretical notion whose origins go back to early modernism, the historical frame of Shakespeare's poetry. Renaissance and early modernism are the moments in which the notions of the individual and of individuality start affirming their importance in western epistemology. That is why gay scholars have widely investigated early modernism as the essential phase in which gender and heterosexual identity are made viable through a process of exclusion and negation of their threatening and dangerous counterparts. At the essence of the western epistemic subject lies a precept of exclusion, as Jonathan Dollimore clearly states, referring to the relationship between postmodernism and the early modern period: "Identity is *essentially* informed by what it is not" (Dollimore 1991, 282). Homosexuality is paradoxically turned into one of the most definitive experiences of modernity, and Shakespeare's sonnets reinforce this assumption.

It is easy now to understand that Butler's and Jarman's works, so different and heterogeneous, insist on two crucial assumptions: the privileged position of gay and queer communities in experiencing lack and loss as highly significant, traumatic moments which can reinforce the sense of bond and community and which offer, on the other hand, the possibility of configuring another, unforeseen image of history and modernity (once perceived as consolidated and authoritative paradigms), stable and sanctioned epistemic tools, and suddenly turned into disquietingly undefined and problematic images, an opaque gossamer in which bodies and stories come to be caught, displaced, and charged with a new political as well as ethical meaning.

The homosexual experience is central not only to understand what a marginal condition means for thousands of people, but to question the basis of the very criteria according to which notions of the legitimacy of human life, and of humanity as such, are possible and conceivable. The experience of loss makes the articulate detours of desire, at the same time, understandable and dramatically viable, as Jarman's movie proves. Likewise, shifting to a more cogent political context, Judith Butler posits that the loss experienced by gay and lesbian communities, and the work of mourning after 9/11, share a common, even if hardly visible, emotional and ethical background. Butler overtly refers to the traumatic experience of AIDS during the 1980s as a significant moment for the American gay communities, which, under the threat of the AIDS epidemic and its violent biopolitical consequences, revealed how exclusion and loss could mark the formation of a political agency. The vulnerability of the body, so clearly displayed in illness, is the means through which a new sense of mutual dependence and reliability can be configured and defined. The perception of one's own corporeal being as a site of both desire and vulnerability is the epistemic key to understanding this discourse.

As an elegiac tune that must be played again and again, Butler's words make for a full understanding of the painful, intolerable burden of trauma and loss, and their crucial importance in marking a common terrain from which a choral perception of mutual dependence arises. She tells us that "if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions for our desire" (Butler 2004, 20). The traumatic experiences of loss and mourning, the sudden, unexpected, unbearable weight of loss, can make us completely aware of the subtle and intricate net of bonds that connect our lives, creating a complex system of reciprocal and communal reliance. There is a similarity here to the constitution of gay communities and a new perception of the national community after 9/11, Butler suggests, a sense of collective self-perception that is reinforced and reshaped by the experience of loss and the work of mourning. And, in the wake of recent history, it seems quite unlikely that loss can be faced without reacting violently, even as it is almost impossible to comprehend how a subject position born of actual violence could derive its strength from it.

The very idea of bonds springs from desire, and Jarman's movie translates the close, silent connections that desire traces into images among male bodies. Nevertheless, the threat of loss, the work of the negative, seems to be at work here as well. The sonnets by Shakespeare that Jarman quotes stress the disturbing menace represented by the departure of the beloved—the images themselves recast the very possibility of the bond into a phantasmatic and almost unattainable realm whose visibility and throbbing rhythm continually interrupt and fade.

In conclusion, history can be read as a "memory that flashes up," as Benjamin suggests, an image that clearly recalls most scenes of Jarmans's movie. Similarly, the histories traced, or just hinted at so far, recollect a memory that becomes part of the "piling wreckage" (Benjamin 1969, 257) of our present time. The core sense of my words implies the risk of tracing a trajectory that potentially arranges recent historical events in a mutable, uncertain and precarious configuration that hinges on a common perception of loss and on the frailty and precariousness of the bodies and the relationships that connect them.

Works Cited

Benjamin, Walter. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 253-264. New York: Schocken, 1969.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life*. London and New York: Verso, 2004.

Dollimore, Jonathan. *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Jarman, Derek. *The Angelic Conversation*. 1985.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Shakespeare, William. *Sonnets*. Edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones. London: Arden, 1997.

Barbara Montefalcone

“Celebrating the Instant”: Robert Creeley and Marisol Escobar’s *Presences*

Robert Creeley (1926-2005), American poet, novelist, art and literary critic, as well as teacher, began working in collaboration in 1953, after having spent some years at Black Mountain College. At this experimental college located in North Carolina, a group of artists and writers studied under the supervision of eminent teachers such as Joseph Albers, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Wilhelm de Kooning, Franz Kline and many others. Here Robert Creeley discovered for the first time the power of community in terms of creativity: he learned to look at other arts and to engage an active dialogue with them.

Since then, Creeley never stopped his working in collaboration, completing almost fifty different joint projects with many eminent American and European artists like René Laubiès, R.B. Kitaj, Robert Indiana, Jim Dine, Donald Sultan, Susan Rothenberg, John Chamberlain, Francesco Clemente, Elsa Dorfman and others. Collaboration cannot thus be considered a secondary activity but rather a necessary practice complementary to Creeley’s poetic writing. In fact, on the one hand collaboration confirms Creeley’s membership in an artistic community, the so called “Company” he has been working at constituting since the beginning of his career. On the other hand, through collaboration Creeley finds a way to constantly perpetuate his involvement with his first Company at Black Mountain College during the 1950s. Creeley’s collaboration with New York-based Venezuelan sculptor Marisol Escobar, entitled *Presences: A Text for Marisol* (1976), belongs to a first group of joint projects realized during the 1970s. At that time, Creeley was experiencing an extremely rich and fruitful creative phase. As Creeley himself explains, “*Presences* began with the publication of *Numbers*,” Creeley’s collaboration with artist Robert Indiana, published in 1968: “Marisol had seen that collaboration of Robert Indiana and myself, and considered I might be the appropriate writer of a text to accompany photographs of her work, which a New York publisher had then in mind to bring out as a book” (Creeley, “Introduction,” in Creeley, Marisol 1976, n.p.). Creeley and Marisol’s collaboration is thus the product of an act of recognition: the artist notices in Creeley's work with Indiana a coincidence of styles and objectives with her own work.

The book is characterized by an experimental prose text written by Creeley which alternates with black and white photographs of Marisol's installations. *Presences* is thus an example of Creeley's unique work with images. Even when he collaborates with a sculptor, as in this particular case, Creeley almost never writes his text after observing the actual artwork but prefers to write after observing the photographic reproductions of the work on his laptop. As a consequence, distance and abstraction characterize his writing.

When he started collaborating with Marisol, Creeley was experimenting new writing techniques based on fixed elements and formal frames. His use of these so-called "scaffoldings" allowed him to gain new perspectives on his work, which until then had been based on projective and spontaneous techniques borrowed from Charles Olson. The formal frames he uses in such works as *Presences* thus acquire a double function: on the one hand they set up the context for expression and can be considered as the base of his work. On the other, they also allow the author to operate variations within the chosen context and thus affirm his own writing style within the frame's limits.

The importance of these formal tools is explained by Creeley himself. Describing the construction of his text for *Presences* he asserts:

> I wanted a focus, or frame, with which to work, and *one, two, three* seemed an interesting periodicity or phasing. That is, using a base of one-page, two-page, and three-page units (again single-spaced in their initial composition on the typewriter), each section of the text was then six pages, and that times five was thirty—returning me to *three*. (Creeley, "Introduction," in Creeley, Marisol 1976, n.p.)

Creeley's creative strategy is based on the organization of his text into five main chapters characterized by a unique formal periodicity: 1-2-3, 2-3-1, 3-1-2, 1-2-3, 2-3-1. In order to avoid repetition, he inverts the numbers of each sequence (the first becoming the latter and the latter the second, and so on) thus creating a text based on repetition and variation.

The structure of the book is also the product of William Katz's original design:[1] Katz established the relationship between Creeley's text and Marisol's sculptures and perfectly embodied the author's formal ideas. By using a formal frame Creeley wanted to show how any text can escape external logical impositions: he wanted to use the frame just as expressionist painters do, to show how it could be transgressed. Wordscan thus flow outside the page or canvas' limits, just as paint does. Katz perfectly understands Creeley's vision and translates it by eliminating the edges of the pages: the typographical characters thus seem to push against the page's contours, much as each photograph occupies the whole page as if it was too large to be included in the book. Therefore, from the start, "presence" asserts itself as the main theme of the collaboration.

Presences actually constitutes an example of Creeley's new approach to writing already embodied by *Pieces*, an anthology of his poetry published in 1969. The first poem of the anthology announces the new direction Creeley's writing has taken:

AS REAL as thinking
wonders created
by the possibility—

forms. A period
at the end of a sentence
which

began it was
into present,
a presence

saying something
as it goes.

.

No form less
than activity.

All words—
days—or
eyes—

or happening
is an event only
for the observer,

no one
there. Everyone
here.
(Creeley 1982, 379-380)

Creeley's writing seeks to manifest the process of literary production: it translates the structure of thought as well as the velocity and complexity of the thought process. Form thus illustrates the activity of thoughts ("No form less / than activity") as well as the rhythm through which ideas present to the author's mind ("saying something / as it goes"). The only dimension that really counts is that of the instant, of presence in time and space, within which the subject is the center of his world, the point where everything converges ("no one / there. Everyone / here"). Within this universe one cannot distinguish the inside from the outside, for we always experience the transition from the one to the other: we live on the cusp between the personal and the common. The place where this specific writing evolves is thus an "in between zone", a place of passage and transformation.[2]

Presences therefore strives to embody, through prose, this specific poetic of presence where the "here and now" leads the writer's work. The space and physical presence of the sculptures accompany the time and evolution of the text that asserts the fragility of any point of view. Reality can be grasped only in the present, in the instant, and appreciated for the multitude of presences and existences it comprises. Through this particular collaboration Creeley thus gives form to his idea of a text that neither speaks of the past nor of the future but that is "intent always on its present" (Creeley 1970, 13), synthesizing the balance of classicism and the power of projective verse. Opposites can exist only in the present. Donald Sutherland's quotation, the epigraph of the volume, confirms the authors' desire to live in the dimension of the present: "Classicism is based on presence. It does not consider that it has come or that it will go away; it merely proposes to be there where it is". Time therefore ceases to be the necessary frame of narration:

> One thing leads to another—with or without *time*. An instant is a precise formulation, even of a universe. It doesn't finally matter much whether it leads to another; it has its own logic. Or say, perhaps better, that there are two ways of evoking reality: that it has place in *time*, or that it is existent in *space*. There is some choice between them, at least for the novelist. (Creeley 1970, 21)

The originality of *Presences* is the product of this same desire to integrate the two dimensions of time and space in the simultaneity of the instant, thus imitating the perceptive quality of visual artworks.

The process of time and space compression within the instant demands a formal work that affects both images and text. Marisol's sculptures, whose corporeity and materiality are evident when admiring them in a museum, seem to loose their substance in the photographic reproductions. The choice of black and white pictures, the fact that most of them are taken by many different photographers (almost 10) and the shift from close-ups to wide field views contributes to stress the abstract qualities of Marisol's installations. They seem to be cut off from reality: they are not affected by time but seem to float between times. Movement is nevertheless present, because the photographers choose many different angles; moreover through the shift from close-ups to wide fields they imitate the spectator's perception. As a result, when looking at the photographs, we perceive the installations as if they were in a museum: we can measure our own relationship to the represented objects whose size and proportions seem to question our own relation to the place that surrounds us.

If, on the one hand, the volume of the sculptures seems to be reduced by the photographic representation, on the other hand their presence within time is affirmed: the photographs, structured in a sequence, follow a linear development that reflects that of the linguistic code. Nevertheless, the text seems to insist on its corporeity, on the thickness and volume of the words.

Words appear as material "presences" on the page: they occupy a visible and material space, whereas the photographs play the classical role of the text, establishing the sequence and linearity Creeley's writing seems to deny.

The continuity between text and images is established by the insertion of some paragraphs where Creeley seems at first to interrupt his thoughts and then to direct them towards the details suggested by the image. Thus the photograph, as if it were a mirror, modifies the thought's trajectory offering it a new context. This digression that Creeley inserts in the narration of a meeting between a man and a woman shows how the author's personal memories merge with the details suggested by Marisol's installations:

> He recalls now many things, many people. He thinks of a beach in Truro, in Deya, in Gloucester, in San Diego. He puts people on it, many men and many women, and many children. Dogs run past. Divers things are dropped, lost in the sand. The water comes up on the beach, goes back on the beach, with tides.[3]

Rather than describing Marisol's installation, where three women seem to sunbathe on the beach, Creeley imitates the action of the installer at work, ("he puts people on it" he writes), thus constructing his landscape according to the elements suggested by his memory and inspired by the image. This world's multiplicity contrasts with the minimal aspect of Marisol's sculptural landscapes. Nevertheless, the two "worlds" are simultaneously perceived by the reader: they are superimposed so that the stillness and silence of the sculptures seem to be abolished. The installation, thanks to the evocative power of Creeley's words, seems to come into life.

Writing consequently becomes a means to record one's relationship to a specific place and time: it is the trace of the writer's subjective relationship to temporality and spatiality. By establishing a relationship with the images, and, at the same time, by placing himself within the context of his personal memories, Creeley succeeds, through writing, in constantly situating himself in relation to these two worlds. All through the narration he tries to define his position, to indicate all that surrounds him, and to define himself in relation to this multiple dimension called the present. We therefore can recognize the process of "measuring" considered by many scholars as one of the main characteristics of *Presences*, a process that takes place both in space and time.[4]

At the very beginning of his text, for example, Creeley tries to situate himself according to the space and objects that surround him:

> Big things and little things. The weight, the lightness of it. The place it takes. Walking around, it comes forward, or to the side, or sides, or backward, on a foot, on feet, on several feet.
>
> There is a top, and a bottom. From the one to the other may be a distance. Equally it may be so dense, or vaporous, so tangential to touch, that an inextricable time passes in the simplest way. (*Presences*)

Starting with the description of the physical qualities of the sculptures around which he seems to walk (their size, weight, volume), Creeley introduces a consideration about time showing how, within the present, time and space coexist and refer to each other. As soon as we suppose the movement of one of the objects that surround us, the temporal dimension inscribes itself within the spatial dimension, reminding us that the apparent stillness of the so-called "now" need not make us forget the flow of time. Hence we can speak of an apparent stasis of the instant, since we assist in the development of an internal temporality of the instant itself. In this particular case it is characterized by the movement of the observer's eye, trying to perceive the size of the objects around him.

This perception is nevertheless fragile because if the narrative voice can define the boundaries between the objects, it is unsure about both the distance between them and the relationship they engage ("From the one to the other may be a distance"). Within the present the subject, looking for stability, finds himself wandering within the complexity of this particular "world," where the dimensions are no longer distinguishable and where time seems to acquire the material world's thickness so that it becomes "inextricable." This confusion can also be considered as product of the fact that, within the instant, objective (physical) time and subjective time (temporality) are no longer independent but merge regularly. The present, defined by French philosopher Merleau-Ponty as a "past to be and a recent future" ("passé à venir et futur récent"; Merleau-Ponty 1945, 482), is not the time of stasis but the place where time's many undercurrents meet and coexist. It is an unbalanced and liminal time.

The originality of the book resides in the collaborators' desire to propose the experience of a double temporality to the reader/spectator: the simultaneity of plastic artworks (where time is compressed) and the continuity of writing (where time progressively expands). Time compression is translated by the accumulation of extremely short sentences and by the juxtaposition of words separated by punctuation. ("He was not. He was placed, in place"; "Everything. All done. No more. It's all gone now. Poor wood. Poor house. Think"; "Home. The hills. The valleys. The sun. The moon. The ups. The downs. The moors. The arabs") (*Presences)*. Thus, an insistence upon simultaneity (that is, on time's compression into the instant) inevitably leads to an emphasis on the space as well as the visibility of the objects. As in this case, the objects are directly presented and the reader can easily picture them.

Time expansion, on the contrary, is translated through digressions and repetitions. Creeley interrupts the flow of narration to focus on his personal experience or to explore Marisol's sculptural world. The impression we get in reading these pages is that of an expansion of temporality, through which conclusion is always suggested and postponed. Moreover, this expansion process is intensified by repetitions. Creeley often chooses some keywords or phrases and reiterates them, creating anticipation. The following paragraph constitutes an interesting example of this technique. It consists of a call for help addressed to the police but transformed through many variants developed from the fixed base represented by the imperative "call":

> This is the despair of being none, or last, or first. Upon that trackless waste, faceless, upon a hill in Darien, Connecticut where the traffic is endless, the cars immutable albeit their rust, both ways. The traffic goes all ways. Call the police, please.
>
> Call the president. He is first, and second to none. His road goes one way and cars go slowly, thoughtfully, upon it. . . .
>
> Y speaks of other needs, bodily needs, needs of the mind. She wears two hats, of which one is put upon another, but each is first. Her head is small and comfortable. Her hair is long and brown. Her hats are black and brown. Her eyes are brown, her dress is brown, her feet are brown, her house is burning. Call firemen.
>
> Please. Call the police please. (*Presences*)

Elsewhere the variation of a fixed linguistic structure seems to suggest stability but, in reality, it merely installs doubts in the reader's mind. Thus, facing the word, the reader finds himself surrounded by the myriad of its reflections: "Look, look. The road home. Some one. The road knows. The rose nose. He sees what he says. And says what he sees. There. Here. It isn't very big. But then. It isn't very small. It. Is in the 'middle'" (*Presences*).

By using words as springboards, Creeley sets up an expanding writing process that imitates the complex rhythms of thought itself. He offers not facts, but the movements of his mind:

> I keep my *own present*, that *present* defined, made, by the act of apprehension, of the mind's grip, perception, *not* as it can, or may, be recollected but only as it can, *does* occur. In short, I cannot give the reader "facts." I have no wish to. What I can give him, is the movement of my own mind, my language, that flux which can get him to his own, can find him these "things" in a frame open to his *own present*. (Olson, and Creeley 1980, vol. 3, 47)

The time expansion produced by this "double temporality" discloses the real function of the "scaffolding" Creeley uses to write his text. Facing the development of his writing as well as the increase of references suggested by his text, Creeley uses the formal frame as a tool that, paradoxically, allows him to write more spontaneously. In effect, it is evident that the scaffolding cannot contain the flux of his writing. Therefore, even though the frame is a necessary tool, allowing Creeley to isolate some fragments of the textual flux and to present them to the reader, it is considered something to be transgressed:

> The frame then, should be such (& it can only be so, if it is free of the "absolute," free of the rigidity of "fixed" detail) that it has only to be read, to exert the nature of its "relations." Shifts of color in painting are permanent not because they may be painted there with some strong, good-keeping oils, but rather because they set *always* in motion the nature of their relations, one to the other. As long as something, anything, is in such motion, it is contemporary, has its force in the *present*. (Olson, Creeley 1980, vol. 3, 50)

The formal support is a fundamental tool for the creation of any text that wants to live within the present, to exist within a compressed temporality and wants, at the same time, to make the reader aware of the time expansion taking place outside the specific context created by the author. Each instant described by Creeley is actually a unique and independent world, characterized by its own logic, by its own rules, by its own proportions. It is a microcosm of precision lost in the flux of time: "One sees that reality somehow manages a continuity that is exact in every particular," he writes. This is also emphasized by the choice to omit page numbers: the reader can thus start the text wherever he prefers to start, choosing the current he wants to dive into and which will carry him towards others textual spaces.

Any perception will thus be personal and unique and will contribute to accentuate the open character of the jointly authored book that requires a reader for activation. *Presences* can actually be considered an example of the so-called "open work" as defined by Italian critic Umberto Eco in that it constantly renews itself thanks to the readers' actions and thus only exists in the present.[5] It almost acquires the qualities of an installation, for it invites the reader/spectator to interact with its components. And it is exactly on this specific level that Creeley's text and Marisol's sculptures collaborate: the artists create a hybrid object that looks like a book, and yet could be exhibited in a museum as one of Marisol's works.

After a study of the text's double temporality, we realize how the collaborative book, starting from the establishment of a similarity between the materiality of the sculptures and the typographical presence of the words on the page, is actually based on a contrast between opposite poles: presence-absence; space-time; stasis-dynamism; concreteness-abstraction.

The coexistence of these apparently antithetical elements suggested by both text and images actually reflects our own existence. "I like to make combinations that seem incongruous," the narrator explains at some point, directly quoting Marisol. Hence he points to the creative process that characterized the whole work. Through the reduction of opposites within the dimension of the instant, Creeley shows how the distinction between the arts of time and the arts of space is pointless to him. The writer, through the artful manipulation of two languages belonging to two different semiotic systems, seems to want to prove that one can succeed in presenting space and time simultaneously. One does not have to discard time in favor of space. As Italo Calvino explains in

American Lessons, the ideal artwork has to embody the qualities of both the crystal and the flame. It must synthesize both regularity and agitation, stillness and movement. Creeley seems to fulfil the Italian writer's desire by creating a work made of both presence and absence, stillness and movement, materiality and abstraction. *Presences* can thus be considered an "exact" art work since it reflects reality in its instability and constant status of metamorphosis. "Fire delights in its form," writes Creeley quoting Slater Brown:

> Big firemen. Little firemen. In the flames they are dancing. *Fire delights in its form*. Firemen delight in their form? Inform us, policemen. We call upon them to inform us. Hence all the beatings and the shootings and the putting into closed places behind doors. Firemen and snowmen share other fates, the one burning, the one melting. Snow delights in its form, being mutable. It is the immutable that despairs. At least for a time, for any other time, for all time, for bygone times, for time past, for time enough, for in time. Time will tell. (*Presences*)[6]

Offering his own definition of literature but disguising it in an excerpt focused on the narration of a fire accident, Creeley provides us with a key to the understanding of the whole collaborative book. This seems to be the emblem of lightness while being deeply anchored in reality: *Presences* wants to transmit the idea of the passing of time, while taking into account the presence of space. And it is exactly this opposition that allows the whole work its existence, for although he seems to want to be free of constraints, Creeley shows us that he depends on them and perceives their importance. He does not deny the world's materiality by writing a text based on the immaterial aspects of existence and which, by talking about "presences," actually speaks of the "absences" those presences imply. On the contrary, it is by insisting on movement that the writer discovers the value of stasis.

This is why even though *Presences* seems to evoke a surreal world, it remains anchored in reality. It is also the reason why, while insisting on materiality, it becomes more and more immaterial as we read on. Repetitions increase progressively; the text turns into a song made of circular structures. "When I show myself as I am, I return to reality" (*Presences*), writes Creeley, quoting once again Marisol to whom the last part of the work directly refers. The role of the subtitle is thus revealed: the so-called "text for Marisol" acquires the form of a monologue combining interview excerpts, Spanish expressions and thoughts about life in a metropolis and solitude:

> Voices from the silence. Silencio immenso. Darkness falls from the air. When I show myself as I am, I return to reality. Vestida con mantos negros. Somewhere else, sometime. Walking in the rain.
>
> When I show myself as I am, I return to reality. Piensa que el mundo es chiquito. Goes green, goes white. Weather falls out, raining. Applause at the edges. Seeing wind. When I show myself as I am, I return to reality. People should think of themselves when they live alone. Goes white. (*Presences*)

Thus, as we approach the end of the book, the work seems to elude us. It seems to disappear in our hands. We possess it only when we decide to enter the flow of the narrative and become a part of it. This process of progressive dematerialization is perfectly embodied by the "Postscript" where time and space seem to reduce themselves proportionally. The presence of the words on the page, shaped as a triangular calligram, becomes minimal, and the particularization of the message corresponds to the linguistic simplification. Moreover, the isomorphism between the poem's form and its poetic content intensifies the final effect of the last page:

> "My death", said a certain ogre, "is far from here and hard
> to find, on the wide ocean. In that sea is an island, and
> on the island there grows a green oak, and beneath
> the oak is an iron chest, and in the chest is a
> small basket, and in the basket is a hare,
> and in the hare is a duck, and in the
> duck is an egg; and he who finds
> the egg and breaks it, kills
> me at the same
> time"
> .
> (*Presences*)

The text describes a place we discover slowly as we read on. Each sentence isolates a short part of the process of approaching the end, a process that takes place vertically rather than horizontally: each image suggested by the narrative voice demands to be deeply explored (as emphasized by the repetition of the adverb "in") before allowing us to discover something new. Thus, as if we were playing with Russian nesting dolls, through subsequent steps we near a conclusion whose presence is felt throughout the book, until we find ourselves before the last word that, at the very edge of the triangle, appears to be "time."

Once the reader's eyes stop on the last word and the whole scaffolding system seems to disappear, all that remains is the perception of an "end" identified by the period at the edge of the calligram. Nevertheless, the reader is also left with memories of the instants presented throughout the book and the awareness of the infinite continuity of existence resounding outside the physical dimension of this joint effort.

Finally, what remains to the reader, as Creeley explains in one of his letters to Charles Olson, is the unique and indefinable movement of the "present": "In short, what is here, *is* that flux, that relation between man/thought/objects of thought—circle, endless. Complete. PRESENT" (Butterick 1980, 52).

Notes

[1] William Katz’s fundamental contribution to the design of the book is emphasized by Creeley himself in the acknowledgments: “Especial thanks is given to William Katz—who first thought of this book as a possibility, who kept it together throughout its composition, and who finally took on the labor of its design and saw it into press. Without him—nothing” (Creeley, and Marisol 1976, n.p.).

[2] The originality of Creeley’s prose is testified by the publisher’s reaction after having read the original manuscript. At first he refused to publish it since he found the text lacked a correspondence with the images: he wanted it to be “about” the images. As Creeley explains, *Presences* is the product of a particularly difficult publishing experience: “The subsequent history of this text [*Presences*] suggests a ‘spell’ very much unintended, insofar as its publication has met with particular physical difficulties and confusions, e.g., the New York firm, which had contracted to bring it out, at one point discovered that the manuscript had been lost” (Creeley “Introduction,” in Creeley, Marisol 1976, n.p.). The publisher’s reticence concerning the possibility of publishing the text confirms the uniqueness of Creeley’s approach to images as well as the challenging quality of the collaborative book.

[3] The excerpts from *Presences* quoted in this text will not be accompanied by the page reference since the book was conceived without the page numbers.

[4] See Tallman 1964, Paul 1975, Davidson 1978, Gunn 1989 and 1995, Fredman 1990.

[5] In *Open Work* (1962) Umberto Eco develops the notion of “open work” by referring to 1950 American art, and mainly to abstract forms of expressions. Certainly any artwork demands the presence of a reader/spectator to be activated; nevertheless, there are some works that, thanks to their proper structure, leave more space to the activity of the reader. The fact that each single chapter of *Presences* is simply numbered (no reference to the content is made by the titles of the chapters) and the fact that there are no page numbers, as well as that we cannot identify a definite plot, allow the reader to “move” freely inside the text, eventually choosing where he wants it to begin and end.

[6] In an interview with Michel André, Creeley explains: “The only definition of form that really stuck in my head for years is really an instance, an example which I think is one of the very few interesting definitions of anything. It’s a lovely quote that an old friend named Slater Brown once gave me. He said it was a definition from Blake though I’ve not ever found it. It simply goes ‘Fire delights in its form.’ That to me is the context I’m involved with” (Creeley 1993, 105).

Works Cited

Calvino, Italo. *Lezioni Americane: Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio*. 1989. Milano: Mondadori, 2005.

Creeley, Robert. *A Quick Graph: Collected Notes and Essays*. Edited by Donald Allen. San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1970.

_____. *Mabel: A Story and Other Prose*. London: Marion Boyars, 1976.

_____. *Collected Poems: 1945-1975*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

_____. *Tales Out of School: Selected Interviews (Poets on Poetry)*. University of Michigan Press, 1993.

Creeley, Robert, and Marisol (Escobar). *Presences: A Text for Marisol*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1976.

Davidson, Michael. “The Presence of the Present: Morality and the Problem of Value in Robert Creeley’s Recent Prose.” *Boundary 2* 6, no. 3 (Spring-Autumn 1978): 545-564.

Eco, Umberto. *Opera Aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee*. 1962. Milano: Bompiani, 2000.

Fredman, Stephen. "'A Life Tracking Itself': Robert Creeley's *Presences: A Text for Marisol*." In *Poet's Prose: The Crisis in American Verse*, 57-100. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Gunn, Douglas. "In Dissemblance Deft: Robert Creeley's 'Undisciplined' Prose." *Boundary 2* 16, nos. 2/3 (Winter-Spring 1989): 277-304.

_____. "Inappropriate Literary Performances: The Unstable Texts of Robert Creeley's *Mabel: a Story, and Other Prose*." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1995).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard, 1945.

Olson, Charles, and Robert Creeley. *Charles Olson and Robert Creeley: The Complete Correspondence*. Edited by George F. Butterick. Vols. I-VIII. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1980.

Paul, Sherman. "A Letter on Rosenthal's 'Problems of Robert Creeley.'" *Boundary 2* 3, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 747-760.

Tallman, Warren. "Robert Creeley's Portrait of the Artist." *Kulchur* 4, no. 13 (Spring 1964): 15-26.

Marina Morbiducci

The Times, Are They A-Changin'?

1. *"The Times, Are They A-Changin'?"*

The question in the title presupposes a doubt, and the doubt calls for an answer—and here I will restrain myself from quoting: "The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind" ("Blowin' in the Wind," 1963), which, in turn, attaches to the no less known "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows" ("Subterranean Homesick Blues," 1965).

However, by quoting these two famous lines, I would immediately focus on the intratextual dialogue which Bob Dylan's repertoire intertwines; spanning an arc of fifty years, his songs echo back and forth with multiple resonances within his textual corpus and our public consciousness, creating the musical (as well as ideological) background of three generations, probably "the best minds of [our] generations."

"The times, are they a-changin'?" posits the question of whether or not things change—can, or must, change. "What does not change is the will to change," Charles Olson had pointed out; and certainly Bob Dylan, even though ignoring the theoretical pronouncement, did apply it in practice, from the inner source of his creativity, by changing himself many times over his long—at times it almost seems never-ending, as his tour is named—career. In a half century, the changes in Bob Dylan have taken place in terms of musical inspiration, production and performance; he has altered looks, partners, religions; he has touched on different forms of artistic expression, ranging from music to cinema and visual arts. He seems to know no boundaries to his inspiration, and, at the age of sixty-seven, he's still touring the world in concert. It is no coincidence that the film *I'm Not There* (Todd Haynes, 2007) depicts him through seven different dramatic *personae*.

Bob Dylan, therefore, sweeps time horizontally, in its temporal sequential process, diachronically, we could say. But also synchronically, as we can perceive, since the beginning of his poetical production, an obsession with time. Time, obviously a haunting presence in our own lives, is also a very crucial theme in Bob Dylan's work; we find in his texts a constant and recurring sense of time passing and of the temporariness of life; of, ultimately, time ending in death. Critics in the sixties, at the dawn of his popularity, immediately noted in the twenty-one years old singer who looked like a Chaplin tramp, with a flair for the comedic, a dense dialogue with death in his texts. And this did not change over time.

The issue I'd like to raise here is twofold: 1) time, caught in its fugacity and elusiveness, is a *topos* in Dylan's repertoire, and 2) time, in its mutability, brings us face-to-face with contradictory entanglements: it always changes, but also relies on some fixities; it's doomed to end but urges us onto eternity.

> Praised be the Holy Ocean of Eternity
> Praised be I writing, dead already, & dead again.
> Praised be the Non-ending
> (Jack Kerouac, "228th Chorus", *Mexico City Blues*)

2. *"You Got Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow All in the Same Room, and There's Very Little You Can't Imagine Happening"*

These words uttered by Bob Dylan are drawn from the documentary movie *No Direction Home*, by Martin Scorsese (2005). They seem appropriate to encapsulate Dylan's titanic notion of time: one can squeeze time "all in the same room," and give it a physical and graspable dimension by way of our imagination. In addition, after watching the movie by Todd Haynes, *I'm Not There* (2007), one can infer that Bob Dylan, by "not being there," not only does want to escape us—perhaps embodying that *umheimlichkeit* agency which tortures his consciousness—but even forces us to reconsider time in terms of space, and vice-versa, creating an almost inextricable fusion between the two elements: a "dylaniated," torn, centrifugal presence, absence and recurrence of time; thus doing, he proposes the possibility of dying more than once, existing for a longer stretch than a life's span. Very aptly so, the film *I'm Not There* aims at representing the possibility, for us humans (or should we rather say, demigods?), of postulating multiple existences repeatedly reproducing in a process of self-gemination, as does indeed occur in the movie *I'm Not There*.

A different view of time, as conceived by Dylan, seems to spring from Scorsese's work, where in the first frames the insistence on a black and white landscape, of an almost Zen quality—leafless trees with naked branches in winter in a snowy blurred atmosphere constituting the background to Bob Dylan's interview—confronts us with the artist's attempt to impede the inexorable flux of time in its relentless movement: "Time . . . You can do a lot of things that seem to make time stand still . . . But of course, you know, no one can do that."

The musical background to these words is a sad folk tune, sung in a slow rhythm by Black voices. All these elements evoke a utopian sense of the fixity of time, here transfixed in its the eternal duel with temporality. Time challenges itself and the mad human aspiration of making "time stand still" persists; and if not stopping time, at least making it last longer, stretching it, making it repeat itself, over and over and over again. This is, perhaps, the intention of "not being there," that is somehow equal to "being everywhere"; not being in only one place and time might imply the possibility of being in more than one place or time; and if time eludes us, we can always run after it and try to catch it, make it return in a sort of "eternal circle" like the homonymous song by Dylan.

3. *"I'm Not There"*

Appropriately, the movie *I'm Not there* ("I'm Not There" is the name of a famously elusive, unreleased track from Dylan's famed *Basement Tapes* sessions, recorded with The Band in Woodstock in 1967 while he was recuperating from his motorcycle crash, but the title also evokes Rimbaud's famous line: "I is another") starts with his epitaph, and the epitaph concerns his six lives, narrated by one elusive *persona*, Arthur, whose voice we only hear off-screen. As we read in the press release of the film, presented at the Venice *Mostra del cinema* (September 2007):

> *I'm Not There* is an unconventional journey into the life and times of Bob Dylan. Six actors portray Dylan as a series of shifting personae—from the public to the private to the fantastical—weaving together a rich and colourful portrait of this ever-elusive American icon. Poet, prophet, outlaw, fake, star of electricity, rock and roll martyr, born again Christian—seven identities braided together, seven organs pumping through one life story, as dense and vibrant as the era it inspired.

Arthur, representing the renegade symbolist poet, serves as the film's narrating voice, interrogated by a nameless commission as to the motivations, subversive undercurrents, and political misreading of his work. It clearly aims at showing the influence that Arthur Rimbaud, as rebel and "maudit" poet, had on Dylan (and not just on him, actually, in the rock scenario). Here, Arthur responds in quotes from Dylan's famous 1965 interviews and his witty, ironic responses provide counterpoint to the chapters in a life that begins to unfurl. On the other hand, Woody, the second *persona*, is a precocious train-hopper who embodies Dylan's youthful aspirations, when he imitated Woody Guthrie's persona and the tales of the Dust Bowl troubadour. The third character is Jack, the artist achieving success, “singing about his own time” and spearheading the protest-music scene of early sixties Greenwich Village with his original compositions, strident performances and high-profile LPs. Here, in fact, the period of *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* and *The Times They Are A-Changin’* is portrayed. As the devouring public divines a social and political consciousness in his lyrics, Jack severs ties with his “message” in a bizarre retreat from both his lover and folk singing champions. In this respect, the real life of Bob Dylan mixes with the fictional plot unravelling in the movie.

The fourth character is Robbie, a New York actor and motorcycle enthusiast, racing to counter-culture fame with his performance in a 1965 film biography. His troubled sentimental relationships are chronicled against the background turmoil of the Vietnam War as experienced in Greenwich Village.

Jude is perhaps the most interesting character in *I’m Not There*, primarily because of Cate Blanchett’s interpretation. The female portrait of the male hero, shocking his audience for the “electric turn” of *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*, is at once disorienting and reappropriating. The amphetamine-fuelled *persona*, increasingly nihilistic, infuriates the protest-music folk-guard; but, on the other hand, interestingly enough, in *No Direction Home*, Scorsese—covering the same period by inserting cuts from the BBC documentaries of those times—shows that Dylan considered those “songs” “American music” and “still protest songs.” In the film, his new sound attracts Allen Ginsberg and other poets of international fame, as it did in real life.

The remaining characters in *I’m Not There* represent other sides of Dylan’s personality, from his religious beliefs and conversion to Christianity in the late seventies—inspiring albums such as *Slow Train Coming*, *Saved*, and *Shot of Love*—to the enigmatic arrival in the metaphoric town of Riddle, in a sort of Billy the Kid disguise.

Far from creating a straight biopic, in *I’m Not There* Todd Haynes meant to reproduce Dylan’s creative history through his songs, writing, films and interviews. The director confesses that he discovered how change—radical, personal, artistic change—has defined the artist’s life; the only way to convey it was to dramatize it, distilling the life and the oeuvre into a series of separate selves and stories. The six characters who ultimately emerge seem to encompass the dominant themes and instincts that have informed Dylan’s life and canon of work. Exploding any one preconceived notion about Dylan’s personality into diversified *personae*, seeing him from both inside and outside, the film aims at representing the embodiment of American conflicts, rebellions and traditions, all at the same time. Therefore, we can summarize the articulation of time in the movie into the following distinct temporal layers:

1. temporal levels intertwining, intersecting, overlapping in flashbacks, interruptions, sudden abruptions;
2. duplicity of temporal levels by overlapping true and false elements; faked and facsimile interviews mixing history with fiction;
3. insertion of time-resembling events narrated with an aura of fixity and a-historicity;
4. excess of temporally depicting details reaching the opposite effect of temporal estrangement;
5. hysterical, not historical, character/s.

4. *Time Out of Mind*

Bob Dylan seems to be, simultaneously, inside and outside time: a real, living person, still performing on stage today (anyone who saw him perform on his recent European tour can confirm his absolute persisting charisma; he may be a historical figure for what he has represented in the past, but he is also a permanent symbol of revolutionary hopes for the future). He is a singer who has been received by presidents and popes: on January 17, 1993, Bob Dylan performed for Bill Clinton on the new President's first day in the White House, singing "Chimes of Freedom" in a very fast country version. The President appeared very amused. On September 27, 1997, Dylan was at the Bologna *Congresso Eucaristico*, invited by Pope Giovanni Paolo II, and sang "A Hard Rain is Gonna Fall," "Forever Young," and, of course, "Knockin' on Heaven's Door," before an audience of 200,000.

Fully immersed in the spirit of his own time, he has also been ahead of it, anticipating it. His protest songs are set in the very early sixties, in a precise historical moment in time, but they have also never-ending value because they did shape the consciousness of the "rebel" and iconoclast hero, indelibly so.

It is obvious that Dylan's being "bound for glory" also emerges from an urge to defeat time. In his "Song to Woody" (1962) he projects into the life of his spiritual father, Woody Guthrie: talking about the world he says: "it looks like it's dying and it's hardly been born."

Dylan plays on contradictions in his pronouncements about time: "my present situation precedes past," "it took me a long time to become young" (both quotations are from the movie *No Direction Home*); "ah but I was so much older then / I'm younger than that now" ("My Back Pages," in *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, 1964); "Forever Young" (*Planet Waves*, 1974), etc.

On March 28th, 2004, performing at the Apollo Theatre in New York, he sings "A Change is Gonna Come":

It's been too hard living, but I'm afraid to die
I don't know what's up there beyond the sky,
It's been a long time coming, but I know
A change is gonna come, oh yes it will.

. . .

There been times that I thought I couldn't last for long
Now I think I'm able to carry on
It's been a long, a long time coming, but I know
A change is gonna come, oh yes it will.

Time is a dominant motif in Dylan's texts even from a structural point of view: the ballad-like form he constantly uses tends to shape a more conscious temporal dimension, even during its performance. Famous for its temporal length is his song "Highlands" (16'32") from the album *Time Out of Mind* (1997). Here time, with the constant and steady low, moving rhythm of its almost hypnotic blues structure articulates in different formal and topical outcomes:

REPETITIVE TIME:
Everything was exactly the way that it seems
Woke up this morning and I looked at the same old page
Same ol' rat race
Life in the same ol' cage

. . .

REWINDING TIME:
Feel like a prisoner in a world of mystery
I wish someone would come
And push back the clock for me

. . .

MEMORY:
I don't do sketches from memory.

SENSE OF LOSS:
Every day is the same thing out the door
Feel further away then ever before
Some things in life, it gets too late to learn

In other tunes from the same album, we find other differentiations referring to time: in "Standing in the Doorway," for example, in terms of pace:

I'm walking through the summer nights
Jukebox playing low
Yesterday everything was going too fast
Today, it's moving too slow
In "Tryin' to Get to Heaven", Dylan expresses his sense of

TIME ELUSIVENESS:
Every day your memory grows dimmer
It doesn't haunt me like it did before
I've been walking through the middle of nowhere
Trying to get to heaven before they close the door

The reference to the closing door, leads us to a "symbolic" key presented in his enigmatic hallucinated novel, *Tarantula* (1967).

Much more so than in his songs, in this novel Dylan overlaps temporal layers, mixing past with present and future, blending personal and social, political rage and visionary dreams. All the human experiences he describes—in a strongly hallucinatory stream-of-consciousness technique—seem to always pass through the filter of the two opposite ends of the spectrum: life and death, birth and demise, beginning and end.

Bob Dylan, pressured by his publisher to complete the novel after his motorcycle accident, is obsessed by the constrictions of time, by the sense of the end. In the chapter entitled "Subterranean Homesick Blues & the Blond Waltz" we read:

> if youre going to
> send me something, send me a key – i shall
> find the door to where it fits, if it takes me
> the rest of my life
> your friend,
> Friend
> (Dylan 2007, 202)

The symbolical value of the passage is very clear: life is an unknown trajectory through time, the "key" "where it fits" can open up the way to disclosing its mystery. Life is seen as a fragmentary portion of the never-ending flux, circling around the allotted destiny:

> where I live now, the only thing that keeps
> The area going is tradition—as you can figure
> Out—it doesn't count very much—everything
> Around me rots . . . I don't know how long it has
> Been this way, but if it keeps up, soon
> i will be an old man—& i am only 15—the only
> job around here is mining—but jesus, who wants
> to be a miner . . . I refuse to be part of such
> a shallow death—everybody talks about the middle
> ages as if it was actually in the middle ages—
> i'll do anything to leave here—my mind
> is running down the river—i'd sell my
> soul to the elephant—i'd cheat the sphinx—
> i'd lie to the conqueror . . . tho you might
> not take this the right way, i would even

> sign a chain with the devil
> (Dylan 2007, 202)

Time is perceived as a physical substance, almost a piling up blob, after conflagration:

> you learn from a conglomeration of the incredible past—whatever experience gotten in any way whatsoever—controlling at once the present tense of the problem
>
> . . .
>
> needless to say—i & the building met & as instantly as it stopped, the motion started again—me, singing & the building burning—there i was—in all truth—singing in front of a raging fire—i was unable to do anything about this fire—you see—not because I was lazy or loved to watch good fires—but rather because *both myself & the fire were in the same Time all right but we were not in the same Space—the only thing we had in common was that we existed in the same moment* . . . i could not feel any guilt about just standing there singing for as i said i was picked up & moved there not by my own free will but rather by some unbelievable force
> (Dylan 2007, 198-200) (italics mine)

6. *Modern Times*

Considering the notion of time and Bob Dylan's handling of it, we must turn to his latest recorded LP, which is appropriately titled *Modern Times*. Here the intertextual and intersemiotic references are more than self-explanatory, but certainly we cannot but mention the link with Chaplin's film *Modern Times*, and the fact that the various tracks on the album present musical modalities which span the entire American musical tradition in terms of form: folk, blues, country; in terms of personae: the pioneer, the hobo, the worker, the outlaw, the social protester, the hippie. Even in the instruments used in the production, we perceive a sort of dusty patina which probably envelopes memories more than future hopes.

The choice of the title, *Modern Times*, evokes a subverted notion of time: the most recent in time has the definition of "modern". This means that "time" does not change, but proceeds in spirals; time is unmovable—we simply view it from diverse vantage points. In "Ain't Talking," the last piece of the compilation, where Dylan narrates his personal path through a mystic garden with biblical connotations, there is a rhythmic suspension suggestive of a sort of countdown in agony, which probably takes Dylan, once more, into legend.

Works Cited

Dylan, Bob. *Tutte le canzoni (1973-1980)*. Edited by Marina Morbiducci, and Massimo Scarafoni. With a conversation with Alessandro Portelli. Roma: Lato Side, 1980.

_____. *The Bob Dylan Scrapbook, 1956-1966*. Edited by Robert Santelli. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

_____. *Blues, ballate e canzoni*. 1972. Trans. and ed. by Stefano Rizzo, intr. by Fernanda Pivano. Rome: Newton Compton, 2006.

_____. *Tarantula*. 1966, 1971. Trans. Andrea D'Anna, revised by Alessandro Carrera and Santo Pettinato. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2007.

Marcus, Greil. *Like A Rolling Stone*. Trans. Andrea Mecacci. Rome: Donzelli, 2005.

Rizzi, Cesare. *Bob Dylan*. With contributions by Michele Murino. Florence, Milan: Giunti, 2004.

Williamson, Nigel. *Guida completa a Bob Dylan*. Trans. Vanna Lovato. Milan: Vallardi, 2005.

Online Resources

Charter, Ron. *Conclusions on the Wall*. EDLIS (Exchange Dylan Lyrics Internet Service). http://www.taxhelp.com/edlis.html

http://www.sonybmg.com/musicbox/video/bobdylan

http://www.maggiesfarm.it/ttt.htm

Mariangela Orabona

The Aesthetic Traces of the Absent Body

Representation defines the body as a cultural articulation, as a thing culturally and historically engraved in the field of vision, as a modality of inscription in the socio-cultural reality in which often subalternity and ethnicity are excluded. Discussing two different artistic interventions by two contemporary female artists, the African American artist Lorna Simpson and the Cuban American artist Ana Mendieta, I will highlight some crucial points in the politics of representation of the female body in American society and its redefinition through the aesthetics of the ephemeral and the culture of fluidity in contemporary visual art.

In different ways both Simpson and Mendieta deal with the female body. Their art exceeds the boundaries of the image, stressing the importance of art as a *process*, a continuous passage from the visible to the invisible realm of cultural and gender representation. In both cases there is a movement between presence and absence, stillness and motion, visible and invisible. In both cases there is a poetics capable of translating aesthetic acts in ethic acts.

The entire *process* of art as a continuous passage from the inscription to the dissolution of the body, a transit through tempo-reality, is a fluid moment of creation through the ephemeral experience of art. Sensations and affections are experienced in different ways both by the artist and the audience.

Identity Fragmentations and Temporal Dislocations

The Australian theorist Elisabeth Grosz works on issues regarding the body, especially the female one. In her book *Volatile Bodies*, Grosz affirms that the most important goal is to analyze the body as a cultural product/object in order to redefine its indispensable materiality. Yet she stresses the necessity of considering the material body in its cultural, social and political role, because the body has a biological and a psychological dimension, and their interdependency is still unknown; furthermore, the human body, though needing a psychic integrity, has the great capacity of producing fragmentations, dislocations which orient bodies and body's parts towards other bodies and other body's parts (Grosz 1994, 13).

Identity fragmentations and temporal dislocations are common features in Simpson's and Mendieta's work, which deals with the moment of inscription and that of dissolution of the raced and gendered body. Their art interrogates the body as a cultural object, involving the possibility to change it in a political act of resistance.

Following Grosz's thought I consider the materiality of bodies a means to highlight what is before inscription. Who are these bodies? What is in their nature? She insists:

> we need to understand not only how culture inscribes bodies, but more urgently, what these bodies are such that inscription is possible, what it is in the nature of bodies, in biological evolution, that opens them to cultural transcription, and production, that is, to political, cultural and conceptual evolution. (Grosz 1994, 2)

This assertion is a new way of thinking the materiality of the body in its active engagement to the world, to find new strategies to change the controlled vision over it. Contrasting the vision of the body mediated by representation is an urgent necessity to understand its nature and its politics. Without its cosmological and biological dimension there is a lack of vital materiality, and there cannot be cultural inscription: "Living matter/corporeality provides a surface for cultural writing" (Grosz 1994, 4). As a result it is significant to understand the body in its temporal variations involved in the process of inscription. The body has a materiality, which goes beyond life itself in the flux of time. Considering time as a new ontological paradigm is a possible way to recuperate or invent anew the nature of the body in its process of temporal transformations.

The Body-Image: Ephemeral Art, the Crystal-Image and the Flux-Image

In contemporary visual art the body in its materiality is a productive process linked to temporal transformations. In particular the absent body is an artistic strategy often linked to life and death, the visible and the invisible, reality and virtuality. This artistic strategy is expressed through the concept of the ephemeral. The French philosopher Buci-Glucksmann speaks about art in terms of an *aesthetic of the ephemeral* (2003). Considering the image as a process in Deleuzian terms, Buci-Glucksmann portrays a concept of art linked more to the instability than to the fixity of the art object, analyzing a new status of the image from an aesthetical and a political perspective.

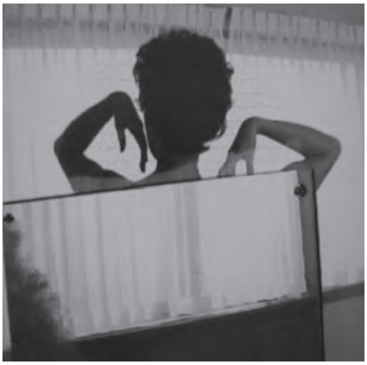
For Buci-Glucksmann the Deleuzian concepts of the crystal-image and the flux-image are ways of considering the image as an active process *in between* life and death, reality and virtuality, the visible and the invisible. For Deleuze the crystal-image is a shot that fuses the pastness of the recorded event with the presentness of its viewing. Yet the crystal-image is transparent, precarious, constantly creating virtualities, a shot shaping time. The flux-image is a virtual image as well, a creative activism of a flux in becoming, a dynamism to create new transits in between.

In contemporary visual art, the body-image considered as a process becomes a passage from the culture of objects to the culture of fluxes. The passage from the culture of objects, the artist's body, to the culture of fluxes, the dissolution of the body, is actualized, in Bergsonian terms, through time. Yet a culture of fluxes is part of our immersion as subjects in the becoming flux of life, a way of experiencing new forms of subjectivities. The artistic process begins a transit from the fixity of representation of an object—the female body—to a time of a fluid creation, in which the artist—the author—is dead and the only significant moment is expressed by the *process* itself, from inscription to dissolution. Buci-Gluksman calls *art icarien* the releasing of the body as object and the transformation of it in a flux image (1996). In the passage there is a process of dissolution through light and a destabilization of matter through time. Behind this new aesthetic of fluidity, linked to the virtuality of the real, there is a politics of fluid identities, new plans of experiencing the materiality of the body.

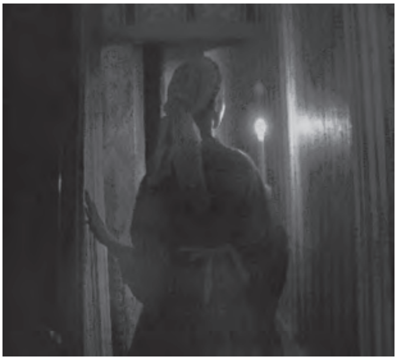
Following Buci-Glucksmann's analysis I consider two different moment of material body involved in the artistic process: a first one linked to a static, photographic body-image, a body giving its back to light in Lorna Simpson's work; and a second moment, a dynamic, fluid body-image expressed by Ana Mendieta's *silhouettes*.

The Crystal-Image: Lorna Simpson

In her interpretation of the Platonic myth of the cave, Luce Irigaray underlines how the men in the cavern seem immobilized by the impossibility of turning themselves, of returning towards the origin. They are bodies without faces, which Irigaray reinterprets following a dual logic of empty space—the cave, the female—and of full space—the light, the male. In Irigaray's study the platonic myth becomes one of the essential tropes of male imaginary and of the exclusion of the female from western philosophy (Irigaray 1975). The denial of the front of the figure and the negation of the gaze are essential features in the work of African American artist Lorna Simpson. Simpson starts with documentary photography and at the beginning of the 1990s turns to conceptual art. Black British fellow artist Isaac Julien sees in her work an important response to institutional conceptual art, because it comes from a female and raced voice. It seems that she intends to transgress conceptual art through the medium of photography, putting into question the photographic medium and its role of "shaper of subjectivity" (Enzewor 2006, 111). Simpson thus begins creating visual installations, using both text and image, which refer to the female body. The juxtaposition of textual and visual languages, and the creation of visual narratives, break the usual fruition of photographic images. In her work, bodies evoke an opaque vision and even an invisibility of the represented subjects. Faces are cut out; figures give their back, occupying the exterior surface of photographic paper as scratches on paper. They represent themselves as parts of faces, eluding their gaze, hiding it in an absent game, where the eye never shows up.



Lorna Simpson, *Corridor* (2003)



Lorna Simpson, *Corridor* (2003)

The 2003 work titled *Corridor* is a dual channel projection that juxtaposes two different temporal plans. The work was filmed in two houses, the 17th-century "Coffin House" and the 20th-century "Gropius House," which Walter Gropius designed and lived in when he moved to America. A single woman appears in each house. The women, played by the same actress, the Kenyan actress Wangechi Mutu, in period and contemporary clothing, carry out everyday tasks appropriate to the era of the two buildings. In one scene of the film, one of the women is giving us her back, which is a mirror reflecting light and the gaze of the audience. The in-between moment, the passage through the image, is expressed by the transparent material, the mirror, reflecting the surrounding space through light. This is the first moment of the image, what I would like to call the *crystal-image*. Her body image is precarious, part of the surrounding space, a virtual image. The two protagonists create moments for meditation and a tension between two different historical events. In fact the work takes its inspiration by two historical events in American history: the American Civil War of 1860 and the Civil Rights Movement of 1960. Simpson seems to look back to the historical events, re-reading them in a multiple perspective, using the reflecting experience of plural mirrors. In fact the moment of the body-crystal-image is connected to the notion of expanded time and affected memory, two essential features of the entire film.

The Flux-image: Ana Mendieta

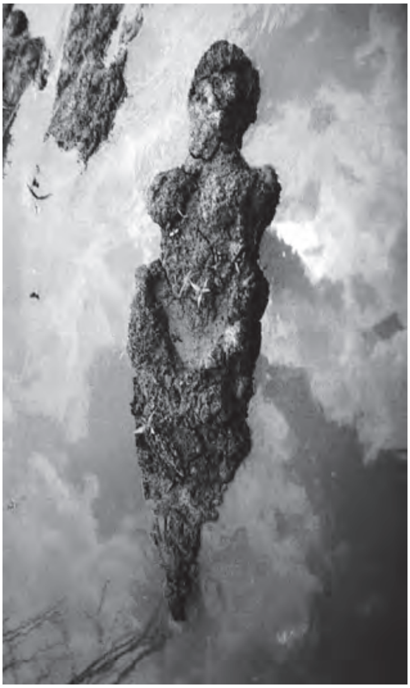
The second moment of the image, a fluid expression of the body-image, is evident in Ana Mendieta's work. She is the first Cuban artist operating in the interstitial spaces of the body art, sculpture, performing art, land art, or what she has called earth body art. It is impossible to configure her work in a particular artistic stream, due to the continuous dislocation of her oeuvre. She was born in Cuba, but at the beginning of the 1960s, at the age of 12, she left the island with her sister Raquel, during the so-called Operation Pedro Pan, the sending of a huge number of Cuban children to the United States.

Therefore it is impossible to separate her art from her personal condition of exile.

Art theorist Jane Blocker analyzes Mendieta's work from her condition of exile as a space *in-between* earth and nation, linked to the condition of being *out of place*: "by engaging the contradictions of identificatory practice relative to the female, the primitive, earth, and nation Mendieta occupies the discursive position of exile, and she uses this position to produce in us a sense of the uncanny. She uses, in other words, exile performatively to question the limits and fixity of identity" (Blocker 1990, 73).

Mendieta's condition of exile was atypical because she could travel normally by accepting the only possible compromise, becoming an American citizen, and an institutional part of that America which has represented her first confrontation with her racial diversity. Her exile is her *bio*-graphy, and I use this term as the declination of her personal experience and the socio-cultural context in which she expressed herself. The borders of her graphs seem like a map, a cartography, with a continuous slippage between *bio* and *graphia*, in which the subject loses her control, dispersing herself in the *graphia* of exile. In this sense the subject renounces to her authority, to the logic of institutional authority, expressed by the absence of the artist and by the traces her body has left behind.

Mendieta links her body to the earth in an affective way. The osmosis with nature, as a substance capable of reproducing while differentiating itself, allows her body to be involved in the rhythm of nature through the dematerialization of the flesh: the *silhouette* of her body is the only visible trace of her passage. The fluid moment of the image is expressed on a double performing plan: in the duration of the artistic event and in the photographic event, which stores the passage. The condition of exile as "a discontinuous state of being," to quote Edward Said (2002, 179), is represented in its virtuality as a real and symbolic dislocation of the body, a sort of shamanic practice where there is a dislocation and at the same time a symbolic dismemberment of the body. The best example of this dislocation is expressed by a 1980 work titled *La isla*, from Mendieta's *Silueta* series.



Ana Mendieta, *La Isla, Silueta series*, (1980)

La isla, a beautiful female silhouette carved out of the mud of a shallow Iowa creek, represents symbolically Cuba, "this place that is always deferred yet disturbingly always in the process of being located" (Blocker 1990, 80). The silhouette travels and moves as a floating boat, as a fluid entity capable of moving itself into the space and at the same time moving the space, as a vital and fluid matter covered by time and history.

Conclusion

In Bergsonian terms both artists engage in a political strategy able to distinguish the differences between ideologically coded images and images that are incommensurably differentiated. It could be important, as Grosz affirms speaking of the differences of degree and the differences of nature in Bergson, of differentiating the political strategies that use some images (of degree) to operate a categorization between races and sexual genres and some other images (of nature) of being generated as parts of an incommensurable flux (Grosz 2005, 13).

If in Lorna Simpson's work the fragmentation of portraits and a denial of the front of the figure permit a new configuration of the female and raced body-image, in the case of Ana Mendieta I perceive a flux tracing borders, as resistant acts, to abandon the flesh and reconfiguring it in the dimension of trace.

In both cases the role of the image is questioned. In both cases the role of the body is questioned. A new status of the image and a new way of perceiving the female body involved in the artistic process is produced as a resistant practice linked to the impossibility of representation. In its material in/visibility the body transgresses the limits of representation, as an in-between crystal- and flux-image, shaping time through its unexpected virtual transits.

Works Cited

Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*. Trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1911.

Blocker, Jane. *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Buci-Glucksmann, Christine. *L'Oeil cartographique de l'art*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.

_____. *Esthétique de l'éphémère*. Paris: Galilée, 2003.

_____. *Gilles Deleuze, immanence et vie*. Paris: PUF, 2006.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinéma II: L'Image-Temps*. Paris: Editions de Minuit. 1985.

Enzewor, Okwui. *Lorna Simpson*. New York: HNA, 2006.

Grosz, Elisabeth A. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

_____. *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2005.

Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum de l'autre femme*. Paris: Editions de Minuit. 1974.

Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

A New Babel: Multilingualism and Transnational Identities in US Literature and Culture

Coordinators: Valerio Massimo De Angelis, Anna Scannavini

Valerio Massimo De Angelis, Anna Scannavini

Introduction

As the title clearly states, the main subject of our workshop is the languages (and cultures) of America—languages and cultures in the plural, as opposed to the fiction of *one* American language and *one* American culture, a fiction that nonetheless exerts its indisputable power on both the national and the global scene. But we should first of all define what we are talking about when we talk about the entity called "America." What does this term refer to? Certainly not to the whole continent, and not even to North America, which includes also Canada and Mexico. And if we shift from geography to history, and take "America" as meaning the USA, what about the centuries before the Declaration of Independence, when something called the United States had not yet been conceived? In the Italian academy, we have sidestepped the obstacle by using the label "Anglo-American language and culture" (in the singular), therefore excluding any expression not in the English language. But are non-English language cultural expressions not (or un-) American? This *cul de sac* aptly shows the difficulty—or even the futility—of attempting to draw the borders of our discipline.

Perhaps our discipline (or disciplines) is/are as Babel-like as the soundscape of any major US/American/Anglo-American town today. And not only today. The multilingual—and transnational—dimension of what we call American culture has actually been operative from the very beginning, since the Pilgrim Fathers asked the Massachusetts Indians for help and received, to their utmost surprise, an answer in English from a Patuxet Indian, Tisquantum, better known as Squanto, who had been kidnapped and brought to Europe years before. The earliest linguistic and cultural encounters between English colonists and Native Americans are marked not only by misunderstandings and open conflicts, but also by a deep interbreeding that at mid-17th century gave birth to dozens of towns of "praying Indians," converted to the Christian faith by the "apostle" John Eliot, who in turn had become fluent in the Indian tongues, and had published a translation of the Bible into the Natick language.

Gradually, as we all know, the English language and the Anglo-American culture became the language and culture of an empire, and attempts were made to hide or thoroughly erase all deviant (non-/un-American) linguistic and cultural expressions. The "melting pot" project is only one of many attempts made at the turn of the twentieth century to homogenize American diversity precisely at a time when the multilingualism and also transnationalism of the American scene was in full, spectacular bloom, a time when a plethora of newspapers and books written in Italian, German, Russian, Yiddish, and so on, were mirroring the reality of a vast non-English-speaking and not-yet-American population. We have already arrived, in our century, at a junction where entire American states are virtually bi-lingual—"virtually," because many Spanish speakers are not yet proficient in English; but they soon will be, or their sons and daughters will be. On a lesser scale, many other non-English languages are gaining more or less culturally legitimate ground, contributing to the ongoing construction of this New Babel that is America. And the experiences of dislocation, the sense of being lost and clueless in a chaotic world, the nightmarish perspective of losing one's identity without yet acquiring a replacement for it, the evident hostility of "native speakers" towards the "barbarians from the other side" (or from the *under*-side, if we are talking about African Americans)—in effect everything that the authors studied in this workshop highlight as the distinctively negative features of living in the "New Babel"—also foreshadow the not-too-distant future of the whole Western world. But such are the often contradictory characteristics of the exhilarating feeling of empowerment and the awareness of a newer, deeper and more complex way of seeing and saying things that one may adopt nowadays to capture (or even create) the reality of contemporary life, in whatever language and from whatever positioning may seem most fit.

Gabriela Seccardini

Eva Hoffman and Elmaz Abinader: Two Women's "Lives-on-the-Hyphen" in Modern-Day United States

Eva Hoffman's autobiographical novel *Lost in Translation* and the short autobiographical essay by Elmaz Abinader, *Just Off Main Street* describe the migration of two women to the modern day United States of America. Underlying their experience of migration, exile or expatriation is the linguistic shift from the mother tongue to a new language, English. This paper will explore the experience of crossing the linguistic frontier when migrating to a new country to better understand whether the individual considers this linguistic shift an enriching, positive experience or a negative loss of identity. Both authors became dispossessed of their mother tongue, had to cope with the new language and the new world, and have been in any number of ways more than successful.

The experience of migration, exile or expatriation implies the crossing of national borders as well as social, political, cultural and linguistic frontiers. Geopolitical borders separating countries are, as scholar Susan Stanford Friedman writes, "the material borders among nation-states, the technologies of enforcement, the controls and markers of citizenship, and the structures of inclusion and exclusion that are enabled by borders as lines on a map backed by armies and laws" (Friedman 2007, 273). Friedman defines borders as

> fixed and fluid, impermeable and porous. They separate but also connect, demarcate but also blend differences. Absolute at any moment in time, they are always changing over time. They promise safety, security, a sense of being at home; they also enforce exclusions, the state of being alien, foreign, and homeless. They protect but also confine. They materialize the law, policing separations; but as such, they are always being crossed, transgressed, subverted. Borders are used to exercise power over others but also to empower survival against others. They regulate migration, movement, travel—the flow of people, goods, ideas, and cultural formations of all kinds. They undermine regulatory practices by fostering intercultural encounter and the concomitant production of syncretic heterogeneities and hybridities. They insist on purity, distinction, difference but facilitate contamination, mixing, creolization. (Friedman 2007, 273)

Borders contain the positive idea of crossing, of going beyond, while simultaneously conveying the negative idea of enclosure and limitation of free movement. The geopolitical frontiers between states necessitate complex bureaucratic processes such as obtaining personal documents like passports and visas that make border crossings more difficult. This painful yet necessary bureaucratic journey often constitutes the first image migrants have of the new country; the multiple difficulties that precede the journey itself can leave them feeling unwelcome and different.

Borders are not only of a geographical and geopolitical nature, but "have also taken on broad theoretical dimensions as spatial metaphors for the liminal space in between, the interstitial site of interaction, interconnection, and exchange across all kinds of differences: psychological, spiritual, sexual, linguistic, generic, disciplinary" (Friedman 2007, 273). The concept of frontier can be applied to all sorts of differences: "A frontier between differences also operates figuratively as a conceptual space for performative identities beyond the fixed essentialisms of fundamentalist or absolutist identity politics" (Friedman 2007, 278). Frontiers can therefore be thought of as lines of demarcation for any kind of differences as well as spaces for exchange, interaction and dialogue. Frontiers are sites where identity is put into question, negotiated, and rediscussed.

Stating that "Identity is changed by the journey" (Sarup 1994, 98), the philosopher Madan Sarup, of Indian origin, underlines the intimate connection between identity and travel. Considering the journey not only in its geographical aspect but also as a metaphorical displacement implies the crossing of different kinds of frontiers which may occasion a re-consideration of identity, a place where the self and the other meet, where the past encounters the present. As Susan Friedman states, there exist "frontiers between all differences," which become "the locations of movement in which routes produce roots and routes return to roots" (Friedman 1998, 178). Adopting the play on words coined by James Clifford "routes/roots" (Clifford 1999), Friedman establishes a relationship between frontiers, movement and origins. From this perspective, we can expand the idea of the frontier and consider it a space, a borderland "where fluid differences meet, where power is often structured asymmetrically but nonetheless circulates in complex and multidirectional ways, where agency exists on both sides of the shifting and permeable divide" (Friedman 2007, 278). The frontier is then the space where the traveler, the migrant, the exile, and the expatriate meet otherness and diversity and are forced to renegotiate their roots, that is, their cultural baggage. The metaphor of "baggage" best suits migrants who, like all travelers, pack the most valuable objects to be carried into the other life in the new world. Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešic´, whose novels are peopled by refugees, exiles and expatriates like herself, states that "life is the only baggage we carry with us" (Ugrešic´ 2001, 177 [my translation]).

If the idea of frontier implies a sense of restriction and limitation of movement, the threshold, on the contrary, is a related concept with a slightly different meaning. Whereas the frontier may also suggest an enclosure, the threshold implies a crossing over, a freer and less restricted movement.

Changing countries and crossing borders often implies a linguistic shift. The science of geography has taught us to think about languages in spatial terms and offers models and concepts to both linguistics and language studies. Linguistic phenomena can be represented through spatial models and metaphors proper to geography. Language can be contemplated in terms of maps and atlases, while the concept of a linguistic frontier is used to refer to the limits of a territory concerned by linguistic phenomena.

Emil Cioran, a writer who left his native Romania and chose to live in France and write in French, stated: "we don't live in a country, we live in a language" (Cioran 1993). Every language can be thought of as occupying a space or even creating a space of social interchanges. For example, each nation can be considered as the space where its official language/s is/are spoken. But, at the same time, within every nation there are thousands who speak other languages. Continuing to speak their own language within the home or with friends, these people contribute to creating 'linguistic islands' within the official linguistic national space, within whose confines people converse in their mother tongue. When a baby is born, s/he is plunged into sounds and musicality that s/he will later identify as his/her mother tongue. It will accompany him/her for his/her entire life. Even if s/he travels, changes country, speaks different languages, the sounds of the mother tongue will never be forgotten and will always be a part of the cultural baggage.

Being uprooted and brought to a country where social interchange occurs in a language other than the mother tongue can be traumatic. Unable to communicate his/her thoughts, feelings, emotions, unable to cope with the most common and simple everyday situations, the individual may feel lost: "As we step out of our understandings of everyday life, our familiarity in categorizing the world, and the rhythms we're accustomed to, our perspectives all of a sudden change. This creates a sense of dislocation" (Ogulnick 2000, 3).

This is why most migrants, even years after arriving in a new country, do not abandon their original language. The language follows migrants in their movements through space and across countries. Languages, like people, also migrate. Migrants continue to use their mother tongue within the home and with family and friends to restore the links to their native culture that have been severed. Use of the acquired language is often limited to formal interchange, as at school or in the workplace. Thus migration has produced a large number of bi- or multi-lingual people.

> Bilingualism and multilingualism are key markers of transit; of the refusal to assimilate completely; and of the insistence on retention of the past, other homes, and other cultural identities. Generational differences intensify the significance of language: first-generation migrants both need and resist the language of the hostland, and subsequent generations retain, lose or hybridically combine the old with the new. (Friedman 2007, 275)

The phrase "Life-on-the-hyphen", borrowed from Gustavo Pérez Firmat's book *Life-on-the-Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way,* is used as a metaphor to represent the life of dislocated people, moving back and forth between two cultures, languages, and spaces, incessantly crossing and re-crossing the linguistic, cultural, social and political frontiers in a process of constant translation. In her study of exile literature *Writing Outside the Nation*, Azad Seyhan says about the hyphen:

> A hyphen simultaneously separates and connects, contests and agree . . . Almost all the writers discussed in this study express the sentiment that neither a return to the homeland left behind nor being at home in the host country is an option. They need an alternative space, a third geography. This is the space of memory, of language, of translation. (Seyhan 2001, 14-15)

It is as though migrants live in a sort of borderland, an *in-between* space which is characterized by interchange, negotiation, and dialogue often inside the self.

"I am my language" (Anzaldúa 1987, 59), states Chicano writer Gloria Anzaldúa, who focuses her *Borderlands/La Frontera* on this linguistic issue. Language is something "immense and all-consuming" (Ogulnick 2000, 1). This is why, in talking about language, "life stories have been told" (Ogulnick 2000, 1), personal stories about the experience of being forced to learn a new language due to migration or displacement. For many writers it is "an act of transformation" (Ogulnick 2000, 1), given the intimate connection between language, identity and the self.

> The opportunity to transcend the self, to travel, and to be another person draws some people into other linguistic worlds; others describe the experience in terms of loss of a prior self, which has been changed in significant ways after undergoing a process of second-language dominance and cultural assimilation. (Ogulnick 2000, 1)

Language accomplishes one further role—it socializes individuals into a culture: "one is socialized into a culture through words, tone, and implicit understandings of one's place, and . . . there are penalties for people who violate the rules" (Ogulnick 2000, 1).

Language is, therefore, one of the most important elements in the life of every human being and it is through language that individuals communicate and express themselves and their emotions, thoughts, and feelings. Language gives sense to the world by naming and describing. Eva Hoffman in *Lost in Translation* writes:

"Nothing fully exists until it is articulated" (Hoffman 1990, 29). Only then can you grasp "a new piece of experience" (Hoffman 1990, 29).

When Hoffman arrived in Canada with her family, the first step in her migration to the North American continent, thirteen-year old Polish Eva felt a deep sense of dislocation and the terrible loss of her Polish universe:

> Mrs Steiner suggests . . . I should not cling to the ways of the past. That makes me want to defend Mrs Witeszczack even more. Not everything there is old fashion, not everything here better! But everyone encourages me to forget what I left behind . . . . Can I really extract what I've been from myself so easily? Can I jump continents as if skipping rope? . . .
>
> I couldn't repudiate the past even if I wanted to, but what can I do with it here, where it doesn't exist? (Hoffman 1990, 115-116).

Hoffman felt that her identity was strongly linked to her past, her homeland, and her language. Therefore, it was traumatic for her to realize that her Polish life was not considered by the new people she met on the American continent and in her new life, many of whom even urged her to forget Poland as soon as possible. Her mother tongue was of no use in her new life. In *Lost in Translation* Hoffman tells the story of her journey to the "new world" and of the cultural shock she experienced in feeling deprived of the possibility to formulate thoughts and fully express her emotions in the new language. She could not verbalize or articulate the essence of Polish reality and Polish life through English words. And "others" could not grasp the real meaning of what she left behind in her native land.

It was not possible for her to fully articulate Poland in English, to translate it. Poland was not "translatable": "But mostly, the problem is that the signifier has become severed from the signified. The words I learn now don't stand for things in the same unquestioned way they did in my native tongue" (Hoffman 1990, 106).

In the act of translation, something is definitely lost: that is, the fluidity and the spontaneity of the utterance, as well as the capacity to make jokes and create irony, or to understand these. Another writer who deals with the experience of migration, Julia Alvarez, in *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*, has one of her characters express her sense of non-belonging from the terrain of language:

> For the hundredth time I cursed my immigrant origins. If only I too had been born in Connecticut or Virginia, I too would understand the jokes everyone was making in the last two digits of the year, 1969; I too would be having sex and smoking dope; I too would have suntanned parents who took me skiing in Colorado over Christmas break, and I would say things like "no shit," without feeling like I was imitating someone else. (Alvarez 1994, 94-95)

These remarks illustrate how the experiences of immigrants, exiles, and expatriates are always linked to language, to the ability to use it, to understand its multiple nuances and the myriad details of the world that it seeks to describe. Understanding puns and jokes; swearing in a natural way—all are signs of belonging. There also seems to be a gap between what one can say in one's native tongue and what one can say in an acquired language, no matter how well that language is mastered. Exiled to the United States from 1945 to 1946, Bertolt Brecht wrote: "I do not say what I want to say, but what I am able to" (Brecht 1970, 162).

The immigrants' movements through linguistic spaces can sometimes be the cause of complete loss of one's mother tongue. Egyptian scholar Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, forced to leave Egypt and live in exile in Holland, writes that the experience of exile (but we could add of migration and expatriation as well) is, first of all, a linguistic experience: "[e]xile is no more a question of distance; there are telephones, fax and email. Exile is not a place. I believe that nowadays exile is a linguistic experience: the condemnation to use and, finally, to think in a language that is different from your mother tongue" (Abu Zayd 2004, 198).

For Eva Hoffman, her experience of coming to the new linguistic space of American English is one of loss of self and original identity, as well as a loss of the surrounding world. As she says in an interview:

> The main impact of immigration for me was my sense of the enormous importance of language. I think that for a while I was, in effect, without language, because Polish lost its relevance to this new world and there were very few people with whom I could speak Polish, and I hadn't yet come into English. And I understood that to be without language is to live in a very dim world, a very dim external world and a very dim interior world. Language is not only something that we use instrumentally, but it is something that truly shapes us, and that truly shapes our perceptions of the world. I always did love language as I was growing up. I loved books. I loved language as much as music. But that sense of losing language was a very, very powerful and potent lesson in the importance of language. And so, indeed from then on, my struggle was for English to inhabit me and to acquire enough command of it so that it would articulate the world and so that it would express the world—both exterior and interior. (Hoffman 2000)

The "Great Divide" (Hoffman 1990, 272), this unbridgeable gap between two worlds and two languages, is found in the experience of another "hyphenated" American writer, Elmaz Abinader, an Arab-American author, poet and performer whose family migrated to the United States of America from Lebanon. She contributed an autobiographical essay for a collection of writings by fifteen American authors; the first part of that essay is entitled "Crossing the Threshold". The threshold of the title represents the door of her house, a door that keeps the two distinct worlds well separated: the Arab world inside, the American world outside.

"When I was young, my house had a magic door" (Abinader 2007, 1). The threshold of the Abinaders' home is constantly crossed, many times a day, by the members of the family, who go to school or to work. Still, the Arab world of the interior, private space, and the American world of the outside, public space cannot merge. Some things cannot cross that threshold: "My family scenes filled me with joy and belonging, but I knew none of it could be shared on the other side of that door" (Abinader 2008, 3).

Every day after school, little Elmaz crosses the threshold of her house and finds herself plunged into the safe world of familiar Arabic smells and sounds which give her a deep sense of belonging. "Drawing me from the entrance, down the hall, to the dining room, was one of my favorite smells" (Abinader 2008, 2).

Only a small portion of the Orient and of Arabness can cross that space: that is, few images, few products, and only after being somehow "Americanized", standardized, made recognizable and enjoyable because deprived of their threatening elements: "When Arabic bread comes out of the oven, it is filled with air and looks like a little pillow; as it cools, the bread flattens to what Americans recognize as 'pita' bread" (Abinader 2008, 2). The name of the bread too has been changed and "Americanized," as have the names of the little Polish girls, Eva and her little sister Alina, in *Lost in Translation*. The very moment they entered their new classroom in Canada, both girls had their Polish names changed into more English sounding ones, Eve and Alice.

For Abinader the familiarity of Arabic gives the sense of belonging that we come to understand via the mother-daughter relationship: "Behind the magic door, the language shifted as well. Mother-to-daughter orders were delivered in Arabic—homework, conversations, and the rosary, in the most precise English possible" (Abinader 2008, 3). Identity and belonging are therefore found in the sharing of perfumes, tastes and language.

On the outside is a small provincial town in Pennsylvania, with its "standard downtown features": the bank, the little shops, including the family's, and the school, where children cross cultural and linguistic paths for the first time. It is here, in the external world, that the physical body takes over, transmitting signals to the others and becoming the text to be read. All physical details are taken into account, and all matter—especially those differing from the norm.

Meena Alexander, an Asian American, writes in her essay/poem *Alphabets of Flesh*: "One is marked by one's body" (Alexander 1998, 149). On this, Susan Friedman comments that, "No matter what passport one carries, the body that looks 'foreign' is subject to a variety of gazes—from the curious and rude to the dangerous and violent" (Friedman 2004, 190-191). Like the distinguishing physical body attributes (gender, race, and color), accent too is a physical sign, a feature of one's body. The body is the first, immediate identity card that we present to the world; one's accent becomes a main feature of this "document" (the body) and, therefore, an important aspect to bear in mind when we study the relationships between immigrants and languages, especially the new language they must acquire. For the immigrant, accent becomes an indelible mark, which immediately places him/her in a different position than the "indigenous" people. People "with an accent" become different, "others."

Little Elmaz experiences, at first, a shift from her illusion of being equal to other people—"At that moment, frozen in second grade, at the threshold of the store, I saw no difference between my father, uncle, and the people who passed by" (Abinader 2008, 2)—to the brutal realization of her 'otherness' through the comments of her schoolmates:

> In these moments of social exchange, the illusion of similarity between me and the girls in my class floated away, bubble light. Despite sharing the same school uniform, being in the Brownies, singing soprano in the choir, and being a good speller, my life and theirs were separated by the magic door. And although my classmates didn't know what was behind that portal, they circled me in the playground and shouted "darkie" at my braids trying to explode into a kinky mop, or "ape" at my arms bearing mahogany hair against my olive pale skin. (Abinader 2008, 2)

Not only physical features, but also her speech and pronunciation seem to betray her 'otherness': "Looking different was enough; having a father with a heavy accent already marked me, dancing in circles would bury me as a social outcast" (Abinader 2008, 3). Having a father who speaks English with a heavy accent becomes a mark of difference. As Canadian writer Nancy Huston, who lives and works in France (and chose to write her novels in French), writes, foreigners put up a mask to dissimulate themselves among the others. Still, linguistic competence is almost impossible to fake and, sooner or later, the fault will arrive: the slightest, most imperceptible error will suffice to unmask and reveal the foreigner (Huston 1999, 33).[1]

The solution Abinader finds in the end, one that is in tune with her being a writer, an activist and a woman, is not the exclusion of one world in favor of the other, but the negotiation, the compromise between the two poles of duality. She finds a community where she may feel a sense of belonging and home: "I found a community: American writers and artists of color often travel the same terrain as I do, living with dual sensitivities, negotiating where one culture I inhabit conflicts with my other culture, looking for a place that is home" (Abinader 2008, 5). "Home" is found in inhabiting the frontier, in dwelling in the conflict, in living on the hyphen.

At the end of the story, we find Abinader at home in a small town where the inhabitants live with their doors open, a metaphor of welcoming and lack of fear towards others where people have learned to cross the threshold and let the two worlds, the inside and the outside, dialogue and merge: "I have a new small town. It's not anywhere in particular, or maybe it's everywhere.

In this village, people live with their doors open, moving back and forth over the threshold of what has been exclusive to what will some day be inclusive" (Abinader, 5).

Conclusion

The narratives analyzed in this paper describe the experience of language shift in two immigration stories. They demonstrate that language is one of the principal components of a displaced or exiled life, which often means the impossibility of using one's mother tongue in everyday occurrences. They also offer two distinct coping mechanisms for the new world and the new language.

Eva Hoffman feels a deep sense of loss, which for her is traumatic, because it implies a loss of the reality associated with the language. Language and reality are intimately connected, inseparable even. In her Polish mother tongue, the signifier and the signified are 'naturally' linked. The words of the new world, on the contrary, are cold and foreign, and "don't touch the soul" (Hoffman 1990, 108). They make the individual feel as if s/he is "not filled with language anymore", as though one "[doesn't] really exist" (Hoffman 1990, 108).

The text by Abinader narrates a story where at the beginning we find a separation between the two worlds, cultures and languages. By the end of the story, the protagonist has found a way to successfully inhabit both worlds at the same time. The key to successful mediation in a new world seems to lie in re-valuing both cultural and linguistic traditions and in bringing them into dialogue in a constant crossing of borders enabled by an awareness of living a "life-on-the-hyphen."

Notes

[1] "L'étranger, donc, imite. Il s'applique, s'améliore, apprend à maîtriser de mieux en mieux la langue d'adoption . . . Subsiste quand même, presque toujours, en dépit de ses efforts acharnés, un rien. Une petite trace d'accent. Un soupçon, c'est le cas de le dire. Ou alors une mélodie, un phrasé atypiques . . . une erreur de genre, une imperceptible maladresse dans l'accord des verbes . . . Et cela suffit. Les Français guettent . . . ils sont tatillons, chatouilleux, terriblement sensibles à l'endroit de leur langue . . . c'est comme si le masque glissait . . . et vous voilà dénoncé ! On entraperçoit le vrai vous que recouvrait le masque et l'on saute dessus: Non, mais . . . vous avez dit "une peignoire"? "un baignoire"? "la diapason"? "le guérison"? J'ai bien entendu, vous vous êtes trompé? Ah, c'est que vous êtes un ALIEN! Vous venez d'un autre pays et vous cherchez à nous le cacher, à vous travestir in Français, en francophone . . . Mais on est malins, on vous a deviné, vous n'êtes pas d'ici..."

Works Cited

Abinader, Elmaz. *Just Off the Main Street*, http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/writers/abinader.htm (April 2008).

Abu Zayd, Nasr Hamid. *Una vita con l'Islam*. Bologna: il Mulino, 2004.

Alexander, Meena. "Alphabets of Flesh." In *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age,* ed. Ella Shohat, 143-154. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.

Alvarez, Julia. *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. London: Bloomsbury, 1994.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Ecrits sur la politique et la société*. Paris: L'Arche, 1970. In *Algeria in Others' Languages,* ed. Anne-Emmanuelle Berger, Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Chambers, Iain. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Cioran, Emil Michel. *Syllogismes de l'amertume*. Paris: Gallimard, 1952. Italian translation: *Sillogismi dell'amarezza*. Milano: Adelphi, 1993.

Clifford, James. *Routes. Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

_____. "Bodies in Motion: A Poetics of Home and Diaspora." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 189-212.

_____. "Migration, Diasporas, Borders." In *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed., David Nicholls, 260-293. New York: MLA Publications, 2007.

Hoffman, Eva. *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*. London: Penguin, 1990.

_____. *A Conversation with Eva Hoffman*. http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Hoffman/hoffman-con2.html, 2000.

Huston, Nancy. *Nord Perdu*. Paris: Actes Sud, 1999.

Ogulnick, Karen L., ed. *Language Crossing: Negotiating the Self in a Multicultural World*. New York and London: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2000.

Pérez Firmat, Gustavo. *Life-on-the-Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994.

Rutherford, Jonathan, ed. *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence and Wishort, 1990.

Sarup, Madan. "Home and Identity." In *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, 93-104, eds. George Robertson et al. London: Routledge, 1994.

Seyhan, Azade. "Neither Here/Nor There: The Culture of Exile." In *Writing Outside the Nation*, 3-21. Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2001.

Ugrešić, Dubravka. *Zabranjeno čitanje*. Beograd: Geopoetika, 2001. Italian translation Milena Djoković. *Vietato Leggere*, Roma: Nottetempo, 2005.

Felice De Cusatis

"To live in the Borderlands means you": la "border tongue" di Gloria Anzaldúa

Borderlands/La Frontera di Gloria Anzaldúa è un testo sulla cultura chicana contemporanea analizzata da una prospettiva *mestiza*, ibrida, che è a cavallo sia di un confine politico che separa due nazioni, sia di altri confini culturali, razziali e sessuali. In questo senso, si tratta di un testo paradigmatico che mira a decostruire miti e discorsi fondanti del continente americano creando una identità e uno sguardo sul mondo di una "donna di colore" degli Stati Uniti contemporanei. Ma il testo, al tempo stesso, evita costantemente ogni approdo a concetti e discorsi totalizzanti, immutabili o monologici. Infatti, l'autrice pone al centro della scena le "terre di confine", l'attraversamento continuo delle stesse, i linguaggi e gli stati mentali *in-between* che in esse si manifestano, trasformandoli in paradigmi stilistici e concettuali. La scrittrice frantuma il muro di silenzio e di invisibilità entro cui la cultura dominante e il patriarcato hanno rinchiuso le donne chicane, e lo fa concependo un testo che, come si evince dalla citazione nel titolo, fonde in modo creativo teoria, mito e *fiction*, in base ad una strategia testuale che è il risultato, ma anche il mezzo più adatto a rappresentarla, di una vita vissuta all'incrocio di culture diverse. Nel posizionare la propria identità in questo spazio liminale, la "new *mestiza*"—la definizione di sé proposta dalla voce narrante in cui l'aggettivo *new* serve ad enfatizzare il superamento di un'idea di meticciato che privilegia i fattori biologici a scapito di quelli culturali—modifica innanzitutto il significato di *border* (da elemento di divisione e separazione a luogo di negoziazione e di incontro), prefigurando una nuova fase delle scritture etniche degli Stati Uniti "multiculturali" contemporanei.

Uno degli aspetti che segnano in modo più evidente la riflessione storico culturale proposta dalla scrittrice è senza dubbio quello linguistico.

È attraverso la lingua che le specifiche conoscenze culturali, le ideologie e i valori sono elaborati e diffusi, ed è attraverso la lingua che gli individui costruiscono la propria identità e la propria visione del mondo.

Come rileva Nancy Armstrong,

> it took Jeremy Bentham's *The Theory of Fictions* to explain how the power of the social contract was nothing other than the power of fiction. . . [he claims that] the actual distribution of power depends largely on the terms in which we agree to represent it. No social order can be said to exist without the invisible element of language. (Armstrong 1987, 34)

Questa prospettiva è simile a quella adottata da molte tradizioni culturali native americane che tendono a considerare la lingua uno strumento che non si limita a descrivere il mondo ma a crearlo e dargli forma.

Michail Bachtin scriveva che la lingua esprime una visione del mondo saturata ideologicamente e che, in ogni dato momento del suo divenire, essa è stratificata non soltanto in dialetti linguistici ma anche in lingue ideologico-sociali, di gruppo sociale, "professionali," di "genere" e di "generazione" (Bachtin 1979, 79-80). Poiché i molteplici linguaggi e codici linguistici coesistono fra loro, integrandosi, completandosi ma anche contraddicendosi a vicenda, la lingua può essere ritenuta una vera e propria arena di conflitti ideologici.

Nelle "terre di confine" di cui parla Anzaldúa le lingue native, lo spagnolo e persino l'inglese "con accento," sono stati oggetto di denigrazione, soppressione e sono stati resi fuorilegge dalle istituzioni, come ad esempio la scuola, allo scopo di accelerare il processo di assimilazione, ossia di "americanizzazione," dei gruppi minoritari. Anzaldúa fa notare che i conflitti legati al linguaggio acquisiscono sfumature ancora più complesse in un contesto, come quello delle *Borderlands*, in cui la violenza linguistica, la cancellazione o la sottomissione di alcune tradizioni culturali è spesso replicata, all'interno di tali tradizioni, da una violenza simile nei confronti delle donne.

È importante ribadire, comunque, che i linguaggi sono elementi dinamici e in costante mutamento e che questo è particolarmente vero in quei contesti multiculturali dove le influenze reciproche si moltiplicano (del resto anche la lingua inglese è il frutto di una storia in cui i dialetti anglo, sassone e quelli di altri gruppi si sono mescolati con il celtico, il latino e il francese). In *ogni* contesto in cui le culture si incontrano e si scontrano, anche i linguaggi si mescolano e si ibridano in modo creativo. Anzaldúa definisce il linguaggio ibrido delle *Borderlands* come frutto di un atto creativo:

> For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what recourse is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves—a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages. (Anzaldúa 1987, 55)

Per Anzaldúa, la lingua chicana è una "border tongue" che "sprang out of the Chicanos' need to identify [themselves] as a distinct people" (*ibid.)*. Essa non è una lingua omogenea, retta da leggi e regole precise e nasce dal mescolamento di tante lingue e dialetti, inclusi l'inglese e lo spagnolo standard che, influenzandosi a vicenda, mutano continuamente. Anzaldúa propone alcuni esempi concreti di questi processi dinamici: alcune parole in spagnolo nascono dall'influenza dell'inglese (ad esempio, *churro* da *sure*, *bola* da *ball*, *carpeta* da *carpet*); allo stesso modo, nel dialetto *Tex-Mex* vi sono verbi che aggiungono suoni e desinenze spagnole all'inizio o alla fine di quelli inglesi (ad esempio *cookiar* da *to cook*, *parkiar* da *to park*). Cambiamenti, questi, che, osserva Anzaldúa, sono spesso il risultato "of the pressures on Spanish speakers to adapt to English" (Anzaldúa 1987, 57). Ma non tutti gli abitanti delle "terre di confine" decidono di adottare questo linguaggio ibrido: qualcuno preferisce rimanere fedele alla propria lingua, anche se minoritaria, e questo, per chi scrive, significa spesso ridurre al minimo le opportunità di pubblicare o vedere letti i propri testi. Anche la scelta di mescolare i linguaggi è una scelta rischiosa. Cherríe Moraga, a tal proposito, afferma:

> Particularly for Latinas here in the U.S., there is a huge amount of censorship and very little space left in which to put our work because we either write in Spanish and they want it in English or we write it in English and they want it in Spanish or we write in both and nobody wants it. (Umpierre 1986, 55)

E nell'introduzione al suo testo "multilingue" più noto, *Loving in the War Years* (1983), scrive:

> Some days I feel my writing wants to break itself open. Speak in a language that maybe no "readership" can follow. What does it mean that the Chicana writer if she truly follows her own voice, she may depict a world so specific, so privately ours, so full of "foreign" language to the anglo reader, there will be no publisher[?] (Moraga 1983, vi)

Così, in una recensione di *Borderlands* si legge: "The terrain is not easy going; Anzaldúa's language merging English, Castilian, Spanish, Tex-Mex, a north Mexican dialect, and Nahuatl, is sometimes difficult to follow" (Baden 1988, 13), mentre in un saggio intitolato "*Borderlands* in the Classroom" vengono messe in risalto le reazioni, prevalentemente negative, degli studenti alla lettura di questo testo: "They claimed that, as an American writer, she had no right to use any language other than that of the dominant culture, English" (Peterson 1993, 298).

Inoltre, l'uso di un linguaggio ibrido fa correre alle "*mestiza* writers" il rischio di essere percepite e classificate come autrici "folkloristiche" che elaborano teorie semplici e utilizzano una scrittura immediata e trasparente, non "letteraria." Questo accade, come osserva Michelle Cliff, anche in altri contesti postcoloniali:

> One of the effects of assimilation, indoctrination, passing into the anglocentrism of British West Indian culture is that you believe absolutely in the hegemony of the King's English and in the form in which it is meant to be expressed. Or else your writing is not literature; it is folklore, and folklore can never be art. (Cliff 1988, 59)

Ma il discorso sul linguaggio sviluppato da Anzaldúa e da altre "*mestiza* writers" come Cherríe Moraga e Anna Lee Walters va al di là di queste riflessioni incentrate sulla dinamica oppositiva lingua dominante/lingua non-dominante. La "border tongue" auspicata da Anzaldúa non è semplicemente riferita ad un confine linguistico fra l'inglese lo spagnolo e le loro variazioni. Essa rappresenta anche il tentativo di liberare la lingua dai vincoli legati al genere e di ripensare il significato stesso delle categoria etniche, di genere e sessuali. L'uso di lingue diverse e del *code-switching* è associato perciò a un atto creativo, alla nascita di un nuova lingua che prefigura anche una nuova realtà culturale. L'uso di una lingua ibrida è funzionale al desiderio di enfatizzare, oltre allo scontro perpetuo di voci, le collisioni culturali costanti che hanno luogo nelle "terre di confine." Inoltre, tale lingua è parte integrante dell'identità della "new *mestiza*" descritta da Anzaldúa—un'identità plurale che rifiuta le dicotomie, che sviluppa una tolleranza per le contraddizioni e le ambiguità e una tendenza all'inclusività nell'atto di mescolare lingue, identità e culture diverse per dare vita a qualcosa di nuovo.

L'uso di una lingua ibrida è, dunque, un ulteriore strumento attraverso il quale è veicolato il progetto di creazione di un'identità e di un testo che non sono né stabili, né fissi, ma scivolano continuamente da una costruzione all'altra in un processo di ridefinizione perpetua. Anzaldúa spiega:

> Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak English, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate. I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have—my serpent's tongue my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence. (Anzaldúa 1987, 59)

Nel processo che conduce alla nascita di una nuova coscienza, nulla è messo da parte, rigettato o ritenuto inferiore. L'ibridazione linguistica è una creazione che rispecchia l'eteroglossia e la pluralità delle fonti e delle forme narrative delle *Borderlands*.

Come la stessa autrice afferma, e come messo in risalto da numerosi critici, *Borderlands/La Frontera* decostruisce la presunta "purezza" delle lingue, in particolare l'inglese e lo spagnolo. Il testo alterna in modo irregolare, e quindi imprevedibile, i diversi idiomi che lo compongono.[1] Le parti in spagnolo sono a volte tradotte, totalmente o, con l'uso di note esplicative, parzialmente in inglese; alcune sezioni non presentano, invece, alcuna traduzione, quasi a voler indicare che non sempre le lingue e le culture possono essere tradotte o comprese interamente, ovvero assimilate all'interno di uno schema precostituito. Il testo, perciò, non offre un linguaggio comune, facilmente accessibile. I vari idiomi spesso si scontrano e procedono in maniera autonoma, mettendo in difficoltà il lettore monoculturale e ricordandogli di continuo che l'ingresso e la permanenza nelle "terre di confine" non sono agevoli. Come osserva opportunamente Leslie Bary:

> This is an intertwining of differences that does not take recourse in myths of commonality, imperial-humanist or otherwise. Nor does it allow assertions of difference that avoid addressing what there is of a common history. (Bary 1990)

La mescolanza linguistica proposta da Anzaldúa impedisce al lettore di sviluppare qulla retorica associata al concetto di "pluralismo" che, come sottolinea Joan Scott, è spesso visto "as a condition of human existence rather than an effect of difference that constitutes hierarchies" (Scott 1995, 5). Al contrario, l'uso di una lingua ibrida intende mostrare i processi di interconnessione che appartengono alla storia delle "terre di confine" e rivelare i modi in cui le differenze e i conflitti continuano a strutturarne il presente, rendendo vano ogni tentativo di assimilazione o di categorizzazione:

> These are borderlands that it takes serious, life-changing work to enter, and which a hegemonic "we" cannot simply expand to include. And Anzaldúa's book does want to show that that hegemonic "we" is only a small, and perhaps not a central part of a much larger "us." (Bary 1990)

Coloro che abitano le "terre di confine," come si legge nella poesia "To live in the Borderlands means you,"

> are neither *ispana india negra española*
> *ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata*, half-breed
> caught in the crossfire between camps
> while carrying all five races on your back
> not knowing which side to turn to, run from;
> To live in the Borderlands means knowing
> that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,
> is no longer speaking to you,
> that mexicanas call you *rajetas*
> that denying the Anglo inside you
> is as bad as having denied the Indian or black. (Anzaldúa 1987, 194)

Il titolo della poesia ne costituisce in realtà anche il primo verso: un espediente che segnala, ancora una volta, la trasgressione dei confini e che

anticipa, da un punto di vista formale, il contenuto del testo. Letto invece da solo, "To live in the Borderlands means you," osserva Rafael Pérez-Torres, "signals a conflation between the 'you' the title addresses and the Borderlands of which it speaks" (Torres 2000, 116).

Nelle *Borderlands* descritte da Anzaldúa non vi sono alleanze precostituite, né comunità o gruppi omogenei, totalmente unitari, ma piuttosto una complessa arena di incontri e scontri che avvengono, per ognuno degli attori sociali coinvolti, sia all'interno, sia all'esterno di sé. La scrittrice auspica, come detto, un "massive uprooting of dualistic thinking"(Anzaldúa 1987, 80) necessario a superare le scissioni, le rotture che "originat[e] in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts" (*ibid.*):

> To live in the Borderlands means to
> put *chile* in the borscht. . .
> speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklin accent. . .
> To survive the borderlands
> you must live *sin fonteras*
> be a crossroads. (Anzaldúa 1987, 195)

Dissolvendo i confini che delimitano le identità, le culture, i linguaggi e i generi narrativi, Anzaldúa e le altre scrittrici etniche contemporanee che hanno utilizzato il paradigma del *border-crossing* come tema e come modalità compositiva dei propri testi, "refuse to deny or limit their identities, their refusals enacted in a weaving or crossing from land to land, language to language, genre to genre, self to words" (Freedman 1992, 215). Un attraversamento continuo dal quale, oggi, nessuno può sentirsi escluso. "Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?," ammoniva, nella celebre chiusa del romanzo, lo *invisibile man* di Ralph Ellison; "To live in the Borderlands means you," dice oggi Anzaldúa, ricordandoci, ancora una volta, come i discorsi sulle "linee," sui "confini," non sono prerogativa esclusiva di individui o gruppi specifici: *ogni* identità si definisce in rapporto alle altre e ogni volta che si parla dell'altro e con l'altro si parla di sé.

Notes

[1] L'esatto numero di lingue utilizzate da Anzaldúa è, significativamente, poco chiaro. La scrittrice fa una lista di otto lingue (Anzaldúa 1987, 55). Walter Mignolo preferisce invece riferirsi a tre *linguistic memories* (Mignolo 1996, 195) del testo, una delle quali è il *Nahuatl*, la lingua pre-colombiana diffusa in Messico, alla cui tradizione Anzaldúa si richiama, anche se non la considera una lingua da lei parlata. Altri commentatori riconducono le otto categorie della scrittrice alla triade *English, Spanish, Chicano Spanish*; altri ancora, molto più semplicemente, alla dicotomia *English/Spanish* sostenendo, non senza ragione, che, più che proporre un'analisi dettagliata, sia importante tenere conto del disegno complessivo del testo e sottolineare la volontà dell'autrice di decostruire una concezione essenzialista anche della lingua.

Works Cited

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Bachtin, Michail M. *Estetica e romanzo*. Trans. Clara Strada Janovic. Torino: Einaudi, 1979.

Baden, Eleanor J. "Review Of *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, By Gloria Anzaldúa." *Belles Lettres*, May/June 1988.

Bary, Leslie. "Decentered Discourse? Problematizing The 'Borderlands'." http://Www.Ucs.Louisiana.Edu/~Lxb1801/Anzaldua_Index.Html.

Cliff, Michelle. "A Journey into Speech." In *The Graywolf Annual Five: Multicultural Literacy. Opening The American Mind,* eds. Rick Simonson and Scott Walker, 57-62. Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 1988.

Freedman, Diane P. "Writing In The Borderlands: The Poetic Prose Of Gloria Anzaldúa And Susan Griffin." In *Constructing and Reconstructing Gender: The Links Among Communication, Language, and Gender,* eds. Linda A. M. Perry, Lynn H. Turner, Helen M. Sterk, 211-217, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Mignolo, Walter. "Linguistic Maps, Literary Geographies and Cultural Landscapes: Language, Languaging and (Trans)nationalism", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 57, no. 2 (1996): 190-201.

Moraga, Cherríe. *Loving In The War Years: Lo Que Nunca Pasò Por Sus Labios*. Boston: South End, 1983.

Pérez-Torres, Rafael. "Refiguring Aztlán." In *Postcolonial Theory and The United States. Race, Ethnicity, and Literature,* eds. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, 103-121. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000.

Peterson, Carla L. "*Borderlands* In The Classroom." *American Quarterly*, 45, no. 2 (1993): 295-300.

Scott, Joan W. "Multiculturalism and The Politics of Identity." In *The Identity In Question*. ed. John Rajchman, 3-12. London: Routledge, 1995.

Umpierre, Luz María. "With Cherríe Moraga." *The Americas Review* 14, no. 2 (1986): 54-67.

Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh

Autobiography in Translation: Anzia Yezierska's Fables of Identity

What Does the Pursuit of Happiness Mean?

The autobiography of Jewish American writer Anzia Yezierska (1880?-1970) was published in 1950 by Charles Scribner's Sons with a long introduction written by Wystan Hugh Auden. Notwithstanding such highbrow credentials and the fact that Yezierska had been living and working in the USA for more than fifty years, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse* was received as the last vibrant *ethnic* document of the former "Cinderella of the Ghetto."

By now, Yezierska's paradoxical stylistic cipher—the fictionality marking her autobiographical works and the confessional quality of her fiction—is widely acknowledged,[1] but at the time of her literary debut and in the post-war context, the omissions and melodramatic inventions, the irony implicit in her "Jewish adaptation" of *the* US *Bildung* narrative—"from rags to riches"—were not perceived. Neither was the fact taken into account that the writer first cultivated "a very literary 'high English'" only later abandoned for multilingual strategies because her readers preferred a more exotic and colorful dialect-like style.[2]

According to what Louise Levitas—Yezierska's daughter—wrote in an afterword to the 1987 re-edition of the autobiography, Auden (with the help of Scribner's) had actually rescued Yezierska from a long critical exile, and the book, "enthusiastically received" by literary critics, was in fact "soon out of print" (Levitas 1987, 227). But while the British-American modernist poet had apparently been instrumental in saving a neglected, marginal female writer from obscurity,[3] he had been doing so through a recognizable, pre-War, diminishing stereotype which reinforced the post-war ideology of a democratic America bursting with (publishing) opportunities.

Levitas's counter-memories provide a familiar "close reading" expanding Yezierska's public persona beyond the Cinderella-of-the-Ghetto image the writer herself contributed in shaping. As the daughter elsewhere argued, the mother was not at ease within the image of the artless Jewish "savage" redeemed by the modern forces of Americanization. Such a popular and ethnic icon impaired the *literary* force of her works: "book reviewers and interviewers tended to regard her as "natural" in other words, a self-educated primitive. They read her books as literally true, in that way underestimating her" (Levitas 1979, 256). On the other hand, the "ethnic" mask imposed and self-created during the Twenties while limiting had also been strategic for Yezierska's literary career in that it established the writer's authority within the much needed immigrants' points of view in the "Jewish question" (Ebest 2000, 2).

Out of the daughter's *critical* reminiscences—Levitas recommends not reading literature and autobiography *literally*—another Yezierska emerges: a self-conscious and ironic professional writer dismissing both Auden's re-proposal in post-war America of an elitist divide, and his patronizing, racist attitude:

> But Anzia did not recognize her book in Auden's analysis; in fact, his introduction made her angry because she thought it was "high-brow," thus distancing Auden from her plebeian writing. She had hoped for a piece of his great poetry instead; and so she took the outrageous liberty of cutting his fifteen typed pages of "abstract Audenia" (her critique) down to about ten. (Levitas 1987, 226)

Auden's act of editorial "charity" was of course not fortuitous: Yezierska had been promoting her work, taking the manuscript to a number of New York scholars until Reinhold Niebuhr introduced her to Auden (Zierler 1993, 5). Thirty years after the writer's debut, and notwithstanding a solid tradition of *Jewish American* literature, Auden still celebrated Yezierska's work as exceptional: a truthful, "moving" and representative self-quest marked by a surprising degree of Americanness. To him, *Red Ribbon*'s power lay in its celebration of American patriotic values, the autobiography being an *unintentional* praise of the most appealing and transparent US right stated in the Declaration of Independence:

> Reading Miss Yezierska's book sets me thinking again about that famous and curious statement in the Preamble to the Constitution about the self-evident right of all men to "the pursuit of happiness," for I have read few accounts of such a pursuit as truthful and moving as hers. To be happy means to be free, not from pain or fear, but from care and anxiety. (Auden 1987, 11)

The affirmed self-evidency of the pursuit of happiness is yet purely nominal: Auden himself elicits implicit questions on the sense and role, in a public political document, of such an evocative formula. As I will demonstrate, *Red Ribbon* argues actually for the opaqueness of US values and does so from a shifting point of view and a multilingual voice. At the peak of the Cold War, Yezierska deftly combines the nationalistic jeremiad with a transnational critique where a fantasmatic "ethnic residuum" of a fictive Eastern, Semiticized, and Jewish "Europe" is the positive counterpart of "America."

Speaking in Tongues

Red Ribbon's narrative enfolds through epistemological and cultural crises underlying asymmetries, gaps, and losses, primarily at a linguistic level. The question of language acquisition, in the actions and dialogues of the characters, in the registers and translation strategies of characters and narrator, or in the codes that include or exclude a heterogeneous readership, argue for the inevitable losses of immigration and diaspora. Of course, language is *the* issue at the core of the "incoherent" "canon" of Jewish literature. As Hana Wirth-Nesher argued, "European Jewish immigrants brought . . . [their] multilingual legacy with them to the New World" (Wirth-Nesher 2005, 5). More significantly, according to Ruth Wisse, the creation of a multilingual literature is a sign of the Jewish "refusal to make language synonymous with national identity" and of the "eagerness to master co-territorial cultures" (Wisse 2000, ix). Such an eagerness is evident in Yiddish, which, as Elèna Mortara argues in this same collection of essays, is a "real *summa* of European languages," with the "addition" "of the language of the Bible," because it "derives from several source languages": "Middle High German, with some . . . Hebrew, Aramaic and Slavic elements (from Czech, Polish, Ukrainian and Russian mainly), plus a sprinkle of Romance words due to its original contacts with France and Northern Italy" (Mortara 2009, 205).

In *Bread Givers* (1925)—a novel described by Wirth-Nesher as deeply "conflicted about Americanization"—where the college-educated female protagonist marries the "Jewish boy next door from the Old World" (Wirth-Nesher 2005, 9), language, national identity, love and success are strictly intertwined. The character of Hugo Seelig—the Jewish boy successfully Americanized—is one example of how Yezierka's fables of cultural and linguistic identity complicate the simplistic, ahistorical and mythical premises at the core of the melting pot metaphors.

As Wirth-Nesher subtly notes, one of the courtship scenes between Hugo and the heroine "intertwines desire for English and erotic desire as the body is roused to produce consonants without debasing traces of other languages" so that "At the very moment that the Yiddish-speaking immigrant girl-turned-English-teacher shamefully slips back into the vernacular in the classroom—'The birds singgg'—Seelig gently brings her back to a correct pronunciation" (Wirth-Nesher 2005, 9). Significantly, Yezierska parallels the male desire and pleasure in speaking correct English with the heroine's faint dismay and regression at her being the object of such a subtle exercise of power:

> There it was. I was slipping back into the vernacular myself. In my embarrassment, I tried again and failed. He watched me as I blundered on. The next moment he was close

beside me, the tips of his cool fingers on my throat. “Keep those muscles still until you have stopped. Now say it again,” he commanded. And I turned pupil myself and pronounced the word correctly. (Yezierska 1975, 272)

What is a Jewish American?

Born around 1880 in the Pale of Settlement, a Jewish enclave between Poland and Russia at the time under the rule of Czar Alexander II, Yezierska immigrated to the United States ten years later. The autobiography represented a bitter literary re-entrée after a long unintentional pause during the Depression and, in a Cold War context dominated by a rigid dichotomy between Europe and America, it brought back on the post-war stage the controversial question that had distinguished the Progressive Era: immigration and its discontents. The pre-war political and cultural context had generated an enormous amount of debate on Americanization, both within popular and elite cultures, with interesting and little explored cross-fertilizations.[4] Paradoxically, as Werner Sollors argued in *Beyond Ethnicity*, the melting pot metaphors, though decidedly progressive, were patently inconsistent and unrealistic; fiction, on the other hand, provided much more complex and sophisticated *realistic* scenarios. Yezierska’s narratives are then deeply significant because they sacrifice the conventional happy ending and a final, successfully Americanized character.

The protagonist of the Jewish American writer’s works is in fact an element that disturbs the evolutionary binary of the melting pot theories. Between the American(ized) and the unassimilated immigrant Yezierska interposes a *tertium quid*, an ethnic residuum resisting the centripetal force of Americanization and further complicating the linearity of the dominant narrative.

Melting Pots and Ethnic Residuums

A few years before Yezierska began publishing her first stories, the US philosopher Horace M. Kallen wrote for *The Nation* “Democracy *vs* the Melting-Pot” (1915), a basic document for his recent idea of cultural pluralism. Kallen, himself a German Jewish immigrant to the United States, intended to provide a progressive and liberal critique on the failure of the facile, and subtly violent, assimilationist theories of the melting pot. And yet, the article ended surprisingly with an image of harmonious musical fusion recalling the happy melting in the acclaimed play of 1908 by English Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill.[5] As Priscilla Wald noted, although Kallen’s “influential essay has been read as imagining an alternative to assimilation, it argues in fact for a particular model of cultural integration, one based on the plural but harmonic coexistence of group affiliations" (Wald 2003, 55).

If in Kallen's intention the metaphor of the orchestra provided the alternative image for a new America—conceived as a federation of nationalities—that same image as well as the essay's emphasis and inspired tones were not far from the triumphant rhetoric of the necessary amalgamation of ethnic differences in the boiling cauldron of future *American* identity. Though tempering it through an idea of collective unity—a harmonious symphony—Kallen argued for the birth of a final product, a homogeneous and essential "American mind":

> At the present time there is no dominant American mind. Our spirit is inarticulate, not a voice, but a chorus of many voices each singing a rather different tune. How to get order out of this cacophony is the question for all those who are concerned about those things which alone justify wealth and power, concerned about justice, the arts, literature, philosophy, science. What must, what *shall* this cacophony become—a unison or a harmony? Thus "American civilization" may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of "European civilization," the waste, the squalor, and the distress of Europe being eliminated—a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind. (Kallen 1915, 10)

Influenced by Kallen, a year later Randolph Bourne published an essay entitled "Trans-national America" which appeared in 1916 in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Bourne's article decidedly denounced the violence of the assimilationist project—to be included into the number of American citizens meant to sacrifice one's identities of origin—and yet the highly contemporary idea of cosmopolitan dual citizens he envisioned was described in a language strongly influenced by the nationalist melting pot rhetoric. America was to be a social utopia: a promise of unprecedented possibilities where the different nationalities were played as the "raw material" contributing to the creation of the American, the new man:

> We are all foreign-born or the descendants of foreign-born, and if distinctions are to be made between us they should rightly be on some other ground than indigenousness. The early colonists came over with motives no less colonial than the later. They did not come to be assimilated in an American melting-pot. They did not come to adopt the culture of the American Indian. They had not the smallest intention of "giving themselves without reservation" to the new country. They came to get freedom to live as they wanted. They came to escape from the stifling air and chaos of the old world; they came to make their fortune in a new land. They invented no new social framework. Rather they brought over bodily the old ways to which they had been accustomed. Tightly concentrated on a hostile frontier, they were conservative beyond belief.
>
> It is just this English-American conservatism that has been our chief obstacle to social advance. We have needed the new peoples—the order of the German and Scandinavian, the turbulence of the Slav and Hun—to save us from our own stagnation. I do not mean that the illiterate Slav is now the equal of the New Englander of pure descent. He is raw material to be educated, not into a New Englander, but into a socialized American. The foreign cultures have not been melted down or run together, made into

> some homogeneous Americanism, but have remained distinct but cooperating to the greater glory and benefit, not only of themselves but of all the native 'Americanism' around them. (Bourne 1916, 97)

Yezierska was of course no outsider: she adhered to the mythical construction of America. Her unhappy solutions, though, depict "Americanness" and "Jewishness" as relational, mutually interdependent poles whose contact creates the shifting ground of female Jewish identity in the United States.

Language Strategies

One of the main points of rupture in *Red Ribbon* is caused by a mysterious letter received by the protagonist. After the fame, success and money earned in Hollywood *forging* the truth (selling a story to film producer Samuel Goldwyn and having it heavily adapted), Yezierska dismisses the most common meaning attributed to the pursuit of happiness: economic success and public recognition. Hollywood is sketched as the mill grinding out evoked in contemporary *film noir* like *Sunset Boulevard*, an infernal place where "the whirling race toward the spotlight, the frantic competition to outdistance the others, the machinery of success had to be kept going" at any cost, literally lying or transforming Jews into *the* caricature of a Jew for the mass audience (Yezierska 1987, 87). Among the many haunting letters soliciting money or help caused by Hollywood fame, one single envelope catches the attention of the weary fictional Yezierska, and it does so because of "something *foreign* in the pencilled scrawl" (Yezierska 1987, 91 italics mine).

The question generated by the letter, addressed to the "honourable and most respectable Anzia Yezierska" from a "homeless old Jew, Boruch Shlomoi Mayer" produces the first violent crisis in the process of Americanization of the protagonist of *Red Ribbon*, and the haunting presence of what has been left behind returns center stage. And while in the stories and novels Yezierska often depicts sensational clashes of sexes and generations—her female protagonists fight against the life and ideals of the fathers, the "traditional" Jews of East Europe—in the autobiography her semi-fictional persona seems to put generational conflicts to rest.

Yezierska is well aware of the "gulf" already dividing her from "her own kind" and from an irretrievable, fantastic past (Yezierska 1987, 94). She often looks at herself in the mirror to exorcise a loss of "original" identity, to delay the transformation into an American, searching for a happy and "strange likeness" with a poor Jewish woman met in the ghetto. Then, suddenly, the letter miraculously brings back the old, faded world. The written text conveys first a sense of intimacy ("there was something familiar in the turn of the phrase"), later a sense of literal familiarity *through* language ("The Yiddish of it reminded me of my father," Yezierska 1987, 91), and it eventually evokes a residual "ethnic" identity never repudiated.

The fortuitous finding of the letter causes nothing less than an epiphany which manifests itself by means of orality: even if successfully processed and worked by the efficient machine of American bureaucracy ("stamped and dated through the drab routine of the US mail"; Yezierska 1987, 91), the written *word* has lost none of the uncanny power of the *voice*:

> Long years and good health on you. May you continue to find in America the land flowing with milk and honey that God in his wisdom did not see fit to let me find. I read in the *Tageblatt* how you became a new millionaire in Hollywood selling stories from your life as an immigrant. Americans are weighing you in gold for telling them how black you had it in Poland, and how your sun began to shine, coming to America.
>
> To my sad sorrow, mine is a story of an immigrant different from yours. I also came from a village in Poland, like you. But to me, America is a worse *Goluth* than Poland. The ukases and pogroms from the Czar, all the killings that could not kill us, gave us the strength to live with God. Learning was learning—dearer than gold. Poverty was an ornament on a learned man like a red ribbon on a white horse. But here in New York, the synagogues are in the hands of godless lumps of flesh. A butcher, a grocer, any money-maker could buy himself into a president of a synagogue. . . .
>
> I pray by night and by day, only to go back to my little village in Poland where all know me for what I am—and will respect me, because I am what I am. I have nothing left in life but to die. I only want to see my own before I die. I beg you for a ship ticket to Poland where I can die and be buried with the honor Jews give to a man of learning who all his life followed the footsteps of his fathers.
>
> Do you still remember the sayings from the Torah? *Tzdokeh tatzel bamooves*. Charity saves you from death. The blessings from the next world will be yours for saving a dying old man from the shame that poverty and old age has to suffer in America.
>
> From me, honourably and respectfully, your landsman,
>
> Boruch Shlomoi Mayer (Yezierska 1987, 91-92)

Notwithstanding, or because of, the use of all the conventional melodramatic devices, notwithstanding, or because of, the evident incorporation of racial and racist stereotypes and Yezierska's rhetoric of Jewishness, Mayer's letter rings true. First of all because it raises a question that dismisses the popular meaning of the pursuit of happiness. Second because of its multilingualism. The question generated by the letter is phrased in a colloquial language both direct and disruptive: "How had we come to feel that to be poor was a disgrace?" (Yezierska 1987, 93).

Yezierska's narrative double soon learns that everything, in America, "is commercial" (Yezierska 1987, 43). Significantly, the first sacrifice imposed on the immigrant by the new land consists of an act of reductive equivalence. The beloved shawl, a sartorial accessory charged with deep personal, cultural, ethnic and religious meanings—"People's lives are woven into it"—is readily processed by an Americanized Jew as useless "junk." In America, in the words of the grotesque Jewish pawnbroker, Zaretsky, a perfect product of the economic logic governing the best and most gifted of nations, "'For what is past nobody pays'" (Yezierska 1987, 27).

Almost as in a chiaroscuro painting, in contrast with such a materialistic, grim landscape the letter conjures a religious dimension; it whispers, to Yezierska's ears, in "a voice out of eternity" which finally projects into the present, "from years of forgetfulness, from the layers of another life," the "place of origin": "the village in Poland where I was born" (Yezierska 1987, 92).

As if freed by the letter, the "ancient past" too, "despised," "denied" but never forgotten, streams out and Yezierska recalls not a specific geographical place (Poland), but a highly suggestive "ancestral" homeland, giving life to the memories of "the ram's horn calling Jews to prayer on the Day of Atonement" and of the "Jews in white shrouds, in the ancestral robes of death, facing their sins in an ecstasy of abasement before the throne of Jehovah, chanting the prayer that was birth, death, and resurrection" (Yezierska 1987, 92).

Interestingly, Jewishness is not reduced to a fixed commodity, but lives as a changing reality refracted through point of view and voice, so that in contrast with Yezierska's, Mayer's homeland is a real place, a lived past to which he desires to return. America has not proved to be the Promised Land, he feels the bitterness of exile and longs to come full circle, going back to where he was born and to the sacred Promised Land evoked by the phrase from the Torah.

The celebration of the past, moreover, does not erase the present from the complex picture: the letter's heterogeneous language bears witness to the contact between the Jewish multilingual tradition and American English which puts into question ideas of authenticity and impermeability with a significant redistribution of power. The letter's language does in fact transform and reshape the syntactical elements of a powerful and inclusive American English.

Casting into doubt the parallel between language, nation and culture where American English—as an elastic instrument with porous boundaries and solid basis—is the linguistic equivalent of an American identity represented from Emerson to John Dewey as a crucible, a frontier assimilating other nationalities, ethnicities and races, Yezierska narrates the uses of the "ticket" to Americanization. The true American, Dewey argued in an Address to the National Education Association delivered in 1916 is "not American plus Pole or German"; "the American [almost an omnivorous, devouring frontier whose openness is also a limit]" is himself "Pole—German—English—French—Spanish—Italian—Greek—Irish—Scandinavian—Bohemian—Jew and so on" (Dewey 1961, 202).

The letter Yezierska receives seems to be in direct opposition to her ancient mentor, provides an inclusive text punctuated with un-translated Yiddish words—a significant defence of linguistic and cultural obscurity—and features a transliterated and translated Hebrew "saying" from the Torah which might be taken as a mark of mediated common belonging. The text's immediate and simple strategies of multilingualism coming from an apparently conservative character, moreover, complicate the issue of loss of a supposedly unique "mother tongue" and dismiss its interpretation as static memory of an unaltered "primal language."

Yezierksa's "Jewishness" is thus the authentic instrument of modernity resisting both America's decadent "varnish of newness" (Yezierska 1987, 44) and the refusal of the past, because immigration to the United States *did* "dramatically alter[ed]," in Wirth-Nesher's words, "the traditional need for bilingualism and the multilingual stratification of Jewish cultures and literatures" (Wirth-Nesher 2005, 6).

Our America?

Yezierska created female characters whose common distinguishing feature is an enthusiastic and tireless quest for *America*. The Jewish American writer adapted the national and nationalistic rhetoric of the Jeremiad, as in "How I Found America" (1921), where to the nameless Polish-Russian-Jewish-American female the dream of a utopian world, initially shattered by the contrast with the grimmest reality, seems eventually more true because continuously deferred and denied. The juxtaposition between the level of the actual and the symbolic plan where desire, belief and faith work simultaneously reaches a peak during the ocean voyage: "Steerage—dirty bundles—foul odors—seasick humanity—but I saw and heard nothing of the foulness and ugliness around me. I floated in showers of sunshine; visions upon visions of the new world opened before me" (Yezierska 1991, 112). The details of the exceptional legend of America are evoked through a collective will to believe in the self-evident principles of the nationalistic propaganda making the *best* of nations:

> From lips to lips flowed the golden legend of the golden country: "in America you can say what you feel—you can voice your thought in the open streets without fear of a Cossack." "In America is a home for everybody. The land is your land. Not like in Russia where you feel yourself a stranger in the village where you were born and raised—the village in which your father and grandfather lie buried." "Everybody is with everybody alike, in America. Christians and Jews are brothers together." . . . "There are no high or low in America. Even the President holds hand with Gedalyeh Mindel."
>
> "Plenty for all. Learning flows free like milk and honey."
> "Learning flows free." (Yezierska 1991, 112-113)

The repetition that should reinforce the promise of plenty introduces instead the first dissonant note in the positive image of America. The first *real* and direct vision of America is New York's Lower East Side. It is a Lower East Side subjectively perceived by a limited point of view, a sad nightmare of decadence, a vision of an alienated, poor and crowded urban modernity. Then, the uncanny encounter with the New World is suddenly exorcised by a fresh rising of "Russia." The "Old" World, a primeval land surging like water to wash the dust of a decadent America, takes on an aura of wilderness, which is, ironically, the main symbolic characteristic of the US myth of origin. "Russia" is nature and free, boundless space:

> Between buildings that loomed like mountains, we struggled with our bundles, spreading around us the smell of the steerage. Up Broadway, under the bridge, and through the swarming streets of the ghetto, we followed Gedalyeh Mindel.
>
> I looked about the narrow streets of squeezed-in stores and houses, ragged clothes, dirty bedding oozing out of the windows, ash-cans and garbage-cans cluttering the side-walks. A vague sadness pressed down my heart-the first doubt of America.
>
> "Where are the green fields and open spaces in America?" cried my heart. "Where is the golden country of my dreams?"
>
> A loneliness for the fragrant silence of the woods that lay beyond our mud hut welled up in my heart, a longing for the soft, responsive earth of our village streets. (Yezierska 1991, 114)

The short story has an ironic happy ending, a renewal of faith in the American dream caused by a providential but subtly ironic *fusion* between the protagonist and a US female teacher. The teacher, a descendant of the Pilgrim fathers and as such an *immigrant* herself, lends her ear to the "more recent" immigrant in a parody of sisterhood, a brief contact which magnifies the permeable barriers of US identity and the positive role the immigrants can play in the making of America.

The apparent equality of the two women is soon erased by a brief comment uttered by the significantly nameless protagonist: "I marvelled at the simplicity with which she explained me to myself" (Yezierska 1991, 127). Being a mere nameless object to be studied and formed, the female protagonist performs nevertheless a bitter exercise repeating—as a sad mantra healing the deep material asymmetry between immigrants and America—the words just read by the teacher from Waldo Frank's *Our America*: "We go forth all to seek America. And in the seeking we create her. In the quality of our search shall be the nature of the America that we create" (Yezierska 1991, 127).

Sartorial Modernism

But where is the author? In *Red Ribbon*, published during the Cold War, Yezierska compared the United States to Siberia, emphasizing both the randomness of America's positive achievements and its disturbing tendency to exercise control. And she did so, once again, using the national rhetoric of the Jeremiad:

> "Why do they call it a Writer's Project? Because we sign our names on the time sheet a dozen times a day? They watch us in the library and follow us up with the time sheet in the toilet. Stooges, gangsters spy on us. Are we citizens of free America or convicts in Siberia? All I ask is life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It says so in the Constitution. If that's a lie, then whom can you believe? Where can you go for truth?" (Yezierska 1987, 194)

The final fusion is exposed as a fraud, an eternally deferred promise of America, or, worst, as a feared threat of irreparable loss. If, on the one hand, Americanization is represented as a never ending jeremiad revivified by continuous obstacles, Yezierska seems also well aware, on the other hand, that some of these obstacles are powerfully effective ideological "barriers." As she writes, again in *Red Ribbon*, "And then I found myself against a new barrier—the barrier of being a Jew" (Yezierska 1987, 105). The fusion is thus simultaneously a goal, a lie, and a dark promise of invisibility, hence the crucial role of a vital and resisting "ethnic" surplus.

Louise Levitas argued that her mother partially invented her "ethnicity" and made an ethnographic spectacle of it—a thesis later sustained by Mary V. Dearborn, with the difference that for the critic Yezierska forged an ethnic self that bore no relation to "truth." In Levitas's words, instead, Yezierska distilled her real life, omitted, "strained out the in-betweens of her life" which did not suit "her literary purpose," such as "literary education, two marriages, motherhood, school-teaching" and years and years of uninterrupted writing, to a positive end (Levitas 1987, 222). Yezierska, that is, recreated herself and her characters in the nationalist and ethnic image of the "Cinderella of the Ghetto," a hybrid type playing its marginal but remunerative part on a national stage dominated by the hot issue of Americanization. At the same time, the blending of the actual with melodramatic inventions, as Christopher Okonkwo has argued, does not justify our continuing to read Yezierska as a writer whose life and work are an example of "sentimental realism," a genre supposedly inferior to a standard, formal American "modernism" (Okonkwo 2000, 129).

Intentionally or not, many critics today still tend to read Yezierska in complete adherence to her fictional roles, thus ignoring, as again Okonkwo maintains, the importance of her argument for "immigrant artistry" and her idea of a "sartorial carving of identity," erasing from the critical frame the question of a subtly crafted authorial role (Okonkwo 2000, 129). Turning ourselves into poor imitations of Americans, we sometimes seem to reproduce the old US nationalistic divide between "style," realism and life emphasized by Leon Phelps in the 1920s when celebrating Yezierska's spontaneous and transparent fiction: "She has, in one sense of the word, no literary style. There was so much style in some of Meredith and Henry James, that it got between the reader and the object" (Phelps 1923, 21).

Salome of the Tenements, a novel published in 1923, stands as Yezierska's sophisticated and ironic representation of the asymmetries between the ethnic woman (the protagonist, Sonya Wrunsky) and the "American" man (John Manning, icon of the true national specimen). The contrast is developed, once again, primarily through language. Pronunciation, pitch, volume, gesticulation, all the telling signs of Jewish ethnicity (Grace Paley's "The Loudest Voice") on the part of Sonya *and* the characterizing marks of Americanness on the part of John—the pioneer in search of a "new race of men"—are masterly played by an author who is, simultaneously, an insider and an outsider:

> "My dear Miss Vrunsky," said John Manning, bowing courteously: "You need not thank me. If you are pleased to get this interview for your paper, it has been a pleasure for me to give it."
>
> His low voice of cultured restraint thrilled through the girl like music. Even his formal manner—his unconscious air of superiority—roused in her the fire of worship.
>
> "It's not just an interview you've given me," she flashed breathlessly. "It's high thoughts for poetry—the most beautiful language that ever went into print in our *Ghetto News*."
>
> Her ardent words embarrassed him. "I trust," he replied, bowing with high-bred aloofness, "that this opportunity to reach the public through your press will materially aid the progress of the work." (Yezierska 1995, 1)

At the beginning I argued that *Salome of the Tenements* is one of the rare examples of Yezierska's happy endings. After an unsuccessful and frustrating fusion between the Jewish "alien" (Sonya Vrunsky) and the true American (John Manning), the answer to the great ethnic question—what will be the result of the contact between the American and the alien?— lies in reducing drastically the importance of pure *blood*, that mythic True American *quid* which in Theodore Roosevelt's nativistic rhetoric was the powerful redeemer of the inferior breed of Eastern and Southern Europe.

After her divorce from Manning, Sonya decides to marry again. Jaky Solomon, a fascinating Russian Jewish and Sonya's new husband, is a symbolical third level between the two opposite poles she and Manning represented. Free of Manning, the stiff Puritan, "the stupid fraud," in Hollins's words, Sonya becomes an acclaimed stylist of a deeply sophisticated and exotically hybrid prêt-a-porter collection. Jaky himself, under the name of Jacques Hollins and with a dynamic and sartorial passing, has recreated himself into one of the most successful and modern dress designers of New York's Fifth Avenue.

Notes

[1] On Yezierska's critical reception and rediscovery, and the question of whether her narrative should be considered fiction or memoir, see Ebest 2000, 1.

[2] See *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*. Eds. Jules Chametsky, John Felstiner, Hilene Flanbaum and Kathryn Hellerstein. W.W. Norton and Co.: New York, 2001, 121.

[3] Of the Jewish writers of the period, Yezierska, along with Abraham Cahan, enjoyed an exceptional and "significant mainstream readership," even if Yezierska died in "relative obscurity" and was not rediscovered until the end of the Twentieth century (Wald 2003, 62).

[4] To Priscilla Wald, Yezierska is close to Louis Wirth's idea of the Jewish ethnic enclaves, "liminal space[s]" marking the desire of the Jewish denizens of the New York Ghetto "to remain segregated." (Wald 2003, 57).

[5] As Wald argues, for assimilationists like Theodore Roosevelt, Kallen's cultural pluralism was "anathema," so that the philosopher "subtly offered cultural pluralism as a conservative ideology," "compatible with US democracy" (Wald 2003, 55).

Works Cited

Auden, Wystan Hugh. "Introduction". In *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*, 11-19. New York: Persea, 1987.

Bourne, Randolph. "Transnational America." *Atlantic Monthly*, 118 (July 1916). http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/rbannis1/AIH19th/Bourne.html (May 12, 2008).

Dewey, John. "Nationalizing Education." In *The Middle Works*: *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, 201-212. Carbonsdale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991.

Ebest, Ron. "Anzia Yezierska and the Popular Periodical Debate over the Jews." *MELUS*, Spring 2000, 1-13.

Garrett, Lea. "Shipping the Self to America: the Perils of Assimilation in Glatshteyn's and Shapiro's Immigration Novels." *MELUS*, Fall 2001, 1-16.

Kallen, Horace. "Democracy *vs* the Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality." *The Nation*, February 25, 1915. http://www.expo98.msu.edu/people/Kallen.htm (May 12, 2008).

Levitas, Louise Henriksen. "Afterword". In Anzia Yezierska. *The Open Cage: An Anzia Yezierska's Collection*, 253-262. New York: Persea, 1979.

_____. Afterword. In Anzia Yezierska. *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*, 221-228. New York: Persea, 1987.

Mortara, Elèna. "'Worthy Editor': Language Wars in Immigrant Families and in the Literature of the 1930's." In *USA: Identities, Cultures and Politics in National, Transnational and Global Perspectives*. XIX Biennial International Conference, Macerata, October 4-6, 2007, eds. Marina Camboni, Valerio Massimo De Angelis, Daniele Fiorentino, Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh, 195-210. Macerata: EUM, 2009.

Okonkwo, Christopher N. "Of Repression, Assertion, and the Speakerly Dress: Anzia Yezierska's *Salome of the Tenements*." *MELUS*, Spring 2000, 129-145.

Phelps, William Lyon. *Review of Anzia Yezierska's Children of Loneliness*. *The Literary Digest International Book Review*, 1923, 20-24.

Wirth-Nesher, Hana. *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish-American Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Wisse, Ruth. *The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey Through Language and Literature*. New York: Free Press, 2000.

Yezierska, Anzia. *Bread Givers: A Struggle Between a Father of the Old World and a Daughter of the New*. 1925. Reprint, New York: Persea, 1975.

_____. "How I Found America." In *How I Found America: Collected Stories of Anzia Yezierska*, 108-127. 1921. Reprint, New York: Persea, 1991.

_____. *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*. 1950. Reprint, New York: Persea, 1987.

_____. *Salome of the Tenements*. 1923. Reprint, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

Wald, Priscilla. "Of Crucibles and Grandfathers: The East European Immigrants." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature*, eds. Michael P. Kramer and Hana Wirth-Nesher, 50-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Zierler, Wendy. "The Rebirth of Anzia Yezierska." *Judaism*, Fall 1993, 1-7.

Elèna Mortara

“Worthy Editor”: Language Wars in Immigrant Families and in the Literature of the 1930s

A Letter to the Editor

Several years ago, while doing research in New York as a Fulbright scholar, I came across a letter that had been sent to the Yiddish paper *Forverts* in the early 1930s, which I found fascinating for its capacity to describe from within all the conflicts of bilingual immigrant families. Since then I have often used this letter in my teaching as one of the documents that could help me introduce synthetically, and with a touch of humor, the heated subject of immigrant families’ “language wars,” and as a way to prepare my students for the reading of narrative texts by first or second generation Americans, such as the masterpiece of that decade, *Call It Sleep* (1934) by Henry Roth, published just one year after that letter was written.

The letter that attracted my attention was signed by a young man in his twenties, writing for himself and his four brothers. Written in Yiddish, it concluded with this apparently contradictory request: “We beg you, friend Editor, to express your opinion on this question, and if possible send us your answer in English, because we can’t read Yiddish” (Metzker 1972, 157).[1] The contradiction of a letter in Yiddish to a Yiddish newspaper, asking for a non-Yiddish answer, is part of my topic here. Several decades later, we shall now satisfy the young man’s queer request, by quoting both letter and answer in their English version, which has made them available to us.

The letter begins with a pompous salutation, “Worthy Editor” (an address that one also finds in other letters of the same period as well). The letter-writer is aware that the issue he is presenting is not a personal one, but one that concerns a whole generation of American children. “I am sure,” he says, “that the problem I’m writing about affects many Jewish homes. It deals with immigrant parents and their American-born children” (Metzker 1972, 156). We are then informed about the story of his family, a very common immigrant story. The parents came from Europe and have been in the Unites States over thirty years. They got married in America and have five sons, who are in their twenties now. All of them, father and children, make a decent living, one of the sons is studying law, all the others have good jobs. The problem that has motivated the letter and has created tension in the parent-children relationship is not economically based, but has to do with the language issue.

> We, the five brothers, always speak English to each other. Our parents know English too, but they speak only Yiddish, not just among themselves but to us too, and even to our American friends who come to visit us. We beg them not to speak Yiddish in the presence of our friends, since they can speak English, but they don't want to. It's a sort of stubbornness on their part, and a great deal of quarreling goes on between our parents and ourselves because of it.
>
> Their answer is: "Children, we ask you not to try to teach us how to talk to people. We are older than you."
>
> Imagine, even when we go with our father to buy something in a store on Fifth Avenue, New York, he insists on speaking Yiddish. We are not ashamed of our parents, God forbid, but they ought to know where it's proper and where it's not. Yiddish among themselves at home, or to us, it's bad enough, but among strangers and Christians? Is that nice? It looks as if they're doing it to spite us. Petty spats grow out of it. They want to keep only to their old ways and don't want to take up our new ways. (Metzker 1972, 157)

Feelings of embarrassment, if not shame ("God forbid"), and profound differences of sensibility accompany this quasi-humorous sketch of immigrant family life. Here the generational conflict, summarized in the contraposition between "our new ways" and "their old ways," finds its most evident expression in the "petty spats" of a language war continuously to be fought, particularly hard to be carried on when taking place in the borderline space where family and strangers, or friends not belonging to the old world, have to meet.

The description of the family conflict, outlining a more complicated conflict in one's relationship with society, is followed in the letter by a request for an opinion, addressed to the newspaper editor with great pathos and, one would say, great expectations of the positive effect of an answer. "Respectfully" is the final form of greeting in the letter, before it is signed by "I, and the Four Brothers" (Metzker 1972, 157).

The Editor's Answer

What makes the above letter so important is not simply the letter itself, notwithstanding its ability to describe a general situation. What is really relevant is the answer that the letter received. Here, in fact, we can see how a newspaper could influence hundreds of thousands of readers, with its policy of advice and instructions, and its way of dealing with essential issues in the path towards "Americanization." It is this larger picture that the answer can help us illuminate.

The specific answer, given by the *Forverts* editor to these immigrant family children in need of help, is structured (in the English version I am quoting) in two paragraphs, each one dealing with one of the two languages involved in the family language war. It is the perfect balance between opposite viewpoints in the argumentative discourse that reveals the ideological perspective of the newspaper.

The first paragraph concerns the use of Yiddish. "We see absolutely no crime," says the editor, "in the parents' speaking Yiddish to their sons. The Yiddish language is dear to them and they want to speak in that language to their children and all who understand it. It may also be that they are ashamed to speak their imperfect English among strangers so they prefer to use their mother tongue" (Metzker 1972, 158). In this part of the answer English is briefly mentioned too, but as an imperfect instrument of communication for the immigrants' generation, and a likely reason of shame for them, who do not have it as their mother-tongue and therefore cannot speak it properly. Yiddish, instead, is that mother-tongue, the *mame-loshen*, the cherished language, "dear to them."

The second paragraph deals mainly with the use of English. "From this letter," reflects the editor, "we get the impression that the parents are not fanatics, and with their speaking Yiddish they are not out to spite their children. But it would certainly not be wrong if the parents were to speak English too, to their children. People should and must learn the language of their country" (Metzker 1972, 158). This second, and final, part of the answer perfectly counterbalances the first, by stressing the opportunity and even the necessity of speaking the language of the country where one lives, and of using it not only in one's relationship with the outside world, but, as an alternative to Yiddish, even at home and with one's children.

This response is a perfect illustration of the *Forverts* policy concerning the debated language issue. This middle path, stressing the value of one's original language and at the same time the absolute need to learn and use the new one, was the lesson daily imparted from its pages. The conclusion of the editor's answer, and its final statement on the topic, was clear: "People should and must learn the language of their country" (Metzker 1972, 158). This was the teaching repeatedly offered in the advice column in a newspaper for immigrants written in Yiddish.

Abraham Cahan (1937)

Abraham Cahan, the Forverts*, and A "Bintel Brief"*

We should now shift our attention from this specific document, the reader-editor epistolary exchange, to the larger context in which it took place. We should also reflect on who the editor giving that answer was, and what his role was in those crucial years of transformation for the Yiddish American world and for America as a whole.

The historical importance of the *Forverts* is well described today on the web site of this still existing newspaper, in a note where the paper is called with its English name, "The Forward":

> The Forward is a legendary name in American journalism and a revered institution in American Jewish life. Launched as a Yiddish-language daily newspaper on April 22, 1897, the Forward entered the din of New York's immigrant press as a defender of trade unionism and moderate, democratic socialism. The Jewish Daily Forward quickly rose above the crowd, however; under the leadership of its founding editor, the crustily independent Abraham Cahan, the Forward came to be known as the voice of the Jewish immigrant and the conscience of the ghetto. It fought for social justice, helped generations of immigrants to enter American life, broke some of the most significant news stories of the century, and was among the nation's most eloquent defenders of democracy and Jewish rights.

> By the early 1930s the Forward had become one of America's premier metropolitan dailies, with a nationwide circulation topping 275,000 and influence that reached around the world and into the Oval Office . . . . In thousands of Jewish households across the country, the Forward was for decades more than just a daily newspaper—it was a trusted guide and a member of the family. ("Our History," *Forward*)

A very popular feature of the *Forverts* was its daily advice column, "*A Bintel Brief*" ("A Bundle of Letters"), established by the paper's editor Abraham Cahan in 1906,[2] one of the peak years in Jewish mass immigration from Eastern Europe. Some twenty years later, in his Yiddish memoirs *Bleter fun mayn leben* (Pages from my life), Cahan wrote some comments on this feature of the paper he was still directing. He explained:

> People often need the opportunity to be able to pour out their heavy-laden hearts. Among our immigrant masses this need was very marked. Hundreds of thousands of people, torn from their homes and their dear ones, were lonely souls who thirsted for expression, who wanted to hear an opinion, who wanted advice in solving their weighty problems. The 'Bintel Brief' created just this opportunity for them. (Cahan qtd. in Metzker 1972, 7)[3]

Speaking about his own time, he added: "Many of the letters we receive are poorly written and we must correct or rewrite them. Some of the letters are not written directly by the people who seek the advice, but by others who do it for them" (Cahan qtd. in Metzker 1972, 8).[4] He then underlined the practical influence of the "*Bintel Brief*" column on the readers' daily life and its popularity, reflected even in some new expressions of American Yiddish,[5] and explained that many of "the themes from the letters have been used by writers of dramas and sketches for their works, because a world of literary import can be found in them" (Cahan qtd. in Metzker 1972, 8).

In this autobiographical passage Cahan adds an interesting piece of information on his role as a respondent to the letters and, what's even more revealing, on his interest in them as a writer: "The first few years I used to answer all the letters myself. I did it with the greatest pleasure, because in the letters one sees a rare panorama of human souls and because I also had a literary interest in the work" (Cahan qtd. in Metzker 1972, 8). Considering Cahan's reputation as a tyrannical leader of his newspaper,[6] he was certainly personally responsible for all the content of the editorial answers and their ideological implications, although he might have been later assisted in his job of answering them.[7] As for the literary interest confessed, one should remember that Cahan was not only the giant figure of Yiddish journalism in the long decades from the 1890s to 1946 (when he suffered a stroke, five years before his death), and the "dictator" of the American Yiddish scene for his fundamental role in publishing other writers in his paper all those years ("nearly every major luminary in the then-thriving world of Yiddish literature, from the beloved 'poet of the sweatshops,' Morris Rosenfeld, to the future Nobel laureates Isaac Bashevis Singer and Elie Wiesel" were, at one time or another, in the newspaper's editorial staff" ["Our History," *Forward*], and found their more or less comfortable home on his pages). But he was also himself a first rate narrator, a believer in the school of literary realism, whose early fiction in English had a fundamental role in the history of American Jewish literature.

The middle path and double language choice, that he suggested as an editor in the *Forverts* answer from which we started, can be seen powerfully reflected in Cahan's own dual choice as a writer. In his job as a journalist, aiming at helping the Yiddish masses enter the American world in a non-subordinate position, he used Yiddish as a medium of expression; and it was in Yiddish that he also wrote his personal memoirs, his more intimate narrative. But in his fiction, when he meant to describe from within the Yiddish ghetto experience and the immigrants' struggle towards integration, he used the language of the new country, so that *all* the country readers, both non-Jews and Jews, could learn from him.

From Cahan to Roth: Multilingualism on the Yiddish and Jewish-American Literary Scene

As I said at the beginning, the epistolary exchange from the *Forverts* on the immigrant family "language war" can be used as a fit introduction, a sort of entrance door that can lead us from reality into the world of fiction, the magic world where that reality has been transformed, to remain as a legacy of knowledge and gift for future generations. The document picked up from the "*Bintel Brief*" advice column of New York's Yiddish daily is dated 1933. One year later, in 1934, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* was published, in the same city. The lesson of modernism, coming from Joyce and T. S. Eliot, the lesson he received by way of studying at the City College of New York (where he graduated) and through his association with cultural life, could melt into the young artist's furnace mind and become intimately joined with his recollections as a child of East European Jewish immigrant parents growing up in Brownsville and the Lower East Side, and with the literary tradition of realism that had already started telling that experience in all its nuances from within. In the latter tradition, Abraham Cahan had been a master and an initiator. The language conflicts taking place within and among newly arrived "greenhorns" had been introduced into his narrative in powerful and humorous ways since his first short stories of the 1890s, set in the Jewish ghetto of New York. In his later novel *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917) the struggle to learn the new language had been described extensively, in sections of the novel that could be used as a guide for reflecting on methodologies of language learning.

What changed with Henry Roth were both the subject matter and the style. While Cahan, or Mary Antin, or Anzia Yezierska, in English, and so many other less-known writers in the Yiddish American world, were telling mainly the experiences of those who had themselves arrived in the United States from somewhere else, Roth's narrative was centered on the immigrant's son's experiences, on the growing up of a new American, living among different worlds, in a mixed-identity/multilingual environment. No other novel up to then had been able to make the reader plunge so deeply into the *multiverse*[8] of a child of the 20th century, a multi-layered world of intricate connections, having the mind of the child and his family at its inner center, and all the city around at its outside circle, that keeps expanding and becoming larger and larger in the main character's consciousness. No other novel had been able to tell of the multiplicity of languages coexisting in the mind of a Jewish child living in the United States. This multiplicity was not just the simple Yiddish-English dual conflict described in the *Forverts* exchange of 1933, but included a much more intricate linguistic web of references to other languages as well, in a text where each coexisting language—from the Yiddish of family life rendered in standard English, to the broken English of peers meeting in the streets and of the immigrant world outside, to the Polish of the European Gentile world in whose sounds past family mysteries were obliquely and perhaps wrongly revealed, or the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Holy Texts, with their differently meaningful words and sounds, plus the poetic English of the child's stream of consciousness and the purified English of the impersonal narrator's voice telling the events and mixing the whole – each one had a different, and fundamental, role and narrative function. And no other novel had been able to fuse the redemptive aspirations of one person, the child, in search of purity and spiritual illumination, with the collective hopes for redemption set against the reality of corruption of a whole city (and of the 1930s society), and lead the reader to the final multilingual explosion of the novel's penultimate chapter (chapter XXI of Book IV, "The Rail"), where the cacophonic chorus of a post-Babel metropolis of immigrants combines with the character's lyrical solos into a large American symphony, powerfully composed and performed by the grown-up artist in the fusion of all those instruments.

Since I first began to do research in American literature, I have been fascinated by Henry Roth's novel. I have often written about it and about the multilingual world that inhabits it.[9] Here, however, I shall not discuss in more detail the large canvas and multi-thread interlacing of languages of the text, but rather say something about a recent discovery I have made in the text, while reading the novel again with my students. That will allow me to give a less-known example of the complexity of that intricate linguistic and narrative web. As it happens, I have realized that, hidden within, there were languages whose importance I myself had overlooked in all these years. This is the beauty of re-reading and of teaching, that one always discovers something new, when texts are valuable.

David's Hungarian and the Non-Communication of Languages

One of these easily unacknowledged, further languages enriching Roth's novel is "Hungarian," not the real Hungarian spoken in Hungary, but the imaginary "Hungarian" invented on the spot, in a flash of terror, by the young boy David, when, after a self-created situation of mystical revelation, his reveries along the river and his following peaceful going back home are suddenly interrupted by the aggression of a gang of violent city boys. On this occasion, to shield himself from the assault of their anti-Semitic menaces, David denies his Jewish identity (a motif that will play a role in the following narrative)—"I ain' nod a Jew!," he protests when he is told that he lives in "a sheeney block" (Roth 1964, 250)[10] and must be a Jew—and declares instead that he is Hungarian, the son of Hungarian janitors living in a Jewish neighborhood. To prove it, he starts uttering invented sounds, as evidence of his knowledge of the unknown language, that should protect him from their attack.

This episode (taking place in chapter VIII of Book III, "The Coal") is, by the way, a crucial one in the novel, a sort of narrative turning point, as it is in the course of the dramatic confrontation with these violent non-Jewish street boys that David will be forced by them to experiment "de magic" (Roth 1964, 250), that is, the shocking encounter with an electric force passing through his body. The memory of this experience will have a fundamental function in the novel's denouement, by leading the boy to an almost-death experience (in his search of ecstatic light and superior meaning, in fact, he will later try to recreate that light on the tracks again), while bringing the novel to its choral, cacophonic semi-conclusion.[11]

In the climactic episode I am discussing, the passage concerning the fake Hungarian is very short, and indeed, in spite of the drama of the situation, is quite humorous. Yet there is meaning hidden in the obscurity of that self-created language.[12] In the harsh confrontation where the young anti-Semite investigates the child's pretended home language, there is a brief exchange of just two short cues, with the aggressor speaking first and David answering:

> "Talk Hungarian," challenged the first lieutenant.
> "Sure like dis. Abashishishabababyo tomama wawa. Like dot." (Roth 1964, 250)

Languages should be means of communication, they should convey meaning. But sometimes they become barriers in one's attempt at understanding the world, as this novel shows in various episodes. As a matter of fact, the episode we are considering is not the first one in the novel where we listen to strange-sounding words. In this post-Babel, multilingual human universe, languages can be used in order *not* to be understood by other people. This is what David has learned even from his beloved mother, when she uses Polish, that is the Gentile language of her old world, in her mysterious conversations with her sister, as she doesn't want her child to get the embarrassing meaning of what she says. Polish has the explicit function of a "screen,"[13] hiding forbidden meanings, covering perhaps shameful truths of the past that must not revealed. This is the lesson that David spontaneously applies when trying to protect himself from his enemy peers' assault. But while Polish represents the "screen" of a real language that the world outside puts up against his thirst for knowledge, his "Hungarian" instead is the grotesque, pathetic imitation of that kind of screen, which the child tries to create for himself, without success.

Languages, be they real or invented, may represent different types of screen or mystery, as shown by another "mysterious" language with which the main character of *Call It Sleep* gets in touch, that is, Hebrew. This "sacred language," for David the language of God, plays an important role in the Jewish child's spiritual growing, and has a relevant narrative function in the novel. It is a partially unknown, partially familiar language, whose sounds the child already knows from the words of the prayers recited at home, but that he begins to study only when he goes to the Jewish children's school, the *cheder*.

David is taught the Hebrew alphabet and learns how to read Hebrew, letter by letter, but he does not know what the words actually mean, he does not really know the Hebrew language. Therefore, when he is at an early stage of his language study and tries to recollect by heart what he has read, in one of his mental monologues he substitutes the missing words with *abababa* ("First you read, Adonoi elahenoo abababa, and then you say, And Moses said you mustn't, and then you read some more abababa" [226], he says to himself).

Isn't this *abababa* another case of inner invented language? Yet what a difference from the invented Hungarian! In fact, this Hebrew *abababa*, substituting the real Hebrew that he is trying to learn as a child, stands for what he knows has a meaning, though being slightly undervalued and dismissed by him at this stage.[14] In the episode about "Hungarian," instead, the fake language is pure invention, a hieroglyph of sounds created by the writer and coming from the child's mind, a combination of his world and languages, notwithstanding their nonsense. *Abashishishabababyo tomama wawa*: when we listen to the strange "Hungarian" sounds more carefully, we realize how familiar and indeed interiorly meaningful they can be within the character's mental universe.

This is my interpretation of the invented phrase, within the context of the novel. The first part of the initial long sound, the segment "*aba*," is a primitive sound, corresponding to the first two letters of the alphabet both in the Latin/English alphabet (*a-b*) and in the Hebrew/Yiddish one (*aleph-bet*).[15] This sound recurs in both episodes of invented mental languages, in substitution for what one does not know. It is here followed by the common Yiddish *sh-* sound of dismissal ("*shishisha*"),[16] then by a variation of the previously mentioned "abababa," shortened into "*ababab*," that is eventually crowned by a version of the typically Yiddish *oy* sound of pain inverted in its sequence, thus becoming an affirmative sound, "*yo*," resembling the German "yes." In the two next rhyming words/sounds of David's response, "*tomama wawa*," the former, "*tomama*," through the repetition of the elementary sound *ma*, expresses a sort of cryptic invocation of the child's mother ("*mama*" is the Yiddish for mother and mom), while the onomatopoeic final sound "*wawa*" resembles a cry of weeping, the involuntary linguistic sign of that despair that the child tries not to show, in his self-defense through the shield of a language. So although this "Hungarian" has no real meaning in any objective language existing in the external world, it does have a meaning within the character's unconscious.

This is just an example from the variety of cases that *Call It Sleep* offers for our observation. Its intricate multilingual tissue is not only representative of the immigrant world and of America as "a nation of nations" (Walt Whitman). The interest of the novel goes beyond the representation of a historical and sociological situation filtered through individual eyes. The dramatic interplay of languages on stage in the text helps us see deeper into the universal human language problem and its after-Babel condition. Languages, we learn among other things, can be either carriers of meaning, that communicate in full or at least hint at what we are looking for, or they can be barriers to our knowledge, to our mutual understanding and integration. Like broken bridges, they can not enable the crossing of human communication. Like more or less transparent screens, they can partially hide and partially reveal.

Multilingualism, Language Wars, and Gentlemen's Agreements

I started this discussion with the description of a "language war" within a real immigrant family, disclosed by a letter in the Yiddish-American daily *Forverts* of 1933. We have seen the much more intricate web of languages, and language conflicts represented by Henry Roth in his novel of the following year. I shall conclude by pointing to the cultural context in which both contemporary texts, the letters and the novel, were born, from the viewpoint of the basic Jewish component they share.

A keen sensibility to the language issue and to mankind's multilingualism has been a constant in Jewish culture, even before the coming to the New World. One reason for that has been the historical experience of life in exile (Hebrew *galut*, Yiddish *golus*), which has been running through Jewish history from its origins. The patriarch Abraham, who started that history on a scale of personal revelation and family dimension, was a voluntary expatriate, moving from the place of his birth to the Promised Land to which God bid him to go (see Abraham's call in Gen. 12, 1).[17] According to the Biblical narrative, even the birth of the Jewish nation as a collective entity, a most climactic moment in that history, took place in exile, when the people escaped from Egypt, an alien land of slavery, under the leadership of Moses, and spent the next forty years in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The continuous experience of living among other peoples speaking languages other than their own, which has marked the history of the Jews, has made Jewish culture quite sensitive to the notion of multilingualism as a feature characterizing the human condition. The relevance of this theme in Jewish culture is testified by the location in the Bible of the episode of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11, 1-9), where the drama of the human plurality of languages is staged. This story is placed at a crucial turning point in the biblical narration: right at the end of that initial part of the Book of Genesis which deals with the beginning of Creation and the history of *all* mankind, from its common start from one man to its development into a multiplicity of cultures and languages. Only after this general history of mankind does the specific story of the Jews begin to be told.

Linguistic plurality is not only a characteristics of human history as a whole. Jewish culture itself has developed for centuries on a basis of internal multilingualism. In fact Hebrew, the language of the Bible, is undoubtedly at its linguistic center, but the Talmud and the Zohar, just to mention two pillars of post-biblical culture, were written mostly in Aramaic, the spoken language of about two thousand years ago, having the same alphabetic characters as Hebrew. As for Yiddish, the language of Eastern-European Jewry, in recent centuries up to the *Shoah* the most widely spoken Jewish separate language, it is essentially a European "*language of fusion*" (Harshav 1990, 28),[18] derived from several source languages, in spite of its use of the Hebrew characters. It comes basically from Middle High German, with some important Hebrew, Aramaic and Slavic elements (from Czech, Polish, Ukrainian and Russian mainly), plus a sprinkle of Romance words due to its original contacts with France and northern Italy: it is a real *summa* of European languages condensed into one, with the addition of the special, unique flavor that derives from the language of the Bible, which is present in the etymology of many words and in whose alphabet it is written. And this is only a trio of internal languages written in the Hebrew alphabet, just one part of an even more varied picture of internal Jewish linguistic multiplicity, having Ladino, the language of Jewish Sephardic culture, on the other geographic side of the screen, and a few minor dialects or languages in-between.

Jewish internal multilingualism is mainly the product of Jewish living in contact with "external polylingualism" (Harshav 1990, 24-26) as a consequence of the Diaspora, that is, of the fact of living for centuries spread among linguistically diverse nations. As scholar and Yiddish poet Benjamin Harshav says about Jews in Medieval times, their culture "lived and thrived in the interstices between nations, tongues, religions, and empires" (Harshav 1990, 25). Harshav aptly notes that while many English speakers are not aware of using a language of fusion, this awareness was much more actively present in European Yiddish speakers, as the experience of living directly exposed to the source languages as well, i.e. their knowledge of Hebrew and Russian, or Polish or German and so on, made them conscious of the linguistic intersections at play in their own speech. "Yiddish, a language of fusion like English," says Harshav, personifying the language, "was much more directly aware of its composing languages, since it lived among them—among Hebrew texts and German and Slavic neighbors—and kept relatively open and wavering boundaries" (Harshaw 1990, 26).[19]

The experience of living in a "polylingual society," and the dilemmas born out of that situation, can be recognized as essential in the lives of the most important Jewish East-European writers. All the greatest figures of modern Yiddish literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Mendele Mosher Sforim, Shalom Aleichem, Peretz, were torn among various linguistic possibilities, before making the final choice of Yiddish, the language of everyday life for Jews in Eastern Europe, as their favorite instrument of writing.

In the first years of the twentieth century, the awareness of living in a multilingual universe was extremely acute in the Yiddish world. The conflict concerning the choice of a tongue that could represent Jewish linguistic identity was so important, in the wake of the growing external and internal national feelings of the age, that it even developed into what became known as the "War of Languages," an expression from which I have drawn on purpose for my title. The ideological conflict between supporters of Yiddish or Hebrew as the main language of the Jewish people had one of its climactic moments in 1908, at the international conference on Yiddish that took place in Czernowitz, a city at the crossroads of several frontiers in the Austrian-Hungarian nation of Ukraine.

The conference was promoted by Nathan Birnbaum, a former Zionist leader who had become the ideologist of "Golus Nationalism," or nationalism of the Diaspora. At that time, after the great Jewish migrations from Eastern Europe to America at the turn of the century, New York was the best harbor for Jews escaping from the persecutions of Jews in "Yiddishland" and the most highly populated "Jewish city" in the world, so it is no surprise that Birnbaum would start his promotion of the conference with a lecture tour among Yiddish writers and intellectuals in the United States. In New York he found the support of novelist and dramatist David Pinski and of leftist theorist Chaim Zhitovski, who helped him present his plan in Pinski's Bronx apartment and in Lower East Side "evenings."[20] The Czernowitz conference, which was attended by such major literary figures as J. L. Peretz and Sholem Asch, had been summoned with the aim of stating the superior role of Yiddish as *the* national language of the Jewish people. The conference had the historical result of acknowledging that Yiddish was not to be considered a dialect, or, as one would say in Yiddish, a "jargon," its usual derogatory label. But for what concerned its supremacy as a language, after heated debates the conference had to end in a gentlemen's agreement, with the admission that beloved Yiddish was only *a* national language, one of the languages of the Jews.

The so-called "War of Languages" in Czernowitz was concluded with a compromise (a new episode of this war would take place in the Holy Land in the following years, this time with Hebrew in conflict with German for supremacy in university teaching at Haifa's new Technion). As for the United States, a gentlemen's agreement between the generations concerning the languages in conflict at home was the road suggested also by the editor of the *Forvert*s, in that new version of "language war," between Yiddish and English, which took place on a miniature scale in hundreds of thousands of families on the American soil, in those years of intense post-immigration, after the high peaks of immigrant waves from Jewish Eastern Europe of the first two decades of the 20th century. But what made it possible, in that period and later on, to many Jewish scholars to be on the avant-garde of language studies, with their sensibility to the reality of "languages in contact" (Uriel Weinreich),[21] what made it possible to a young novelist of the 1930s like Henry Roth to describe the drama of multilingualism beyond the usual binary treatment (not only showing the bilingual conflict opposing two cultures, the old and the new one) and allowed him to make us hear in such fullness the American polyphony of language experiences surrounding a city boy in his growth, what made those achievements more easily reachable was this long tradition and experience of living among languages and cultures which had existed for centuries in the culture of Jewish Diaspora, even before its mass crossing over the ocean and its new fruitful settling in the United States.

Notes

[1] The letter from the *Forverts*, "1933. Worthy Editor," and its editorial answer are collected, in an English version, in Metzker ed., *A Bintel Brief* (1971) 1972, 156-158 (primary source indicated above as *Bintel Brief*).

[2] "The first three letters were printed with an introduction by the editor on January 20, 1906" (Metzker "Introduction," in Metzker 1972, 6).

[3] This passage from Cahan's memoirs and the following ones are quoted in Metzker 1972 ("Introduction"). For the five-volume Yiddish autobiography by Abe Cahan, see Cahan 1926-1931. The first two volumes of this autobiography were translated into English in one volume (see Cahan 1969). In the English version, the titles of the first two Yiddish volumes are "The Old Country" and "The Golden Land." Jules Chametzky (in his important study of 1977, 155) announced the forthcoming publication of the other volumes o f this autobiography, to be translated into English with the title *The Rise of Abraham Cahan*.

[4] For what concerns the fact that the letters were often not written directly by the people seeking the advice, one can suppose that the letter by "I, and the Four Brothers" quoted above might have had a similar story too, considering that the brothers who sign it ask the editor to answer in English. The authority of the *Forverts* in immigrant families is shown in that letter from the fact that the children would address themselves to their parents' Yiddish paper for advice, saying that their parents had been readers of that paper for years.

[5] "The name of the feature, 'Bintel Brief,' became so popular that it is often used as a part of American Yiddish. When we speak of an interesting event in family life, you can hear a comment like 'A remarkable story—just for the 'Bintel Brief.' Other times you can hear, 'It's like a 'Bintel Brief' story!'" (from Cahan's memoirs, quoted in Metzker "Introduction," 8). The *Forverts* also had a Yiddish-language radio station, WEVD, "the station that speaks your language."

[6] A hint at this feature of his character can be also remarked in the passage from the web site of the *Forverts* we mentioned above, where the writer-journalist is defined, in a friendly way, as "the crustily independent Abraham Cahan."

[7] For detailed information about Cahan the journalist, the *Forverts* and "*Bintel Brief*," see Howe 1976, 522-543.

[8] See Adams (1907, 1918) 1931, 460-61. Here Adams describes the modern condition of the mind, which, up to a certain time, had been able to adjust itself to the chaos of reality, "always assimilating bits of it, until at last, in 1900, a new avalanche of unknown forces had fallen on it, which required new mental powers to control. If this view was correct, the mind could gain nothing by flight or by fight; it must merge in its supersensual *multiverse*, or succumb to it" (Ch. XXXI, "The Grammar of Science," my italics).

[9] My first essay on H. Roth was in *Studi Americani* (Mortara 1966); my latest one is in my book on Jewish American Literature (Mortara 2006, Part III, ch. 2, "Nel *Golden Land* degli immigrati: suoni e lingue di Babele in Henry Roth").

[10] All quotations are from the 1964 edition of *Call It Sleep*. "Sheeney" is an offensive slang word for "Jew" and "Jewish."

[11] The penultimate chapter of *Call It* Sleep is followed by the real ending, in the last chapter, where one reads about the boy's rescue and coming back to a normal, and apparently pacified, family life, and to his final falling into sleep ("one might as well call it sleep," hence the title of the book), in the beautifully written last paragraph of the novel.

[12] See Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* II, 2, when Polonius, observing Hamlet's "madness," remarks to himself, "Though this be madness, yet there is method in't."

[13] Roth introduces several metaphors to describe what Polish is to the child: "under a screen of Polish," "that alien thicket," "stranded on a sounding but empty shore" (see Roth 1934, 196-197).

[14] Later on in *Call It Sleep* other Hebrew sounds from the Bible, acquiring enlightening meaning in the child's soul, will lead him to an understanding of his inner needs: "All his senses dissolved into the sound. The lines, unknown, dimly surmised, thundered in his heart with limitless meaning, rolled out and flooded the last shores of his being" (Roth 1934, 255).

[15] In Hebrew, *aba* means "father" (phonetically close to the Italian "babbo," having the same meaning). One could suppose a secret reference to that meaning too at the start of this invented phrase: the child would not know the meaning of that Hebrew word, but he would sometimes have found it in Hebrew prayer books and biblical texts; and though the character himself would not be aware of the pun, the author might have been. See also Wirth-Nesher 2006, 85.

[16] About the Yiddish *sh-* sound, see Rosten (1968) 1970, 323-324: "Sh- is the introductory signal to a rich symphony of disesteem. A great many words of mockery . . . begin with *sh-*: *shlemiel, shlimazl, shloomp, shmegegge, shmo, smuck, shnook, shnorrer*. / If you eschew the *sh-* and *shm-* sounds, you rob Yinglish of two of its phonetic glories."

[17] Abraham's call by God opens the portion of the Hebrew Bible called *Lech-lechah*, which begins with the bidding to leave his country (Gen. 12, 1).

[18] Benjamin Harshav is quoting Max Weinreich's theory of Yiddish.

[19] Even much of Yiddish humor and word pun can have this origin.

[20] See Weinstein 2001, 79. About the Czernowitz conference, see also Mortara 2006, 88-89.

[21] See Weinreich 1953.

Works Cited

Adams, Henry. *The Education of Henry Adams*. 1907, 1918. New York: Random House-Modern Library, 1931.

Cahan, Abraham. *Bleter fun mayn leben* (Pages from my life), 5 vols. New York: The Forward Association, 1926-1931.

———. *The Education of Abraham Cahan*. Trans. Leon Stein, Abraham P. Conan, and Lynn Davison. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969.

Chametzky, Jules. *From the Ghetto: The Fiction of Abraham Cahan*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1977.

Harshav, Benjamin. *The Meaning of Yiddish*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford: University of California Press, 1990.

Howe, Irving. *The Immigrant Jews of New York: 1881 to the Present*. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976.

Metzker, Isaac, ed. *A Bintel Brief: Sixty Years of Letters from the Lower East Side to the Jewish Daily Forward*. 1971. New York: Ballantine, 1972.

———. "Introduction." *A Bintel Brief*, 1-11.

Mortara, Elèna. "L'arte di Henry Roth." *Studi Americani*, 12, 1966, 231-255.

———. *Letteratura ebraico-americana dalle origini alla shoà. Profilo storico letterario e saggi*. Roma: Litos, 2006.

"Our History." *Forward*. http://www.forward.com/about/history/ (September 5, 2007).

Rosten, Leo. *The Joys of Yiddish*. 1968. London: W.H. Allen, 1970.

Roth, Henry. *Call It Sleep*. 1934. Afterword by Walter Allen. New York: Avon, 1964.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by J. Dover Wilson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961.

Weinreich, Uriel. *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems*. 1953. Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974.

Weinstein, Miriam. *Yiddish: A Nation of Words*. New York: Ballantine, 2001.

Wirth-Nesher, Hana. *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Valerio Massimo De Angelis

Diasporic Identities: Multilingual Biographies in Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*

Henry Roth's autobiographical novel *Call It Sleep* (1934) tells the story of a young boy's migration from an Eastern European Jewish village to New York City. The novel opens in "May of the year 1907, the year that was destined to bring the greatest number of immigrants to the shores of the United States" (Roth 1977, 9). The Jewish diaspora to the USA is thus framed from the very beginning within the larger context of global migration. In any case, of the almost one million three hundred thousand immigrants from Eastern Europe who arrived in the United States in 1907, 150,000 (11.5 percent) were Jewish. Roth and his mother formed part of the massive influx that boosted the Jewish population of New York sixteen-fold in thirty years, from 80,000 in 1880 to 1,250,000 in 1910. In 1918, 10 percent of all Jews in the world lived in New York.

This explains why the image of Manhattan's Lower East Side as the Jerusalem of the American Diaspora is, in Hasia Diner's words, "the central metaphor of American Jewish memory" (Diner 2000, 37), even if the district came gradually to lose part of its centripetal attraction for Jewish immigrants in favor of other New York City areas.[1] But from the very beginning the novel states clearly that the Jewish diaspora is not the only American diaspora: Ellis Island is thronged "by hundreds upon hundreds of foreigners, natives from almost every land in the world, the jowled close-cropped Teuton, the full-bearded Russian, the scraggly-whiskered Jew, and among them Slovak peasants with docile faces, smooth-cheeked and swarthy Armenians, pimply Greeks, Danes with wrinkled eyelids" (Roth 1977, 9). One may note that here the "natives from every part of the world" are actually represented by a synecdochic choice of European peoples, identified by way of the most stereotypical physical traits an Anglo-American observer might use in order to pinpoint their "already known" difference, a list of bodily features that accommodates them in a manageable map of "not too alien" otherness. Nonetheless, the varieties of human experiences and of languages, as the next-to-last chapter shows in an explosively virtuosistic *tour de force* represented in the novel undermine any attempt to reduce *Call It Sleep* to a sort of celebration of the linguistic strategies David Schearl learns to use to survive in the New World chaos and Henry Roth exploits so as to be recognized by the literary American establishment as a legitimate modernist writer. Rather than a defensive closure against a Babel-like confusion of unknown and threatening tongues, what David Schearl's progress through the crowded and noisy Lower Manhattan streets finally comes to signify when he almost commits suicide is a monumental negotiation of different languages and cultures that almost miraculously manage to communicate one with the other without renouncing any of their distinctive idiosyncracies. But this is only the final result of his peregrination through the complex web of New World languages (and cultures), caught as he is "between crumbling Old World values and an accommodation not yet formed" (Pinsker 1992, 12).

As a matter of fact, David Schearl's experience in the new land (where he arrives when he is 2) is structured according to a pattern of tensions between the different languages he gradually encounters and the only language he knows before leaving Europe, Yiddish. As the novel almost didactically shows (as do many "language biographies" of Jewish immigrants to America),[2] this pattern is modelled according to a tripartite process, commonly found in modern immigrant fiction. The first reaction the immigrant has when facing the "quintessentially modern sense of dislocation and alienation"—typically "a crucial theme in immigrant fiction" (Barnard 2005, 49)—is a defensive retreat into a cultural space where only the mother tongue is spoken: in the novel, this is *literally* a *mother's* tongue, because Yiddish is the only language David's mother speaks to him, and the place she speaks it is the protective womb-like home to which David repeatedly flies to escape the threatening English-speaking outside world, the world of the streets; on the other hand, the novel hints that this protection is only provisional, and may even cause an identity regression.[3]

The second stage is that of the necessary acculturation to the second language, the language that dominates the new world (but not its only language): it is a world represented through an imagery (and a sound-track: "this must be the noisiest novel ever written," in Walter Allen's words, quoted in the title of Stephen J. Adams's essay; see Adams 1989) that stresses the frantic incomprehensibility of the landscape of modernity. But as David begins to learn some English, this world also starts opening up new opportunities, new paths he may travel to create his own identity, and to avoid his father's fits of rage, caused by his conviction that David is not his son. At this stage, David's father, Albert, comes to represent the alienated state of the immigrant who is able neither to maintain his original cultural identity nor to acculturate to the society of immigration (he always fights with his colleagues at work):

it is a state David fears may become also his own, but a paradoxical solution is offered through Albert's decision to send his son to the *cheder*¸ the Hebrew religious school, "to make sure he'll become something of a Jew" (Roth 1977, 207). The third stage the return to one's linguistic and cultural roots, even those the subject does not know he has is mirrored in David's learning classic Hebrew and Aramaic at the *cheder*, the symbolic place where the educational system of the American Jews attempts to ensure the transmission of traditional knowledge:[4] even if he does not understand most of what he is forced to learn by heart of the Scriptures, the myths of cultural identity he is exposed to light up new fascinations and desires. David is particularly struck by the story of Isaiah, whose lips are touched by an angel with a burning coal so that he may be cleansed and gain the power to hear the voice of God and speak with Him.

This myth of empowerment through language becomes so important to David that, when a violent fight between his parents breaks out, he runs to the trolley rail and drops a metal dipper on the electrified tracks in an attempt to evoke the same flame that allowed Isaiah to become a prophet. The result is apparently the opposite: David falls almost senseless to the ground, and his return to the language and culture myths of his "origins" seems to produce only the soundless stasis of a regression to a pre-natal state as he is brought back to the womb-home to lay in bed, where he drifts towards what we may call "sleep." But David's act of (almost) self-sacrifice also manages to create a bond of communication among all the ethnic communities peopling the Lower East Side, as all converge to the site of the accident and, at least momentarily, overcome their differences and even hostilities in order to help the injured boy (as his parents do also):

> The street paused. Eyes, a myriad of eyes, gay or sunken, rheumy, yellow or clear, slant, blood-shot, hard, boozy or bright, swerved from their tasks, their play, from faces, newspapers, dishes, cards, seidels, valves, sewing machines, swerved, and converged. While at the foot of Tenth Street, a quaking splendour dissolved the cobbles, the grimy structures, bleary stables, the dump-heap, river and sky into a single cymbal-clash of light. Between the livid jaws of the rail, the dipper twisted and bounced, consumed in roaring radiance, candescent—
>
> . . .
> "Holy Mother O' God! Look! Will yiz!"
> "Wot?"
> "There's a guy layin' there! Burrhnin'!"
> "Naw! Where!"
> "Gawd damn the winder!"
> "It's on Tent' Street! Look!"
> . . .
> "Git a cop!"
> "An embillance—go cull-oy!"

“Don’t touch ’im!”
“Bambino! Madre mia!”
“Mary. It’s jus’ a kid!”
“Helftz! Helftz! Helftz Yeedin! Rotivit!”
. . .
“Mimi! He’s awright! He’s awright!”
“Yeh?”
“Yea!”
“No kiddin’! No kiddin’!”
“Yeh!”
“Yuh!”
“Yeh!”
“Oi, Gott sei dank!”
(Roth 1977, 417-419, 430)

Elèna Mortara has already underscored how this scene dramatizes a sort of metaphorical translation of all the hyphenated Americans into a new entity, a varied but finally single-minded microcosm of Americans, without the need to be further specified (see Mortara 2006). This *reductio ad unum*, besides, occurs thanks to the near-sacrifice of a “son” attended to by a venerated mother and by a father who’s not so certain that he *is* his father. The obvious analogy David=Jesus Christ reflects the transformation of the boy’s cultural environment, triggered by the symbolic electric (g)rail, as his old Jewish identity seems to give way to a new, Christian one.

Jeffrey Folks (1999) has claimed that *Call It Sleep* is not so much multilingual—as Hana Wirth-Nesher (1995), among others, insists[5]—as it is monocultural, because the many diverse languages and dialects represented in the novel are not given the equal status to the “dominant” language that many contemporary postcolonial texts manage to allow. According to Folks, code-switching here functions as a marker of Roth’s own modernist alienation from the raw speech of the masses, which is contained, in the 21st chapter, by the poetic-like paragraphs in italics, written in an elegant, Eliot-like, accentless English, such as the following:

(As if on hinges, blank, enormous
mirrors arose, swung slowly upward
face to face. Within the facing
glass, vast panels deployed, lifted a
steady wink of opaque pages until
an endless corridor dwindles into
night.) (Roth 1977, 425)

These paragraphs should convey David’s perception of what’s happening around him, but the language used here is not the one we are accustomed to when reading David’s emotional reactions to the most relevant events in the novel: this is not the phrasing a dizzy 8-year boy might use, but a sophisticated rendering of those emotions, much later recollected (we do not know how much in tranquillity) and reorganized by an adult aspiring to compete with the major modernist poets. What the reader should note, however, is that in the visual structure of this chapter the parentheses do not enclose David's original experience of courting death and the cacophonic alternation of voices from the street commenting on it, but the very reconstruction of that experience. The multifarious languages clashing and merging remain on the page as they are, faithfully reproduced with no attempt to reduce them to some sort of "unified" structure—not even the orchestra-like harmonization of dozens of different cultural expressions that Horace Kallen compared to/contrasted with Israel Zangwill's homogenizing crucible in his 1915 essay "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot." Even the disposition of the dialogues on the page hints at an irredeemable resistance to orderly arrangement, building at best a reproduction of another favorite image of Kallen's, that of a "national mosaic of ethnic and religious groups" (Shapiro 1992, 158). This may well be a supreme instance of that "exploded form" that for James M. Mellard (even if he does not cite Roth in his book) is the distinctive trait of the modernist novel, whose authors were "forced to identify 'authority' their textual validations and determinations—elsewhere than in the traditional figural, emblematic monisms upon which the genre had been based" (Mellard 1980, 15-16); or it may also be an "attempt to escape the limitations of individual forms" that, according to Maurice Beebe, "has been a dominant feature of the entire Modernist movement" (Beebe 1974, 1072).

Roth's poetic intersections may well be markers of his distance from that Babel-like world, his modernist alienation from it, but it is *that* Babel that saves his protagonist, and it is the literary representation of all those not-yet-fully-American, still confusing and confused transnational identities that will save Roth himself from anonymity—not his copycatting Eliot. That in subsequent decades Roth suffered from the worst case of writer's block in modern American literature (it came to an end only decades later), may be the result not only of the ideological ostracism from the political Left because his novel was not "socialist" enough, but also of Roth's distancing from the polyphonic vitality of the Lower East Side and of his choosing the isolated citadel of modernist elitism: when Cinzia Schiavini says that *Call It Sleep* is a sort of staging of the death of the author in the traditional sense, she stresses that Roth is here discarding the role of the writer who represents reality at safe distance (see Schiavini 1998). And here is the reason for the paradox Mario Materassi recognizes: one of the most important novels of the 20th century, and an absent author (Materassi 2004, 21). Absent, almost dead, because his own linguistic biography comes to a halt when David's does: ultimately both remain silent (we may as well call theirs a sleep), while the plurivocal kaleidoscope of the streets of New York continues to turn and resonate.

Before the "almost dying/sleeping" (and Hamlet's ghost clearly hovers here) of the novel's author and of its protagonist, David's trajectory from Eastern Europe through the various New York spaces he has come to inhabit closely resembles that of virtually every contemporary individual who, according to Madan Sarup's refections on "Home and Identity," passes "a long string of widely divergent social worlds. At any single moment of their life, individuals inhabit simultaneously several such divergent worlds. The result is that they are 'uprooted' from each and not 'at home' in any" (Sarup 1994, 102). That in David's alienation Roth projects his own—not so much that of his childhood as the one he will soon oppressively feel in failing to be either a successful proletarian novelist or a high modernist, and in his dismissal of a Jewish identity not substituted by any WASP one—is made evident in a letter written in 1968 to Byron Franzen, when he confesses that the East Side depicted in *Call It Sleep* is much more nightmarish than it actually was when he lived there as a child: the novel's main setting is

> East Harlem impinged upon an inoffensive ghetto, when in fact the East Side was really quite cosy, quite snug and homogeneous, while a barbarous, goyish, Irish-infested, Irish-plagued and benighted Harlem, where I spent most of my youth, impinged upon the East Side, where I spent only a few years of earlist [*sic*] childhood, and thereby distorted an essentially benign environment, violated it gratuitously, disfigured it into a new grim vision recognizable to neither Jew nor gentile, with the result that neither, in the vernacular, bought it. (Roth 1968)[6]

Nonetheless, until his final drift into inarticulateness, David's linguistic biography might have come to stand, at least at a symbolic level, for a possibly different outcome of a process that could otherwise have led to a linguistic and cultural entrenchment, somehow replicating the corresponding defensive strategies of many immigrant diasporas. The novel suggests instead the possibility of a cross-linguistic and transcultural dialogue reached through the valorization of the specificities of each cultural and linguistic heritage. The standard two-way back-and-forth (better, forth-and-back) movement of the diasporas (spatially, from the place of origin to the place of immigration/exile; temporally, from the present time of the "new" world back to the past of the "original" linguistic and cultural identity),[7] which may beget the static worship of a seemingly immovable tradition, gives way to a plurality of lines of movement through the many frontiers that separate the New York immigrant communities, and that are celebrated by the novel itself as a linguistic and cultural object. In some way, the consequences of David's near-sacrifice in the name of a totally fideistic trust in the word of an unintelligible God confirm the view of the Orthodox Rabbi Bernard Drachman, who more or less at the same time professed to subscribe to a "harmonious combination of Orthodox Judaism and Americanism" (qtd. in Kraut 1998, 31) and what is more American than the coming together of people from all corners of the world toward a central "melting rod" (if not pot)? Rather than isolating him from the boiling mixture of early 20th-century New York ethnic communities, David's attempt to become something like a "real" Jew projects him into the very heart of American multicultural society, on a trajectory that American Jewish intellectuals such as Randolph Bourne and Horace Kallen were trying to trace in studying "the anomalous condition of the Jew in a cosmopolitan nation," finally arriving at the conclusion that "Jewish heritage" could be satisfactorily reconciled "with American citizenship" (Whitfield 1999, 15). This is not to say that the ending of *Call It Sleep* partakes of the same quasi-utopian atmosphere of Hutchins Hapgood's romanticizing *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (1902), where we read that the "picturesque" ghetto may give the young Jew the possibility of becoming "an integral part of American life without losing the seriousness of nature developed by Hebraic tradition and education" (Hapgood 1967, 34). David's predicament is much less straightforward, and the "turbulence of migration" (I borrow the expression from Nikos Papastergiadis) he experiences may rather foreshadow newer forms of belonging that "are rarely the mere duplication of traditional forms, or the blind adoption of modern practices" (Paparstegiadis 2000, 20).

Thirty years after the personal experiences which gave Henry Roth the material for his novel, these multiple languages and cultures—not only those of the Jewish diaspora—are translated into *Call It Sleep* without losing their peculiarities, and cooperate in weaving a complex web of interrelationships that mobilizes the concept of Jewish identity as a monolithic entity,[8] because David's (and Roth's, and maybe the reader's) identity is shown as patterned by the exchange with, and contamination by, the many other identities he has encountered. It was the isolation from this network of experiences, of linguistic and cultural expressions, that probably led Henry Roth to retreat to a sort of solitary and muted exile from the world, just as he was incapable of fully playing the role of modernist writer, of entering that "process of role-playing experimenting with diverse styles while rapidly changing styles and voices," which "is an essential part of Modernism" (Schwartz 1997, 181), because he distanced himself from those many styles and voices, and did not make them his own.[9] But in the meantime, *Call It Sleep* was diasporically disseminating his New Babel of words everywhere.

Notes

[1] "In 1892, 75 percent of New York Jews lived on the Lower East Side, a number that fell to 50 percent in 1903 and to 25 percent by 1916" (Wenger 2007, 94).

[2] The concept of "language biography" is the very heart of many recent reflections on migration and identity, and on their interaction with multilingualism. See Zarate, Lévy, and Kramsch 2008.

[3] As a matter of course, this picture is the one the novel attempts to draw, not necessarily always succeeding in doing so, especially as regards the narrative function of David's mother, Genya, whose figure is much more complex than the role this tripartite model would allow her to play. In the traditional "attantial" narrative pattern developed by Greimas, Genya would play a double function, as "helper" in protecting Henry from the dangers represented by the streets and his father, and as "opponent" in thwarting his attempts to break free by overtly facing them. But Genya would deserve a deeper analysis, to free her too from the bondage of the closed and oppressive domestic space Roth tries to lock her in. She might also come out as an instance of that "inner subjectivity" recent feminist theorists have retrieved in many immigrant women, who did "not necessarily view their situation [of unpaid domestic workers] as oppressive" and who managed to "forge multiple and complex identities" (Brettell 2000, 111). Besides, Genya's dialogues with her sister Bertha, mainly in Polish (a tongue David does not understand), hint at a multilinguistic biography that is as important as the one David is creating at the *cheder*, because they give him some obscure clue about an alternative history of himself—something he "creatively" manipulates to invent a family romance in which he is the son of a Catholic musician (his mother's would-be lover in an aborted affair back in Europe).

[4] The rabbi teaching at the *cheder* David attends is evidently a conservative Orthodox, and not a member of the most liberal Reform movement. David's family is part of the wave of East European Jewish immigrants who "did overturn the Reform majority in America," and by 1910 "90 percent of approximately 2,000 synagogues in the United States identified as Orthodox" (Wenger 2007, 109).

[5] In a most recent essay, Wirth-Nesher presents *Call It Sleep* as an exemplary instance of literary multilingualism, because it "encompasses all of the aspects of multilingual writing . . . : dialect, reproduction of 'foreign' languages, internal translation [most of the dialogues we read in English are actually spoken in Yiddish] and untranslatability, cultural literacy through non-English triggers, interlingual puns, liturgy, sacred and secular language, linguistic home and exile" (Wirth-Nesher 2003, 122). For her more general reflections on multilingualism in Jewish American literature, see Wirth-Nesher 2006.

[6] "For all its wretched poverty, the neighborhood that Roth remembered was a lively community of Eastern European immigrants who could now live without fear of anti-Semitism, because they rarely saw a Gentile, more rarely still an anti-Jewish bigot" (Kellman 2005, 31).

[7] The first two common features Robin Cohen individuates in all diasporas are: "Dispersal from an original homeland," and "a collective memory and myth about the homeland" (Cohen 2008, 26).

[8] David Biale bluntly states that to historicize Jewish culture is to recognize that "the difference between 'Jew' and 'goy' is no longer ontological," and that the "relationship of Jewish culture to its surroundings was, and is, dynamic and permeable" (Biale 1994, 44-45).

[9] On the other hand, this attitude could also be read as the manifestation of a sort of respect towards the multi-faceted linguistic and cultural world of the Lower East Side, or at least of the imagined Lower East Side of *Call It Sleep*, that Roth does not want to inappropriately appropriate, dispossessing the immigrants of their own "styles and voices"—something Eliot or Pound were much less scrupulous about.

Works Cited

Adams, Stephen J. "'The Noisiest Novel Ever Written': The Soundscape of Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 35 (Spring 1989): 43-64.

Barnard, Rita. "Modern American Fiction." In *The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism*, ed. Walter Kalaidjian, 39-67. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Beebe, Maurice. "What Modernism Was." *Journal of Modern Literature* 3 (5), July 1974: 1065-1084.

Biale, David. "Confessions of an Historian of Jewish Culture." *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (Fall 1994): 40-51.

Brettell, Caroline B. "Theorizing Migration in Anthropology: The Social Construction of Networks, Identities, Communities, and Globalscapes." In *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, eds. Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, 97-135. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.

Diner, Hasia R. *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Folks, Jeffrey J. "Henry Roth's National and Personal Narratives of Captivity." *Papers on Language and Literature* 35 (Summer 1999): 279-300.

Hapgood, Hutchins. *The Spirit of the Ghetto: Studies of the Jewish Quarter of New York*. 1902. Ed. Moses Rischin, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967.

Kellman, Steven G. *Redemption: The Life of Henry Roth*. New York and London: Norton, 2005.

Kraut, Benny. "Jewish Survival in Protestant America." In *Minority Faiths and the Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna, 15-60. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Materassi, Mario. "Henry Roth." In *Voci dagli Stati Uniti: Prosa, poesia e teatro del Secondo Novecento*, eds. Caterina Ricciardi and Valerio Massimo De Angelis, 15-24. Roma: La Sapienza, 2004.

Mellard, James M. *The Exploded Form: The Modernist Novel in America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980.

Mortara, Elèna. "Nel *Golden Land* degli immigrati: Suoni e lingue di babele in Henry Roth." In *Letteratura ebraico-americana dalle origini alla* Shoà*: Profilo storico-letterario e saggi*, 273-294. Roma: Litos, 2006.

Papastergiadis, Nikos. *The Turbulence of Migration*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000.

Pinsker, Sanford. *Jewish-American Fiction, 1917-1987*. New York: Twayne, 1992.

Roth, Henry. Letter to Byron Franzen. November 14, 1968. Henry Roth Papers, Correspondence, Franzen file. American Jewish Historical Society, New York.

_____. *Call It Sleep*. 1934. London: Penguin, 1977.

Sarup, Madan. "Home and Identity." In *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, eds. George Robertson *and others*, 93-104. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Schiavini, Cinzia. "Morte e resurrezione dell'autore: Henry Roth e Ira Stigman." *Ácoma* 13 (1998): 114-120.

Schwarz, Daniel R. *Reconfiguring Modernism: Explorations in the Relationship Between Modern Art and Modern Literature*. New York. St. Martin's Press: 1997.

Shapiro, Edward. "Jewish-Americans." In *Multiculturalism in the United States: A Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity*, eds. John D. Buenker and Lorman A. Ratner, 149-172. New York: Greenwood, 1992.

Wenger, Beth S. *The Jewish Americans: Three Centuries of Jewish Voices in America*, New York: Doubleday, 2007.

Whitfield, Stephen J. *In Search of American Jewish Culture*. Hanover, NH, and London: Brandeis University Press, 1999.

Wirth-Nesher, Hana. "*Call Is Sleep*: Jewish, American, Modernist, Classic." *Judaism* 44 (Fall 1995): 388-398.

_____. "Traces of the Past: Multilingual Jewish American Writing." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature*, eds. Michael P. Kramer and Hana Wirth-Nesher, 110-128. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

_____. *Call It English: The Languages of Jewish American Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Zarate, Geneviève, Danielle Lévy, and Claire Kramsch, eds. *Précis du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme*. Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2008.

Letters Across the Ocean

Coordinators: Marina Camboni, Renata Morresi

Marina Camboni

Bryher's Letters to Amy Lowell; or, How to Desire America, Build the Poet, and Promote Transatlantic Literary Relationships

> You have said something here which deserves to become an epigram: "It is difficult to imitate a hundred authors; so easily to be influenced by them."
> (Amy Lowell to Bryher, 1919)

Bryher and Amy Lowell corresponded from 1917 until the latter's untimely death in 1925: a relatively short time span but long enough to reconstruct the storyline of their relationship.[1] Within the short space of this essay I will concentrate on the inception and key moments of their exchange, from Bryher's first letter to Lowell in 1917 in the context of World War I to, at the end, their meeting in New York in 1920, during Bryher's first momentous visit to the United States. From even this limited evaluation of their correspondence, however, we can see how their epistolary relationship soon evolves into personal friendship and then into reciprocal critical and literary support. During these four years, we observe Bryher gaining a sense of self and worth thanks to Lowell, and Lowell earning some standing and recognition in a literary world still heavily dominated by British literary hegemony. We also perceive the struggle of both women as they strive to succeed as writers in a male-dominated Euro-American culture.

It is within and through this personal story, where the agency of the two correspondents comes to the fore, that the process of indigenization or domestication of aesthetic and cultural forms becomes ever more evident. For, indeed, when we move from a personal to a cultural perspective, Bryher's and Lowell's letters also tell the story of the hybridization resulting from literary importation, assimilation and re-exportation, in a never-ending cultural circuit.[2]

Writing from Brookline, Lowell comments on her translations and adaptations of French, British and Oriental forms, revealing how important they were for her own poems and poetics. The reasons she offers her correspondent also reveal her desire to build an American Renaissance in poetry and thus become a protagonist on the American cultural scene. Bryher, on the British side of the Atlantic, emerges as the spokesperson for a developing European awareness of the USA as a source of culture and as the "modern" country *par excellence*, testifying also to the literary transformations that were making American poets the leaders in modern poetry in English—a poetry that, ironically, had been launched in London by American expatriates who admired classic Greek, Hebrew, Chinese and European medieval literatures and renewed poetry in English by translating and indigenizing late nineteenth-century French forms and themes.

1. *Amy Lowell and Bryher*

No poem better than Amy Lowell's "Astigmatism" (Lowell 1914, 45) anticipates the selective, oppositional and finally mortifying attitude that underpinned the canon of Anglo-American modernism for most of the twentieth century, with its active diminution, if not complete exclusion, of some of its key actors, Lowell one of them.[3] A new crop of critical essays has in the past few years redirected the attention of scholars and the reading public to her literary production. Two recent anthologies of her poems and reprints of some of her books corroborate this renewed interest and anticipate a more extensive reconsideration of the role she played in the formation of Modernism.[4] In the past, however, literary histories have tended to dismiss her poetry and highlighted her entrepreneurial spirit instead. She has come down to us as the strong-willed Boston Brahmin who, having read H.D.'s poems in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine, realized her own verses were also *imagistes* and went to London to storm and join the *Imagiste* movement. For all that she did, however, she was never fully accepted as a poet by Pound's supporters and by later critics. As a result, the typical image of her that remains in the mind is that of the powerful, rich "hippopoetess" who snatched the Imagist movement out of Pound's hands and then returned to America to promote the Imagists, contemporary American poetry and, of course, her own work.[5] Yet, her correspondence with Bryher reveals a generous poet, willing to share her knowledge and help a younger aspiring writer.

As for Bryher, most critics have taken at face value what she wrote in her autobiographical *The Heart to Artemis* about how she discovered H.D.'s *Sea Garden* (1916) and how important the American woman's poems had been to her life and growth as a writer. Though she also stated that she had "discovered from Amy Lowell's *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* that H.D. was a woman and an American," (Bryher 1962, 182) she underplayed Lowell's role in her discovery of H.D. and the Imagists. Her early letters to Lowell tell a different story, one that highlights Bryher's later distortion of historical fact, functional to her design to build the myth of H.D.'s centrality in her life. It was in fact Amy Lowell who first directed Brhyer's attention to the Imagists and it was Lowell's introduction to H.D.'s poetry in *Tendencies* that led her to the discovery of *Sea Garden*. But because perhaps very few have read, or heard, of her, some information is needed to help us understand her early fascination with Lowell and her poetry.

Born Annie Winifred Ellerman in 1894, she was the daughter of the richest man in Great Britain, the shipping tycoon, industrialist and financier Sir John Reeves Ellerman who, among other things, owned shares in the *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *Tatler* and *The Sphere* (Taylor 1976, 79). As the daughter of a rich man, brought up in a "solid, Protestant" family, "less extravagant than thrifty" (Bryher 1962, 29), in a Victorian and then Edwardian society, she suffered the limitations and powerlessness of the women of her time, enhanced by her own family's loving but stern repression and forced isolation. She was prevented from pursuing a career as an archaeologist, or any other profession that would have taken her away from home. This marked her for life. For Annie loved adventure and travel, and the freedom she felt only boys were allowed to enjoy. "The modern world does not understand how narrow experience was for the Edwardian woman," she wrote in her autobiography (Bryher 1962, 144).

Mostly known for her lifelong relationship with Hilda Doolittle, Bryher also contracted two unconventional marriages: in 1920 with the American poet-editor Robert McAlmon and, in 1927, with the Scottish artist and film director Kenneth Macpherson. McAlmon, who thought that Paris was the only place where he could seriously write, introduced her to the Paris of the roaring twenties. Although Bryher did not take to the life of the artists' milieu, in Paris she did meet American expatriate writers like Gertrude Stein, who later contributed to the magazines she edited, and other key figures like Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach, with whom she struck a lifelong friendship and whom she regularly visited for the rest of her life. Her second husband was instrumental in her involvement with German *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Russian experimental cinema, and Berlin. Between 1927 and 1932 in Berlin she established a solid friendship with Austrian film director Georg W. Pabst, who opened for her the Berlin cinema world. Through Pabst, she also met her psychoanalyst, Hanns Sachs, who, in turn, introduced her to the Freudian school of psychoanalysis in the German metropolis. From 1932 onwards, she was totally absorbed by the approaching cataclysm in Europe and relief work and assistance to refugees from Nazism between 1933 and 1939.[6]

Bryher has left us two of the most interesting modernist autobiographies, *The Heart to Artemis* (1962) and *The Days of Mars* (1972). In *The Heart to Artemis*, recently reprinted, she portrays herself as a participant in and an agent of modern innovation. For the scholar as well as for the lay reader interested in modernist history and culture, this autobiography is as relevant as Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Reading it, we become acquainted with a woman who is naturally attracted to modern life, taking easily, almost instinctively, to new means of transportation like the airplane, to new technological tools like camera and film, to the new arts and music. For a woman, she claims, to be modern is to rebel openly against Victorian and Edwardian mores and morality. It is also nothing less than to recover one's separate individuality, to pursue personal development, and to act according to one's wishes and talents, rather than adhere to social dictates. Individualism, in synthesis, is for her the necessary answer to the Victorian massification that froze men and women within fixed gender roles and blind obedience to tradition, no matter which class they belonged to. With a telling image, she represents her generation as "mass-produced little Victorias and Alberts already sitting on our memorials" (Bryher 1962, 161).

Late in life Bryher authored a number of historical novels, one of which, *Visa for Avalon*, a science fiction novel, was reprinted in 2005. But in her youth, between the late nineteen-twenties and early forties, she contributed to contemporary culture through critical essays on subjects ranging from Russian cinema to Elizabethan drama, and, most of all, through the two magazines she financed and co-edited: *Close Up* (1927-1933) and *Life and Letters To-Day*, bought in 1935. *Close Up* claimed to be the first magazine of cinema as art in the English-speaking world, but it also devoted space to discussing the relevance of cinema for mass education. Dorothy Richardson contributed a regular column on this aspect. As for *Life and Letters To-Day*, though her name did not appear on the masthead, Bryher was the real editor, and the one who "liaised" with contributors from all over the world. Through this journal she tried to build a transnational Europe of the arts, capable of countering Nazi and Fascist nationalisms and establishing a fruitful dialogue with the cultures of countries such as America, China and Africa.

There is another literary activity for which Bryher was renowned: her letter writing. Bryher's huge correspondence, particularly the letters she exchanged with American writers and artists, is integral to the network of material and intellectual exchanges that fostered a highly hybrid modernist Euro-American culture. Of her Sylvia Beach wrote in *Shakespeare & Company*:

> Bryher, though she won't like my mentioning it, has done more than anyone to maintain international contacts throughout wars, and to keep together her large family of intellectuals, who are dispersed in many countries. She has looked after them in war and peace, and her correspondence is vast. (Beach 1991, 103)

Directly and indirectly, Bryher played a very important role in connecting Europe and America, in shaping Anglo-American modernist culture and promoting some of its avant-garde figures and publications. "I have spent a lot of my life trying to bring Americans and English together" she writes in *The Heart to Artemis* (Bryher 1962, 154-155).

For all her desire to establish literary relationships, Bryher's attempts at connecting were never separated from her search for, and active building of, a writerly, modern, ethical and political self. Given her isolation, from childhood Bryher had sought, and found, in books what the closed space of home, family and society could not provide. And as a young aspiring writer at the beginning of her career, books were just about the only source to which she could turn to learn her *métier*. Her correspondence often started as a personal response to the authors whose books she had found appealing and not unusually ended up in further exchanges and literary apprenticeships when not also in her patronage. During her long life (1894-1983) she corresponded and built long-lasting friendships with a great number of American writers and poets, among these Marianne More, Horace Gregory, Maria Zaturenska and Muriel Rukeyser. Nevertheless, Amy Lowell was her first "American" correspondent, one whose figure loomed large in Bryher's imagination for many years. She was as much captivated by Lowell's outspoken Americanness as she was conquered by her "modern" poetry and non-academic criticism. Though later H.D. would take Lowell's place, Bryher not only admired the latter for her work but, feeling a personal and experiential affinity, identified deeply with her and, at the beginning of her writing career, adopted her as a model.

2. *Bryher, Lowell, French Symbolist Poetry and World War I*

On September 14, 1917 Bryher sent from London to Amy Lowell in Brookline a five-page handwritten letter that began "*Six French Poets* is the primary reason for this letter." She was 23 years old and World War I was raging in Europe. Since 1914 German zeppelins had been raiding the skies over London, where she lived, and which she considered "a city of the dead." She herself felt "neither dead nor alive," with her life more confined than ever by her family's further tightening of an already stern discipline (Bryher 1962, 194, 198). Yet, by 1917 war had started to affect changes in her life as in the lives of the many women called to substitute for men in every workplace. "We were freed by the war," Bryher would state (Bryher 1962, 146). She aspired to become a "modern" poet, and in 1914 had already privately printed a very immature collection, *Region of Lutany and Other Poems*, whose cold reception had made her even more aware that in order to write good poetry, technique was as necessary as experience—as were exchanges with other writers, if not a *cénacle*. Yet she had no direct connection with London's modernist milieu. Clement Shorter, editor of *The Sphere* and *Tatler*, two of the London papers partly owned by her father, was her only literary acquaintance and mentor, and he was rather conservative. He grounded her well in Elizabethan literature but cared little for contemporary writing. Thus, during the war years and completely singlehandedly, she had begun to develop and cultivate her interest in modern poetry, particularly in the French symbolists and in American verse, and secretly dreamed of going to America, for her the land where girls could work, where freedom was real. "America was my first love affair and I have never gotten over it," Bryher unabashedly stated in *The Heart to Artemis* (Bryher 1962, 155). Around 1916, due to a shortage of male staff, she had also started to write reviews for the *Saturday Review*, to whose editor, A.A. Bauman, she had been introduced by Clement Shorter. Her first review was of a book by Verhaeren. And it is probably in this context of heightened attention to French Symbolist poetry and new self-confidence as a reviewer that Bryher found the nerve to write to Lowell.

Even if America had not yet entered the European War, the conflict had played, and continued to play, no small role in Bryher's mature American correspondent's life and work. In fact, from its inception, Lowell had found herself involved, and in more ways than one. She was in London on August 14, 1914 when Great Britain declared war on Germany and, like Robert Frost and Gertrude Stein, found herself stranded in the capital. She had gone to London early in June to meet again with Ezra Pound and the other Imagists and to celebrate the publication of *Des Imagistes*, which included her poem "In the Garden." She was also hoping to secure publication of her forthcoming volume of poetry, *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914) in Great Britain. She had had no luck with Pound, who had already launched the Vorticist movement and was not interested in a more democratic editorial management of Imagist literary production. Their clamorous break also caused a split among the Imagists, with H.D. and Richard Aldington siding with Lowell and helping her publish three more Imagist anthologies in the United States: *Some Imagist Poets* 1915, 1917, 1918.

If Lowell was able to turn a failure into gain with the Imagists, she was not equally fortunate with her own book, for the war prevented its publication in England. Still, she went back to Brookline with a little treasure: a pile of French books and a deeper and wider understanding of Symbolist and contemporary French poets, whose work she had begun studying in earnest in preparation for a series of lectures to be delivered the following winter in Boston. During that August in London she met often with the Imagist poet Frank S. Flint, and spent more than one evening listening to his expositions of French contemporary poets, to his reading aloud Paul Fort and Henri de Régnier (Flint 1916, 9-10, Damon 1935, 246-247.) He was quite possibly *the* major authority on contemporary French poetry, and the one who had done much to stimulate the interest of British and American poets and of the literary magazines through a number of critical writings. He authored the seminal essay published in the August 1912 issue of *The Poetry Review* entitled "Contemporary French Poetry," where he connected poetic innovation and political change, listed the new French "schools"—including Neo-Mallarmisme, Unanimisme, Futurisme, Impulsionisme, Les Paroxystes and Les Fantasistes—and quoted extensively from *vers libre* poems.[7] It was probably her exchange with Flint that made Lowell even more aware of their value for modern poetry in English as well as for contemporary culture. Through Richard Aldington she also got to know Remy de Gourmont and felt greatly indebted to him and his theories. Once returned to Boston, while putting together her first Imagist Anthology, she lectured on Émile Verhaeren, Albert Salmain, Remy de Gourmont, Henri de Régnier, Francis Jammes and Paul Fort, introducing them to the American public. Her lectures, accompanied by her own translations of representative poems, were then collected and published as *Six French Poets* in 1915.

In her book Lowell took advantage of the renewed and widespread American interest in Europe spurned by the War, and of a particular attention to France brought about by that country's heroic response to Germany's attack. Her preface to the volume is quite explicit about this. Her aim as a critic, she writes, is to disseminate among her English-speaking contemporaries the best of what the French generation of poets "immediately following that of Verlaine and Mallarmé" (Lowell 1915, vi) had contributed to modern poetry. Underlying her statement was the assumption that the break in time and the breach with the past brought about by war not only made Symbolist poetry testimony to a vanished era, but also bred new literary life out of destruction.

The purpose of her book, she tells her readers, is to highlight the things that could be rescued from that French past to build modern literature which, she believes, will be dominantly English. Having revolted against their Romantic and Realist predecessors to search for forms more suited to modern life, she maintains, the Symbolists had taught revolt to modern poets, freed poetic forms from set conventions and, finally, made them available to individual creativity. Now these forms could undergo further change as they were imported into the new century and the English-speaking culture and literatures.

In the essays that follow, Lowell also gives voice to her own perceptions of nationality, race and culture, highlighting the differences and similarities between the Anglo-Saxon Protestant world of English poetry and the Catholic, Latin world of French poetry. She draws her readers' attention to the French poets who are most suited for importation and assimilation, either because they were themselves influenced by English literature, or on the basis of personal and cultural characteristics. In her criticism she adopts the perspective of a poet deeply aware of her Anglo-Saxon origins and completely identified with the wider English cultural, religious and literary traditions, and thus with the English-speaking continuum on both sides of the Atlantic.

3. *Transatlantic Circulation*

No surprise, then, that Bryher in her first letter to Amy Lowell writes that *Six French Poets* had fired her enthusiasm for the French Parnassian and post-Symbolist poets and that, thanks to the American poet-critic's mediation, she had come to understand the modernity of *vers libre*. She admits that at the moment she lacks inspiration and, most of all, the emotions out of which poetry is born, but Lowell has certainly convinced her that by learning the technique she can work toward her future as a writer. Furthermore, and with great insight, Bryher tells Lowell that the book has also revealed the poet-critic herself:

> It is a poet's book. Mediocrity of mere criticism may produce a biographical study, a valuable suggestion, but they could never paint six portraits in a prose Elizabethan in its vitality, redolent of real knowledge (not the arid stuff delighting certain scholars). Six portraits, or rather seven, for as I have ever held, a poet cannot prevent something of his own spirit escaping into what is written of another, so from a line here, an opinion there, I discern a seventh portrait of yourself. . . . To me *Six French Poets* was like having a friend. (Bryher, Letter of September 14, 1917, 1-2)

Though she reads French fluently and has already read de Régnier and other French contemporary poets (in her third letter she also states she had read Flint's essay), Bryher confesses that she had got very little out of everything she had read so far, thus acknowledging Lowell's role as cultural mediator.

It is because she had managed to translate the six French poets into the language of her American readers that Lowell was also able to reach the British reader that was Bryher. This fact provides evidence that a new trend had begun, and that an American could acquire a reputation in England by conquering America first. It is, then, Lowell's personal enthusiasm, her feelings, images and interpretations that, having caught Bryher's attention, opened the way for Bryher to understand the personal freedom engrafted in French *vers libre*. Lowell had used a language that spoke to the "common reader" as well as to the aspiring poet that Bryher was, and had put writer and reader on the same level. This critical attitude made Bryher feel she had not merely found information and learning, but also a friend.

Accurately read by Bryher as cultural translations of French authors, themes and forms for an English-speaking public, Lowell's essays would open the path to future transplant and indigenization. Lowell herself had already started the indigenization process. In the preface to her own *Sword Blades and Poppy*

Seed after acknowledging the influence of French "metrical experiments"on her poetry, she had proceeded to indigenize *vers libre* by calling it "unrhymed cadence":

> Many of the poems in this volume are written in what the French call "Vers Libre," a nomenclature more suited to French use and to French versification than to ours. I prefer to call them poems in "unrhymed cadence," for that conveys their exact meaning to an English ear. They are built upon "organic rhythm," or the rhythm of the speaking voice with its necessity for breathing, rather than upon a strict metrical system. They differ from ordinary prose rhythms by being more curved, and containing more stress. The stress, and exceedingly marked curve, of any regular metre is easily perceived. These poems, built upon cadence, are more subtle, but the laws they follow are not less fixed. Merely chopping prose lines into lengths does not produce cadence, it is constructed upon mathematical and absolute laws of balance and time . . . . The desire to "quintessentialize," to head-up an emotion until it burns white-hot, seems to be an integral part of the modern temper, and certainly "unrhymed cadence" is unique in its power of expressing this. (Lowell 1914, x-xi)

Later, in her preface to *Can Grande's Castle* (1918), while acknowledging her debt to Paul Fort's original combination of prose, rhythmic prose and verse, she would define her analogous experiment as "polyphonic prose" (Lowell 1918, x-xi).

There is one more debt, however, that Lowell never acknowledged. Her essays were themselves an adaptation of the portraits of French authors which her favourite poet-critic, Remy de Gourmont, had painted in his *Livre des Masques*. Moreover, she had applied to her own book of essays—and Bryher had promptly detected it—his idea that "l'oeuvre d'un écrivain doit être non seulement le reflet, mais le reflet grossi de sa personnalité" (13).

The truth that was most revealing to Bryher in Lowell's book was that those six French poets had, in various ways, incorporated in their verse their own experience of life and freed it from past forms and past trappings. It is this modern world that becomes synonymous with *vers libre*, Bryher writes to Lowell, and confesses that the word *libre* itself works wonders in her imagination, uniting poetry, modernity and America. And in fact to her it meant the liberation of one's inner drives, desires and powers, exploration of new territories, expansion of a formerly congealed self, a movement in time that could melt the Victorian hold over a woman's destiny as much as over the twentieth century.

4. *A Spiritual Sisterhood*

But it is first and foremost as a poet and mentor that Bryher needed Lowell, and in her letter asks Lowell to become her guide, the Virgil who will introduce her to modern poetry and contemporary poetic techniques.

Six French Poets had only been the starting point of Bryher's exploration of the new *vers libre* experimentation. After reading it, she writes to her correspondent, she read everything she could get her hands on, including the two collections of poems by Lowell that she could buy in England: *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* and *Men Women and Ghosts* (1916). Of these, flatteringly, Bryher writes

> [B]eside the work of practically all contemporary English writers your poems are so rich in colour and feeling, they flame with life. I admire your experiments in new forms, yet each line you have written has the strength born of careful study behind it. (Bryher, Letter of September 14, 1917, 4)

Lowell's poems had struck a deep cord in Bryher, who detected in them the woman behind the poet and, as a consequence, could identify with her and feel that the American woman's poetry responded emotionally to situations resembling her own (Bryher 1963, 179).

Bryher's first letter, then, having begun as the gesture of the admiring reader who recognizes the literary and cultural value of the critic, very soon moves to a more personal level, candidly acknowledging an analogy of life situations and childhood experiences that creates an affinity between them. Commenting on the poems she has read she writes, "'An Aquarium' reminds me of being taken to watch the fish, when I was a small infant at Naples. You, also, have loved childhood I think, from your books" (3). And then, mentioning Lowell's confession that isolation was one of the sources of her poetry, she continues, "I have really no friend to argue with, or with whom I can discuss my own work, or discoveries. The only thing left is knowledge. Perhaps you know something of this, or why did you write 'Miscast,' my favourite of your poems." Bryher's letter claims a spiritual sisterhood. In Lowell's poems she has found expressed emotions and experiences that were and had been her own. Most of all, she recognizes her own solitude in the utter solitude present in many of Lowell's poems. Apprehending in them the author's true self, she identifies with that self.

Bryher had not yet read Lowell's first collection of poems, *A Dome of Many-Colored Glass* (1912), that recorded the exclusion of one shut out from humanity, but the sense of exclusion and isolation was very much part of the two collections she did read. In the twin poems entitled "Miscast" the brain "whetted . . . until it is like a Damascus blade" "has no use to me," "I, who am set to crack stones / in a country lane!" (Lowell 1914, 89). She could recognize that feeling, for she had often experienced it. Thus, responding to Lowell's lines, in her letter she writes of herself: "The only thing left is knowledge" (Bryher, Letter of September 14, 1917, 4).

Even before writing her first letter, then, Lowell has become a figure of identity for Bryher. And it is this deep personal identification that prompts her move into more personal ground. She introduces herself, recapitulating her life in a synthetic history that divides it in two, with the traumatic school years and adolescent unhappiness and isolation as the mid-point, the gap in time. That story summarizes the first three chapters of the autobiographical novel she is writing at the moment, *Development*, which she offers to send Lowell to read. Finally, she reveals to her correspondent that she sees "colour in words," possibly to qualify herself as a potential imagist.

Ending her letter with a request for more information about other contemporary French and American poets, tying art and life, she declares herself ready to become Lowell's disciple and friend, thus taking the necessary steps to elicit the American poet's response.

5. *Lowell and the New American Poetry*

Lowell's response was not long in coming. The letter itself, dated November 14, 1917, is taken by Bryher as a gesture of acceptance and recognition, an assurance of her value, more so because it contains Lowell's offer to give her "any advice in [her] power," which is also the promise for the future development of their correspondence. Yes, she has also been lonely and has suffered isolation in the literary world for years, Lowell answers, but has refused to give in to the sentiment of marginality and inner silence. Offering Bryher encouraging advice, she assures her that "high courage and the constant pursuit of your own ideal will bring you to the goal of desire" (Lowell, Letter of November 4, 1917, 3).

Lowell provides a new list of younger French post-Symbolist poets and critics like Ghéon; she mentions Apollinaire as the author of a "futurist book," and strongly suggests that Bryher read Imagist poets F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington and H.D. Along with her letter she sends her most recent book of criticism, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, published that year as a companion volume to *Six French Poets*. It deals with the six American poets she believes are leading American letters into modernity: E.A. Robinson, R. Frost, E. Lee Masters, C. Sandburg, J. Gould Fletcher and H.D., each exemplifying a trend in contemporary American poetry. And while she believes the younger French poets, with the exception of Jules Romains, are not as interesting as those of the older generation, "[w]ith American poets the matter is quite otherwise. I am more than ever convinced that the great step forward in poetry to-day is being taken in America" (Lowell, Letter of November 4, 1917, 2).

This statement summarizes what she has articulately expounded in her preface to *Tendencies* which, as she points out, is yet another result of the ongoing European war. For the war has "produced a more poignant sense of nationality," and submerged all "hyphens . . . in the solid overprinting of the word 'America'" (Lowell 1916, v). This "realization of ourselves," she writes, has not merely made Americans more sympathetic to their allies, it has given rise to a new sense of self and worth, of the aesthetic importance of American reality, and finally even of the historical processes and the place America will hold in them:

> Each country approaches an evolutionary step from its own racial angle, and they move alternately, first one leads and then another, but all together, if we look back a century or so, move the world forward into a new path. At the moment of writing, it is America who has taken the last, most advanced step. (Lowell 1916, vi)

With *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, Lowell's critical perspective has taken a new turn. While in *Six French Poets* she had considered herself part of the Anglo-Saxon continuum uniting America and Great Britain, in *Tendencies* she emphasizes her Americanness and the specificity of American geography and the American experience which have produced a national, modern poetry, radically different from the British poetry that had been its inheritance and on which it had depended:

> How should such a race express itself by the sentiments appropriate to a highly civilized country no bigger than New York State, and of that country some fifty years earlier, to boot?
>
> I would not be construed into saying that the larger the country, the more profound the emotions. That would be absurd. I only mean that the material conditions under which Americans lived—the great unoccupied spaces, the constant warring and overcoming of nature, the fluid state of the social fabric—all made a different speech necessary, if they were really to express the thoughts that were in them. (Lowell 1916, 7)

Rooting herself firmly in American ground and culture, following in the steps of Emerson and Whitman, invested with an analogous sense of cultural patriotism, Lowell highlighted both the *Americanness* and the modernity of twentieth-century American poetry, a modernity based in a fluid society. This fluidity, Lowell—staunch representative of white New England hegemonic culture—wrote, was due to the fact that American society was multiethnic, multilingual and highly mobile.

6. *Adventures in El Dorado*

The immediate result of Lowell's first letter to Bryher, and of her book, was that Bryher bought the Imagist books and started to dream about America. America is her El Dorado, she replies on December 9, 1917, just as the London of the Imagists had been Lowell's El Dorado in 1914. "I feel more and more the great new movement is taking place there. I lie and dream each night of America." The three letters she writes Lowell between December, 1917 and January, 1918 report Bryher's reading of and response to both *Des Imagistes* and *Some Imagist Poets*, and to Aldington's and Lowell's poems in them, as well as to H.D.'s *Sea Garden*. They also record the difficulty she has buying American books in England, and the restrictions war has imposed on the transatlantic book market. Most of all, these letters illustrate how Lowell's and Imagist poetry are influencing her own writing of *Development*. Of her work-in-progress she writes, "It is an attempt to deal with the early development, the literary influences, and their effect on the mind of a writer . . . I am now struggling with a fourth part in which I hope to indicate a little the widening influence of your poetry" (Bryher, Letter of December 9, 1917).

By 1920 when the book is finally published, the feelings of solidarity between the two correspondents have evolved into reciprocal literary and critical support, so much so that the American edition of *Development* is prefaced by Lowell's promotional introduction in which, though admitting that "the wide ranges of creative imagination are denied" its author (Bryher, Macmillan 1920, 12), she definitely concedes that the book is to be read as an outcome of the imagist poetic credo.

Not content with confirming Lowell's influence in her own writing, and considering *Tendencies* "one of the finest pieces of modern prose" she has read, Bryher tells Lowell that she is ready to do her best to promote her work and American contemporary poetry in England. Finally, Bryher's enthusiasm for Lowell's poetry is such that she decides to write a book-length critical essay of her own to compensate for the unsympathetic critical reception of the American poet's books in England. She deems the poet's gift of "a new world" so precious that only another gift on her part can express her debt. *The Art of Amy Lowell: A Critical Appreciation*, published in May 1918, is totally devoted to Lowell's poetry, from *Dome of Many-Colored Glass* through her last-printed composition, "Guns as Keys; and the Great Gate Swings" of 1917, to the poems in "Lacquer Prints," later to be published in *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919). Naïve and exceedingly appreciative, Bryher gives voice to her faith in modern American poetry which, she believes, is leading, along with American women, the march of the new. "I wanted a new world," she writes, "and in the Imagist writers, particularly in Miss Lowell—all I needed was before my eyes." (Bryher 1918, 9). Most of all, it is because Lowell's universe is "so personal" that she believes her poetry is "so strong with life." She quotes at length from Lowell's poems to demonstrate the poet's development and at the same time highlight "the new imagist tendencies" (16), the poet's spirit "sharp with vision and adventure" (Bryher 1918, 17), "the loneliness that is the core of so much" of Lowell's poetry (Bryher 1918, 30), as well as her vitality, her awareness of "injustice and repression" (Bryher 1918, 31). By the end of her survey she has drawn a portrait of the American poet that resembles more a self-portrait, or better, the image of a desired self. Exploration, adventure, the free life of a boy that she dreams for herself: she unwittingly projects these onto her correspondent. Concluding her essay, she states that "among all poets, Miss Lowell is essentially an explorer" (Bryher 1918, 48). And this is what should stimulate British readers, she maintains, for adventure, exploration of new lands, is what she believes England is lacking. It is also what should attract British readers to American literature, though "England's attitude towards" that literature is at present "one of intolerant indifference:"

> Yet American books possess no bar of language to deter explorers . . . . I have no doubt the future will rank Miss Lowell among the great poets of all ages, but meantime I grieve the present should deny itself the acclamation of this poetry as it slips, fresh and vital, from her growing thought. (Bryher 1918, 47)

7. *Falling out of Love*

Upon receiving the book Lowell rejoices, believing that she is finally gaining a foothold of recognition in England. Bryher also provides the kind of publicity she needs to fight those in her homeland who criticize her work and that of the other Imagists.

Along with her third letter, Bryher also sends Amy Lowell a batch of her own poems, asking for critical revision, suggestions and directions. And Lowell, busy as she is, finds the time to read and edit those poems, sometimes rewriting them to show how they might be improved. She even offers to get some of them published and by the end of 1918 has managed to sell a number of them to prestigious American magazines. She takes her role as mentor and friend seriously.

In the meantime, in August, 1918, to be precise, Bryher has sought out and met H.D. in Cornwall. On their first visit Bryher brings her critical appreciation of Amy Lowell, by way of introduction, and as proof that her interest in contemporary American poetry is not the whim of a rich, spoiled child. The story of how the two women met and how their relationship evolved to become a lifelong partnership has been told by Bryher herself and by H.D.'s biographers and critics. What still remains to be said is that little by little, through H.D. and the milieu of poets H.D. introduced her to, Bryher came to see Amy Lowell in a different light. Though in her letters Lowell had written at length that she did not share Bryher's desire for adventure and advised her correspondent that adventures of the mind were to be preferred over those of the body, it was not until her first visit to the United States in 1920 and her first meeting with Amy Lowell in New York that Bryher realized Lowell was not the person she had imagined. She soon discovered that Lowell, far from belonging to the counter-hegemonic avant-gardes, disliked them, and aligned herself with the bourgeois and hegemonic class that dominated the cultural and economic American world, though she tried to fight its patriarchal discrimination against women. Their meeting in New York ended the idealized connection established through letters and books. Though in *The Heart to Artemis* Bryher maintained that it was Lowell who "was disappointed in me," the reality was that she "was gradually moving away from a restricted world and instinctively withdrew from too strong a personality" (Bryher 1962, 199).

Even America, after the few months spent there, lost most of its gloss for Bryher. In 1925, the year of Lowell's death, Bryher published *West*, the novel she had written during her six months in America. To it she consigned the story of her break with Lowell, her falling out of romantic love with America, and the beginning of her friendship with Marianne Moore—a friendship that, as with Lowell, developed through letters and along the parallel lines of personal friendship, mentor-pupil relationship, critical and literary reciprocal support, and Bryher's patronage.

Notes

[1] The correspondence of Bryher and Amy Lowell, still unpublished, is now preserved in the Houghton Library at Harvard. Numbers following quotations refer to the page of the letter. The only critical essay with a specific focus on the relationship between the two women is Radford 2004.

[2] On intercultural contacts and transculturation see in particular Even-Zohar 2005, and Friedman 2007.

[3] For revisions of the Anglo-American modernist canon relevant here, see Lauter 1991, Scott 2004, Camboni, *Networking Women*. For a specific focus on Amy Lowell see Lauter 1990 and 2001 and Scott 2004.

[4] See in particular the two anthologies edited by Munich and Bradshaw (2002) and Honor Moore (2004), and the essays in the volume edited by Munich and Bradshaw 2004.

[5] According to Lowell's biographer Jean Gould, the disparaging epithet "hippopoetess" was coined by Harold Bynner of the Poetry Society of New York (Gould 1975, 231). It stuck to her, however, and even Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* used it in his ironic portrait of Lowell (Kenner 1975, 291–292). On this see also Scott 2004, 137.

[6] No biography of Bryher has yet been published. For information about her see Guest 1984, Friedman 2002, Camboni 2005 and 2008.

[7] See Flint 1912, Damon 1935, and Gould 1975. On the relevance of Flint's essays see also Pondrom 1974, who, however, fails to pay attention to Lowell. Flint's essay also had an immediate effect on Pound, who appears at that time to have known relatively little about French poetry. Two years later, in a letter to Harriet Monroe, he mentions this essay as one "which everybody has to get" (Pound 1950, 35).

Works Cited

Beach, Sylvia. *Shakespeare and Company*. 1956. Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991.

Bryher. *Region of Lutany and other Poems*. Privately printed, 1914.

___. *Amy Lowell: A critical appreciation.* London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1918.

___. *Development*. 1920. Reprint, New York: Macmillan, 1920.

___.*Visa for Avalon*. 1965. Reprint, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969.

___. *The Days of Mars*. 1972. Reprints, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972; London: Calder & Boyars, 1977.

___ *The Heart to Artemis: A Writer's Memoirs*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962. Reprints, London: Collins, 1963; Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2006.

Camboni, Marina, ed. *Networking Women: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America, 1890-1939. Towards a Rewriting of Cultural History*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004.

___. "Networking Women: A Research Project and a Relational Model of the Cultural Sphere." In *Networking Women: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America, 1890-1939*, ed. Marina Camboni, 1-26. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004.

___. "Bryher: fra barbarie e modernità." In *'Words at War:' 'parole di guerra e culture di pace nel primo secolo delle guerre mondiali,'* eds. Marina Camboni, Gigliola Sacerdoti Mariani, Biancamaria Tedeschini Lalli, 1-26. Firenze: Le Monnier, 2005.

___. "'Perché, Berlino, ti devo tanto amare?' Bryher a Berlino, 1927-1933." In *Città, avanguardie modernità e Modernismo*, eds. Marina Camboni and Antonella Gargano. Macerata: Eum, 2008: 85-118. "'Why, Berlin, must I love you so?:' Bryher in Berlin, 1927-1932." English translation by Maria Stadter Fox, http://www.imagists.org/hd/hdsweb/winter2008.html (March 20, 2009).

Damon, S. Foster. *Amy Lowell: A Chronicle. With Extracts from her Correspondence*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1935.

Even-Zohar, Itamar. "Laws of Cultural Interference." *Papers in Culture Research 2005*. http://www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/works/papers/papers/laws-of-cultural-interference.pdf (June 30, 2009).

Flint, Frank Stewart. "Contemporary French Poetry." *Poetry Review* 8 (August 1912): 355-361.

___. "Six French Poets." *The Egoist* 3 (January 1, 1916): 9-10.

Friedman, Susan Stanford, ed. *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H. D., Bryher, and their Circle*. New York: New Directions, 2002.

____. "Migrations, Diasporas and Borders." In *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. David G. Nicholls, 260-293. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2007.

Gould, Jean. *Amy: The World of Amy Lowell and the Imagist Movement*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975.

Gourmont, Rémy de. *Livre de Masques*. Tome 1. Paris: Mercure de France, 1896.

Guest, Barbara. *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World.* New York: Quill, 1984.

Kenner, Hugh. *The Pound Era*. London: Faber and Faber, 1975.

Lauter, Paul. *Canons and Contexts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

____. "Amy Lowell and Cultural Borders." In *Amy Lowell: American Modern*, eds. Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw, 1-8. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Lowell, Amy. *A Dome of Many-Colored Glass*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912.

____. *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914.

____. *Six French Poets: Studies in Contemporary Literature*. New York and London: The Macmillan Company, 1915.

____. *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, New York and London, The Macmillan Company, 1916.

____. *Can Grande's Castle*. New York and London: The Macmillan Company, 1918.

____. *Pictures of the Floating World*. Boston & New York: Houghtnon Mifflin Company, 1919.

____. *Selected Poems of Amy Lowell*. Eds. Melissa Bradshaw and Adrienne Munich. New Brunswick, N.J.:Rutgers University Press, 2002.

____. ed. *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan: Lady Murasaki Shikibu and Others*. Introduction by Amy Lowell, translation by Annie Shepley Omori and Kochi Doi. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920. Rpt. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003.

____. *Amy Lowell: Selected Poems*. Ed. Honor Moore. New York: Library of America, 2004

Munich, Adrienne, and Bradshaw, Melissa, eds. *Amy Lowell: American Modern*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Pondrom, Cyrena N. *The Road from Paris: French Influence on English Poetry 1900-1920*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Pound, Ezra. *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*. Ed. D. D. Paige. New York: Faber and Faber, 1950.

Radford, Jean. "A Transatlantic Affair: Amy Lowell and Bryher." In *Amy Lowell, American Modern*, eds. Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw, 43-58. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Scott, Bonnie Kime, ed. *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology.* Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1990.

____. "Amy Lowell's Letters in the Network of Modernism." In *Amy Lowell: American Modern,* eds. Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw, 136-153. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

____. ed. *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Some Imagist Poets. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915.

Some Imagist Poets. Vol. II. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1916.

Some Imagist Poets. Vol. III. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917.

Taylor, James. *Ellermans: A Wealth of Shipping*. London: Wilton Housre Gentry, 1976.

Gigliola Sacerdoti Mariani

“We Need to Make the Connections”: The Correspondence of Muriel Rukeyser and May Sarton

“My one reader, who are you?”

Muriel Rukeyser began publishing in the 1930s, writing about Sacco and Vanzetti, the trial of the Scottsboro boys, the Gauley Bridge industrial disaster and the Spanish fight against Fascism, insisting always on the link between individual lives and public subjects. At her death, she left us fifteen volumes of poetry, biographies of the scientist Willard Gibbs, the explorer Thomas Hariot, the politician Wendell Willkie, an ambitious and profound book of theory and criticism, *The Life of Poetry*, translations of the Mexican poet Octavio Paz and the Swedish poet Gunnar Ekelof, six children’s books, one novel, and a large body of essays, plays and film scripts. Moreover, she left us her manuscripts, letters and notes, gathered today in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library and which I have thoroughly explored for some years (Sacerdoti Mariani 2004, 2005, 2008).[1] While examining Rukeyser’s precious material, I often heard the echo of her appeal and the questions she posed at the beginning of chapter twelve in *The Life of Poetry* (Rukeyser 1996, 189): “My one reader, you reading this book, who are you? what is your face like, your hands holding the pages, the child forsaken in you, who now looks through your eyes at mine?”

Indeed I have always felt, to this very day, that I am that reader holding the pages—not of her book but of her correspondence, which helped me “make the connections” (see bibliography) and will help us “make new connections,” in the sense that it will extend our understanding of her work. As a matter of fact, after exploring the multidimensional vision, with its fruitful tensions growing out of her poetry, some of my essays took shape and emerged out of investigations into the letters of her correspondents, “those men and women / brave, setting up signals across vast distances.” Now the time has come “to look at Muriel’s eyes,” analysing her letters to May Sarton,[2] which offer new insights and fascinating glimpses into Muriel’s multifaceted character.

The inspiration for the title of this paper came from one of her epistles:[3]

> Last night I had dinner with Octavio Paz . . . I like Paz his political story is fantastically close to mine. He fought in Spain, though . . . Perhaps we need to know these people in other countries, with the same wishes, and party-less and voice-less now, more than anything, we need to make the connections, more than to go to other countries. In one excitement last night, he and I agreed to translate each other's poems. That will take a lot of doing.[4]

"Connections"—as I wrote elsewhere—is a key-word in Rukeyser's life and work and it is used as often as "links," "relationships," intercultural, transnational "encounters," and political "closeness," as is evident from the fragment quoted above and from the following:

> I had the news of Alexander Kaun's death yesterday. He was in pain a lot of the time—heart. But gay, brave, attractive. And, God, he said I was a link-maker the last time I saw him in the sunshine at his house, in his purple robe and red-and-black Georgian cap. In all my chaos. He talked so well of Tchechov and Gorki in the classes I visited; and quoted Gorki out of a depth and joy of his own.[5]

An Epistolary Novel

Both missives, addressed to May Sarton, are to be found in an orderly set in one (No. 10) of the thirty-five folders that contain their correspondence. Since the time period of their epistolary exchange is quite long—extending from 1940 to 1963—I have separated Muriel's letters from those written by May and have divided them into three groups (1940-1948; 1949-1955; 1956-1963).

From the letters we learn that May was born in Wondelgem, Belgium, in 1912, and that the Sartons arrived in the United States in 1916 after fleeing the advancing Germans. They settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where May's father George, a historian of science, took up a teaching post at Harvard. We learn that, starting from 1931, May visited Europe annually, where she met members of the European intelligentsia like Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, Julian and Juliette Huxley, Bryher, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, and Dame Edith Sitwell and her brothers. In 1940, Sarton began her yearly poetry reading/lecture tours of colleges throughout the United States; in the early 1940s she worked at Pearl Buck's East and West Society in New York, writing documentary scripts for the United States War Information Office.[6]

It took quite a while for May to consider herself American (although she had immigrated to the States when she was four); at times she was teased by Muriel because she made spelling mistakes in English, such as failing to capitalize some words: "Only, my little, now you must learn to put capital letters on Negro and Jew, or you will offend a good many of both. Think of what the english [sic] would say! i [sic] don't care, myself, but Many Might."[7]

The letters under consideration in this essay are only those written by Muriel between 1940 and 1948. In the breadth and amplitude of several of them, we partake of Muriel's joys and sorrows; her messages, with their narrative inclination and resonant power of suggestion, often reproduce the rhythms of spoken discourse, and her "speech" seems to be interrupted and resumed continuously, sometimes with the help of questions that do not expect any answer but are intended to prolong or extend the pleasure of being together, on paper. Weaving through this web of letters we get a sense of the power of her personality, her charm, her humor, her generosity, and we understand how, more than most poets, Muriel lived on paper, continually exploring and elaborating her key themes of connection and growth, for she believed in growth through connections, believed that poetry is crucially linked to various forms of bearing witness.

The topics covered in her letters include ideas about the role of the artist in society, modernity and modernism, the blows of rejection by publishers or wounds inflicted by reviewers, the two women's brief lesbian relationship, feelings and information about personal friends, Rukeyser's short marriage, the physical/emotional suffering from an emergency caesarean and the birth of her son (out of wedlock). All together, within this intense dialogue we are offered new perspectives on the tension between Rukeyser's need for solitary concentration and her social concern; on her impassioned involvement in the political debate of the time; on her extreme independence in personal life, her prolific verbal energy, her radical experiments in writing, and the fact that she rejected poetics and politics based on gender. What she sought was a poetics of relationship and process, or "a poetry of meeting places where the false barriers go down" (Rukeyser 1996 [1949], 20).

If one reads these letters one after the other, as a *continuum*, one has the impression of reading a hypertextual epistolary novel where nothing is fictitious. Real are the participants, the members of the literary/political community: we happen to meet Bryher and Sylvia Beach, Robert Herring and H. D., Elizabeth Bishop, Klaus Mann, Marya and Horace Gregory, and some Italian friends—Gaetano Salvemini, Bruno Zevi, Ignazio Silone, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese—who had left Italy because of their antifascism. Real are the events, the connections which Rukeyser presents, which she explores, for which she takes risks. Moreover, these epistles offer a direct clue to the artistic patterns of her creative mind.

Science and Poetry

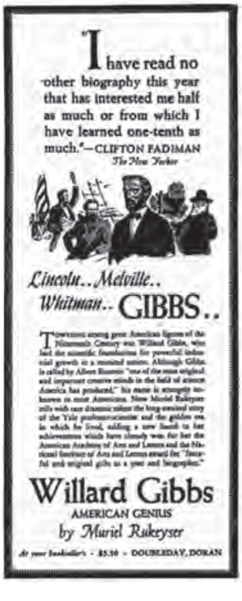
Two aspects of her creative mind as revealed in these letters are quite intriguing: the connection she sets up between art and science and the connection she establishes between the “fear of poetry” and the “place of poetry.”

In the letters Muriel sends May between 1940 and 1942, she continuously refers to the book she was writing on Willard Gibbs and seems increasingly concerned about her work in progress—the biography of the outstanding physicist who discovered the law of thermodynamics—as we read in the following fragments:

> New Haven is very still, and is the stacks and stalls of the Library, and a few rooms and places around and all the farm country and hills that have just now been snowed on . . . . I came here to learn the Gibbs material that I must have. If only that book were written, by anyone! It is a book I must read, and so I go ahead with the writing.[8]

> The Gibbs is almost finished, it will be done in another two months, Einstein has made a fine statement which will be used on it . . . I think so long of your father during all of this. I wish I could be speaking to him about all the connections I have uncovered in Gibbs' story.[9]

Connections are emphasized once again by Rukeyser herself and—as we can evince from the advertisement published by *The New York Times* on November 6, 1942—are also pointed out by that paper when referring to American politics, literature and science, when placing Melville, Lincoln, Whitman and Gibbs on the same platform, when “adding a new laurel to her achievements” for “her rare dramatic talent:”



"I have read no other biography this year that has interested me half as much or from which I have learned one-tenth as much."—CLIFTON FADIMAN
The New Yorker

Lincoln.. Melville.. Whitman.. GIBBS..

Willard Gibbs
AMERICAN GENIUS
by Muriel Rukeyser

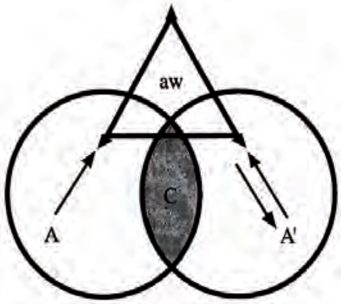
$3.50 · DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

Advertisement of Muriel Rukeyser, “Willard Gibbs. American Genius.” *The New York Times*. November 6, 1942.

A Dynamic Process

What was it that attracted Rukeyser to Gibbs? Her interest in the "American genius" unfolded through a sort of circularity, a negotiation and intersection of art and science, and involved impulses of connection/inclusion/integration. In the tenth chapter of *The Life of Poetry*—the first paragraph of which is entitled "The rare union: poetry and science"—she describes science's quest for knowledge as one transcending specialization and dedicated to combining, while she deals with the idea of "the unity of imagination, the meeting-place between science and poetry" (Rukeyser 1996 [1949], 165). Moreover she is impressed by Gibbs who thinks of truth "not as a stream that flows from a source, but as an agreement of components" (Rukeyser 1996 [1949], 167).

We may cite other words of hers, those ones she pronounced in the course of an interview (Draves, Fortunate 1972, 32): "The reason I think I came to do Gibbs was that I needed a language of transformation. I needed a language of a changing phase for the poem. And I needed a language that was not static, that did not see life as a series of points." Thus she found herself 'borrowing' Gibbs' theory on physical mechanics to explain exactly what effect she strove for in her poems. Gibbs convinced her of the necessity of being "dynamically minded" and in poetry she translated this idea into her own theorem:



This diagram is false until all the components are shown in motion.

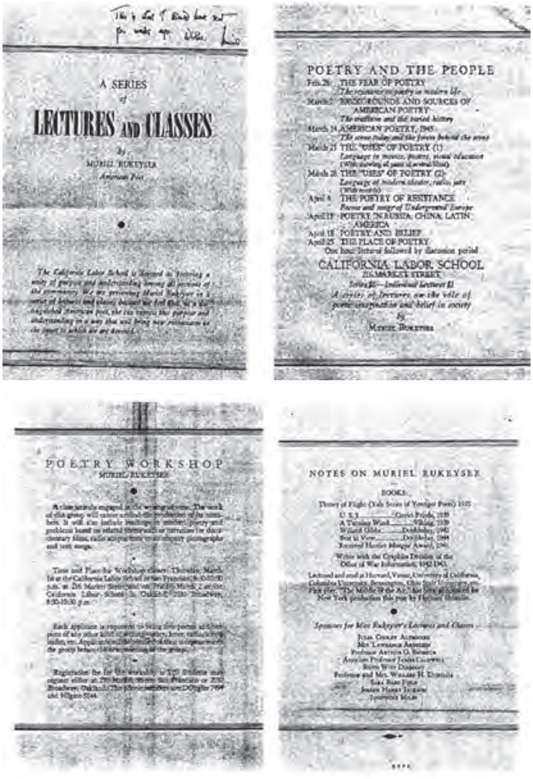
Muriel Rukeyser, diagram. Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry. 1949*. Reprint, Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 1996, p. 51.

The foundation of her ideas rests upon the conviction that poetry is a dynamic process that succeeds or fails according to the relationship between its several parts—the poem, the poet, and the reader. Here, summarizing the words she uses to explain her diagram, *A* is the artist, A^1 the audience, or witness, and *C* the consciousness of both (we might say their connection), the common factor through which they communicate and share; *aw* is the artwork, seen in motion, and the vectors the relations to it (Rukeyser 1996 [1949], 51). What she meant to imply was that "both artist and audience create, and both do work on themselves in creating” (Rukeyser 1996 [1949], 50). But while the artist is aware of it, the audience seems to be scared because poetry demands full consciousness and requires full response; because—as Rukeyser herself writes—“it may change you.” People who deem themselves merely indifferent or ignorant about poetry—she insists—fear its power to awaken their imagination and senses.

“Where is the place for poetry?”

Rukeyser’s statements lead us to what I consider her second relevant connection, the one between the “fear of poetry” and the “place of poetry.”

Among her papers—attached to one of the messages sent to May Sarton—I found the program of a “series of lectures on the role of poetic imagination and belief in society” entitled “Poetry and the People,” which she gave in 1945 at the California Labor School. It is reproduced here, though its colors (yellow and red) have faded and the misprint of a title cited in her bibliography (*Best in View* instead of *Beast in View*) is quite ludicrous.



A SERIES
of
LECTURES AND CLASSES
by
MURIEL RUKEYSER
American Poet

POETRY AND THE PEOPLE
Feb. 28 THE FEAR OF POETRY
The resistance to poetry in modern life
March 7 BACKGROUNDS AND SOURCES OF AMERICAN POETRY
The tradition and the buried history
March 14 AMERICAN POETRY, 1945
The scene today and the forces behind the scene
March 21 THE “USES” OF POETRY (1)
Language in movies, posters, visual education
March 28 THE “USES” OF POETRY (2)
Language of modern theater, radio, jazz
April 4 THE POETRY OF RESISTANCE
Poems and songs of Underground Europe
April 11 POETRY IN RUSSIA, CHINA, LATIN AMERICA
April 18 POETRY AND BELIEF
April 25 THE PLACE OF POETRY
One hour lecture followed by discussion period
CALIFORNIA LABOR SCHOOL
A series of lectures on the role of poetic imagination and belief in society
by
MURIEL RUKEYSER

POETRY WORKSHOP
MURIEL RUKEYSER

NOTES ON MURIEL RUKEYSER
BOOKS:

Sponsors for Miss Rukeyser’s Lectures and Classes

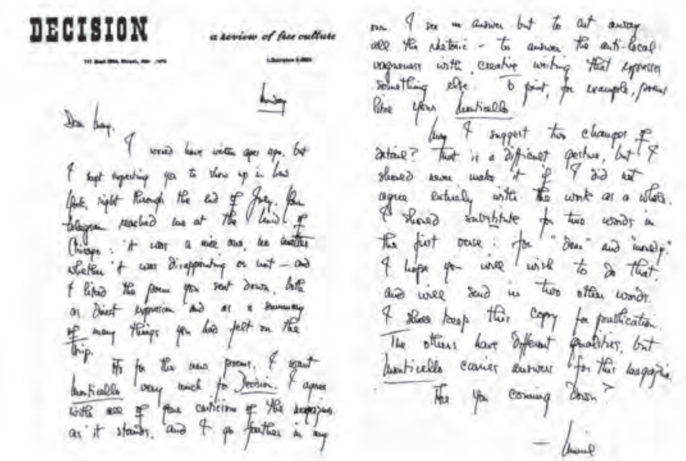
Program for Muriel Rukeyser’s lectures at the California Labor School, 1945. Rukeyser Papers. Berg Collection of English and American Literature. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Besides planning speeches on "transnational connections/intercultural encounters" of European, American, Russian and Chinese art, she gives meaningful titles to her first lecture and to the final one, creating a dynamic tension between "The Fear of Poetry" and "The Place of Poetry." The latter seems to answer the question, "Where is the place for poetry?" (Rukeyser 1978, 247), posed in one of the lines of *Mediterranean*, her first and major composition on the Spanish Civil War (Sacerdoti Mariani, 1990, 1995, 2005, 2008).

"A childless goddess of fertility"

Taking that line into account and adapting it, we may now ask a series of questions, the first of which can be worded as follows: where would Rukeyser find a place for Sarton's poetry? The answer is to be found in a letter which is not dated, but that, given the internal evidence, may be assigned to 1941:

> As for the new poems, I want *Monticello* very much for *Decision*. I agree with all of your criticism of the magazine as it stands, and I go farther in my own. I see no answer but to cut away all the rhetoric—to answer the anti-local vagueness with creative writing that expresses something else. To print, for example, poems like your *Monticello*. May I suggest two changes of detail? That is a difficult gesture, but I should never make it if I did not agree entirely with the work as a whole. I should substitute for two words in the first verse: for "dear" and "mouldy." I hope you will wish to do that, and will send in two other words. . . . The others have different qualities, but Monticello carries answers for this magazine.



DECISION a review of free culture

Monday

Dear May,

I would have written ages ago, but I kept expecting you to show up in New York, right through the end of July. Your telegram reached me at the [illegible] of Chicago: it was a nice one, no matter whether it was disappointing or not — and I liked the poem you sent down, both as direct expression and as a summary of many things you had felt on the trip.

As for the new poems, I want *Monticello* very much for *Decision*. I agree with all of your criticism of the magazine as it stands, and I go farther in my own. I see no answer but to cut away all the rhetoric — to answer the anti-local vagueness with creative writing that expresses something else. To print, for example, poems like your *Monticello*.

May I suggest two changes of detail? That is a difficult gesture, but I should never make it if I did not agree entirely with the work as a whole. I should substitute for two words in the first verse: for "dear" and "mouldy." I hope you will wish to do that, and will send in two other words. I shall keep this copy for publication. The others have different qualities, but *Monticello* carries answers for this magazine.

Are you coming down?

— Muriel

Muriel Rukeyser, undated letter to May Sarton (probably 1941), Rukeyser Papers, Berg Collection of English and American Literature, New York Public Library.

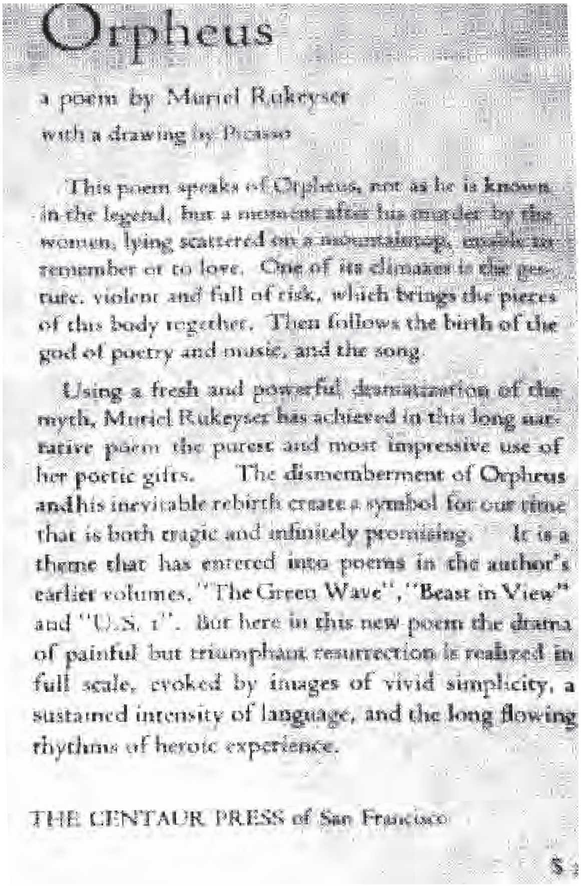
At the time, Rukeyser was assistant editor of *Decision* and the two pages here reproduced are not only relevant for their contents: she praises Sarton's entire poem, though objecting to two lexical choices, and writes that she would like to publish it, to "find a place" for it on *Decision*.[10] The two pages are of interest for their historical frame, for the connections Rukeyser succeeds in establishing, and for the literary-political connections we can make on both the synchronic and diachronic level. The sheet of headed paper on which the letter is written bears the same logo as the journal founded by Klaus Mann in December 1940. The English-language periodical—whose fusion of literary and political pieces took up the goals of *Die Sammlung*, that he had launched in September 1933—was intended to introduce the literary talents of the emigration scene to the European public (connections again!), to make the intellectual currents of their adopted homeland known to the emigrants, and to project a political message to those still in Germany. Moreover, *Decision*—according to Mann's plans—was to be a "truly cosmopolitan magazine devoted to creative writing and the discussion of all great, timely issues. Something on a much larger scale and infinitely more exciting than *Die Sammlung* used to be" (Mann 1942, 328-329). *Solidarity*, *Zero Hour*, *The Cross-Road* were the suggestive names he was thinking of using for his journal, but when Muriel Rukeyser said that *The Cross-Road* "might give the impression of a somewhat undecided attitude," and proposed naming it *Decision*, he accepted her suggestion. Contributors included W. H Auden, Sherwood Anderson, Stephen Spender, Aldous Huxley, Stefan Zweig, Virginia Woolf, Jean-Paul Sartre and Muriel Rukeyser herself.

The connection between the German exile and the American poet seems to be quite intense, as we can infer from a page of Mann's diary, dated June 8, 1941; after quoting the first few lines of "Who in one lifetime,"[11] he comments: "These terrifying lines are from a poem Muriel Rukeyser gave me for the forthcoming issue [of *Decision*]. If only I were somewhat less familiar with the anguish they articulate." A few weeks later, he wrote, "I suppose this is the most lonely summer I've ever experienced. . . . the only person I see is Muriel Rukeyser, who recently joined the staff of the magazine. She is a great help in these trying days. Probably I couldn't carry on *Decision* if it were not for her cheering and dynamic assistance" (Mann 1942, 345-346).[12]

"Breathe-in experience, breathe-out poetry"

Here, we may ask a second question: where would cheerful and dynamic Muriel find a place for poetry, when she was in love with May? There are passages in Muriel's letters in which she addresses May with such sounds and rhythms, that it is almost as if the text were transformed into a poetical conversation:

The postman gave me your letter in the street. The city is fog and horns this morning, dominion of snow. I wish you were not away, but here: where the illusion stays that it is you that I shall see as I leave this place, that the approaching heartbeat feet on the stairs just might be yours. That was a brief and flaring and bitter time. Snatches of time, and sweetness flowing across the moment, across the flesh. Across the hopelessness.[13]



Orpheus

a poem by Muriel Rukeyser
with a drawing by Picasso

This poem speaks of Orpheus, not as he is known in the legend, but a moment after his murder by the women, lying scattered on a mountaintop, unable to remember or to love. One of its climaxes is the gesture, violent and full of risk, which brings the pieces of this body together. Then follows the birth of the god of poetry and music, and the song.

Using a fresh and powerful dramatization of the myth, Muriel Rukeyser has achieved in this long narrative poem the purest and most impressive use of her poetic gifts. The dismemberment of Orpheus andhis inevitable rebirth create a symbol for our time that is both tragic and infinitely promising. It is a theme that has entered into poems in the author's earlier volumes, "The Green Wave", "Beast in View" and "U.S. 1". But here in this new poem the drama of painful but triumphant resurrection is realized in full scale, evoked by images of vivid simplicity, a sustained intensity of language, and the long flowing rhythms of heroic experience.

THE CENTAUR PRESS of San Francisco

$

Back cover of Muriel Rukeyser's Orpheus. San Francisco: Centaur Press,1949.

Metaphors, repetitions, alliterations help form a sort of lyrical composition, where the images do not simply pile up one upon the other, but argue with each other. The dominant idea is built up through the lexical chain that begins with the cold environment of the first line and ends with a sense of bitter solitude, a sense of loneliness[14] that lasted for years and that would not be overcome until the birth of her son on September 26, 1947. And here we may ask: where would she find a place for poetry when William Laurie was a few months old? The answer is to be found in an undated epistle of four pages (that may be assigned to 1948) which confirms that she is ceaselessly searching the elusive muse which makes poetry and the creative transformation of life possible:

> Laurie is enormous . . . and you should be seeing each other. He laughs, and walks, drunkenly, on a wide wheelbase, and jokes and climbs and pushes furniture endlessly.
>
> He does everything but sleep.
>
> The poems are back. I have almost finished *Pieces of Orpheus*, which I'll send later. And there are a number of short ones. Three long ones in the working. But I am going slowly, for deep changes are happening in the poems . . . Things go on and change, and new people emerge, for me, but I have been so ill, really, that health and poems come back like the true resurrection and many of the personal intensities are still buried very deep.

From the link she makes between motherhood and poetry, between creation and creativity, that is between *Orpheus* (published in 1949 with a Picasso etching)[15] and little William Laurie, and from our reading of the poem itself, we may infer that her makeover of the Orpheus legend helped her reconnect poetry to its elder roots in prophecy and wisdom literature and provide a poetics that would acknowledge the full range of female experience as essential to poetry itself. Eurydice's or Rukeyser's descent to hell followed by her emotional recovery from the trauma described ("health and poems come back like the true resurrection"), by the awareness of her own vulnerability and responsibility, seems an opportunity to move beyond pain into action. The self splits open,[16] gives birth and, suffering, acquires a new voice. A voice that would clearly express the values of Sarton's poetry and compare it with her own in praises and dispraises, in blessings and curses, through connections and dis-connections, as when she writes:

> It seems to me that these sonnets are so full of everything you ever wanted. It is all here, your simplicities, the traditional grace, the sonnet purity shining through . . . and a wonderful achievement, in poetry and in your life . . . and even if you have already moved from that place, it is that place which is most deeply yours. Oh I wish we could talk now! This is not my place . . . every kind of loss and stupidity, every kind of butchery and folly, have dragged me to the place where the sonnets rest, but I cannot live there, not yet, not for fifty years to come. I love it in you, of course, plenty of people will. They are wonderful sonnets, wallaby. Bless them, line by line.

This fragment provides the occasion for us to reflect on the function of Rukeyser's rhythms and rhymes. As a matter of fact, she moves through as wide a range of forms as any twentieth century poet and, whether she publishes long or short poems, whether she avoids conventional meters and punctuation (in order to create a space for boundless connections), whether she composes sonnets (the "Nine Poems for the Unborn Child," a nine-sonnet cycle written during her pregnancy), she insists on connecting life and poetry, as we learn from the emblematic line that opens her first collection ("Breathe-in experience, breathe-out poetry").[17] She believes in integrating autobiographical memories with a mythic recognition, as in *Orpheus*; she believes in constructing a recognizable collective history, a narrative of events told by its participants, as in the "Book of the Dead," a formally experimental poem on the Gauley Bridge tragedy of West Virginia, that connects legal, medical, political testimony within a lyrical frame.[18] She expresses these ideas in a letter where the key word is not connecting, but a synonymous term, "combining":

> I like this group of poems . . . Sometimes I am afraid, in the way you deal with violence and I think of the delicacy of *Inner Landscape* . . . I think the division that I am trying to talk about is the division between the *kind* of love you have and the *kind* of anger you have. Maybe I harp too much on *combining*; I know that I wish for example my making love to be complete (even if the *thing* itself is incomplete in its nature) that is to acknowledge the whole body, to praise and love the whole body. There is *deep* contention between us at just this point; it goes terribly deep with me, as fulfilment or as disappointment. And so in the poems. Maybe I am wanting something gross and impossible and grotesque—but I know that when I find it, in love or poetry, it is my happiness.
>
> It has been my happiness to feel that you would be bringing your especial delicacy, your lyric delicacy and fire, that I value so highly, to these poems about whole countries and peoples and the war. I think it is beginning to happen, but not enough yet. It is a *political* mistake when it does not happen; I think it is why revolutionaries distrust the intellectuals who cut off something of themselves when they approach the revolution.
>
> All I am trying to say is that you are beautiful, bring your whole self to these poems.

It is Muriel who certainly brings her entire self into her poems, combining, connecting life and verse, politics and rhymes, because she believes that poetry shares with science a heightened quality of vision, because she does not "fear poetry," although she refers—with no deceptive rhetoric—to other kinds of fears:

> You must be happy to be back. As for me, this time has been important. . . . Much has been happening to me in intense quiet and solitariness. Something has arrived—I have arrived at a place I never before came near, and am more clear and sure than ever I was. A set of fears have dropped away in these last weeks—months—I don't know anything like it except the dropping away of physical fear in Spain . . . the fear I have dropped about since childhood, and the search in other people for what had to be found in myself, has reached some sort of completeness, in all of this. . . . I feel like a nicer person—out of the woods, well out.[19]

Rukeyser recalls her 1936 experience in Spain with the intensity of some autobiographical poems, as she does in the letter I quoted at the beginning of this essay. In a way, she invites us to confirm what we wrote about her "moment of proof," about her connections and disconnections in national / trans-national perspective (Sacerdoti Mariani 2004, 2005, 2008).

Some of these letters, besides being a source of historical insight into modernist culture, besides giving a truthful portrait of Rukeyser's strength, wit, courage, and talent, offer clues to her poems, helping to define their meaning. Moreover, they let us understand how events initially external to the writer's personal life became absorbed and then expressed by her reportage and/or by her poetic dialectic, as in the case of the death of hundreds of miners in West Virginia and in the case of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona. After all, in *The Life of Poetry* (Rukeyser 1996 [1949], 11-12), she would theorize that the defining feature of modernism across disciplines is an emphasis on relationship. And, as we can read in the letter we have just quoted, her ideal was "to reach some sort of completeness," convinced as she was that "our time depends, not on single points of knowledge, but on clusters and combinations" (Rukeyser 1988 [1942], 3).

I believe that now, after "looking at Muriel's eyes," I am ready to answer her question, the one she poses in her timeless voice: "My one reader, you reading this book, who are you? what is your face like, your hands holding the pages, the child forsaken in you, who now looks through your eyes at mine?" I am a reader who, as a child, learned what Aristotle used to say about poets: they are to be respected as they make connections in the world.

Notes

[1] I have recently discovered that a small number of Rukeyeser's letters is to be found at the Library of Congress.

[2] Rukeyser's epistles to May Sarton were given to the Berg Collection by the latter. In some of them, when the date was incomplete or missing, Sarton added the correct reference.

[3] Permissions to quote all this material was obtained from Muriel's son, William L. Rukeyser, as copyright holder, and from the Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenon and Tilden Foundations, as owner of the material rights.

[4] Dated 1942 by internal evidence.

[5] Dated June 1944 by internal evidence.

[6] Rukeyser had a similar experience when she worked in the Graphics Workshop of the Office of War Information between December 1942 and May 1943: see Sacerdoti Mariani 2005, 2008.

[7] Thanks to internal evidence, this letter is to be assigned to the end of June 1944.

[8] She repeats the same concept in *Willard Gibbs*: "One of the reasons that I wrote this book was that I needed to read it" (Rukeyser 1988 [1942], 443).

[9] Here the date is explicitly stated: "Columbus day [October 12] 1941." Rukeyser discusses George Sarton's *History of Science* at length in *The Life of Poetry* (Rukeyser 1949, 162-3). Her philosophy of the unity of knowledge "connects" her with his work.

[10] May never modified the two words "dear" and "mouldy," as Muriel had suggested.

[11] Quoted here in its entirety, because it illustrates revealing emotional assumptions that Mann and Rukeyser share: "Who in one lifetime sees all causes lost, / Herself dismayed and helpless, cities down, / Love made monotonous fear and the sad-faced / Inexorable armies and the falling plane, / Has sickness, sickness . . . Introspective and whole, / She knows how several madnesses are born, / Seeing the integrated never fighting well, / The flesh too vulnerable, the eyes tear-torn. // She finds

a pre-surrender on all sides: / Treaty before the war, ritual impatience turn / The camps of ambush to chambers of imagery. / She holds belief in the world, she stays and hides / Life in her own defeat, stands, though her whole world burn, / A childless goddess of fertility" (Rukeyser 1978, 227).

[12] While exploring the Rukeyser archives I found letters written to her by Klaus Mann in 1942, from which we can evince that she was willing to resign as Associate Editor of *Decision*.

[13] Dated December 11, 1942.

[14] "Nine Poems for the Unborn Child" starts with the following line: "The childless years alone without a home."

[15] Only five hundred copies of the book were published with this drawing and I was able to examine one of them in the Rare Books Collection of the New York Public Library. Since photocopying is forbidden in that department, I was allowed to photograph (with no flash!) the etching itself and the back cover of the book.

[16] I "borrow" this expression from Rukeyser's meaningful epiphanic couplet: "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? / The world would split open" (on the issue, see Sacerdoti Mariani 2004).

[17] *Theory of Flight* was published in 1935 (see Rukeyser 1978, 3).

[18] The poem is defined "a documentary in verse" by Leslie Ann Minot in her essay "'Kodak as you go.' The Photographic Metaphor in the Work of Muriel Rukeyser" (Herzog, Kaufman 1999, 270).

[19] Dated November 5, 1945.

Works Cited

Herzog, Anne F., and Kaufman, Janet E., eds. *How Shall We Tell Each Other of the Poet?* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.

Mann, Klaus. *The Turning Point: Thirty Five Years in This Century.* New York: L.B. Fischer, 1942.

Rukeyser, Muriel. *Collected Poems.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.

____. *Willard Gibbs.* 1942. Reprint, Woodbridge, CT: Ox Bow Press, 1988.

____. *The Life of Poetry.* 1949. Reprint, Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 1996.

Sacerdoti Mariani, Gigliola. "Barcelona, 1936 – A 'moment of proof' for Muriel Rukeyser." In *The City as Text: Atti del X Convegno dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani*, ed. Angela Vistarchi, 387-396. Sassari: Chiarella, 1990.

____. "Muriel Rukeyser, 'held among wars.'" In *Methodologies of Gender: Atti dell'XI Convegno dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani*, eds. Mario Corona and Giuseppe Lombardo, 505-513. Roma: Herder, 1993.

____. "Muriel Rukeyser, 'dalle trincee della poesia.'" In *La guerra civile spagnola tra politica e letteratura*, eds. Gigliola Sacerdoti Mariani, Arturo Colombo, Antonio Pasinato, 51-62. Firenze: Shakespeare & Company, 1995.

____. "Muriel Rukeyser e Käthe Kollwitz: un confronto di segni." In *S/oggetti immaginari*, eds. Liana Borghi and Rita Svandrlik. 165-179. Urbino: QuattroVenti, 1996.

____. "Muriel Rukeyser e la lezione spagnola del 1936." *Nuova Antologia*, 2197 (1996): 300-310.

____. "'Those men and women / Brave, setting up signals across vast distances.'" In *Networking Wo/men: Subjects, Places, Links Europe-America,1890–1939*, ed. Marina Camboni, 387-412. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004.

____. "'Words at War:' testi e pre-testi di Muriel Rukeyser." In '*Words at War:' parole di guerra e culture di pace 'nel primo secolo delle guerre mondiali*,' eds. Marina Camboni, Gigliola Sacerdoti Mariani, Biancamaria Tedeschini Lalli, 116-139. Firenze: Le Monnier, 2005.

____. "'To be against war is not enough, it is hardly a beginning.'" In *For Peace in Europe: Institutions and Civil Society between the World Wars*, eds. Marta Petricioli and Donatella Cherubini, 525-539. Brussels: Peter Lang, 2008.

Teresa Scordino

Dialogizing about Culture and Politics: Dos Passos's Correspondence across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans

John Dos Passos's behavior and his peculiarly critical and anti-conformist concept of writers and writing which he held from the beginning of his career made him a committed writer. The long-term fascination with the social and political issues concerning both the Old World and the New World led John Dos Passos to become deeply involved in controversial matters of his time that linked the destinies of America and Europe in the first half of the 20th century.

Associated with the generation of American writers and intellectuals of the Twenties "estranged" from their nation and its culture, Dos Passos transformed his condition of alienation into a positive. As a result, he interpreted his role as a writer in a transnational perspective, constructing a prolific confrontation and trans-oceanic interchange through copious correspondence to and from the USA. The transatlantic letters Dos Passos sent and received may be said to represent the privileged ground on which he expressed and developed an oppositional artistic debate about current historical and ideological issues and literature as well.

Journeying from Paris to Spain, from North Africa to Russia, and back to the USA (New York, Key West, Baltimore, and later Provincetown in Massachusetts), he dialogized about his positions in powerful confrontations with the most important representatives of the cultural establishment of the time. Between October and December 1919, he sent letters form Europe to Rumsey Marvin and Stewart Mitchell in the United States. While in Madrid in September 1933, he corresponded by letter with Theodore Dreiser in the USA. From Provincetown, he wrote to Ernest Hemingway, who was in Spain. These are but samplings of the artistic and personal relationships the American writer established and maintained with his colleagues. Sometimes these relationships were also "interrupted," as in the case of Hemingway, because of arguments about the Spanish Civil War.

The starting point of my work is Dos Passos's initial interest in the politics of the Left, mainly linked to the Sacco and Vanzetti case. This interest evolved gradually over the years until a crucial turning point in the writer's ideological positions was reached and he decided to withdraw from the Communist Party. Dos Passos disapproved of both the way the Party had handled the Sacco and Vanzetti case and its tactics in Spain during the Civil War. As a consequence, in the late Thirties he started a serious revision and investigation of American history and democracy which was accompanied by a radical disillusionment with what he regarded as the tyranny of Communism.

The role of the Sacco and Vanzetti case in John Dos Passos's "political secession" is thoroughly explored by David Dougherty in an article in *The South Carolina Review* in which he analyzes the close link between the development of the writer's positions towards the Communists' handling of the case and its literary output: "Dos Passos's portrayal of efforts by his characters Mary French and Don Stevens in *The Big Money* suggests his view by 1935 that the Communist Party was involved in the case for propaganda purposes, a view that was also impressed on Katherine Anne Porter in 1927 when Party director Rosa Baron responded to Porter's hope that Sacco and Vanzetti might be saved: 'Who wants them saved? What earthly good would they do us alive?'" (Dougherty 1996, 254-255)

Dougherty continues his comment on Dos Passos's awareness of the real interests of the Party:

> As a political observer he had by 1935 confirmed his doubts about both the American and International Communist Parties; his experiences in Dedham in 1926-27 and in the Harlan County coalfields in 1931-32 gave him opportunities to observe first-hand the Party's willingness to subordinate individuals' causes to its propaganda purposes, a lesson another semi-autobiographical character learns the hard way in *Adventures of a Young Man* – the first of his allegedly right-wing novels. (Dougherty 1996, 255)

With regard to this matter, the most meaningful section of the Dos Passos correspondence are the letters he sent to Edmund Wilson and to Robert Cantwell (Jamaica, January 1935). Relevant, too, is the letter to Jim Farrell, active in the Trotskyist politics and member of the Socialist Party, which dates back to Summer 1939. In addition, in a letter to the Editors of the *New Republic*, of July 1939, Dos Passos underlines, more or less directly, the responsibility of Russian Communism in the matter of the death of José Robles Pazos.

His critical attitude had already emerged as early as the Sacco and Vanzetti case, which made him move as far to the left as he ever would and take a more active interest in politics than ever before. Graduating from Harvard in 1916, he left for Europe as a gentleman volunteer. At that time his point of view sharpened and he "almost exploded with rebellion" against America and the war; evidence of this appears in his memoirs, written in diary form:

> At present America is to me utter anathema—I can't think of it without belching disgust at the noisiness of it, the meaningless chatter of its lying tongues. I've been trying to read a copy of the New Republic that has come over—honestly I couldn't get through it. Its smug phraseology, hiding utter meaninglessness—was nauseous. (Dos Passos 1939, 99)

In one of his letters he maintained:

> The war looks as if it would never end and the net of slavery to it grows tighter and tighter about all of us—If people could only realize the inanity of it— or if they had the courage to stop being dupes . . . I am convinced that it is through pure cowardice that the war continues—The only thing it has proved to me is the necessity of alcohol and tobacco to the human race—American sentimental gibberish not withstanding. (Dos Passos 1939, 99)

Following a coherent intellectual stance, he moved to the extreme Left in the late Twenties, when he took up radical political positions while working as a freelance writer. Even before that period, steadily monitoring the American "state of the nation," he had not spared harsh criticism for what according to him was the American intelligentsia's weak point: its lack of involvement, its detached dissent. This criticism is clearly spelled out in another letter to Rumsey Marvin:

> I've been getting letters from America—a darn good one from you too—and it makes me blue to think of the strange lack of energy that young Americans of attainments and sensibilities seem to have. I know so many who are really brilliant people who seem to be drifting into meaningless boredom . . . Anything taken up hard is better than that vague dissent from the inelegance of life today which is the main quality of the people who ought for good or bad to be getting into the turmoil. (Dos Passos 1939, 265-267)

In the same letter, Dos Passos also comments on the "laws" of business:

> Though why you should want to expend that gumption on "business" is beyond me, I admit. Of course everyone has to do a certain amount of business to keep alive—but it's a means not an end. That's the tragic fundamental fallacy in the minds of Americans—not Americans only, god knows—Everywhere—they take the means for the end. It's inconceivable to me . . . Talk to me. Can't you see that their sense of values is pathetically wrong?

Some years after his return from Europe, he stood up for the two Italian immigrants facing the death penalty. He worked in their defence as best as he could, also writing the pamphlet *Facing the Chair: Story of the Americanization of Two Foreignborn Workmen* (1927).

In the late Twenties Dos Passos travelled around Europe for a specific purpose: to search for a better alternative to the capitalistic system, a system that had disappointed him so deeply and had shown its faults particularly in the American government's handling of the Sacco and Vanzetti case. As a committed writer, he addressed an open letter to the Harvard president, Lowell, which appeared in *The Nation* and several other papers. The addressee of the letter, who participated in the report of the case presented to Governor Fuller of Massachusetts, was regarded by Dos Passos as having played a key role in the judicial murder of Sacco and Vanzetti. Though not actually a letter, this document contains one meaningful passage that helps us understand how Dos Passos analyzed such an important worldwide event in which justice, conscience and political views were involved:

> The Sacco-Vanzetti case has become part of the world struggle between the capitalist class and the working class, between those who have power and those who are struggling to get it. In a man in high office ignorance of the new sprouting forces that are remaking society, whether he is with them or against them, is little short of criminal. (Dos Passos 1927, 17)

After experiencing a period of radicalism almost bordering on utopian idealism, Dos Passos, who strongly believed in the right to liberty and the free expression of ideals, also came to disagree with the Communists. At first he expressed his disappointment in the collective "Open Letter to the Communist Party" printed in *The New Masses* in 1934. The catalyst event for this open letter was the rally organized by the Socialist Party in Madison Square Garden and broken up by the Communists. The letter accused the Communists of having caused a riot by their strong-arm tactics, thus weakening the whole left-wing movement. It also pointed out the growth of a form of fanaticism that could only end in the division of the conscious elements of the exploited classes into sects.

Meanwhile, on the grounds of the artistic relationships established and maintained through his correspondence with American intellectuals, he seized the opportunity to criticize the European totalitarian systems: Hitler, the Kremlin and Marxism. In a letter to Edmund Wilson he wrote:

> What is happening is that the whole Marxian radical movement is in a moment of intense disintegration . . . The Marxians have gotten into one of those hopeless situations like the French Huguenots in the years before St. Bartholomew, where everything they do helps the reaction . . . The only alternative is passionate un-Marxian revival of Anglo Saxon democracy or an industrial crisis helped by a collapse in the director's offices. (Ludington 1973, 435-436)

Writing to Wilson again on 23 December 1934, suggesting that he read "all Veblen said about Marxism," he confessed his renewed trust in the power of democracy and underlined the necessity "not to damage any latent spores of democracy that there still may be in the local American soil" (Ludington 1973, 459).

The following year, just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, he wrote a letter to Wilson from Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in which he dismantled Stalinism, explaining why his "enthusiastic feelings about the USSR have been on a continual decline since the early days" because of "the Krondstadt rebellions, the Massacres by Bela Kun in the Crimea, the Trotsky expulsion …—which leaves the Kremlin absolutely supreme" (Ludington 1973, 462). He added his suspicion "that a vast variety of things are going on in Russia under the iron mask of the Kremlin, but I don't think that any of them are of use to us in this country": (Ludington 1973, 462)

> About Russia I should have said not politically useful rather than politically interesting . . . because they are working out various forms of organization that our great conjunctions are also working out in a very similar way. While those forms were headed towards workers' democracy they were enormously interesting but since they seem to have turned away from that . . . I personally would prefer the despotism of Henry Ford, the United Fruit and Standard Oil than that of Earl Browder and Amster and Mike Gold and Bob Minor and I think most non-intellectual producers feel the same way. (Ludington 1973, 461)

In a letter to Robert Cantwell, bridging political and artistic positions, he reveals his concern "about the communist veneer of phrases that is being slicked over so many people who get their talk from New York and I can see less and less to be encouraged in it" (Ludington 1973, 463).

Dos Passos's sharp disagreement turned into final disillusionment with Marxism and Communism at the time of the Spanish Civil War. It paralleled the general disappointment among western intellectuals who had flocked to Spain to fight for the Spanish Republic. It also put the final nail in the coffin of some friendships, particularly the one between Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, who had chosen to side with the Communists.

The breaking point was the murder of José Robles Pazos, a Spanish Republican, close friend and translator of Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), who had been shot as a fascist spy. Robles Pazos was working with the Loyalist government which both Hemingway and Dos Passos supported. He was highly educated and counted Russian among his languages; that background made him an invaluable asset as liaison and interpreter to the Russians, who were soon sending their political and military 'advisers' to Spain. In March 1937, Robles was arrested, never to be seen again. Dos Passos committed himself to searching for the truth. That was how, from his location on American soil, he came to comment on the Robles Pazos's matter in a letter to the editors of the *New Republic*:

> Spaniards I talked to closer to the Communist Party took the attitude that Robles had been shot as an example to other officials because he had been overheard indiscreetly discussing military plans in a café . . . My impression is that the frame-up in his case was pushed to the point of execution because Russian secret agents felt that Robles knew too much about the relations between the Spanish war ministry and the Kremlin and was not, from their very special point of view, politically reliable. (Ludington 1973, 528)

Less than a year later, Dos Passos associated Robles' death with the GPU methods used by the Communists. This event and the resulting attitude mark a point of no return in Dos Passos's thinking. Henceforth, he started to re-evaluate American democratic forms, in which he detected a great alternative to Communism, one worth defending against the threat of such political systems as Stalinism and Fascism. This 'new course' was willingly ignored by Leftist critics, and Dos Passos was openly accused of having betrayed the Progressive cause. His correspondence, however, as I have tried to show, reveals a coherent development of his critical thought, and his works of the Forties and Fifties, up to the 1960s, stand for his personal and political coherence. His growing disillusionment with the Communist ideology and practice was accompanied by a parallel investigation of the American political tradition, particularly of such key figures as Thomas Jefferson, Tom Paine, John Adams, etc.—in short, the Founding Fathers of American democracy.

Dos Passos's strong trust in the values of the American tradition is clearly documented in a vast production of historical and political tracts such as *The Ground We Stand On* (1942), *State of the Nation* (1945), *The Prospect Before Us* (1951), *The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson* (1954), *The Men Who Made the Nation* (1957), *Occasions and Protests* (1964), and *The Shackles of Power*: *Three Jeffersonian Decades* (1966), which represent what we might define as the "other" Dos Passos and his increasingly patriotic stance.

Although he was aware of the many failings and weaknesses of the United States, he persuaded himself that in the face of a worldwide perspective of decadence, America embodied concrete hope for individual liberty and human progress. I regard *The Prospect Before Us* and *The Ground We Stand On* as the literary "bricks" of Dos Passos's rediscovery of the teachings of his country's Fathers. This historical and fictional ground still lies waiting to be "tilled." My work intends to open a new path towards an understanding of the "other" Dos Passos. The neglected work he produced after the Thirties still begs criticism capable of judging with full awareness of the writer's ideological changes. Dos Passos thought that a rebirth of freedom, individuality and collectivity was necessary in the United States.

What did Dos Passos mean by "America?"

Many answers are given in *The Prospect Before Us*, in which, playing the role of an anonymous Mr. Lecturer, the writer stages an open debate with a fictional audience of authentic Americans, exchanging opinions about America in the present and in the past:

> Our survival individually as men and women and collectively as a nation with hopes and purposes essential to all mankind depends . . . upon our solving a few of the social and political problems of corporate industrial society . . . Particularly we must get out of our

> heads the paralyzing Marxist doctrine of historical predestination that teaches that these problems will solve themselves if we wait long enough. (Dos Passos 1944, 12-13)

In the same book, past and present are confronted to make people understand the best and the worst of a nation:

> Men who have lost their conviction of what is good and what is bad find themselves without a sextant to check their position by . . . Somehow, like the degenerate last Romans, who had forgotten the art of turning columns and had to use the débris of old temples to build Christian basilicas with, we have to improvise at least enough of an edifice out of the fallen dogmas of the past to furnish a platform from which to take an observation on the society we live in . . . If an eighteenth century libertarian like Tom Paine were resurrected today he would find more similarities than differences in these industrial societies cloaked under their various ideological banners . . . Jefferson and Adams and their friends went back to the fundamentals of human behaviour. (Dos Passos 1944, 4-6, 82)
>
> It was this lack of profound convictions about the importance of human liberty on the part of Franklin Roosevelt and his advisers that cost us the fruits of our wartime victory to the point that the things Americans hold most dear remain in greater peril today than they were on the afternoon of Pearl Harbor. You and I, my friends, are partly responsible for the ruin of the Baltic republics and the terror in Warsaw and Prague and for the expropriation of the peasantry in the Balkans. (Dos Passos 1944, 119)

Dos Passos, who witnessed during the 20th century a long period of America's controversial conduct in domestic and foreign matters, finds in the use of the past a valuable source of *exempla*, an effective recipe to adjust or better avoid any future fault, the only way out from any form of annihilation. He writes about it in the chapter "The Use of the Past" (from *The Ground We Stand On*), which also appears in *Occasions and Protests*:

> We need to know what kind of firm ground other men, belonging to generations before us, have found to stand on . . . their thoughts were the grandfathers of our thoughts ... In times of changes and danger when there is a quicksand of fear under men's reasoning, a sense of continuity with generations gone before can stretch like a lifeline across the scary present and get us past the idiot delusion of the exceptional . . . That is why in times like ours, when old institutions are caving in and being replaced by new institutions not necessarily in accord with men's hopes, political thought has to look backwards as well as forwards. (Dos Passos 1964, 33-34)

Dos Passos's stubbornness in reclaiming the timeliness of the American past is reaffirmed in the same chapter: "The minute we get the idea that the records can be of use to us now, they become alive. They become the basis of a world picture into which we can fit our present lives, however painful they may be, and our hopes for the future" (Dos Passos 1964, 42).

During the Cold War, when the United States government policed a number of American writers who "were watched for supposed crimes as serious as espionage and as vague as subversion" (Mitgang 1987, 47). Dos

Passos officially declared his split up from Communism on June 3, 1952, to F.B.I agents who interviewed him at his home in Spence's Point, Virginia. From that day on, he confirmed his disappointment with the Soviet system on every occasion, thus putting an end to his Communist past.

Reading Dos Passos's transatlantic correspondence has been fundamental in my investigation of the "unknown" Dos Passos. I have tried to demonstrate that his turning away from Communism in the second part of his life and career cannot be associated *sic et simpliciter* with Conservatism. On the contrary, I believe it should be considered a further development of his Progressivism:

> In our past we have whatever hope it was that kept Washington's army together the winter at Valley Forge, but today have we anything left of that world picture of 1776? The Communists used to tell us we had only the Almighty Dollar and the degradation and sluggishness that came from too much property on top and too much poverty below. Now they specialize in racial tensions. To answer them we don't need to fill ourselves up with the hope of another historical illusion like theirs, but we do need to know which realities of our life yesterday and our life today we can believe in and work for. We must never forget that we are heirs to one of the grandest and most nearly realized world pictures in all history. (Dos Passos 1964, 43)

Works Cited

Dos Passos, John. "An Open Letter to President Lowell." *The Nation*, 125, August 24, 1927: 32-42.

____. *Adventures of a Young Man*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939.

____. *The Ground We Stand on: Some Examples from the History of a Political Creed*. New York: Harcourt, Brace 1941.

____. *State of the Nation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944.

____. *The Prospect Before Us*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950.

____. *The Head and Heart of Thomas Jefferson*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954.

____. *The Theme Is Freedom*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1956.

____. *The Men Who Made the Nation*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957.

____. *Prospects of a Golden Age*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice- Hall, 1959.

____. *Midcentury*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960.

____. *Occasions and Protests*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964.

____. *The Shackles of Power: Three Jeffersonian Decades*. Garden City. NY: Doubleday, 1966.

____. *Facing the Chair: Story of the Americanization of Two Foreignborn Workmen*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1970.

Dougherty, David. "The Sacco-Vanzetti Case and the 'Political Secession' of John Dos Passos." *The South Carolina Review*, 28, April 2 (1996): 251-260.

Ludington, Townsend, ed. *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos*. Boston: Gambit Incorporated, 1973.

Mitgang, Herbert. "Annals of Government. Policing America's Writers." *The New Yorker*, October 4, 1987, 47-91.

Bruce C. Swaffield

Letters on Italy: From Casual Perspectives to Familial Perceptions

Descriptions of Italian life often revolve around the concrete and physical: old buildings, quaint houses, curious people and beautiful landscapes. "We love the solidly-built stone houses," writes one American tourist. "The Italians are colorful people. They talk noisily & very excitedly. You won't believe their wild driving until you see it," says another. "The Colosseum looks pretty much like we have always seen it," adds a casual observer. And so forth. All of these accounts are attempts by Americans to adapt to and fit in, if only briefly, to a society they believe they know and understand. Possibly because of preconceived notions, as well as societal predispositions created from past generations of Italian Americans, those "discovering" Italy for the first time may not be able to discern the true essence and meaning of the country and its people. The works of Jerre Mangione, Ben Morreale and (to an extent) Mark Rotella, however, stand out from most other "letters" of the day no doubt because of each writer's familial and familiar ties to the land. Contrasting the insights of Italian Americans with that of the typical American traveler offers a unique look at and study of how two different communities view the same culture: one sincerely, the other superficially.

The beauty, charm and culture that is so often cherished about Italy eludes all but the most insightful and careful traveler. Most visitors quickly notice the impressive facades, the congested and chaotic streets, the overwhelming noise and the flavorful food without ever realizing that these are all a part of a traditional and historical mosaic that makes up the people and the country. Shaped by centuries of custom and convention, daily life in Italy is not as simple as it seems. There is a complexity that can be seen and felt only by those who take the time to study the past those who are willing to listen with a cultural ear to the history that explains, at least in part, the habits and rituals that are as much a part of Italian life today as the ancient ruins. For example, in *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience*, Mangione and Morreale (1992) described in minute detail both the structures and strictures of the Southern towns in the beginning of the 20th century:

> Those small towns and villages . . . at the turn of the century consisted of clusters of cubelike houses that seemed to have spilled down from the high ground into the hollows below. Each town had its *chiazza* (as *piazza i*s pronounced in dialect), usually with a church at one end and a winehouse at the other. The *chiazza* was the marketplace, the emotional and social center of the town. It was the place where men met and in their public relations gave character to one another. Here, too, they paid respect to the traditions and values of the century. (Mangione and Morreale 1992, 36)

Typically, there is a place for everything and everyone in Italian cities and culture. There is a random, yet orderly and sequential, succession of houses from the top to the bottom. All are individual, distinct and unique, but neatly stacked one upon the other. So, too, there is the large symmetrical piazza: a church and winehouse at each end, like bookends that secure everything firmly in place. Order and balance are important, almost an unstated requirement. As if following a kind of innate master plan, the buildings are arranged around the square. The center is reserved for the true heart of the city the lives of the people where all become one. In the *chiazza*, the men gather, the women shop and the children play; they form a complete fabric of life and living. Everyone is apart from one another and still a part of the greater whole, an organism of daily activity and existence.

From out of these same streets, a way of life flows forth that casual visitors do not see or understand. What might appear, at first glance, to be a detached or fragmented society, with all of its differing types and classes, actually reveals a people who are deeply connected to one another as well as to the land. The bonds form over years, through families from one generation to another, out of a sense of belonging to one place. Nurtured by communication and curiosity, the community lives and grows together. Oddly enough, what has held everyone together, according to Mangione and Morreale, is a form of maternal entertainment:

> Women found their entertainment in the narrow streets simply by talking with other women and at the church. Most entertainment for women took place at home: the simple visit (*la visita*). It was largely the women who maintained, almost institutionalized, *la visita*. Visits ranged in importance. Heading the list was the death visit. When someone died, time was allowed for the immediate family, then the lesser family came, and finally the neighbors and friends arrived at the bereaved home with a black sash at the outer door. Great friendships and enmities stemmed from the expected visit. … There were visits when a child was born or confirmed. There were visits, too, when someone returned from a trip or was going abroad. The women maintained this web of visits. (Mangione and Morreale 1992, 38-39)

These visits are more than simple greetings or conversational exchanges. To most Italians, *la visita* is *la vita*. Spending time with others is necessary, almost obligatory, because the essence of life is found in relationships and friendships. People are expected to visit one another at certain times and on specific occasions; they must respect the established, traditional protocol as well as the dignity of others. Failure to do so is an offense to all in the community, not just to the individual. For this reason most visitors never hear the underlying heartbeat of Italian society. They admire the sites and structures, believing they have experienced the real energy of Italy. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

American tourists in particular tend to find meaning and purpose, even fulfillment, in what they can see and taste. Their total appreciation of Italy has little to do with what is beneath the surface, what is behind the marble edifices and classic palazzi. They often fail to "feel" the experience or to let themselves be changed by a work of art. Most of the time, tourists do not even know how to spell what they see, let alone understand the language itself: "We headed of to the coliseum early in the door by 930 before the crowds/buses showed up," explains traveler Ron Wozniak (2007) in an online travel blog as he chronicled a recent visit to Rome:

> This time we got the audio guide to hear the description but next time it be better with a regular guide. After an hour we moved towards the forum which is an incredible place but you really have to use your imagination to picture what was once there. Then moved over to Palantine hill which is twice as large as the forum. It seemed that we saw more there than the last time we visited. If you nose around you never know what you might find. The ruins are by far our favorite things to look at. By this time we started to get tired and hungry so back through the forum and up Capitol hill and time to find a outdoor restaurant. There is so much in one area to see that it could 2 days. We then wandered across the tiber river into the Jewish quarter of Trestaverde. Small shops and restaurants until we came across the campo di fiori, where the market was just winding up. Sat back had a glass of wine and watched the cleanup, what a transformation. Within one hour every fruit and veggie stand was down and the street cleaners had it back to the square Then we found the Piazza Nuovo where there is street musicians and artists everywhere. That the last place I that thought i would see a guitar player doing a solo of Stairway to Heaven, actually it was pretty darn good. Had our choice of 4 or 5 places for dinner. Found a rally nice place with a table that looked out to the square. In the middle of the square was a statue was being renovated that sat in the Circus maximus on the Appian road just south of the city [sic, entire passage]. (Wozniak 2007)

Step by step through the Colosseum, Forum, Palatine Hill, Capitoline Hill, across the Tiber and into Trastevere, back to the other side to the piazza Campo de' Fiori and over to the piazza Navona we catch glimpses of the city. There are brief, static snapshots of the monuments and piazzas. But what about the people, past and present, who have molded these places into what they are now? What of the women and men who buy fruits, vegetables and flowers in Campo de' Fiori? What of the children playing soccer together in Piazza Navona? What of the great ruins, in all their sublimity and magnificence, that stand as time-worn monuments? What of previous generations who designed and built such structures which are the containers of life itself? The typical tourist sees with the eyes, but not with the heart.

To most, a visit to Italy is a more of a visual than a visceral experience; the sight is usually what defines the culture and the country. In 2007, Jayne Kilbride wrote on the Internet about her excursions in the Eternal City:

> Well here we are in bustling Rome. Ancient monuments everywhere, delicious gelati and great pasta! Lanes and hapy people with lots of bikes and apparently 1000 traffic accidents a year! Scored with the Roma Pass—missed an hour or more of a queue to get into the Colosseum as you can get in on one side—no one tells you this but a guide touting for business said we didn't need to queue for tickets. It was amazing in there. the audio guide was really useful. We tried to go to the Vatican museum and Sistine chapel today but after walking for 5 minutes and still not finding the end of the queue we gave up. Can't stand that long! So we went to the Pantheon and plazzas and the round prison the popes used to hide from their enemies. All great. Lots of fountains and you walk down little lane ways which suddenly open into lovely plazas [sic, entire passage]. (Kilbride 2007)

The beauty of the city is obvious, and this is what will be remembered. Unfortunately, though, there is no sense of history or tradition, two of the most important elements in Roman life. Even the significance of the "round prison" (Castel Sant'Angelo) seems lost in this daze of dizzying activities. Similarly, the entire Colosseum is distilled into one ambiguous and abstract phrase: "it was amazing in there."

Americans often remember the food most. No one can argue about the fresh pasta, fruits, vegetables and meats found throughout the whole of Italy. When most of memories have faded and photographs have become tattered, the many dishes and tastes of a trip will remain clear and sharp in the mind. "We were pretty tired from the day but we wanted to hit up the nightlife area in Rome, Trastevere," wrote Jennifer Ramones (2007):

> I LOVE IT THERE! So many cute little gelaterias, cafes, etc. We had dinner at this little mom and pop place where they spoke no english and only italian. It was awesome! What an italian dinner. We could not move after [sic, entire passage]. (Ramones 2007)

Tourist Karen Ashenberner (2007), explained in her online travelogue that "We had dinner last night at this great restaurant where the owner and his daughter sang and they were good!! The food has been awesome and we have not yet had a bad meal. . . Every morning we have our cappucino and croissant and I am getting spoiled by the coffee here . . . I know I am now cured of driking at starbucks!" [sic, entire passage].

Sadly, with the exception perhaps of some Italian Americans, few visitors ever realize the significance of food in Italy. Taste is only part of the experience. Meals have almost a spiritual importance; people gather to partake of what nature has given them in a sort of communion. There is a reverence, a respect, for food that is hard for the foreigner to comprehend. In *Stolen Figs and Other Adventures in Calabria*, Rotella (2003) details the care and attention his grandmother displayed in preparing a meal:

> On Sundays my father would awaken to the aroma of garlic, olive oil, and tomatoes. His mother would send him and his four brothers and sisters off to church, while she would prepare dinner. Most of the time when they returned, the table would be set for just my father and his parents and siblings. Sometimes my grandmother would set a buffet for relatives and friends. There would be an antipasto platter of cheeses from the milk of sheep and chows, *soppressata*, *capicola*, and salami. Grandma would then serve homemade fettuccine and *ragu* (which she called '*maccheroni* and gravy') simmered with pepperoni and her version of *braciole* (which she pronounced *rah-zhol'*), oblong meatballs infused with herbs and cheese. The men would pour themselves wine that Grandpa had made. For the next course, Grandma would pull out of the oven a roasted chicken or rabbit on a bed of sliced potatoes. Bowls of sautéed spinach, dandelion greens, broccoli rabe, or zucchini would follow. She would place in the center of the table a dish of hot Italian peppers, which only she and my grandfather would eat, along with any other Calabrese adults who were present. (Rotella 2003, 40)

The ritual of the meal is as central as the flavor. In Italy, one cannot exist without the other.

As in everyday life, from relationships to the architecture of the cities, there is order and structure. The meal is carefully composed, beginning to end, so it builds to a climax like a dramatic Italian opera: it begins subtly with antipasto and bread, then builds to the first course, followed by the finale: the second course with meat and vegetables. At the end, salad, dessert and strong coffee complete the experience. Everything is orderly and purposeful. There is even meaning in the bread. "For most southern Italians their sturdy bread was the mainstay. When cutting a new loaf, one would make the sign of the cross on its level side and kiss the knife before cutting into it. One would never set the bread on its rounded side: bread was respected. A good man was said to be as good as 'a piece of bread'" (Mangione and Morreale 1992, 38).

One of the most misunderstood characteristics of life in Italy is that of gestures and movements. The language of the hands speaks clearly and loudly to those who watch carefully. It is an international and universal communication that Americans are not accustomed to using. Rotella (2003) confessed that even he, an Italian American, was confused by his father's signs when they visited Calabria.

> After twenty minutes . . . we were greeted by an old man in a wool sport coat with a large smile. He was deaf and mute, it turned out, but this didn't stop him from conversing with my father. Their exchange took place entirely in hand gestures. A point to a tree; a cupping of the hand; a twist in the cheek with a single finger; a clasp of the hands, followed by a sigh. The man was at least seventy and seemed to be unaffected by the heat. After a few minutes my father turned to me and said matter-of-factly that the old man had recommended a café on the main street that served frozen *orzata*, a drink made of shaved ice, sugar, and crushed almonds. (Rotella 2003, 13)

Signs and signals are a way of life in Italy; there is meaning in each motion and wave of the hand. To the untrained eye and intellect, though, such movements often seem silly and strange.

The whole *cultura* of life in Italy becomes critical in understanding the country. Without truly knowing the people and their customs, a visit to Italy is little more than a trip to the representation of the Doge's Palace in Disneyworld or Las Vegas. Visitors can see the sights and hear the sounds, yet they may never realize the energy and sway of life itself. There is a rhythm to daily activity in Italy: it begins early in the morning, inside the little houses among the families and continues throughout the day in the markets, shops, schools, piazzas and restaurants. Life is everywhere. Regrettably, few Americans ever notice because they become lost in the maze of activity and never feel or touch the true *essenza* that is Italy.

Works Cited

Ashenberner, K. *We are in Venice*. http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Italy/Veneto/Venice/blog-206324.html. (September 28, 2007).

Coveney, D. *Day Trip To San Gimignano And Siena* [*Sic*]. http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Italy/Tuscany/Siena/Blog-206991.html. (September 30, 2007).

Kilbride, J. *Rome Here We Are*. http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Frascati/Blog-206411.html. (September 28, 2007).

Mangione, Jerre, and Ben Morreale. *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience*. New York: Harpercollins, 1992.

Ramones, J. *A Day In Ancient Rome*. http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Rome/Blog-206750.html. (September 29, 2007).

Rotella, Mimmo. *Stolen Figs And Other Adventures In Calabria*. New York: North Point Press, 2003.

Scholosser, L. & D. *Rome – Part Two*. http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Italy/Blog-218508.html. (November 10, 2007).

Wozniak, R. *Roman Shuffle*. http://www.travelblog.org/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Rome/blog-218518.html. (November 10, 2007).

Algerina Neri

Letters Home: Elizabeth Seton and Her Circle

> *We must pray literally without ceasing,*
> I mean that prayer of the heart which is independent of time and place,
> which is rather a habit of lifting up the heart to God,
> as in a constant communication with him
> Saint Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton

"… as I told my Bayley, I neither look behind nor before—*only up*—there is my rest, and I want nothing. They threaten a storm, but I fear not *with Him*" (quoted in Bechlte and Metz 2000, 244).[1] These lines were written by Elizabeth Bayley Seton in a letter sent to her friend and sister-in-law Rebecca from the *Shepherdess*, the ship which had just left New York on October 3, 1803, bound for Leghorn (Italy). Elizabeth is on a transatlantic voyage;, her thoughts do not linger behind (I neither look behind) to her mother country, to the American world she belongs to, to her milieu, to her family and to the four children left behind. Nor do her thoughts go to the future (nor before): to Italy, her destination. Italy is an unknown place with different customs, language and religion. Only one family, the Filicchis, will be waiting for her, her sick husband and her eight year old daughter, Ann. Memories, regrets, yearnings, worries, apprehensions, hesitations, and anxieties for the future are willingly and stubbornly mastered and erased, as shown in the strong opposition between the subject and her negativity. She looks to where there is neither past nor future, but only the present: her self-reliance, her beliefs, her faith. The personal pronoun, which is repeated three times, controls the passage. At first it is followed by "look," a visual perceptive verb. Then the sentence stretches out as the writer finds peace in her faith, only to leap up again in another opposition between the subject and the negative linked this time by "want," a verb indicating a strong rational being. Elizabeth breaks with her past, does not fear for her future, controls her feelings and rationally lacks nothing; she desires nothing, and needs nothing. She is confident in her strength and in her faith. The same pattern returns in the following sentence, which is brief and concise as before. Both verbs of the coordinative clauses, *threaten and fear*, belong to the sensorial/perceptive field. They are linked by the adversative conjunction "but." People on board are on the alert because a storm is coming, but *Elizabeth* is calm, she is not afraid because she is rationally and psychologically united with her God. As she told her father (my Bayley), Elizabeth Seton will behave in such a manner till her death.

The life and work of Elizabeth Bayley Seton have been the subject of publications since the mid-19th Century. In the introduction to the most recent and complete edition of her writings[2] the two editors, Regina Bechlte and Judith Metz, express their hope that their volumes will mark the beginning of a new and fruitful phase of investigation into the life of Elizabeth Bayley Seton. She is presented as "wife, mother, widow, convert, educator, foundress, and saint" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, xxi). I will attempt to portray her as fiancée, friend and daughter as she emerges in her early correspondence.

Born in New York the 28th August 1774, Elizabeth was the second of three daughters of Dr. Richard Bayley, whose wife died in childbirth. Intelligent and sensitive, Elizabeth never recovered from this loss. Her beloved father was often absent, busy with his professional life. A feeling of loneliness ran through her whole childhood. The presence of her step-mother, whom she called Mrs. Bayley, and of her numerous step-brothers and sisters did not relieve her loneliness. She also grew up in a turbulent period in the life of both her country and hometown of Manhattan.When she was two, the Revolutionary War broke out. New York was set on fire twice and became the capital city of the Confederation from 1785 to 1790. The Revolution also caused religious problems for families like the Bayleys who belonged to the Anglican Church.[3] At nineteen, Elizabeth became engaged to William Magee Seton, one of the most eligible bachelors in New York. Six years her senior, William had been educated in England, had served with the Bank of New York, and had toured Europe's prominent counting houses. The six short notes Elizabeth sent her fiancée in 1793 show her trepidation about arranging meetings with William. The following sentences are typical of the feelings of a young woman in love: "it is my intention to pass an hour with Mrs. Wilkes in the Evening where you may have the honor of seeing me if you please." And again, "Your Eliza is well—and would be perfectly happy if she could enjoy the Society of her Friend..." Every social occasion provided a good excuse to see her lover. "Mrs. Sadler is not going to the Concert and wishes very much to see *us* there this Evening—do not be too late," "If you are *anxious* to see your Eliza you will find her at Mrs. Atkinsons at the Piano" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 2, 3, 4).

A few months later, in January 1794, Will and Eliza were married at Trinity,[4] the Protestant Episcopalian church of their hometown. Rev. Samuel Provoost, the bishop of New York, celebrated the wedding. Both bride and bridegroom belonged to New York's upper class. The young couple went to live in the large family house at number 61 of Stone Street.[5] In the same year William's father resigned his appointment as treasurer of the Bank of New York[6] to return to private business. He set up a commercial house with his eldest sons, William Magee and Richard, and William Maitland of London. The "Seton, Maitland, & Company of New York and London" became one of the largest and more thriving societies of the town; its ships traveled back and forth between New York and London, Hamburg, Leghorn, Barcelona, Malaga and the West Indies. Will and Eliza enjoyed a period of ease and happiness. While William was on a business trip to Philadelphia, Elizabeth waited impatiently for his letters, and was happy to speak of him whenever possible. She was proud of him and of being his wife. The family grew quickly. Ann was born in 1795, William a year later, and then Richard (1798), Catherine (1800) and Rebecca (1802). The love, affection and peace that Elizabeth felt are evident in a letter sent to her friend Eliza Craig Sadler, who was travelling in Europe in February 1796:

> you go to Balls on Sunday night, you depraved creature, and what Balls or amusements can compensate that quiet calm tranquillity which Sunday and particularly Sunday Evening affords with Husband shaking his Slippers by a good coal fire and a volume of Blair[7] opened on the table. But avast I am an American savage I suppose and should not mention these dull Insipidities to a Lady in the largest Metropolis in the world . . . (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 7-8)

The two friends' different lives emerge from the contrast between the two subjects (you /I). "You" is followed by a verb of movement, "go," which reveals Eliza Sadler's extroverted and outgoing life. In fact she accompanied her husband, Henry,[8] on his frequent business trips to Europe. "I" is followed by the verb "to be:" Elizabeth Seton presents herself not through what she does, but, ironically, through what she is: "a savage American." The juxtaposition goes on in a playful comparison between two ways of life in two spatially distant worlds. Eliza enjoys life in society on the Old Continent, Elizabeth the everyday activities of a good housewife in the provincial American society of her time. Later in the year another letter to Sadler shows a changed atmosphere. William's health is beginning to fail. Elizabeth opens her heart in a long letter, which reveals the psychological means she uses to cope with her problems.

> —You need not fear to loose me—no my *Sad* every hour I pass shows me the Instability of every expectation which is not founded on reason. I have learnt to commune with my own Heart, and try to govern it by reflection, and yet that Heart grows every day more tender and softened, which I in great measure I attribute to the state of my Williams Health, that Health on which my every Hope of Happiness depends, and which continues me either in the most perfect *Human* felicity or sinks me in the lowest depth of sorrow That Health certainly does not mend and I often think very much decreases, and althou' it is my fixed principle both as a Christian and as a reasonable Being never to dwell on thoughts of future

> events which do not depend on myself, *yet* I never view the setting sun or take a solitary walk but melancholy tries to seize me, and if I did not fly to my little Treasure and make her call Papa and kiss me a thousand times, I should forget myself—. . . therefore my Sad I have become a looker-up which is certainly the only remedy for my description of sorrow. (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 10)

The passage is divided into two parts, which are separated by the adversative conjunction "yet." The subject is repeated eight times in a few lines: in the first part it is linked to rational verbs: pass, learn, try to govern, attribute and think. Here reason tries to calm unhappiness, which comes from the heart. In the second part rationality lessens and the subject is followed by action verbs as view, take a walk, fly, make her call, [make her] kiss me. When her reason fails to control her feelings, Elizabeth is overcome with anguish and her extreme frailty emerges. She becomes anxious; she is uneasy and fidgety. She draws to her daughter and makes her call her father Papa, the Italian name William had taught her. The child's voice reassures and cheers her up, and she never tires of kissing her. However, common sense, reason, affection and love are not enough; they will not restore her husband's health. Only her faith can help her go on.

At the time correspondence to/from Europe took three months to arrive, so Elizabeth's constant concern is to find a vessel that is leaving in order to send her messages. She communicates with Sadler twice a year. Only once does she mention political matters in her letters. In August 1796 Elizabeth worries about Eliza being in France during those dangerous days, but she soon changes the subject back to their private, everyday family lives.

Seton's extensive correspondence with Julia Sitgreaves Scott (1765-1842) begins in 1798. Julia's husband dies in March. Elizabeth spends many hours with her, helps her to pack her belongings and close her house in preparation for her and her children's move to Philadelphia, Julia's home town. Communications between New York and Philadelphia are easier and quicker, letters are sent and received on an average of once a week. Seton is anxious to hear of her arrival, her health. She hopes their daughters will remain friends as their mothers are. What she most desires and wishes for Julia now is peace and trusts she will not be replaced by any other in her heart. Bits and pieces of everyday life in New York City become known; for example, the activities of the Widows' Society, where Seton meets her friends,[9] and traffic jams in Manhattan. When Elizabeth and her sister leave the Theatre on a Friday night of April 1798, they are swept away by a violent gust of thunder. Their carriage gets stuck; the coachmen quarrel, first one wheel cracks, then another. After a full half hour of "embarrassment," the two sisters arrive safely in Wall Street.[10] Ships cannot leave the harbour because there is a shortage of sailors. In fact, Miss Shipton, a mutual friend, has been on board a vessel, ready to sail, but she has been obliged to return home. Springtime is the moment to look for a Summer house in Long Island, which offers a better climate. Seton's anxiety about possible threats from the French are caused by the undeclared naval war between United States and France, which started in 1798 and lasted two years

The tone of Seton's letters becomes formal and factual when Elizabeth writes to her husband's relatives in England. A letter to Lady Isabella Cayley, William's aunt, dated 6 July 1798, describes the sorrowful events that occurred lately in the Seton household. William's father has a bad fall on his doorstep in January and is in pain until his death on June 9. The funeral, attended by some five hundred people, gathers mourners from society's higher echelons, grieving for a friend and a social companion, and by the poor as well, who mourn a father and a benefactor. William and Elizabeth's life is permanently disrupted. The relaxed and happy period of the first years of marriage is swept away. William, the eldest son and his father's partner in trade, becomes the provider and head of a numerous family. The war between Great Britain and France makes commercial exchanges dangerous. United States neutrality is disregarded. Both contenders seize ships and confiscate goods. American trade collapses; merchants, like the Setons, who have a great number of trading vessels, suffer most. In the following two years Elizabeth becomes her husband's tireless secretary in an extreme effort to save their commercial house. Unfortunately the Company must close and William must pay all debts. In May, 1801, the Setons leave the old family residence at 61 Stone Street in Manhattan's residential area and rent a smaller and less elegant house at number 8 of State Street, near the Battery.[11]

The Setons face not only economic problems, but also the danger of a yellow fever epidemic that strikes New York twice in a few years. Dr. Richard Bayley, Elizabeth's father, is surgeon and professor of anatomy at Columbia University and a noted authority on the disease. He is one of the first health officers of the port of New York and spends much of his time on Staten Island, where there is the quarantine station for ships entering the harbour. Elizabeth admires her father's work and his dedication to his profession. At the end of a brief sketch of him she writes, "It may be said of him… that he never visited a patient without making a friend" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 547). Unfortunately such a busy father was often absent when Elizabeth was a child, and is still a far-fetched presence in later years. The short messages she sends him are always demanding his attention, entreating him to smile upon her, waiting for his visits. She hopes to see the door open suddenly, and then her heart would dance. The rare times she receives his letters, she is full of joy:

> My Father,
> Your letter of the 8th Instance conferred an incalculable favour on your Daughter who would with pleasure employ an hour of every day in writing to insure a repetition of similar favours. (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 114)

And again:

> The Heart of your Betty jumped for Joy at the sight of the letter that was to tell her of your safe arrival, that you are well, and in the midst of friends. . . (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 118).

In June 1800 Elizabeth and her children go by boat to Staten Island where they spend the summer with her father. The messages she sends Rebecca Seton, who remains at their Stone Street residence in the city, are full of happiness. Dr. Bayley is waiting for them on the wharf, the house is neat, the birds sing in the little garden, the setting sun is sweet; the afternoon tea is crowned by a bowl of garden strawberries sent by Mrs VanDusen, their neighbour. Everything inside and outside her home looks cheerful. The same tone occurs in the letters sent in July to her other female friends, Eliza Sadler and Catherine Dupleix, who have left New York to visit Ireland where Elizabeth has family ties. Again Elizabeth's language reveals her inner contentment. The picture is idyllic: "What would you give my own Du to see all so well, your little Darlings enjoying themselves most perfectly, my Father at his usual occupations. Seton and Rebecca nursing and kissing little Catherine all day long, and the little Mother too happy" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 126). The sojourn is so rewarding that the following summer Elizabeth and her family return to Staten Island. June and July are spent in the usual cheerful atmosphere. Letters are sent to Seton's close friends: Julia Scott, Eliza Sadler and Rebecca Seton. At the beginning of August the yellow fever explodes on Staten Island. Elizabeth confesses she cannot sleep at the thought of babies perishing at the empty breast of their expiring mothers. These are the scenes that surround her. Her father tells her that it has never happened before. There are twelve children who will surely die because their parents have been laid ill for many days in the ship without food and air. Dr Bayley goes up early in the morning to procure all possible comforts for the sufferers, but he himself takes ill on August 11. Elizabeth describes her father's last days calmly in a letter to Julia: "he struggled in extreme pain until about half past two Monday Afternoon the 17th when he became apparently perfectly easy, put his hands in mine turned on his side and, sobbed out the last of his life without the smallest struggle, groan, or appearance of pain." (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 186). The feeling of loss haunts Elizabeth again and again in later years. In the journal written for Rebecca Seton in December, 1803, she recalls an episode of 1789. One day, while her father is in England, Elizabeth jumps into a wagon that is driving into the woods for brush, sets off for the woods and sits down there under a chestnut tree. Loneliness and anxiety are wiped away. Seton enjoys nature and firmly believes that the Creator of all these beautiful things will not abandon her.

> —here then was a sweet bed, the air still a clear blue vault above, the numberless sounds of Spring melody and joy – the sweet clover and wild flowers I had got by the way, and a heart as innocent as a human heart could be filled with even enthusiastic love of God and admiration of his works—still I can fill every sensation that passed thro' my Soul—and I thought at that time my Father did not care for me—well God was my Father—my All. I prayed—sung hymns—cried—laughed in talking to myself of how far He could place me above all Sorrow—Then laid still to enjoy the Heavenly Peace that came over my Soul; and I am sure in the two hours so enjoyed grew ten years in my spiritual life—. (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 264)

The following year Rebecca, the Seton's last child, was born. This happy event did not mitigate the atmosphere of concern about William's health, which was inexorably failing. As in many other instances at the time, the doctors suggested a voyage. William proposed that they visit the Filicchi family in Leghorn, where he had spent some time when he was younger. The Filicchi have a commercial house and William was sent there both to learn Italian and to gain experience in foreign trade. As soon as the Setons decided to leave for Italy, Elizabeth made arrangements to hasten their departure. She sent many touching letters to friends and relatives; brought her children to Staten Island to visit her father's grave; went alone in her father's sail boat in New York Bay to say goodbye to her native land. Her children stayed behind, she took only the eight years old Ann with her. This trip was her last effort to save her husband's life. While on board Elizabeth could not send letters home, so on November 8, 1803 in Gibralter Bay she began writing a journal to Rebecca Seton. The journal covered her entire Italian sojourn until her return home on June 4, 1804. The journal reveals her contemplative and introspective nature, its language is intimate and sensual. Verbs of perception characterize her story, the means through which Elizabeth communicates and understands the world around her. During the forty-seven days she is on board the *Shepherdess*, from October 2 to November 18, her eyes are constantly on her husband, who seems to improve thanks to the sea air. In the rare moments when her worries about William's health are less pressing, Elizabeth notices the few people she mentions: Captain O'Brien, his wife and their eighteen month old child. No other person is mentioned. The ship seems empty. Only the whooping cough of the Captain's child or the sound of the sea can be heard. During the night of November 15, while the *Shepherdess* is sailing along the Corsica coast, a storm rocks the boat. Elizabeth, who has behaved as a strong and determined woman, becomes vulnerable; she prays, goes to bed to read, cannot fall asleep, hears her daughter's sobs and takes refuge in her arms. The rhythm of the following sentence suggests the lines of a poem: "the rocking of the vessel and the breaking of the waves were forgot the heavy sighs and restless pains were lost in a sweet refreshing sleep" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 248). Seton's poetic language emerges again when she confronts views and scenes that suddenly appear before her eyes. After being shut up for many days in the small space of her cabin, she admits she cannot convey her emotions: "If I dared indulge my Enthusiasm and describe as far as I could give them words my extravagant Enjoyments in gazing on the Ocean, and the rising & setting sun, & the moonlight Evenings, a quire of Paper would not contain what I should tell you" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 245). The lack of ability to record natural scenes, which belong to the artistic category of the sublime,[12] is a common feature of Nineteenth Century travellers. As Attilio Brilli remembers "Ciò che viene definito sublime è infatti il particolare fascino del paesaggio inteso come occasione offerta all'animo umano di misurarsi con la grandezza incommensurabile della natura, con la minaccia incombente delle sue forze e allo stesso tempo con il sentimento della propria umana fragilità" (Brilli 1995, 42).

The *Shepherdess* makes port at Leghorn on Novmber 18 as bells announce the Angelus. Both Antonio and Filippo Filicchi are waiting for their arrival. Guy Carlton Bayley, Elizabeth's step-brother, too is there. He is working at the Filicchi's business as William had sixteen years before. The Setons and the Filicchis have been in touch for many years, and both families know they can rely on each other's support. William's father had supported Filippo's appointment as consul to the United States in Leghorn, the first diplomatic appointment on the Italian peninsula. Elizabeth believes they have reached a safe place, but her bright expectations are immediately dashed by events that follow their arrival. On the following day, in her journal to Rebecca, she describes what has happened in language that is strictly confidential. Elizabeth seems to be speaking in a low voice, as if the noise of her writing on the paper might disturb her husband's or her daughter's sleep. These are quite likely the only moments Seton could devote to herself.

> How eagerly would you listen to the voice that should offer to tell you where your "dear Sis" is now—your Souls Sister yet you could not rest in your bed if you saw her as she is—sitting in one corner of an immense Prison, locked in and barred with as much ceremony as any Monster of mischief might be—a single window doubled grated with iron thro which if I should want any thing I am to call a sentinel with a fierce cocked hat, and a long riffle-gun, that is that he may not receive the dreadful infection we are supposed to have brought from N York. (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 249)

The whispering of the first three lines where Rebecca is evoked as a witness of so much suffering is introduced by weak verbal forms (would you listen to the voice). The description of the conditions of Setons' unfair detainment is followed by an ironic stand against the authors of such cruel treatment. Elizabeth goes on to tell Rebecca about her initial entrance into Italian waters. She is quite happy to have reached their destination, and goes to bed quite cheerful, dreaming about singing in Trinity Church in New York. Early in the morning she hears a boat alongside the ship, hurries up on deck and hopes to find her step-brother Carlton. A guard tells her not to touch anything. Their ship is the first to bring the news of the yellow fever epidemic in New York, and as they have no Bill of Health, they are taken to the Lazaretto, which is some miles out of town. Elizabeth knows the hospitals where her father worked at Staten Island, and believes she is entering a treatment centre; therefore, she does not bring any medicine for her husband with her. She is given room No.6 with high arched ceilings, naked walls, three mattresses on the brick floor, and a jug of water.

The travel journal becomes a prison diary. The need to record her days in writing might be compared to the markings prisoners leave on prison walls to remember the time spent incarcerated. This period of isolation turns out to be a precious moment for her spiritual growth, as she affirms after few days: "I find my present opportunity a Treasure and my confinement of Body a liberty of Soul which I may never again enjoy whilst they are united " (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 257). The journal portrays not a static, motionless character, but a continuously developing individual. The estrangement felt in completely different environments provokes unexpected changes in sensitive travelers. Elizabeth's journal highlights "il passaggio da una fase dell'esistenza ad un'altra tutta diversa, come accade nelle conversioni quando si rinuncia all'uomo vecchio ma ancora l'uomo nuovo stenta a nascere e non si è precisamente più niente di definito, in balia dell'identità in formazione" (Magherini 1989, 51). Elizabeth had lost her mother at four; she had been taught French and music, as girls of her social milieu were. She had become the wife of a well-off man six years older than she, and the mother of five children. She had been raised in the Episcopalian religion of her family and husband. But in the few months she spends in Italy she changes from a dependent woman into an autonomous and authoritative person. Though the journal is written for Rebecca, Elizabeth writes of herself for herself. While she sets down her words, she is constructing her female identity through a ceaseless work of self- analysis. During the first eleven days Seton spends in the Lazaretto she writes every day. She does not use the date, only the day of the week. She goes on for several pages and describes her new material and psychological conditions. At the end of November her notes become sporadic and are all marked by the precise date. Then they stop for a week, from December 6 to 9, then resume, but are now very short, sometimes just one sentence; for example, "Thursday a cloudy day, and quiet"

(Bechlte and Metz 2000, 273). Elizabeth may not have had the time to write or she may have been so upset that she could not record her feelings. When she resumes writing, she admits her husband has been on the verge of death. On December 19 they finally leave the Lazaretto and move to Pisa where they rent a flat. Twice William asks to go out in a carriage to see the town, but he is too weak. Soon after, Elizabeth's journal registers these few lines: "At a quarter past 7 on Tuesday morning 27th December—his Soul was released—and mine from a struggle next to death—" (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 274).

William is buried in the English Cemetery in Leghorn; Elizabeth and her daughter remain with the Filicchi until April 1804. A series of unfavourable circumstances delay their departure. First, they attempt to depart for America on the *Shepherdess* at the beginning of February, but the ship is damaged before sailing. Then Ann falls ill with scarlet fever, then Elizabeth takes ill. They finally leave for New York on the *Pyomingo* April 8. Seton goes on writing her journal for Rebecca, intending to give it to her as soon as she arrives. She also sends three letters from Leghorn trusting them to ships bound for Boston. In these letters she makes summarizes events; in the journal she describes her daily Italian life in longer and more descriptive entries. Ann is starting to learn Italian, Elizabeth puts on Italian widow's weeds which will become the uniform of the religious order she will set up once back in America. The three months spent in Italy after her husband's death change her life in unexpected ways. The Filicchi take her to Florence for some days to see the works of art. Here Elizabeth starts her initiation into the Catholic faith. At first it is a sensitive and irrational reaction to an unknown world. She is taken by the mystic atmosphere of Santissima Annunziata:

> my eye was struck with hundreds of persons kneeling, but the gloom of the chapel which is lighted only by the wax tapers on the Altar and a small window at the top darkened with green silk made every object at first appear very indistinct, while that kind of soft and distant musick which lifts the mind to a foretaste of heavenly pleasures called up in an instant every dear and tender idea of my Soul . . . I sank to my Knees in the first place I found vacant, and shed a torrent of tears at the recollection of how long I had been a stranger in the house of my God . . . (Bechlte and Metz 2000, 283)

What fascinates Elizabeth most is the way in which religion is an essential part of everyday life, at least in the Filicchi's household. Catholic churches are always open and people may enter at any time of the day. In New York, Episcopalian churches are open only on Sundays. For Seton to be able to enter into God's house whenever she likes becomes extremely attractive. Elizabeth knows very well how difficult religious conversion is. However, her painful experience in the prison-like Lazaretto has made her self-confident and self-reliant. She leaves her dear husband's body in a foreign land, but her journey to Italy has proved to be not death, but a life voyage. From now on Elizabeth is the mistress of her own future. During her voyage home, Seton is aware of the economic and religious problems she must solve. The *Pyomingo* sails into New York harbour on June 4. After eight months Elizabeth can again hug her children and give Rebecca her journal.[13]

Notes

[1] Seton's transcribed texts follow the originals.

[2] The edition is in three volumes. The first two consist of letters and journals from 1793, just before her marriage, to December 1820, the year before she died. The third volume, which is divided into two books, includes notebooks, instructions, meditations, poems and a variety of other material spanning her entire life.

[3] In 1775 there were about three hundred "Church of England" congregations in the thirteen colonies. During the war many of these communities were persecuted. Quite a number of priests fled to Canada, to Great Britain, and to the West Indies rather than take an oath of allegiance to the Crown when they entered the Church. Others, like William White, the future bishop of Pennsylvania, formed an independent American church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, founded in Philadelphia in 1789. Elizabeth belonged to this church.

[4] Trinity Church was built in 1697 and burned down during the great fire that destroyed New York in 1776. It was re-built, but the roof collapsed in 1830. It was again rebuilt and finished in 1846 on the same location: Broadway, facing Wall Street.

[5] Stone Street in Lower Manhattan is the oldest settlement on the island and the only part that was inhabited at the end of 18th century; the rest of the island had some rural settlements. In 1790, at the time of the first census, the population was 33,000; by 1800 it had doubled. Half the population was of British origin, the other half was Dutch, descendants of the first settlers, and French-Huguenot, German and Black. The natives had disappeared. A useful, brilliant and learned guide of the city is *Sotto le torri di Manhattan* by Mario Maffi.

[6] The Bank of New York was founded in 1784.

[7] Hugh Blair, minister of the High Church and professor of Rhetoric and Belles-lettres at the University of Edinburgh. In the original publication the ninety-one sermons formed five volumes.

[8] Henry Sadler was a rich English merchant who had settled in New York. Located at 215 Water Street, the firm of Sadler and Bailie traded in cloth, wines, indigo and tobacco.

[9] In 1797 she Elizabeth and other women met at the home of Mrs. Isabella Marshall Graham to form a society to aid destitute widows with children in New York City (the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children). Elizabeth served as treasurer for some time. This association was the first charitable organization in the United States managed by women. The Graham-Windham Agency, the current child welfare agency, traces its roots to this society.

[10] 27 Wall Street was the Seton residence from 1795 to 1798. The Wall Street of the 1790's was lined with splendid private residences.

[11] The house still stands. After the Civil War the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary used the building to shelter Irish women and over 170,000 people were accommodated there. Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church was built in 1883 next to this building. Today it is known as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine.

[12] See Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757.

[13] After a long period of internal conflict, Seton became a Catholic in 1805. She went to Baltimore where she founded the first Catholic school for girls in the United States. In 1812 the rules of her Order, The Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph, were ratified. At Emmitsburg, MD, she opened another school and two orphanages. Pope John XXIII proclaimed her saint in 1963 and she was canonized in 1975 by Paul VI. Today the order has six religious communities with more than 5,000 members. They run schools, social centers and hospitals.

Works Cited

Bechtle, Regina, and Judith Metz, eds. *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*. 3 Vols. New York: New City Press, 2000, 2002, 2006.

Brilli, Attilio. *Quando viaggiare era un'arte: Il romanzo del Gran Tour*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1995.

De Barberey, Hélène Bailly. *Elizabeth Seton et les commencements de l'Eglise catholique aux Etats-Unis*. Paris: Poussielgue, 1868.

Dirvin, Joseph I. *Mrs Seton, Foundress of the American Sisters of Charity*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1962.

Franchi, Gino, ed. *Il viaggio in Italia: Lettere e diari*. Livorno: Editasca, 2003.

_____. *Un dialogo di amicizia e di fede: Corrispondenza tra i Seton e i Filicchi (1788-1890)*. Livorno: Books and Company, 2006.

Magherini, Graziella. *La sindrome di Stendhal.* Firenze: Ponte alle Grazie, 1989.

O'Hara, Edward. *Elizabeth Seton and Her Legacy*. New York: The Elizabeth Seton Library College of Mount Saint Vincent, 2004.

White, Charles. *Life of Mrs Eliza A. Seton*. New York: Dunigan, 1853.

American Poets Abroad

Coordinators: Gregory Dowling, Francesco Rognoni

Gregory Dowling, Francesco Rognoni

Introduction

The aim of the workshop was to consider those American poets who had chosen to ignore Emerson's famous call to sing "our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boasts and our reputations," and instead devote their attention to non-native subjects. Some poets clearly felt no need to resist the courtly muses of Europe and some found ways to define their American-ness by deliberately confronting non-American themes and subject-matters, whether in the Old World or elsewhere.

Antonella Francini offers the interesting case of Jorie Graham, whose own multi-linguistic background makes her one of the most cosmopolitan American poets since Longfellow or Pound. Francini's paper concentrates both on her openness to varied art-forms and on what Helen Vendler has defined her "polyvocality."

It was inevitable that a paper should have been devoted to Elizabeth Bishop. However, Paola Nardi's paper subverts our expectations by focusing on the poet's childhood Canadian experiences, rather than her European or Brazilian travels. Nardi shows just how far-reaching and pervasive the Canadian influence was on Bishop; her childhood memories and her returns to the "Great Village" provided a yardstick for an ideal landscape by which all other settings and experiences were to be measured.

Francesco Rognoni discusses the poetry of Anthony Hecht, concentrating in particular on one of his Roman poems. The paper offers a close reading of what is perhaps his most disturbing poem, "Behold the Lilies," bringing a wealth of classical research and biographical information to bear on it, and investigating the traumas that lie beneath the poem and provide much of its unsettling power.

Gregory Dowling considers Richard Wilbur's early war poems. Wilbur's European poems have sometimes been criticised as examples of the "Fulbright school," diligently but coolly observing European art and architecture from the point of view of the cultured tourist. Dowling points out that Wilbur's first experiences of Europe were not those of a tourist, and how the traumatic experiences of a shattered continent help explain his commitment to an art that celebrates an ordered world.

Massimo Bacigalupo gives a broad overview of 20th-century American poets in Italy. Ezra Pound, of course, is the leading figure; Bacigalupo points out that it is often ignored that the *Cantos* are "largely centered on Italy and its history." He sees the Beat poets, like Ginsberg, Corso and Ferlinghetti, as following in some way in Pound's footsteps. James Merrill is more usually associated with Greece, but Bacigalupo points out that his autobiography reveals that he was made "different" by his time in Italy. He concludes with Charles Wright, who belongs more firmly to the Pound tradition, having written several poems in homage to the older poet.

Antonella Francini

Multilingualism and Structural Drama in Jorie Graham's Poetry

Interviewed in 2003 by Thomas Gardner for *The Paris Review*, Jorie Graham recalled the facts that have made her into one of the most cosmopolitan American poets of her generation. Born in New York City in 1950, when she was three months old her mother brought her to Southern France. When she was two, her parents moved to Positano, Italy, and then to Rome where she grew up in a household where, she recalls, "art and the news intermingled daily." The daughter of a sculptor and a journalist who was then the director of the Rome bureau of *Newsweek*, Graham remembers episodes and anecdotes of her upbringing in a trilingual environment among a heterogeneous crowd of artists, filmmakers, novelists, philosophers, politicians, rock stars, and prelates. "English was my third language," she says, "after Italian [the language spoken at home] and French." In Rome she first studied at the Montessori School, then at the Licée Chateaubriand, "the French lens," as she calls it now, through which Rome and Roman history were seen (Graham 2003, 67, 72-73, 75 and 77).

In 1968 Graham moved to Paris to study sociology at the Sorbonne, but the student uprisings caused her to leave shortly after and to finally land in the States, essentially for the first time, as a film and literature major at New York University. "I really didn't know the United States existed much at all," she comments on her time in Rome, "except for watching its tourists and actors." She had visited America only once, "as a ten year old, for a month-long visit, before [her] mother took [her] on a seven-month trip around the world." At New York University film studies appeared to suit her. As film, Graham says, "utilizes an almost universal language—the image—working in it was a good transition for a not-yet-fluent speaker of English" (*The Paris Review* 2003, 73 and 75). Her literature professor was M.L. Rosenthal, who turned her towards poetry, and taught her English. Here are Graham's words:

> I learned English from him, in a sense, or from his habit of reading huge quantities of poetry aloud, class after class. For the first months I just basically sat and listened to him read the greatest poems in the language . . . Only after those great actions of spirit were in my ear—and mouth—did I "study" them. (Graham 2003, 76)

Her academic career subsequently brought her to Kentucky, California, and for a long time to Iowa and Wyoming. Currently, she lives partly in Cambridge (she is Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, succeeding Seamus Heaney), partly in Normandy, and she frequently visits Italy. She is still very fluent in both Italian and French.

In *The Paris Review* interview Graham also beautifully outlines in retrospect her relationship with the different places where she has lived—her relationship with space and time. Rome was historical time, a space where one is overwhelmed with a "sweeping sensation of history," and where her "sense of the dimensions of prior times, lives, and actions that swelled up through that city" made her feel like a ghost, "yet another human soul added to the massive pile of soul-debris" (*The Paris Review* 2003, 73 and 70). At the other end of her experience there is the geological time of Wyoming, where she felt equally like a ghost in those vast expanses of space, where "the issues of justice, the causes and effects of history just vanish," where "any assumptions you might make about the importance of the human on this planet" need to be corrected, and "your consciousness [has] no access to the place." Historical time and geological time are the two extremes that, she explains, "played a great role in my life and my creative life," as she had the chance to live deeply in both of them (Graham 2003, 71 and 70). France and the experience of "politics," in between, represented her opening up to reality, to "other forms of the present, more defined by ideas than by sensation, imagination, myth, story"—a bridge between childhood and adulthood (*The Paris Review* 2003, 73).

How has this triple background affected Graham's poetry? Undoubtedly, ideas (or thinking), socio-political issues, and history (personal, collective and cultural) are three major thematic blocks in her poetry that one might trace back to her multicultural upbringing. The vast landscapes may be regarded as a backdrop for her metaphysical meditations. They are places, she points out in a 1996 interview which, in *Materialism* (1993), her sixth volume, represent the encounter with "something [she] would consider 'other', something that resists the will of the speaker"; in her second book, *Erosion* (1983), Italian paintings are the resistant material, whose fixity and apparent eternal nature she tries to break, to erode and open up to new meanings; in *The End of Beauty* (1987), that 'otherness' is given by mythological figures; in *Region of Unlikeness* (1991), autobiographical facts turn into the "texture against which [she was testing her] sense of what *knowing*, or *thinking*, or *feeling* is" (quoted in Vendler, 172). We notice a similar tension also in her later work: in *Swarm* (2000) language itself is under her lens while the motion of the sea and of the tides, or urban and global views of degradation and danger, for example, challenge the speaker's will in her recent poetry.

But it is Graham's characteristic syntactical structures and grammatical idiosyncrasies that, in my view, mostly reflect her multicultural upbringing and, specifically, her relationship with English, the tongue chosen for her writing after some experimentation in French. Her poetry, in Helen Vendler's words, pictures "a mind in action," and her language is made "to fit the mind's motions" (Vendler, 171 and 184). The peremptory voice we hear throughout her writing directs the linguistic drama that Graham enacts on the page, staging an infinite series of thought rehearsals in the attempt to reconstruct a crumbling reality and give it form and meaning. This voice arranges and rearranges words, transforms and elaborates the language, and reshapes structures, often being self-corrective in these arrangements, resounding, all along, as a voice external to the poetic construction we are reading, like a sort of voice-over that places itself mid-way between the subject matter and the reader, involving us in the creation of meaning. This speaker outsider to the text is a characteristic feature of Graham's writing—in her early short-lined verse in regular stanzas as well as in her mature stylistic ventures into long-lined sentences broken into fragments, dissolved, even, into isolated words.

I would now like to give two examples of Graham's voice-over. The first comes from the beginning of her early poem "Masaccio's Expulsion" from *Erosion*, a book whose "antiphonal symmetries" show, Helen Vendler writes, "the mind in dialectic motion" (Vendler, 172), in and out of the observed painting. This motion activates another distinguishing feature of Graham's writing, the interrogative mode, which helps to bring the reader further into the text as a listener or an interlocutor:

Is this really the failure
            of silence
or eternity, where these two
            suffer entrance
into the picture
            plane,

a man and a woman
            so hollowed
by grief they cover
            they eyes
in order not to see
            the inexhaustible grammar

before them—labour, judgement,
            saints and peddlers—

The poem begins as an ekphrasis of Masaccio's painting in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence, yet soon moves away from this mode. In Graham's lines, Adam and Eve cover their eyes to reject given interpretations, "the inexhaustible grammar." The meeting between the gaze and the painting leads the onlooker "to harrow the fixities," as Graham writes in another such original ekphrasis ("Noli Me Tangere," Graham 1987, 40)—that is, to tear the given data, the expected, in order to expand the poetic power of observation, providing access to things unseen, renewing art's power. The poem goes on for several stanzas, ever more an intimate response to the initial open question and a mental space within which to counteract the downcast look of Masaccio's Adam and Eve with new meanings. And in fact it continues to digress towards something quite different: a crack or a stain the poet notices in the fresco is imaginatively expanded into the image of a bird (perhaps an objectification of her gaze) flying over the painting in search of a renewed relationship between the viewer and art. All along Graham's voice-over places itself firmly outside the text, in the space where visitors presumably stand in the Cappella Brancacci.

My second example comes from the opening lines of a later poem, "Praying (Attempt of May 9 '03)" from *Overlord* (2005), a book in which Graham focuses on war and on other forms of self-destructions. Here too we hear the poet's voice while it constructs the image of a praying figure, in a church perhaps, placing itself again in that mid-position between the text of the prayer and the reader outside the text, implicating us with that down-to-earth conversational start as if her supplication were uttered also on our behalf:

I don't know where to start. I don't think my face
in my hands is right. Please don't let us destroy
your world. No *the* world. I know I know nothing. I know I
can't use you like this. It feels better if I'm on
my knees, if my eyes are pressed shut so I can see
the other things, the tiniest ones. Which can still escape
us. Am I human. Please show me mercy. No please show
a way

Even when the object under inspection is Graham herself, the "outside" position of her voice persists. Here is the opening poem in the volume *Swarm*–—her most experimental book to date—entitled "*from* The Reformation Journal":

The wisdom I have heretofore trusted was cowardice, the leaper.

*

I am not lying. There is no lying in me,

*

I surrender myself like the sinking ship,

*

a burning wreck from which the depth will get theirs when the heights
have gotten theirs.

*

My throat is an open grave. I hide my face.

*

I have all reduced all to lower case.
I have crossed out passages
I have severely trimmed and cleared.

Graham is actually editing her own work, glossing her text, or adding footnotes to it as much for her own benefit as for ours: it is 'on-the-page' live editing. To note also the way she arranges the lines on the page, isolating segments of thought with asterisks in order to bring them into full light, putting them on display. What we see on the page is a language in progress, shaping and reshaping itself as the poet's thoughts turn into words. We are observing a mind in search of a resting place, pushed forward by her inquiries into the relationship between self and world.

Graham's voice-over has one first major effect: it creates what she calls the "sensation of real time" (Graham 2003, 63)—that is, it makes the time of the poem printed on the page cross over into the real time of the reader. Her poems become, she points out in the 2003 interview, "rather large exfoliations of what I would take to be an instant of time"; obsessively, especially in her recent poetry, she uses the adverbs *here* and *now*, which are terms, she says, that "summon *presence*. In the literal sense as well as the spiritual" (Graham 2003, 57). To present "the sensation of real time" is therefore an attempt, she explains, discussing her book *Never* (2002),

> to change the power ratio of witness to world, to give the world—the subject—more power. To get one's self to where one is open to being "corrected" by the given….Also an attempt to enact the time in which it takes to see the thing, the time in which that seen thing is living and constantly changing, the time it takes to "take" those actions down, the time in which my language is occurring, your reading is occurring—to make all that a piece. The mutability of the external meeting the mutability of the internal.
>
> [. . .]
>
> Things from consciousness, self-consciousness, memory, random thought, from an aside. Or multiple things noticed at once. Multiple things happening at once. (Graham 2003, 63 and 66)

To further explain her concept of the "real time" and her strategies to make the readers participate in her acts of perceptions and descriptions, she discusses Tarkovski's film *Nostalghia*, a work which "shaped [her] sense of how the real-time effect works in art." Focusing on the filmmaker's shift from representational to actual time in the last thirteen minutes of his work, she points out that through this kind of "iconic action" the actor accomplishes his performance within the time it would actually take him in real life, and explains that this technique makes the viewer's mind overlap with the work of art in front of his/her eyes. Having had the opportunity to work with Jorie Graham on the translation of an anthology of her poetry which was published in the

Fall of 2008, I have discussed at length with her the mechanisms that activate her poems. During one of our conversations, she mentioned (as she mentions in *The Paris Review*) that in her poetry classes she often teaches Caravaggio's painting *Supper at Emmaus*, a painting where Christ sits at the centre of the scene, at a table set for a meal. On the table is a basket of fruit which, oddly enough, protrudes into the vacuum, into the space that is our space; the host, recognizing the stranger as Christ, throws open his arms and his left hand also protrudes from the scene into the space in the National Gallery where visitors stand looking at the painting. This produces the same effect that Graham's voice-over does on the page, spanning the gap between object and subject, viewer and what is being viewed or, in her words, connecting "that immortal-because-imaginary space Christ occupies with the mortal one of the gallery in which I am standing breathing my minutes." It activates a live encounter so that the artist fulfils his task by bringing reader and subject together (Graham 2003, 63). But how does all this translate into Graham's poetry?

Typically her writing presents parenthetical insertions, brackets, parenthesis within brackets, dashes and slashes, puns, the same words repeated across a passage to create echoes and rhythms, series of nominal clauses, ellipsis, blanks, asides, grammatical oddities. Such devices are Graham's stylistic strategies employed to make, as Helen Vendler writes, her "single voice multiple," "to bring into the lyric a polyvocality" (Vendler 2005, 179) capable of registering simultaneous perceptions and phenomena, and to create "the sensation of real time." An internal disruptive power seems to be at work in Graham's texts, which turns the English language into a pliable tool for her multiple thinking. Calvin Bedient writes that Graham attempts "the impossible totality of all directions and perspectives" (Bedient 2005, 288). Here is an example of her mature style from "Passenger," a poem from *Overlord* about a taxi driver in New York City, an immigrated worker:

> You are so far away now from
>
> *your country*—you have had to give up something so great
> [God only knows what] [I don't know what] for money,
> I mean let's face it, for money to send home, yes, and then
> to get all the stuff—not very much it is true but they make
> you feel it is always almost enough. Also you are scared
> [therefore the flags on your windows] [one on the car itself]. (Graham, 2005, 70)

In this passage the brackets accomplish the same task as the basket in Caravaggio's painting, or the final scene in Tarkovski's film. Elsewhere the speaker, just like a film or a theatre director, gives orders for the actions she is setting up in front of our eyes, as she does in the opening passage of "Middle Distance" in *Swarm*:

> This is certain.
> Dream has no friends.
> Bottom is there but depth conceals it.
> Centuries cannot see us.
> Here, in liberty.
> (enter others)
> What are these eyes for?
> What are these hands for?
> I have been listening. A long time (looks around)
> The "frontier labyrinth" (gestures)
> All the people in history (gestures further)
> The heart in my throat (spotlight in wilderness). (Graham 2000, 37)

At other times subjects are omitted to open the text to multiple directions as we notice in "From the New World," a poem from *Region of Unlikeness*, Graham's 1991 book where personal facts are linked to historical events (the Holocaust in this case), and epistemological questions. The poem is in fact an account of a girl who somehow survived a Nazi gas chamber only to be raped and be sent back into the chamber later to die, of the 1987 trial of the concentration camp guard responsible for her death, and of Graham's memory of her grandparents as an old couple:

> Has to do with the story of the girl who didn't die
>   in the gas chamber, who came back out asking
> for her mother . . .
>
> Has to do with her coming back out? Asking for her mother?
>   Can you help me in this?
> Are you there in your stillness? Is it a real place?
>   God knows I too want the poem to continue,
> want the silky swerve into shapeliness. (Graham 1995, 106)

The reader is asked to participate in the formation of meaning, to get involved in the historical fact and its relevance to present time. What does the missing third-person subject refer to? What is it that "has to do" with the girl's story, with the trial, and with the poet's grandparents put in separate Homes for elderly people? Perhaps it is our unsettled relationship with the atrocities of history, with our collective past; perhaps it is the small daily cruelties that go unnoticed. In this poem the greater history mingles and clashes with the quotidian to create a cumbersome bulk of uneasy feelings and guilt which continue to ask for trials and redemption. When reading Graham's poetry we typically reach such a perspective, and from here one could move on to discuss the ethical component in her work, transcending language itself.

A second major consequence of Graham's voice-over, technically speaking, is the distance we perceive between the poet and her raw material, the English language—a distance she needs to create to objectively convey her primary effect of real time and multiple thinking. From this removed position she firmly controls her language, freely manipulating, transforming, re-envisioning her structures to capture simultaneous mental facts and make them exist in a cohesive manner, as one single utterance. Indeed, like a film director, Graham enacts on the page the drama of her restless and questing mind, phrasing and rephrasing, arranging and re-arranging the setting for her "little utopia," as she calls the project of civilization she exhorts her reader/interlocutor to reconstruct. English appears then to be her 'host' language, the idiom that gives hospitality to her multiculturalism, her multilingualism, her mixed background, her mixed field of academic studies. This being the origin of her writing, her poetical language bears its refraction as a translation bears the refraction of its original text. Her plural background is metabolized into her syntactical inventions and twists of language, into an overwhelming flux of words that swarms on the page in search of a simultaneous syncretism for her triple cultures, her triple pasts, her triple identities. Punning on a famous line in English poetry, we might say that 'in her beginning is the origin of Jorie Graham's stylistic devices.'

Works Cited

Bedient, Calvin. "Toward a Jorie Graham Lexicon." In *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry*, ed. Thomas Gardner, 275-291, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

Graham, Jorie. *Erosion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983.

_____. *The End of Beauty*. Hopewell, NJ.: Ecco Press, 1987.

_____. *Materialism*. Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press, 1993.

_____. The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974-1994. New York: HarperCollins 1995

_____. *Swarm*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.

_____."The Art of Poetry No. 85." *The Paris Review* 165 (2003): 56-97.

_____. *Overlord*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Vendler, Helen. "Indigo, Cyanine, Beryl: Review of Never (2000)." In *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry*, ed. Thomas Gardner, 170-184, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

Paola Nardi

Elizabeth Bishop and Canadian Space

The goal of this essay is to analyse whether and how Elizabeth Bishop's initial contact with Canadian space may have influenced her poetry. The Canadian province of Nova Scotia is, first of all, the subject of some of her poems. However, it is also indirectly present in other compositions dealing with different topics. At the same time, it shows Bishop's predilection for images of islands, lighthouses, sea/coast and for a poetry of geography and place, as she herself declared in an interview in 1970: "when I travel my principal interest is not people. What really appeals to me is scenery and architecture" (Monteiro 1996, 51). Life outdoors and exposure to Canadian space are two of the main traits of Bishop's experience of Canada during her childhood and during her return trips there as an adult, and it is true that Bishop's recollections of Nova Scotia often refer to landscapes, seascapes, the intersection between earth and water, and lighthouses or edifices built on land but facing the ocean.[1] Although focusing on different aspects, other readers of Bishop's poetry have regarded her Canadian background as an important influence on her work. The British poet Peter Levi, for example, detects a sort of "Canadian or North Eastern coolness and tartness" (Sanger 1985, 15) in her prose while Peter Sanger finds in Bishop's language "signs" of her stay in Great Village, a peculiar use of words like "some" or "yes" that she must have heard during her visits to the island as a child and later as an adult (Sanger 1992, 54).

In her writings about her childhood Bishop describes Canadian Nova Scotia in great detail, the place where her maternal grand-parents and relatives lived and where she spent long periods of her life till 1928, when she began at Walnut Hill Boarding School. However, only after settling in Petropolis, Brazil, in 1952 did Elizabeth Bishop manage to come to terms with and write about her difficult childhood. Bishop was always opposed to confessional poetry: many people, she affirms, "seldom have anything interesting to 'confess' anyway. Mostly they write about a lot of things which I should think were best left unsaid" (Ellis 2002, 64). She was not opposed to autobiographical writing per se but to a use of one's biography in a confessional way, a risk that she avoids by mastering feelings and emotions through form. Thanks to "a rare feeling of control" (Ellis 2002, 65) her own life and past experiences enter her poetry and become the subject of her art.

Although it would be absurd to consider Elizabeth Bishop as a Canadian writer since she spent the greater part of her life in the United States and Brazil, it is essential to remember that Bishop refers to herself as a transnational person: "In origin I am half-Canadian, half-American from New England" (Monteiro 1996, 17) with a family that lived across borders: "It's amusing. Before the American Revolution my ancestors belonged to opposing parties" (Monteiro 1996, 17)[2]. The days spent in Great Village at the house of her maternal grand-parents seem to have been the most secure and serene in her uneasy and tormented childhood. The death of her father when she was a few months old and the mental illness of the mother, who disappeared from her early childhood life when Bishop was five and her mother entered a mental hospital, made Bishop practically an orphan. The poet expresses a willingness to clearly separate her experiences of Nova Scotia and New England, the two places where she spent her childhood. In an interview Bishop spoke of Nova Scotia in terms of being "smaller than New England and much more understandable to a child's mind" (Monteiro 1996, 60) with a tone of "characteristic regional sensitivity" (Monteiro 1996, 60), according to the interviewer. In the poet's mind the two apparently similar geographical areas always remained separate and her preference for the Canadian region is apparent in her words and in the emotions she betrayed in her recollections of the past. Listening to Bishop talking about her childhood, Sheila Hale comments that she was attached to New England neither by deep roots nor by temperament" while "she speaks with special affection of two of her Canadian ancestors" (Monteiro 1996, 111). As Thomas Travisano underlines, "the sensuous richness of detail found in the many poems and stories set in Great Village and the paucity of writing about the rest of her childhood attest to the importance of the time spent there (Travisano 1989, 23).

The profound difference in the lives that Elizabeth Bishop led first in Great Village and then in Worcester, Massachusetts, could possibly be at the origin of this sharp distinction between the regions. When her paternal grand-parents went to Nova Scotia in the Fall of 1917 to take the six-year-old Elizabeth back with them to Worcester, they put an end to a period of peace and relative joy, wishing to raise and educate their only grandchild to the Bishop family's standards. In her autobiographical short story "The Country Mouse" Bishop remembered the emotions of that day—"I felt as if I were being kidnapped" (Bishop 1984, 14)—and lists the reasons for her "kidnapping":

> I had been brought back unconsulted and against my wishes to the house my father had been born in, to be saved from a life of poverty and provincialism, bare feet, suet puddings,

> unsanitary school slates, perhaps even from the inverted *r*'s of my mother's family. With this surprising extra set of grandparents, until a few weeks ago no more than names, a new life was about to begin. (Bishop 1984, 17)

As Brett Millier states in her biography of Elizabeth Bishop, the poet's "lifelong troubles with her expatriate condition [arises] here as the essentially Canadian first-grader begins her American education during the years of World War I" (Millier 1993, 21). Still considering herself a Canadian, in "The Country Mouse" Elizabeth Bishop reveals her uneasiness with patriotic rituals:

> I hated [war] songs, and most of all I hated saluting the flag. I would have refused if I had dared. In my Canadian schooling the year before, we had started every day with "God Save the King" and "The Maple Leaf Forever." Now I felt like a traitor. I wanted us to win the War, of course, but I did not want to be an American. (Bishop 1984, 26)

Despite the anxiety of her paternal grandparents, life in Great Village ensured Elizabeth Bishop a secure home in the welcoming house of her Bulmer grandparents. She came to love the interior and decorations of the house, the relaxed and spontaneous relationships with neighbors and relatives that turned the village into a kind of extended household, and the island itself with its rocky shores, tides, lighthouses, thick woods and the murmuring brook, green in summer "with thick grass, elm trees and evergreen" and under spectacular skies, "pure blue skies, skies that travellers compare to those of Switzerland, too dark, too blue, so that they seem to keep on darkening a little more around the horizon . . . the color of the cloud of bloom on the elm trees, the violet on the fields of oats" (Bishop 1984, 251).

References to her Canadian childhood and to subsequent visits to the country are innumerable in her prose, poems, interviews, letters, notebooks and unpublished documents. Among them the recollections of Canadian scenery are particularly interesting for this essay. Her predilection for poetry with geographical subjects could have had its roots in her first experiences at primary school in Great Village. There she was surrounded by geographical maps and was strongly impressed by them, at an age when every detail and event seem to have been very important for this particularly sensitive and attentive child. In her memoir "Primer Class" she vividly recalled her first school days and gave proof of her formidable and unfaltering memory:

> Only the third and the fourth grades studied geography. On their side of the room, over the blackboard, were two rolled-up maps, one of Canada and one of the whole world. When they had a geography lesson, Miss Morash pulled down one or both of these maps, like window shades. They were on cloth, very limp, with a shiny surface, and in pale colors—tan, pink, yellow and green—surrounded by the blue that was the ocean . . . On the world map, all of Canada was pink; on the Canadian, the provinces were different colors. I was so taken with the pull-down maps that I wanted to snap them up, and pull

> them down again, and touch all the countries and provinces with my own hands . . . I got the general impression that Canada was the same size as the world . . . and that in the world and Canada the sun was always shining and everything was dry and glittering. At the same time I knew perfectly well that this was not true. (Bishop 1984, 10-11)

For this six-year-old child Canada represented the world and there, in the coastal town of Great Village in the Canadian Province of Nova Scotia, she found her first real home. Although during her life Bishop lived elsewhere and found other beloved and unforgettable houses—she declared that her favorite houses were the ones in Key West, Florida, the Casa Mariana in Ouro Prêto, Brazil and the Sabine Farm, North Haven, Maine—for her, Great Village represented the place of her origins, the best place to return to, to grow old and spend the last days of her life in a sort of ritual homecoming. "Do you think the Great Village home would be a good place to retire to in my old age?" (Bishop 1994, 379) she wrote to her Aunt Grace in 1959; later she enquired more than once about the possibility of buying a house in Great Village: "I would like something *old*, with one of those heavenly peaceful views… and with as much as land as possible . . . and some woods and a brook—and a pasture for a cow!" (Millier 1993, 348).

When referring to Nova Scotia, or more in general to Canada, in her letters, interviews or conversations Bishop seemed unable to forget the magnificence of the scenery, views and colors. In a letter to Marianne Moore she wrote about the Bay of Fundy: the amazing tides (going out for hundreds of miles and then coming in with a rise of 80 feet), and the island's shades in detail (terra cotta pink, pale lime-greens and yellows, dark blue-green). For Bishop this bay was "the richest, saddest, simplest landscape in the world. I hadn't been there for so long I'd forgotten how beautiful it all is—and the magnificent elm trees" (Bishop 1994, 139). Again in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton was instead "one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen" (Bishop 1994, 145) and several times in her frequent letters to her favourite Aunt Grace she declared "I really envy you being in Nova Scotia" (Bishop 1994, 320) or confessed her homesickness: "I do wish I could get there now to see the colors of the maple trees" (Bishop 1994, 341); for her Nova Scotia's "fall colors" were "better there than anywhere else" (Bishop 1994, 573).

Taking her *oeuvre* into consideration, eight of Bishop's poems are set in Nova Scotia and their book publication ranges from 1946 to 1976[3]. Canada with its overpowering nature, unlimited expanse of land and water, ocean and inland seas, and myriads of islands many of which are still unknown, could not be easily erased from the mind of the child and later of the adult; Bishop defined herself as a person able to "remember things that happened to me when I was two. It's very rare, but apparently writers often do"(Millier 1993, 8).

A work which appeared for the first time in *The New Yorker* and in the same year in her first collection *North and South*, “A Large Bad Picture,” is the first of Bishop’s compositions set in Canada. As the poet herself revealed in an interview, the composition was inspired by a picture painted by one of her mother’s uncles which she saw hanging on the wall of her grandmother’s house in Great Village. The poem shows a seascape, a view the painter had recreated “remembering the Strait of Belle Isle or / some northerly harbor of Labrador,”[4] according to the interpretation of the poetic voice. Through topographical names Canada is introduced directly into the poem and it is apparently a still, peaceful, almost pastoral Canada. “The flushed, still sky” hangs over “pale blue cliffs” “receding for miles” constantly and undisturbed; the sea in the bay is a “quiet floor” where a “fleet of small black ships” can “sit” with “sails furled, motionless” as if perfectly arranged by a scrupulous orderly mind. In the sky there are “hundreds of black birds,” whose cries are the only real sound that can be heard, and a “small red sun” motionless in a “perpetual sunset.”

However, the scene “is rich with other suggestions” (Rotella 1991, 211) that move beyond the idyll described above. The cliffs are “fretted by little arches, / the entrances to caves” that are actually unknown, holes that could undermine the stability of the cliffs themselves and cause them to collapse. The “perfect waves” mask the bay instead of revealing it and there are two menacing black spots (ships and birds) that spoil the beautiful scheme of joyful colours: pale blue, red, pink. The words “burnt,” “sighing” and “crying” hint at nature of a different kind, not harmless and pastoral, and therefore the “consoling” role of the sunset becomes more comprehensible. The ship has only “apparently” reached its destination. Has the journey been interrupted by the turbulence of the sea? Between the lines the poetic voice dismantles the artifice of this painted world and recalls the destructive power of the waves, a force directly experienced by Bishop’s great-grandfather Hutchinson, who was lost at sea off Sable Island.[5] The poet often recalls this tragedy in memories of her past and honored it with a visit to Sable Island in 1951: “I am trying to get out to Sable Island, cheerfully known as ‘the graveyard of the Atlantic’ (my great-grandfather & his schooner and all hands were lost there, among hundreds of others)”(Bishop 2006, 300).

The world of fishermen and fisheries returns in another poem with Canadian echoes “At the Fishhouses.” In the summer of 1946 Bishop travelled to Nova Scotia, “her first trip back since her mother’s death” in 1934 (Millier 1993, 181), and ended her stay with her first visit to Aunt Grace and Great Village in almost fifteen years. The notebooks written during this summer are full of entries about this journey, ideas that eventually contributed to “At the Fishhouses” and to another famous Canadian poem, “The Moose.” Bishop’s biographer Brett Millier affirms that this "trip was both deeply disturbing and deeply significant to Elizabeth in ways that it would take her years to articulate. […] This trip home gave Elizabeth back her childhood as artistic material" (Millier 1993, 181). "At the Fishhouses" was first published in August 1947 in *The New Yorker* when Bishop was again visiting Canada and then included in her second collection *A Cold Spring*. The poem deals with issues of knowledge and identity placed in a specific cultural, geographical and social context, that of the fishery tradition of the coastal Great Village where people "make their living with dairy products, eggs, and cattle, or by fishing" (Millier 1993, 16). The old fisherman sitting and "netting / his net" introduced in the first lines "was a friend of my grandfather," explains the narrator's voice. The Bishop's family tradition in seafaring appears once again, together with her familiarity and perfect knowledge of the place thanks to her constant immersion in this atmosphere. It is the Canada of the south-eastern coast and of the islands, of its miles of rock-shores and of its "cold dark deep and absolutely clear, / the clear gray icy water" with the "dignified tall firs" beginning immediately behind the shore. The knowledge of the place is knowledge acquired through first-hand experience. The poetic voice invites the reader to direct contact with the sea: "if you should dip your hand in," "if you tasted it." The precise description of the consequences of these two actions bears witness to the fact that the narrator has already yielded to this impulse, probably in childhood, since the touching and tasting of water is typical of children when meeting the sea. As her notebooks reveal, many of the images present in the poem have their sources in the impressions which arose in Bishop's mind while observing the Atlantic in Nova Scotia, a place alluded to also at the end of the poem through the "rocky breasts," reminding the reader that Nova Scotia is the land of Bishop's mother.

Immediately following "At the Fishhouses" in the collection *A Cold Spring* is "Cape Breton," another poem openly set in Nova Scotia. Bishop's trip to Cape Breton in the summer of 1947 was the source of inspiration for this poem and for another work, "A Summer's Dream," that precedes "At the Fishhouses" in the same collection. In December 1947 Bishop wrote a letter to Robert Lowell declaring: "I am also doing a couple of Cape Breton [poems] started this summer" (Bishop 1994, 152). Another letter that the poet wrote, again to Lowell, in August from Cape Breton itself is, however, more revealing:

> This is a nice place—just a few houses and fishhouses scattered about in the fields, beautiful mountainous scenary and the ocean. I like the people particularly, they are all Scotch and still speak Gaelic, or English with a strange rather cross-sounding accent. Offshore are two "bird-islands" with high red cliffs. We are going out with a fisherman to see them tomorrow. They are sanctuaries where there are auks and the only puffins left on the continent, or so they tell us. There are real ravens on the beach too, something I have never seen before—enormous with sort of rough black beards under their beaks. (Bishop 1994, 147)

The title of the poem unequivocally declares its setting, even more precisely mentioned in the first line, with the naming of the two "bird islands, Ciboux and Hertford," which Bishop expressed her intention to visit in the letter. The landscape is here "the grand natural background to the human communities that appear to be 'dropped into' it" (Blasing 1995, 92). The Canadian scenery is composed of mist hanging in "thin layers," "the valleys and the gorges of the mainland," the "folds and folds of fir: spruce and hackmateck," by "deep lakes," "mountains of rocks," and "dark brooks." It is the typical Canadian landscape that Frye describes in terms of "empty spaces, [...] largely unknown lakes, and rivers, and islands" (Frye 1971, xxiii). Its Canadian specificity, however, lies not only in its being a plausible description of a real Canadian scene but also in the attitude of the poet confronted by nature. In reality, "whatever the landscape had of meaning appears to have been abandoned"; the landscape described in "Cape Breton" seems to resist interpretation and does not offer any access to ultimate truths. "The little white churches . . . dropped into the matted hills / like lost quartz arrowheads" reveal the indifference of nature towards the human communities it harbors, echoing what Margaret Atwood describes as a common image in Canadian literature: "nature seen as dead, or alive but indifferent, or alive and actively hostile towards man" (Atwood 1972, 54). But this image of an "inaccessible and illegible nature" (Blasing 1995, 92), a "kind of space in which [you] find [yourselves] lost" (Atwood 1972, 18) co-exists in the poem with the image of beautiful and untouched nature menaced by the intrusion of human beings: the mist "incorporates the pulse, / rapid but unurgent, of a motorboat"; on the wild road are parked "small yellow bulldozers," while "in the interior" there are "miles of burnt forests standing in gray scratches." As Margaret Atwood explains, in contemporary Canadian literature "the problem is no longer how to avoid being swallowed up by a cannibalistic nature, but how to avoid destroying her" (Atwood 1972, 50), the same tendency expressed by Frye who considers ecology the present major social problem in Canada, arguing that "the feelings of Canadians towards nature [have] changed over time from terror to guilt, as they 'polluted, and imprisoned and violated' but never really lived with nature" (Frye 1971, xviii).

In addition to these eight poems clearly focusing on Canada, there are many others echoing the poet's Canadian experience in their attention to geography and spatial descriptions. Bishop openly admits her sympathies on several occasions: commenting on her poems with Anna Quindlen, she says "I think geography comes first in my work and then animals" (Monteiro 1996, X), while in a 1948 letter she is even more explicit on this point: "A sentence in Auden's Airman's Journal has always seemed very profound to me . . . something about time and space and how geography is a thousand times more important to a modern man than history—I always like to feel exactly where I am geographically all the time, on the map" (Millier 1993, 78).

Poems centered on landscape, even if not Canadian, are numerous. "A Cold Spring" set in her friend Jane Dewey's farm in Havre de Grace, Maryland, recalls her Canadian experience not only in her careful description of lawns, trees, flowers, and woods with maples typical of her childhood—"After lunch we drove to Worcester. I think I must have fallen asleep, But I do remember arriving at a driveway lines with huge maple trees. To my slight resentment (after all, hadn't I been singing 'O maple leaf, our emblem dear' for years?) they were pointed out and named to me" (Bishop 1984, 17)—but also in Bishop's choice of describing the birth of a calf, a detail that brings back her childhood in Great Village when visiting her Aunt Grace's farm, which Bishop recalls was "always described as the most beautiful farm on the Bay of Fundy, and I think it must be" (Bishop 1994, 139).[6]

The seascape of "The Bight" has its origins in the excavations under way at Garrison Bight in Key West, a scene Bishop described in a letter to Lowell as one of familiar disorder. Watching this view with its tides, birds and ships, the narrator in the poem affirms that "the bight is littered with old correspondences." The poet's past comes once again to the surface and it is not difficult to compare this description with similar examples detailing Canadian coastal scenery. The famous and widely commented "Crusoe in England" instead shows Bishop's love, almost obsession, for islands: "I'd have / nightmares of other islands / stretching away from mine, infinities / of islands, islands spawning islands, / like frogs' eggs turning into polliwogs / of islands, knowing that I had to live / on each and every one". In a composition book Bishop began writing in 1934 she noted: "'simplify life' all the time—that's the fascination of an island. . . . the idea of making things do—of using things in unthought of ways because it is necessary . . . It is an island feeling certainly" (Millier 1993, 62). Bishop's first experience with islands was in Nova Scotia, where she lived the simple life of a farm, a life she described as consisting of "hard work . . . but always cheerful and funny" (Bishop 1994, 140-1), where "contriving and inventing" "(Millier 1993, 62) was necessary all the time as "something is always happening" (Bishop 1994, 141). Another Canadian experience of islands was her three-week walking tour of Newfoundland in 1932, a dream that Elizabeth had for several years according to her biographer Brett Millier. In her running journal of the trip the poet observed the landscape intensely, writing enthusiastic postcards from the place: "The place is far beyond my fondest dreams. The cliffs rise straight out of the sea 400-500 feet . . . . I wish, and not just conventionally, that you could see them" (Bishop, 1994, 6-7).

On her last trip to Nova Scotia in 1970 when she visited her Aunt Grace who was ill, her cousin remembered the outing they made to an old cemetery at Scrabble Hill and the words Elizabeth pronounced that once again testified to her Canadian affinities: “It’s so quiet here. All I can hear is the river and the cars in the distance. This is where I would like to be buried” (Bishop 2006, 308).

Notes

[1] Always in some ways connected to space and landscape Ellis underlines how “metaphors of ice and snow tend always to evoke Bishop’s memories of childhood” (Ellis 2002, 65).

[2] Gary Fountain focuses her attention on Bishop’s transnationality building his analysis around this question: “When did Bishop first become an inhabitant of national borders’” (Fountain 2001, 296).

[3] In order of publication in Bishop’s *Complete Poems* the poems are: “Large Bad Picture,” “At the Fishhouses,” “Cape Breton,” “Manners,” “Sestina,” “First Death in NS,” “The Moose,” “Poem.”

[4] All quotations from the poems are taken from Bishop’s *Complete Poems*.

[5] In Nova Scotia there are two very different places with similar names: Cape Sable and Cape Sable Island. Cape Sable Island is on the southwest tip of the mainland of Nova Scotia. Sable Island is 280 kilometres southeast of Halifax, out in the north Atlantic. Oral tradition of the Bulmer family had Robert Hutchinson dying on Sable Island—though Bishop also mentions Cape Sable Island. Though historians speculate that more than likely it was off Cape Sable Island, what matters here is what Bishop believed.

[6] “At the boundary between Great Village and Glenholme stands ‘Elmcroft’, the Bowers family farm. Grace Bulmer married the widower William Bowers in 1923. Elizabeth Bishop often visited her aunt here” (Berry 2005, 29).

Works Cited

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival*: *A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Anansi, 1972.

Berry, Sandra. *Elizabeth Bishop’s Great Village: A Self-Guided Tour*. Kentville: Gaspereau, 2005.

Bishop, Elizabeth. *Edgar Allan Poe & the Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006.

——. *One Art. Letters*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994.

——. *The Collected Prose*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1984.

——. *The Complete Poems*: 1927-1979. New York: Farrar Straus, and Giroux, 1983.

Blasing, Mutlu Konuk. *Politics and Form in Postmodern Poetry: O’Hara, Bishop, Ashbery and Merrill*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Camhi, Leslie. “Art of the City.” *Village Voice*, June 15, 1999, 154.

Dietler, Michael. “‘Our Ancestors the Gauls:’ Archaeology, Ethnic Nationalism, and the Manipulation of Celtic Identity in Modern Europe.” *American Anthropologist*. 6 (1994): 584-605.

Ellis, Jonathan. "The Snow Queen: Elizabeth Bishop and Nova Scotia". In *Elizabeth Bishop: Poet of the Periphery*, eds. Linda Anderson and Jo Shapcott, 63-68. Tarset: Bloodaxe, 2002.

Fountain, Gary. "'The Maple Leaf (forever)': Elizabeth Bishop's poetics of Nationality." In *Divisions of the Heart: Elizabeth Bishop and the Art of Memory and Place*, eds. Gwendlyn Barry, Sandra Davies, and Peter Sanger. Wolfville: Gaspereau Press, 2001.

Frye, Northrop. *The Bush Garden: Essays on Canadian Imagination*. Concord: Anansi, 1971.

Kelly, John D. and Martha, Kaplan. "Ritual Studies." *Annual Review of Research in Anthropology*. 19 (1990): 119-150.

Millier, Brett C. *Elizabeth Bishop: Life and the Memory of It*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Monteiro, George, ed. *Conversations with Elizabeth Bishop*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996.

Rotella, Guy. *Reading and Writing Nature: The Poetry of Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Elizabeth Bishop*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991.

——. "'…and even spoke some myself': Elizabeth Bishop, Great Village and the Community of Imaginable Words". *The Antigonish Review*, 91 (1992): 53-62.

Sanger, Peter. "Elizabeth Bishop and Nova Scotia". *The Antigonish Review*, 60 (1985): 15-27.

Travisano, Thomas. *Elizabeth Bishop: Her Artistic Development*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.

Gregory Dowling

“The Whole World’s Wild”: Richard Wilbur’s War Poetry

The idea for this paper came when I read a chapter in Robert von Hallberg’s book *American Poetry and Culture 1945-1980* entitled “Tourists.” In this chapter von Hallberg himself takes the reader on a tour around an area of American poetry. He starts by listing the movements of American poets in the 1950s, mentioning W.S. Merwin, Robert Lowell, Elizabeth Bishop, Anthony Hecht, James Merrill, James Wright, Adrienne Rich, Charles Gullans, Robert Creeley and Richard Wilbur, and enumerating the various grants, foundations and scholarships (Prix de Rome, Guggenheim and Fulbright…) bestowed in those years. He reports the opinion of Charles Olson (who also travelled, but chose the untypical destination of Yucatan), who “felt that poets writing about English gardens, French boulevards, and Italian piazzas were begging off the challenge of dramatically expanding American culture” (von Hallberg 1985, 62-3). Hallberg hastens to add that “[i]n this respect he was quite wrong, though thoroughly American” (von Hallberg 1985, 63).

The reservations that Olson expressed put him in a line of American cultural thinking that goes back to Emerson, with his dramatic plea for a poet who would celebrate “our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations…” (Emerson 1981, 262). The superiority of Whitman’s “barbaric yawp” over the “courtly muse” of such European-leaning poets as Longfellow has long been taken for granted in American critical circles, and the assumptions behind this judgment have frequently been carried forward into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is evident, for example, that reservations similar to Olson’s explain the suspicion of a critical guru of our age like Helen Vendler towards such confirmed internationalists as Eliot and Pound, and her evident preference for poets of the native ground, like William Carlos Williams, who considered it un-American to write sonnets since “we do not live in a sonnet world” (qtd. in Cushman 1985, 104), or Wallace Stevens, who never travelled to Europe in his life.

Now von Hallberg would seem on the surface to be questioning the validity of such prejudices, but his tone indicates, nonetheless, a certain ironical fastidiousness towards the itinerant poets—as, for example, when he writes that "although the poets traveled widely, the poems tended to gather, like pigeons and hawkers, around the sights and monuments" (von Hallberg 1985, 71). He then offers a list of such "sightseeing" poems by Wilbur, Hecht, Gullans, Kennedy, Jarrell, Merwin, Hollander, Bowers and Rich, starting off with four by Wilbur: "Marché aux Oiseaux," "Wellfleet: the House," "Piazza di Spagna, Early Morning," "A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the Villa Sciarra." I would contend, however, that only one of these deals with a specially notable sight—and one of them (Wellfleet) actually describes an American setting.

Von Hallberg goes on to say:

> They were all self-conscious tourists, with a mission. By fountain, statue, palazzo and piazza, the poets were demonstrating their ability to write intelligently, tastefully about the outward signs of the cultural heritage America was taking over after the war. These poems—and most of them are certainly intelligent, tasteful, and worthy of continued attention—are part of America's cultural claim to global hegemony. (von Hallberg 1985, 72)

The argument would seem to be that the poets were metrical ambassadors, paving the way for American power; he points out that "[n]early all the poets who responded to that need by writing tourist poems were conservative in terms of poetic technique. Merrill, Wilbur, Howard, Hecht, Hollander, Rich, Cassity, Gullans, Merwin, Bishop…" (von Hallberg 1985, 72). He goes on to talk about the obvious confidence of these writers: "They seem to understand it all. Poets using monuments to write parables or extract a lesson are secure in their authority: this way of writing does not easily admit uncertainty or faintness of voice…" (von Hallberg 1985, 75-6).

Now, I have many doubts about this. Partly my doubts concern specific poets, whose works I think it grossly simplistic to describe purely in terms of "confidence" and "self-assurance." Wilbur's and Hecht's poems, however assured the meter and the rhymes, often testify to uncertainty or self-doubt, and frequently offer alternating voices and points of view; this is the case even of such a magnificent "tourist-poem" as "A Baroque Wall-Fountain." But more importantly, of the poets he lists, Wilbur, Hecht, Bowers and Wright did not first visit Europe as tourists, and all of them have acknowledged the crucial importance of that first impact of the old continent on their development—both their general human development and more specifically their development as poets.

Wilbur in particular has on several occasions talked about what first drove him to poetry: in an essay entitled "On My Own Work," he wrote:

> My first poems were written in answer to the inner and outer disorders of the Second World War and they helped me, as poems should, to take a hold of raw events and convert them, provisionally, into experience. (Wilbur 1976, 118)

The same notion has come up in various interviews with the poet; in a 1966 interview, he said:

> You do a lot of waiting, and it's a waiting both anxious and boring. And during these periods of anxious and boring waiting you contemplate a personal and an objective world in disorder. And one way of putting the world to rights a little bit, or at least articulating your sense of the disorder, is to write poetry. So I commenced to do it for earnest therapeutic reasons during World War II. (Butts 1990, 37)

In a later interview (1975), he stated: "Even now I think of turning back and using some of my experiences in World War II, but I don't know whether I could manage to do it. I don't know whether I could recover the experiences authentically" (Butts 1990, 143). However, even if he has never written any later poems directly connected with these experiences, there is no doubt that they continue to resonate with him—even, one might say, to haunt him. In a famous poem about sleeplessness from a volume published in 1976 (*The Mind-Reader*), these lines appear:

> But listen: under my billet window, grinding
> Through the shocked night of France, I surely hear
> A convoy moving up, whose treads and wheels
> Trouble the planking of a wooden bridge.
> (Wilbur 2004, 162)

That grinding noise, disturbing the steadiness of the world, helps us to understand the emphasis Wilbur has always put on order and harmony: the balance of his poetry is difficult because it is achieved against the unsettling confusion of this world—and Wilbur has often referred to Frost's famous dictum on poetry as a "momentary stay against confusion."

So instead of focusing on the famous "tourist-poems" of the 1950s—those that came out of his stay in Rome ("Piazza di Spagna," "A Baroque Wall-Fountain," "For the New Railway Station in Rome")—I'd like to look closely at a group of poems written directly out of his war experiences, poems that are among the finest of the Second World War. I am interested in the way these poems describe not only his reactions to the events of the war but also his feelings on the whole question of displacement; in addition, I wish to show how the emotions and thoughts expressed in these poems inform the apparently calmer, less troubled works from later years on his European experiences.

These war-poems are indeed about the horrendous events of world history, but they are also about the feelings and thoughts of young American men in an unfamiliar and unsettling world. As Wilbur said in an interview:

> War is an uprooting experience—that's at the very least what it is. It sends you to other places, puts you in other clothes, gives you another name and a serial number. And

> it also fills your head with doubts as to what the world will become, an accelerated sense of change. And then, of course, if you're in a line company, it fills your ears with "Bang! Bang!" and your heart with fear. And there's all of this to be allayed as best one can. There are letters from home, or you can drink: there are all kinds of ways to forget how frightened and disoriented you are. But I think one of the best is to take pencil and paper—which is all you need, thank heavens, to be a poet and which makes it possible to practice poetry in a foxhole—and organize, not the whole of it, because of course you cannot put the world in order, but make some little pattern—make an experience. That it to say, jell things into an experience which will be a poem. (Butts 1990,195-196)

The poems I'm interested in form a kind of cluster in his first volume: "Cicadas""Tywater," "Mined Country," "Potato," "First Snow in Alsace," "On the Eyes of an SS Officer," "Place Pigalle" and "The Peace of Cities." In his first volume of *Selected Poems* he omitted the fifth and sixth, and although they are interesting poems, for reasons of space I will also leave them aside, as well as the seventh, and concentrate just on the first four of the group.

The first thing to note is the range and variety of forms in these poems. It is worth observing that Wilbur is something far more than just a skilled metricist; indeed, one thing he himself has pointed out in interviews when tasked with being a "traditionalist" (accused of so being, one might say) is that he has in fact used rather sparingly the most famous "traditional" forms, such as the sonnet, and he has never used forms purely as an exercise; his *Collected Poems* include no villanelles or sestinas written just to try his hand. A surprising number of his poems are in nonce stanza forms; these are sometimes quite elaborate forms used just for that one particular poem—or used again perhaps only by Wilbur himself. This is true, for example of "Mined Country"; the delayed rhyming scheme seems to be his own devising and it is found again in such later poems as "The Terrace" and "Clearness."

Wilbur himself states that he does not preconceive or deliberately invent his stanza forms, but rather happens upon them:

> The line lengths will be chosen much as a free verse writer chooses his line lengths, according to the way the words want to fall. And the rhymes will occur if they do occur. If they do occur, then in the remainder of the poem I'll keep to rhyme as well as to the metrical pattern which is naturally developed. So my work, in general, is likely to start out in something of a free verse spirit . . . In other words, however, artificial many of my forms seem, they are organic in origin and, when successful, organic throughout. (Butts 1990, 4-5)

Elsewhere, a little more provocatively, he has said: "I simply write a kind of free verse that ends by rhyming most of the time" (Butts 1990,74).

From the formal point of view, then, these four poems can be described as follows: a traditional lyric in tetrameter quatrains rhyming ABBA; a poem in quatrains, with lines of shortening length, and rhyming only between the different stanzas; a poem in unrhyming tercets, mainly in triple meter; a poem in tetrameter *terza rima* (undoubtedly the most technically challenging of all).

Within these forms of varying degrees of strictness we find a fascinating range of language, tones and attitudes, all testifying to that sense of uprootedness, of a direct confrontation with the new and the disturbing.

"Tywater" is the first and probably the best known of the four, having been anthologised a number of times. The poem gives a portrait of one of Wilbur's fellow soldiers, a corporal from Texas. It is, on first reading, a puzzling, even perturbing poem; in part this is due to the deliberate fusion of diction that recalls the world of Malory and Spenser with language from the world of Texan rodeos (we are to understand that Corporal Tywater used to take part in such competitions). It begins with the direct announcement: "Death of Sir Nihil, book the *nth*, / Upon the charred and clotted sward" (Wilbur 2004, 439). These last four words could come straight from *The Faerie Queene*, but we are then immediately told that Sir Nihil was *lacking* the "lily of Our Lord, / Alases of the hyacinth"; these are symbols of chastity and of faithfulness—but perhaps more importantly they are symbols both of Christian faith and of classical mythology. Sir Nihil, we realise, belongs to a completely different world.

While a phrase like "charred and clotted sward" is archaic, it is also a highly suggestive way of presenting the aftermath of a modern battle; the effectiveness of the phrase lies above all in its concentrated power. We notice that the vocabulary in this opening stanza is predominantly Anglo-Saxon and the sentences are deliberately clipped; indeed, they are scarcely sentences at all, since they lack verbs. We are being presented with the simple *fact* of death; it is not being described as an event.

When the poem goes on to evoke the man's past life, we find the same clipped style. But now the concentration takes on more modern connotations; we might describe it as telegraphic language—or the language of a file entry, for example, in an army dossier. The soldier's accomplishments are presented to us now in words and images that clearly evoke modern Texas. The two stanzas, with their superb control of alliteration, assonance, internal and end rhyme, are a kind of literary equivalent of the very feats they describe; the lines themselves embody the same nimble dexterity that they are celebrating, in a triumph of aural and visual clarity:

> Could flicker from behind his ear
> A whistling silver throwing knife
> And with a holler punch the life
> Out of a swallow in the air.
>
> Behind the lariat's butterfly
> Shuttled his white and gritted grin,
> And cuts of sky would roll within
> The noose-hole, when he spun it high.
> (Wilbur 2004, 439)

The fourth stanza sums up the soldier's life, in neat and practised fashion, while recognising dispassionately the "violence" and the nullity of it all. His death is as meaningless and abrupt as that of the swallow evoked in the second stanza; all of a sudden his dexterity is simply rendered null and he is transformed instantaneously into "clumsy dirt." The final couplet expresses the sheer impossibility of summing up this life and death, or of deriving any message or meaning from them. The caesura in the final line ("Such violence. And such repose.") has been much praised by critics; it brings us up short, depriving the reader of any sense of consolation or significance. There is not really any comfort in the last word, "repose."

This poem thus sets the tone for the whole group of war poems, preparing us for the mixture of languages and styles that is to characterise all of them. In each one, homely American idioms are deliberately offset against the language and mythology of old Europe. The second poem in particular, "Mined Country," uses the combination of American plainness and echoes of classical mythology to even more unsettling effect.

The opening is suggestively general in its description: "They have gone into the grey hills quilled with birches, / Drag now their cannon up the chill mountain" (Wilbur 2004, 440). This could be an account of any war of the last five hundred years. The enemy is simply a menacing "they"; we are told they "have gone," but the tense of the verb allows the possibility of their return. The landscape is a generic one of grey hills and chill mountains; there is just one brilliant choice of adjective ("quilled with birches") to add a touch of muted ferocity to the picture. Lines three and four ("But it's going to be long before / Their war's gone for good") are almost childlike in their simplicity.

This simplicity of language is highly appropriate; it could almost be said to be the very subject of the poem, since it is dealing with the tragic necessity of revising our childhood views of nature. Wilbur's picture of a devastated Europe uses, to suitably devastating effect, the same language of juvenile ingenuousness: "churches / Full up with sky or buried town fountains." The mine-sweepers are then pictured as "boys" who "come swinging over the grass / (like playing pendulum)." It seems almost a desperate attempt to maintain an innocence of vision in the face of horror, rather in the manner of the character played by Roberto Benigni in *La vita è bella*. Wilbur is, in part, also drawing on the long-established Jamesian notion of the encounter between American innocence and European sophistication (or corruption). However, the rest of the poem makes it quite clear that the attempt to preserve such boyish innocence is doomed, precisely because the countryside itself, the symbol *par excellence* of blameless purity, has been corrupted.

As in "Tywater" he introduces echoes of classical pastoral poetry, with the reference to the chaste huntress Belphoebe. The erudite allusion is set alongside evocations of popular American culture, presented with a kind of wistfully jaunty alliteration: "calendar colts at Kentucky gates." But he proceeds at once to deny all of our natural assumptions about such pastoral settings:

Danger is sunk in the pastures, the woods are sly,
Ingenuity's covered with flowers!
(Wilbur 2004, 440)

With a bitterly ironic twist he illustrates the treacherous nature of the landscape by using an image that is itself a parody of at least two artistic genres associated with childhood: "Cows in mid-munch go splattered over the sky." As one critic has noted, there is something distinctly "cartoonish" (Kirsch 2004) about this image; at the same time it recalls the old nursery-rhyme, "Hey diddle-diddle," which contains the line, "The cow jumps over the moon." To complete the task of disillusionment, the very next line of Wilbur's poem proceeds to "corrupt" the language of Spenserian poetry: "Roses like brush-whores smile from bowers."

It is a powerful poem, extremely subtle in its shifts of tone and register, moving gradually from simple description through parody and satire into an almost didactic or oratorical tone towards the end. By the final stanzas we are being instructed in almost formal terms in the urgent need to renounce the simplicities of the pastoral (or infantile) vision of nature (and again there is something poignantly childlike in the adjective "sunshiny" and the expression "woods floor"):

Sunshiny field grass, the woods floor, are so mixed up
With earliest trusts, you have to pick back
Far past all you have learned, to go
Disinherit the dumb child.
(Wilbur 2004, 440)

This process of "pick[ing] back" is the very reverse of a nostalgic return to the past. The last stanza complicates the picture yet further:

Tell him to trust things alike and never to stop
Emptying things, but not let them lack
Love in some manner restored; to be
Sure the whole world's wild.
(Wilbur 2004, 441)

On first reading, this stanza appears to offer reassurance; it seems to gesture towards the healing effect of the mine-sweeping, thus guaranteeing "love in some manner restored." The last line, however, is intriguingly enigmatic, with its oxymoronic combination of sureness and wildness. It is possible that

Wilbur is here bringing in all the American, Thoreauvian connotations of Wildness ("in Wildness is the preservation of the World" [Thoreau 1964, 609]). He may be suggesting that there is possibly a redemptive side to what has happened to the European landscape. This seems a reference to something Wilbur once said when talking about the difference between the European (specifically French, in this case) and American attitudes to nature:

> Mostly I think the American writer, both with regret and attraction, acknowledges the fact of a great diversity of culture, of considerable anarchy in this country, and the presence—if not in the sense of woods, in other senses—of the wilderness still amongst us. (Butts 1990, 67)

It is as if he were saying that the mining of the countryside has at least had the effect of restoring a certain awe in our attitude towards the woods and fields; we will at least no longer be able to simply take them for granted.

The third poem, "Potato," is not at first sight so closely connected with the war. It is, in fact, the first of a number of poems that Wilbur will devote to single plants, fruits or vegetables: later ones will contemplate the aubergine (melongène), olive trees, October maples, lilacs and seed-leaves. They could be described as emblem poems and, as such, belong to a tradition of poetry dating back to the Middle Ages. In this case, the potato could be taken as an emblem of the condition of war:

> All of the cold dark kitchens, and war-frozen gray
> Evening at window; I remember so many
> Peeling potatoes quietly into chipt pails.
> (Wilbur 2004, 442)

Quite apart from the military memories that are here evoked, the potato serves to symbolise the soldiers themselves, who, in their fox-holes, survive as best they can: "Got a misshapen look, it's nudged where it could; / Simple as soil yet crowded as earth with all." It is probably no coincidence that the potato is a vegetable of American importation.

The fourth of these poems, "First Snow in Alsace," also celebrates resilience. For some critics, it has seemed almost too upbeat in its celebration of this quality; Clive James, a far from hostile critic of Wilbur's poetry, described the last lines of the poem as "the exact verbal equivalent of a Norman Rockwell cover-painting" (James 1974, 47):

> The night-guard coming from his post,
> Ten first-snows back in thought, walks slow
> And warms him with a boyish boast:
>
> He was the first to see the snow.
> (Wilbur 2004, 444)

James's comparison is perhaps rather too cynical; in the end it really comes down, as Wilbur once suggested, to a question of temperament:

> Well, yes, to put it simply, I feel that the universe is full of glorious energy, that the energy tends to take pattern and shape, and that the ultimate character of things is comely and good. I am perfectly aware that I say this in the teeth of all sorts of contrary evidence, and that I must be basing it partly on temperament and partly on faith but that is my attitude. My feeling is that when you discover order and goodness in the world, it is not something you are imposing—it is something which is likely really to be there, whatever crumminess and evil and disorder there may also be. (Butts 1990,190)

In this poem snow works as an image of the overall patterns and shapes of the world; it is able to restore a momentary sense of order amidst even the most awful chaos (and Wilbur does not flinch from giving telling details of the horrors of war: "this snowfall fills the eyes / Of soldiers dead a little while…"), miraculously transforming the devastated landscape and all the depressing paraphernalia of war. In particular, he stresses the beautiful simplicity of snow—"simple cloths," "absolute snow"—as opposed to the twisted entanglements, complications and confusions of war and its aftermath:

> it fell till dawn,
> Covered the town with simple cloths.
>
> Absolute snow lies rumpled on
> What shellbursts scattered and deranged,
> Entangled railings, crevassed lawn.
> (Wilbur 2004, 444)

In this case the simplicity is not ousted or replaced by a more mature, darker vision of things. Instead, it succeeds in imposing itself on the landscape and it has a transformational and salvific effect. There is an almost religious tone of awe in the descriptive passages here; undoubtedly the *terza rima* contributes to the visionary quality of the verse.

It is interesting that in what is probably the darkest poem of a writer whose overall vision of life was already far darker than Wilbur's, the image of snow arrives with a similar redemptive force; I'm thinking of "Rites and Ceremonies" by Anthony Hecht, his long and ambitious attempt to treat the theme of the Holocaust in poetry. In the middle of the final section of this work, after pages of anguished evocation of the horrors of man's cruelty, we find these words:

> It is winter as I write.
> For miles the holy treasuries of snow
>   Sag the still world with white,
> And all soft shapes are washed from top to toe
>   in pigeon-colored light.
> (Hecht 1990, 46)

Wilbur has acknowledged that his war was less traumatic than that of many others, not least Anthony Hecht, who was present at the liberation of the concentration camp of Flossenburg; it is undeniably significant that Hecht's poem was not published until 1967, while Wilbur's dates from 1947.

It is possible to make a comparison with another poem by Hecht, "Still Life," written even later (it was published in the 1985 collection, *Venetian Vespers*). As in Wilbur's poem, the landscape and the weather arouse a memory:

> I stand beneath a pine-tree in the cold,
> Just before dawn, somewhere in Germany,
> A cold, wet, Garand rifle in my hands.
> (Hecht 1990, 211)

This neatly illustrates the difference in temperament between the two writers: Wilbur's young soldier in war is stirred to a "boyish" memory of earlier days of innocent peace; Hecht's elderly speaker in peacetime is stirred to a disturbing memory of the dark days of his youth, in war.

However, to dismiss Wilbur's poem as mere Norman Rockwell sentimentality is, I think, unfair. Instead, I would say it does testify to that quality of resilience—to that sense that even in the midst of the worst of woes something redemptive and "boyish" can survive. And I don't find it hard to believe that the poem is based on personal recollection—which is the recollection of a displaced or uprooted American boy in Europe. He might "warm him" with the boast but he is perfectly aware that the snow will eventually melt and the scatterings and derangements of war will return to view; if there is something, as some critics suggest, a little too "homely" about this poem, it is clear enough that beneath the surface (beneath the snow, that is) is a full awareness of the sad truth of "homes" that are "[f]ear-gutted, trustless and estranged."

Therefore, before we talk too confidently about the excessive confidence or sophistication of Wilbur's later European poems, we need to remember that behind his cool celebrations of "fountain-quieted squares" is the clear if boyish memory of a Europe whose town fountains were once buried. However metrically mannered or urbane his poetry might seem, Wilbur is always "sure that the whole's world wild."

Works Cited

Butts William, ed. *Conversations with Richard Wilbur*. Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1990.

Cushman, Stephen. *William Carlos Williams and the Meanings of Measure*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1985.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Portable Emerson*. Edited by Carl Bode. New York: Penguin, 1981.

Hecht, Anthony. *Collected Earlier Poems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

James, Clive. *The Metropolitan Critic,* 1974. London: Jonathan Cape, 1994.

Kirsch, Adam. "Get Happy: Richard Wilbur and the Poetry of Profusion." *The New Yorker*. November 22, 2004.

Thoreau, H.D. *The Portable Thoreau*. Edited by Carl Bode. New York: Viking Press, 1964.

von Hallberg, Robert. *American Poetry and Culture, 1945-1980.* Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Wilbur, Richard. *Collected Poems 1943-2004*. London: Waywiser Press, 2004.

_____. *Responses: Prose Pieces, 1953-1976*. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Francesco Rognoni

“A More Real Monument of Triumph”: Roman Scenes in Hecht’s Poetry

Anthony Hecht’s long dramatic monologues, “Venetian Vespers” and “See Naples and Die,” have earned him an assured position in what we could call the rich “foreign literatures” of Venice and Naples. But while these magnificent poems seem to sum up and exhaust all that Hecht has to say of their respective Italian cities, which are not revisited again in his poems (except for Venice, in the elegy “In Memory of David Kalstone,” whose ashes were scattered in the Grand Canal), Rome—which apparently has no comparable narrative to offer him—turns up over and over again in his poetry, a gymnasium for the exercise of his muscular imagination, or (as Hecht’s detractors would have it) for his remarkable but ultimately facile rhetorical skills.

When, in 1950, he was awarded the Prix de Rome, the news reached the young poet while he was already in Italy, apprenticing with W.H. Auden in Ischia. The prize allowed him to stay on, and many of the poems that would make up his first collection, *A Summoning of Stones* (1954), were written or at least begun in Rome. The tours de force of his early essay-poems (Hecht’s definition), “The Gardens of Villa d’Este” and “La Condition Botanique,” or the assured urbanity of “Letter from Rome,” would, of course, be unthinkable without the Roman experience; but also a much grimmer later poem may have originated from his stay in the Capital. I am thinking of “Behold the Lilies of the Field,” collected in his second and probably best book, *The Hard Hours* (1967).

Like many of Hecht’s poems (notably “A Hill,” a paradigm of his art), this well-known text, one of Hecht’s few ventures in free verse, unfolds on two different temporal planes, and asks to be read as a dramatic monologue. To put it more precisely: a past that is both personal, private, and “collectively” historical, encroaches on the very precarious present tense of the speaker, threatening disruption.

It is certainly not a coincidence that the dramatic monologue—not unlike the ghost story—flourished as a genre in the decades prior to the advent of psychoanalysis. In fact, “Behold the Lilies” is the dramatic record of an analytic session, where the patient does most of the talking and the analyst chimes in once in a while—his are the lines in italics—to contain and direct the flow of memories and associations.

Matthew's precept, referred to in the title—"Behold the lilies of the field," that neither toil nor spin, yet dress more elegantly than the king of kings—seems to be appropriated by the doctor, who, Christ-like, invites the speaker to relax, lie back, rest, "look at the flowers there in the glass bowl." These flowers, "lovely and fresh," trigger in the patient the shamelessly Freudian memory of a scene where a mother's "mechanical enthusiastic show" of pleasure didn't fool a child, who evidently had "that within which passes show"—a Hamletic context reinforced by the insistence on the notion of "honesty" (remember Hamlet's frequent puns on "honesty" with Polonius and Ophelia, and his disconcerting assertion to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that, if the world has grown honest, then doomsday must be at hand [II ii 237-38]), and by the sudden laughter of the speaker, himself probably "indifferently honest," when someone comes up with the "amazing truth" that "[his] mother's a whore."

This surprising recognition—it is hard to tell whether the speaker is more surprised and elated by the blunt disclosure of his mother's moral fickleness, or by his own reaction to it—is carried over in the second and longer verse paragraph, mainly devoted to the very graphic telling of a dream, an exquisite experiment in cruelty and the sheer contemplation of horror. The speaker—while still very much his mother's son—is now a Roman soldier of the army of Valerian, the mid third-century emperor who was made captive by the Persian king Sopor, forced to undergo diverse humiliations, often of an overt sexual character (such as crouching on all fours to serve as Sapor's stool), and eventually flayed—after his death or while still alive according to different traditions—, his skin stuffed and exposed to the barbarous multitude.

It may be worth remarking on some formal features of the poem. There is the highly paratactic style, as if no ambiguity were possible: something very unusual for a poet known for his over-elaborate and almost Miltonic syntax. One notices the absence of enjambed lines in the second part of the poem, in contrast with the two fairly strong enjambments in the first ("the effect / Was" and "but / Meaning"). And there are the frequent repetitions, and the strong anaphora of the expression "made to watch," repeated four times and reinforced by the lines "To which we were tied in the old watching positions" (again with sexual connotations) and "we were not allowed to close our eyes / Or to look away." The poem *is* indeed *about watching*, from the very title: *behold* the lilies of the field. So much so that the analyst's invitation to "look at the flowers" may be read as double-edged; it calls to mind the role of the king's personal doctor, who sees to Valerian's back, ripped off by flogging, only to be able to flay him alive more professionally, i.e. more painfully, when the skin has healed. In fact, it is only at the very end of the poem, I think, that one is suddenly made to realize that the flowers in the shrink's study are *not* like the lilies of the field, arrayed more splendidly than Solomon, but that they are cut flowers in a glass bowl which will not renew their candid garments: they are not an alternative to, but an analogue of the emperor's skin, artificially preserved and made to grotesquely resemble its former possessor, so that the speaker's final line, "I wish I were like them," rings with an exhausted suicidal note.

Hecht's guarded but unflinchingly precise description of Valerian's endless torture—"His death had taken hours," *hard hours* indeed—is all the more disturbing because, as it has been pointed out (see Spiegelman 1989, 65), his most likely source, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, with its usual urbanity, doesn't even hint at the tradition that the emperor was flayed alive, and is quite sceptical about the notion that he underwent that savage treatment even after his death: "When Valerian sunk under the weight of shame and grief," Gibbon writes, "his skin, stuffed with straw, and formed into the likeness of a human figure, was preserved for ages in the most celebrated temple of Persia; a more real monument of triumph, than the fancied trophies of brass and marble so often erected by Roman vanity. The tale is moral and pathetic, but the truth of it may very fairly be called in question . . . nor is it natural to suppose that a jealous monarch should, even in the person of a rival, thus publicly degrade the majesty of kings" (Gibbon 1950, I, 237). A more detailed account of Valerian's death is in the third volume of Louis Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont's *Histoire des empereurs*, to which Gibbon refers for the various testimonies of Valerian's misfortunes, lamented by the pagan writers but saluted as divine retribution by those Christians that the emperor had systematically persecuted. But even the French historian, who does report that according to some authors, Valerian "fut écorché tout vif par une cruanté que n'avoit peut-estre pas encore eu d'example," claims that this gory tradition is "contraire aux meilleur historiens" (Tillemont 1732-1739, III, 315).

Reading these seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers is most instructive in terms of something that Hecht, perhaps himself unawares, has relegated to what one could call the "unsaid," or "unconscious," of his poem. I'm thinking of the role of Valerian's son, the emperor Gallienus, "a master of several curious, but useless sciences, a ready orator, an elegant poet, a skilful gardener, an excellent cook, and most contemptible prince," who, again according to Gibbon and all the other sources, "received the intelligence of his [father's] misfortunes with secret pleasure and avowed indifference" (Gibbon 1950, I, 238), and, affecting a stoic firmness, did not stir a finger to have him released. That Valerian was "forced to offer his ripped back / As a mounting block for the barbarian king / To get on his horse" may well derive from Gibbon, who writes that "whenever the Persian monarch mounted on horseback, he placed his foot on the neck of a Roman emperor" (Gibbon 1950, I, 237). But there is no historical evidence that Sapor ever "received [the Roman] ambassadors / To discuss the question of ransom." Quite the contrary, in the words of the Christian apologist Lactanctius, almost a contemporary of Valerian, "he suffered additional punishment in that, although his own son was emperor, he found no one to avenge his captivity and utter enslavement, nor was he ever at all sought back in ransom" (Lactanctius 1984, 11). At this point, one realizes that Hecht's extraordinarily simple syntax does in fact leave ample margin for ambiguity and that the subject of the apparently matter-of-fact line "Of course, he didn't want ransom" may be either Sapor or Valerian, the strong, enduring father ("How he stood it, I don't know," says the soldier at one point), who would not accept the deliverance on which the dream, and the poem, chillingly collapses: "In the end, I was ransomed. Mother paid for me."

Perhaps I should apologize for the ruthlessly Oedipal direction that my reading is taking. But I feel that, for all his civilities, Anthony Hecht—"an elegant poet" like Gallienus—is also a ruthless poet, who would probably not dismiss my unfashionable claim that Ernst Jones's un-nuanced *Hamlet and Oedipus* is still one of the very best books on the subject of Shakespeare! After all, one of the longest poems in the *Hard Hours*, the very Ransomian (forgive the pun . . . I mean Hecht's teacher John Crowe Ransom) "Three Prompters from the Wing," is a backward retelling of the story of Oedipus. And Hecht's perhaps most celebrated narrative poem, the intricate "Venetian Vespers," closes on the speaker's lingering suspicion that he may be "a little more than kin" to an uncle who was probably his mother's lover. And not only this: reading "Behold the Lilies" through Gibbon and the other historians and apologists, one realizes that the earlier poem exactly prefigures the lot of the "Venetian Vespers," where the real—or supposedly real—father of the narrator is not killed by his brother, but, perhaps more cruelly, is unacknowledged, *un-reclaimed* by his family when, by a series of circumstances, he ends up locked in a mental hospital: paraphrasing Lactanctius, he is never "sought back in ransom," and dies in captivity.

At this point I want to go back to that fortunate year, 1950, when Anthony Hecht was enjoying his fellowship in Rome, and "[his] parents came through, though significantly not at the same time." Here it is worth quoting one of the most revealing passages from his long 1999 epistolary "conversation" with the British publisher Philip Hoy, which is the closest we will ever get to an autobiography of the poet—at least until his letters are published:

> My mother came first. She told me that my father's job . . . was not "real" in that it was entirely subsidized by her parents, the money being paid to the employer by her father.

> She went on to say that she planned to divorce my father, and that immediately his salary would cease. The point was not simply that he would be penniless once again but that the discovery that he had not been holding a real job but was being supported by his in-laws would so humiliate him that he would "probably commit suicide." I remember being told this in the lobby of the Hassler Hotel over cocktails. I could see that she was in a strange state, but that did not mean that she wasn't telling the truth. My father arrived a day or so after she left. I felt that unless I told him what I had just learned he might hear it first from a lawyer, and act as my mother seemed to intend. So I told him what she said, and he claimed it was wholly untrue, which, as it turned out, was the case. (Hoy 1999, 17-18)

Now one begins to see what the son and patient in "Behold the Lilies" may mean when he claims that "[his] mother was a whore, . . . not meaning that she slept around." What Hecht is telling is very much a story of the "tranquillized fifties," which Robert Lowell would have handled quite straightforwardly in one of his "Life Studies": the apparently strong mother, weak father and painfully puzzled son are the stuff of Lowell's life and art. Hecht's treatment of the episode (if that is what "Behold the Lilies" is, at least partly, about—as I think) is much more indirect, but also much nastier than the way Lowell would have approached it. One may indeed suggest that it is because Hecht is unable or unwilling to deal with his "family romance" in a more straightforward way that he has such a horrific dream. In the Roman narrative of the poem, the speaker seems to be on his father's (the emperor's) side, but a few revealing references to his real father in the "conversation" with Hoy tell a different story. Apparently Hecht's father, who went through some mental breakdowns, would feel a perverse satisfaction whenever his son gave sign of comparable frailties. This Oedipal struggle was still unresolved at a very late date, if it is true that during Anthony Hecht's three-month hospitalization in the early sixties, after his divorce, "his father took pains [Hecht's choice of words is telling] to violate" the doctor's "prohibition" and visited his son:

> I don't know how he got in, but he did, on the pretext of bringing me some toothpaste or cigarettes. He suddenly appeared one day, very briefly, in the hall, and handed me these things. His grin was terrible, almost triumphant. I was revolted. We exchanged no words.

And he goes on, perhaps projecting an alternative father-figure: "It was after I was released that Lowell went out of his way to be kind, helpful and friendly to me. He was especially gentle and considerate, knowing well what such institutions were like, though we did not discuss the topic" (Hoy 1999, 49). The Lowell-Hecht connection is outside the scope of this essay: let me only remark, incidentally, that Lowell's Roman-American dream-poem "Falling Asleep over the Aeneid" may be a precursor of "Behold the Lilies."

Here I want to call your attention to an earlier Hecht poem, "The Song of the Beasts," included in *A Summoning of Stones*, but surprisingly discarded in the selection from that book appended to the *Hard Hours*. A caption informs us that the poem is inspired by "the ancient Roman law" that dictates that "a man convicted of parricide was condemned to be flogged, and then sewn into a sack with a cock, a viper, a dog, and an ape, and thrown into the sea, or a deep river." The poem gives a stanza to each of these animals, the ape "A faithful mockery / Of man," since "though he shave his body bare, / Under the tattered skin / We are one beast beyond all mimicry" (notice the imagery of skinning is already active), and the last stanza to the parricide: "I am the man whose blood must leak / Ungovernable from its home / Until at last the back, / Torn of the lofty flesh that must come down, / The nest of furious fangs and beak, / Bear the whole weight of Rome / And all its evil bound into one sack. / Water can cleanse, and therefore I must drown" (Hecht 1954, 24-25). It is almost as though Rome were cleansed of its evils by the ritual punishment of the parricide, but its honor is lost when the murderous son is released, sought back in ransom by the already dishonored Mother.

In "Behold the Lilies of the Field," the Maternal does indeed take over. Notice that the emperor is executed on "a warm afternoon in May," the mother's month, a temporal detail entirely made up by Hecht, as is the idea that Valerian's "life-sized doll" has "blanks of mother-of-pearl under the eyelids"—a change as "rich and strange" as, but far nastier, than whatever "death by water" would effect. Also the idea that "painted shells that had been prepared beforehand / For the fingernails and toenails" has an ominously feminine, almost frivolous ring to it. Worst of all, the puppet—which, according to Gibbon, was exposed "in the most celebrated temple of Persia," a sacred place after all—here is even more degraded, swinging "in the wind on a rope from the palace flag-pole; / And young girls were brought there by their mothers / To be told about the male anatomy."

I am not ready to draw a conclusion from my provisional reading. One of the usual complaints of Hecht's detractors is that in seven books and a lifetime's career his poetry did not develop but continued to play virtuoso variations on the same solemn themes. Is there a difference, one may ask, between Valerian's doll exposed to these young women's prurient gaze and the "birthday toy called 'The Transparent Man'" of the eponymous much later poem and book: "It was made of plastic, with different colored organs, / And the circulatory system all mapped out / In rivers of red and blue. She [the speaker's childhood friend, later a nun] asked me over / And the two of us would sit and study him / Together, and do a powerful lot of giggling"? Yes, there is a difference, one could reply: a difference in tone, the voice is quieter, the rage subdued by a wiser human understanding. But the trauma is still the same, remembered in all the foul rawness of sexual ignorance, and it is never fully overcome. (Following the Roman thread, it may not be a coincidence that the ludicrous "figure of instruction" of Hecht's greatest poem of sexual embarrassment, "The Short End," is a spinster schoolteacher of Latin.) Perhaps the trauma can never be overcome, only re-enacted, the way the speaker of the "Venetian Vespers" "look[s] and look[s], / As though [he] could be saved simply by looking"—in spite of the fact that, more often than not, what we are made to watch is as savagely obscene as Valerian's flaying. In Hecht's poetry, repetition is of the essence. He may occasionally be "ceremonious" in the mundane, derogatory sense of the word. More often, "ceremony" is both his argument and the mode of its treatment: the "ceremony of innocence" (to borrow the title of one of his last, more slender poems, certainly an allusion to the magnificent achievement of the powerful, symphonic "Rites and Ceremonies") must be officiated over and over again.

Works Cited

Gibbon, Edward. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York: Modern Library, 1950.

Hecht, Anthony. *A Summoning of Stones*. New York: Macmillan, 1954.

_____. *Collected Earlier Poems*. New York: Knopf, 1990.

_____. *The Transparent Man*. New York: Knopf, 1990.

Jones, Ernest. *Hamlet and Oedipus*. London: Gollancz, 1949.

Hoy, Philip. *Anthony Hecht in conversation with Philip Hoy*. London: Between the Lines, 1999.

Lactantius, L.C.F.. *De mortibus persecutorum*. Edited and translated by J. L. Creed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

Spiegelman, Willard. *The Didactic Muse*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Tillemont, Louis-Sébastien Le Nain de. *Histoire des empereurs, et des autres princes qui ont regné durant les six premiers siècles de l'Eglise, de leurs guerres contre les Juifs, des écrivains profanes, et des personnes les plus illustres de leur temps*, 6 vols. Venice: Chez François Pitteri, 1732-1739.

Massimo Bacigalupo

Italophile American Poets

There are few twentieth-century American poets that have not spent significant periods in Italy and written about it. The subject has already been addressed by scholars; nevertheless, we often take it for granted. The chief exhibit here is of course Ezra Pound and his *Cantos*. It is so obvious that it often goes unmentioned that this is a poem largely centered on Italy and its history, as well as largely written there. Since the world is a big place, one could imagine Pound writing at the same length about Russia, or France, or Greece or Mexico. Yet Italy is at the forefront, and if anybody is still reading Pound in the year 2100, he or she will have to become familiar with the Italian language, the minutiae of Italian history, and actually visit the places where Pound lived to achieve a thorough understanding of the poet's work. A book recently issued by Rosella Mamoli Zorzi and others, *In Venice and in the Veneto with Ezra Pound*, is a literary guidebook to Pound's Venice, and is possibly more helpful to a reader of *The Cantos* than most volumes of Pound criticism. In 2007 Mamoli Zorzi and Gregory Dowling also produced an anthology on *Venice in 20th Century American Poetry*, borrowing a title from E. E. Cummings: *Gondola signore gondola*. Cummings's poem mocks the American tourist in Italy (and the Italian tourist industry and cicerones), another tradition going at least as far back as Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*. T. S. Eliot also wrote with cold distaste of an American couple honeymooning in Ravenna in "Lune de Miel" (a poem written in French). *Gondola signore gondola* also includes Eliot's famous take on Venice, "Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a Cigar," which juxtaposes two types of American tourist, the cultivated and penniless Wasp and the affluent cigar-smoking Jew. Eliot's 1920 vignette has often been accused of being anti-Semitic, though I think it should be placed in the context of the popular music-hall humor that Eliot enjoyed, which always uses racial stereotypes. The Eliotic Burbank is just as grotesque as the expansive Bleistein. Groucho Marx would not have been offended—in fact he would have enjoyed the slapstick. *Gondola signore gondola*, thoughtfully produced though it is, is weighed down by its inclusiveness: fifty-eight modern poets in Venice are too many for any canon, and many of them are practically unknown. Could any of my readers name sixty twentieth century American poets—or Italian poets for that matter? As Marianne Moore famously put it, "There are things that are important beyond all this fiddle." On the other hand, it is always good to have lots of material between two covers, though we will hardly read this book consecutively. In her introduction, Rosella Mamoli Zorzi refers to "una poesia di Billy Collins, citata da Charles Simic" (15), and quotes Collins's witty "Consolation": "How agreeable it is not to be touring Italy this summer." Actually, this poem had already been included in another anthology of American poets in Italy, *La luce migliore*, edited by Alessandro Carrera and Thomas Simpson and published in Milan by Medusa in 2006. (And this was its second Italian appearance, the first being in Billy Collins, *A vela, in solitaria, intorno alla stanza*, edited by Franco Nasi and also published by Medusa in 2006.) So by now Billy Collins's amusing "Consolation" for not spending the summer in Italy has been widely circulated in the Bel Paese. Deservedly so, because Collins has a good eye for significant detail and can evoke with bemused affection the American milieu in contrast with foreign parts:

> How much better to cruise these local, familiar streets,
> fully grasping the meaning of every road sign and billboard
> and all the sudden hand gestures of my compatriots. (*La luce migliore* 256)

The tradition of the stand-up comedian which we detect in Eliot's Burbank and Bleistein is still at work here, as in the joke about "the sudden hand gestures." I remember a comic newspaper piece about an American tourist wondering why the Italian drivers were all "giving us the V sign"!

Unlike *Gondola signore gondola*, *La luce migliore* covers all of Italy and is more selective: forty-two poets, the lesser known among them (like Edwin Denby) interesting discoveries. Carrera and Simpson also provide detailed biographical and bibliographical notes on the poets, including translations: it seems important, especially for the more obscure figures, to know about their reception and availability in Italy. On the other hand Carrera in his introduction tells us rather fancifully that in Italy "Hawthorne preferisce esplorare le trattorie di via Condotti. . . insieme all'amico Hermann (sic) Melville, appena sbarcato da una nave tra un incarico marinaresco e l'altro . . ." (13). Actually, Melville was in Rome in February-March 1857, after visiting Hawthorne in Liverpool in November 1856 (and long after his career as a mariner was over!). I hope Carrera if he reads this will forgive me for pointing out the slip.

Incidentally, Melville is another "poet" who wrote rather extensively about Italy. In 1989 Gordon Poole edited *"At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba"* for the Istituto Universitario Orientale, rather obscure poems as I remember them. And in 1981 I published (in Melville, *Opere*, vol.

2) a translation of Melville's arresting long poem, "After the Pleasure Party," a soliloquy of a virginal lady astronomer who in the course of an outing feels pangs of jealousy because the man with whom she is secretly in love ignores her and pays attention to "the peasant girl demure that trod / beside our wheels" (II, 1688). Melville's Italian poems also include the alarming "In A Bye-Canal,"which expresses puritanical horror for the sexual advances proceeding from a Venetian casement: "What loveliest eyes of scintillation, / What basilisk glance of conjuration!" (II, 1700). Melville goes on to say that this is much more scary than all the perils of the oceans. Though these poems have no great lyric appeal, they are terribly candid in expressing Melville's turbulent repressions. A poor poem, "In A Bye-Canal" is for this reason possibly more arresting than most of the poems anthologized in *Gondola signore gondola*, many of which express a more predictable delight in Venice. Unwittingly, Melville's genius anticipated Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*.

But let us return to major poets born in the twentieth century. From Robert Lowell (1917-77) to Charles Wright (born 1935), the term "Italophile" could be applied. Lowell wrote about Italy in *Life Studies*, chiefly in his elegy for his mother (and Pound), "Sailing Home from Rapallo," and enjoyed a special relationship with his translator Rolando Anzilotti, first president of AISNA. Unfortunately, Lowell's letters to Anzilotti have not been released by his family; they would add significantly to our knowledge of Lowell and his Italian connections. Correspondences between author and translator are always illuminating. To mention two other important Italian instances, there is Carlo Izzo's correspondence with Ezra Pound and Renato Poggioli's correspondence with Wallace Stevens, both of which I have written about (see Works Cited). Allen Ginsberg's exchanges with Fernanda Pivano, his major Italian translator and interpreter, remain to be studied.

Italy was less central to Ginsberg's poetry than France, where he, Corso, and Burroughs spent some crucial years in the late fifties and early sixties, as chronicled in Barry Miles's biographical study *The Beat Hotel*. (An Italian translation of this appeared in 2007.) However, it is interesting to read Allen's first response to Italy in his extensive correspondence with his father Louis (August 1957):

> There's a great square in Florence—one side a huge impossible castle & tower, the other side a vast porch for lounging filled with Renaissance naked Patroklos's & Perseus and Davids and Sabine women being raped 20 feet tall, in between a great alleyway of the Uffizi galleries, in the middle a huge wild fountain with great bronze drunken satyrs—a very striking place—the spot where all the medieval stiffness & religious fear gave way & the Renaissance burst through with huge naked idealized realistic human bodies—David's nakedness being Michelangelo's great historical statement. Never been more anticatholic than since I took this trip. (Miles 2000, 64)

> Next day went to the Vatican museums—saw Michelangelo—and they've painted drapery over all his naked bodies in *Last Judgment*. Then to their great collection of classical statuary—and there again, everybody has a figleaf. I never saw the Church in such vulgar & ugly relief. After Florence & its classical openness, & after seeing the statuary in the Forum & various state museums, to go in Vatican & see them desecrating the very significance & point of ancient sculpture—idealized human bodies, but real ones—they even put a figleaf on poor old Laocoön and his prepubescent sons. How they get away with it I don't know: I mean, it's so opposite to what you see everywhere else in Italy, it stands out like the piece of dirtymindedness that it is. (Miks 2007, 65)

This is the Ginsberg who had already published *Howl* and made a name for himself. He is just as struck by naked statues and the problem of fig leaves as Hawthorne was a century before. He is fighting for an expression of his sexuality—a subject which is still upmost in his mind. However, what is striking about his fascinating correspondence with his father is the passionate intellectual discussion in which father and son engage. Here, for example, he addresses the question of Catholicism with a Poundian indulgence in generalization. Later he and his friend Peter Orlowski go on to Assisi and are received in friendly fashion by the monks. Ten years later, in December 1967, I met Ginsberg in Venice, where he was visiting Ezra Pound and annotating his copy of *The Cantos*. From Pound he took the savage attack against usury and exploitation, as can be seen in his 1970 book of poems, *The Fall of America*. He forgave Pound his anti-Jewish pronouncements as incidental to the candid and uncensored expression of "humors" in his writings. Ginsberg was equally direct and enjoyed "contradicting himself". But an unappreciated quality of his poetry, hysterical though it often is, is the humor and clowning. Humor, passion and intellectual high-mindedness are traits that relate to Ginsberg's Jewish background. But I think one could say he got his Italy mostly through Pound (and Fernanda Pivano). As he lay dying in April 1997, Gregory Corso and Patti Smith passed the time leafing through his annotated copy of *The Cantos*.

Gregory Corso also had his Italian phases, and spent much of his last decades in Rome, where his ashes are buried. His long poem "Field Report" is partly set in Rome:

> I stood in the Piazza Colonna
> (my mother's maiden name)
> on the Via del Corso
> (my mother's wedded name)
> Does that tell you something? (Corso 2007, 464)

The answer is, probably not. Yet Corso for all his posturing has a voice that gets across to the reader. Again, in the tradition of comedy, seriousness and jokes are mixed in his writing, which probably needs to be recited aloud.

Corso much preferred Italy to New York, where, he wrote his mentor Ginsberg, "I'm looked upon as Mr. Shit. . ., here where the arbiters of morality replaceth the dope dealer. In Rome, I'm professor Corso, a good but screwed-up man of creation" (Corso 2003, 422). My non-Italian readers may be surprised at the currency of Corso and Ginsberg in Italy. While Robert Lowell is only known to the small world of poetry connoisseurs, the Beats are still popular, and Americans will have to learn to accept the fact that they are the only late-twentieth century American poets with an international audience. (Plath is another one, but she is chiefly read in a feminist context.) The story of Corso in Italy is still to be written, though in preparing the Italian edition (2007) of his anthology *Mindfield* I tried to fill in the blanks in his chronology and bibliography, thus providing an outline to work from. Another useful source is Jacqueline Starer, *Les Écrivains beats et le voyage* (1977). But much of Corso's significant poetry had been written before his later extended stays in Italy, and in general he is more concerned with American ways and lore. Since his parents were Italian, his connection with Italy may have more to do with his biography, background and culture than with notes on Italy in his writings.

The case of Lawrence Ferlinghetti is somewhat analogous to Corso's. Both have often been to their parents' country, and have been better received there than in the U.S. (I note that neither is included in the 607 pages of J. D. McClatchy's generous and well-produced *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*, 1990, rev. ed. 2003.) Dana Gioia, a younger writer of Italian background, has questioned Ferlinghetti's Italian pedigree, pointing out that he was raised by an affluent adoptive Wasp family. Ferlinghetti responded by sending Gioia his father's birth certificate from Como, but says he got no response or retraction (Stefanelli 298-299). I believe that Ferlinghetti learned his Italian on his travels, for he was in Paris on the G.I. Bill just after the war studying at the Sorbonne. He certainly was quick to discover as an adult that Italy felt like home. Starting in the 1960s he was often in Italy; a painter, he began composing word-pictures of the places he visited. *A Trip to Italy and France* appeared in 1980, followed by *European Poems and Transitions: Over All the Obscene Boundaries* (1984). In his anthology *These Are My Rivers* (1993), a title taken from Ungaretti, an Italian poet who was lionized by the Beats, there are titles like "Firenze, a Lifetime Later," "John Lennon in the Porto Santo Stefano," "The Mouth of Truth," and so on. Ferlinghetti presents clear snapshots of things seen, with a good deal of humor, and a predilection for free rhythms and chanting. A moving poem about an errant master is "Pound at Spoleto," published in a 1971 collection. Ferlinghetti's Italian publication record is extensive, second only to Ginsberg's. Here on my desk I have *Non come Dante*, *Blind poet / Poeta cieco*, *Un luna park del* *cuore*, *Poesie*, *Cos'è la poesia*, *Poesie vecchie e nuove*, *Il lume non spento*, and of course *Poesie: Questi sono i miei fiumi* (the substantial anthology I edited in 1996). He has also translated Pasolini (*Roman Poems,* in collaboration with Francesca Valente). I have sent him corrections for the next reprint, for there are still quite a few misunderstandings of Pasolini's dense texts. When last heard of in the spring of 2008, Ferlinghetti, aged 89, was touring the libraries in and around Rome giving readings and being fêted by his many well-wishers. Probably no contemporary Italian poet is as popular in Italy as the former Poet Laureate of San Francisco. He can be counted on to catch a telling detail in the pages he writes, and to make quite an impression.

Both Ferlinghetti and his publisher James Laughlin, though missing from McClatchy's *Vintage Book*, are represented in *La luce migliore*, Laughlin by his poem "In Another Country," about his youthful affair with a girl in Rapallo, where he was "studying" with Ezra Pound during a break from Harvard. Though Laughlin cannot qualify as an Italophile poet, "In Another Country" is a memorable evocation of life abroad and *la jeunesse*. On the other hand, Laughlin as an old man published another love story, in prose, entitled *Angelica* (1992). This is the journal of a true Italophile, the record of a journey through Italy with lovely Angelica in the footsteps of Ezra Pound. Laughlin contributed in 1982 to a documentary on Pound in the "Voices & Visions" series, and travelled to Italy with the film crew. (He even interviewed me at home, but the footage was cut, though I remember making a good point about the olive flowers mentioned in *The Cantos*!) From this trip to Rapallo, Venice, Rimini and elsewhere he derived the journey in *Angelica*, though in 1982 he was still accompanied by his beautiful second wife Ann, who died in 1989. *Angelica* is a book of Italian notes, with a goodly sprinkling of inaccuracies. It has been translated into Italian by Rita Severi and published by Raffaelli of Rimini in his series of Quaderni poundiani. When I edited an anthology of Laughlin's poems for Mondadori, *Scorciatoie*, I added as an appendix a prose piece he sent me, "Ma Riess," which I believe has not appeared in the original English. I offer it as an Appendix to the present paper, for it is a delightful self-portrait of the young American poet abroad.

My American friends (who sometimes tell me they have never heard of Charles Bukowski and believe he may be my invention) will not object to the next Italophile poet I wish to mention, James Merrill, whose status in twentieth century poetry is assured, though I suppose he is hardly popular even in the U.S., and is little represented in Italy. (Andrea Mariani offered a pioneer volume of translations in 1991; Bianca Tarozzi translated three cantos from "The Book of Ephraim" for the little magazine *In forma di parole*; my version of "An Urban Convalescence" has appeared in two anthologies, 2004-2005; Nicola Gardini translated a section from the early "The Formal Lovers" for his 2001 anthology of modern gay poetry. As for Merrill's reputation in Britain and America, the ABELL bibliography for 2007 lists five contributions, of which only one wholly devoted to him.) Merrill is included in *Gondola signore gondola* by way of a passage from *The Book of Ephraim* ("Venise, pavane, nirvana, vice, wrote Proust. . ."), but is not among the poets of *La luce migliore*. I cannot pretend to know more than superficially Merrill's immense opus. There are Italian scenes scattered here and there, as in *The Changing Light at Sandover*, his 560-page epic rivalling Pound's *Cantos* and Yeats's *Vision*. And I recall in one of his late poems his image of himself going to the gym in NYC, "a yellow plastic Walkman at my hip," listening to Neapolitan songs sung by Roberto Murolo and digressing with stories about this singer ("Self-Portrait in Tyvek Windbreaker"). Merrill is an absolutely assured craftsman and is a narrative poet, who delights telling intricate stories in intricate forms. Like Auden, his master as Ashbery's, he is a virtuoso. But both Merrill and Ashbery, born respectively in 1926 and 1927, have an American raciness that Auden lacks in his Oxford donnishness. Merrill can use very natural language and is as sensitive to the vernacular as Ashbery, who on the other hand is all but a narrator. With Ashbery we are never supposed to know what is going on. With Merrill, the story is supposed to keep us on tenterhooks. Ashbery, though influenced by De Chirico and dedicating his best known poem to Parmigianino, cannot be described as Italianate. In turn, Merrill we associate more with Greece, where he lived in the 1960s, and which he wrote about superbly in prose and verse. Yet there is a major exception in the Merrill canon, the memoir *A Different Person* (1993), which tells of James Merrill in his early twenties sojourning at length in Rome while being psychoanalyzed, conducting affairs and making friends. There are not many Italians among his acquaintances, a grand exception being Count Umberto Morra of Metelliano (near Cortona), whom he loves as a surrogate father. Some years ago I was asked by the executors of the Merrill estate to see if his letters to Morra could be retrieved. I have not been successful so far, but haven't given up.

A Different Person tells us how Merrill was made "different" by his years in Italy. It is written in his typical knowing style, and much space is devoted to various male lovers, including his first (older) mate, the critic and translator Kimon Friar (a Hellenophile whom later, in chapter 2, Merrill visits in Athens and Poros). The title's "difference" is underscored by the sections in italics that conclude each chapter. The first time this voice is introduced Merrill writes:

> *A different typeface for that person I became? He will break in at chapter's end with glimpses beyond my time frame. Who needs the full story of any life?* (Merrill, 1993, 13)

The italic passages introduce later developments of the characters and episodes presented in the body of the chapters. Merrill's memoir proceeds in relaxed fashion, as the chapter rubrics suggest:

> IX A room of my own. Streetwalking, A literary soirée. Making friends with the natives.
>
> X Dr Detre [the psychoanalyst] takes over. The *Rake* on stage and off. Luigi's hospitality. [This is a telling encounter with a peasant soldier and his destitute family at home.]
>
> XI Mademoiselle. Claude's dinner party. Robert and his friends. The Michelangelo *Pietà*.
>
> XII Psychosomatic behavior. Paternal tact and maternal prejudice. Revelations. . .
>
> XIX Arrivederci, Robert. Translating Montale.

These episodes and scenes are vividly recovered, even with dialogue, showing Merrill's talent as a teller of tales. His detachment and perceptiveness recall Whitman's wonderful *Specimen Days*: small vignettes of great freshness. Prematurely spoiled by his wealthy background, Merrill doesn't care for museums and doesn't bask in the Italian past, as Byron or Pound. But he has a gracious responsiveness to people, and to art when he meets it face-on. His comments are always original, since he doesn't feel called upon to "think what other people think" when confronted with Colosseum or *Pietà*. The latter with its detached arm reminds him of a personality split, and he calls it "an inward, famished understudy for creative Love" (Merrill 1993, 139). In one of few generalizations, he finds in Caravaggio, Bellini and Piero della Francesca "a vitality, a unity of effort, that crisscrossed the map of Italy with magnetic currents":

> Here was history that didn't, for once, rise up from old, bloodthirsty stones.
>
> The power it chronicled. . . was comparatively clean, selfless, conferred by surrender to the craft itself, part of a proud calling and a long tradition that left me dazzled, though to a serious dilettante like Robert these were truths that went without saying. . . (Merrill 1993, 138)

Though we can detect echoes of T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Merrill with his interest in ideas and gift of expression has given that poetics new life and suggested his own care for craft as an escape from (or confirmation of) personality, to borrow Eliot's phrase. Characteristically, he adds to his brilliant record of his early response to Italian art the afterthought that to his more sophisticated friend Robert all of this was fairly obvious.

The "literary soirée" of Chapter 9 is given by princess Marguerite Caetani, editor of *Botteghe Oscure*, "at the palazzo in the street that gave its name to the magazine." Merrill is publishing two poems in the prestigious journal. It is at Cateani's reception that he meets Count Morra, a distinguished scholar and diplomat (later director of the Italian Cultural Institute in London):

> I knew not a soul and was about to leave when a gaunt bespectacled man with a dragging foot limped up to me. He said my name, took my hand in both of his, and introduced himself in a melodious drone: "I am Morra. We live at the same address." (Merrill 1993, 108)

Morra proceeds to introduce James to "a couple of black writers and their wives," and one of them, Ben Johnson, is asked to help Merrill translate some poems by Montale. This is a name familiar to Merrill from his friendship with Irma Brandeis at Bard College, and Montale is a recurring theme in the book. Later, when Merrill's divorced mother visits him in Rome, James gives a party for her and invites Umberto and the Johnsons. This leads to the revelation of "maternal prejudice" mentioned in the rubric:

> "Tell me just one thing, son." My mother spoke in dry, exhausted tones. "Would you have asked my father to meet these friends of yours?"
>
> What was she getting at? "I think so; yes. Why not?"
>
> "Do you know that this is the first time in my life that I have met colored people socially? If I wrote home that you had done this to me, no one would believe me. . ." (Merrill 1993, 147)

This is hardly surpassed as social comedy, and compresses volumes of social comment. (In another scene James and Robert take *The Way of the World* to read out loud as they are waiting for their papers at the police, and this suggests a model for the witty social intercourse Merrill cherishes.) The reader is delighted by a narrative where episode leads to episode, evoking in relaxed fashion an entire complex personal and historical world. Merrill's mother (originally from Jacksonville, Florida) has another major stumbling block in her son's homosexuality, and this is also presented in a series of scenes: the destruction of his letters from early lovers, and the contrast between mother and father. Hellen has always told James that the father doesn't know the facts, for the revelation "would kill him." But then it turns out that he has known all along, has talked over the matter with James's psychiatrists, accepted their diagnosis and (as always) paid the bill. During the Nemi picnic Merrill asks his mother how his father has come to know about his secret life, and discovers that... she herself told him.

Thus Italy is the background of a personal journey recounted with detachment and humor at a distance of forty years, with striking immediacy. This kind of somewhat condescending yet nuanced tone is to be found in other major American prose works, notably *The Education of Henry Adams* and much of Henry James. Merrill is close to James in combining subtlety and essential good sense, and in the craftsmanship, the felicity of phrasing, the telling and implying. Statements and understatements dovetail with prodigious ease.

Two other memorable Italian occasions in *A Different Person* are the visit to Umberto Morra's home, an old nineteenth-century pile in the Umbrian hills with mysterious occupants and an international gathering for dinner, followed by a trip to nearby Sansepolcro to see Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection*, which leads Merrill to reflections on Christianity (and to an amusing encounter with an American couple who cannot remember what the fresco is supposed to represent). The foregoing chapter (16) tells of Merrill's solo visit to Ravenna, which is a true epiphany. The mausoleum of Galla Placidia "has been created, it seems, to dramatize the inner life of a seer or a sibyl, the miracles hidden beneath weathered, baked-brick features, upraised in thought..." (Merrill 1993, 197). "Nothing" writes Merrill in the present tense "has prepared me for what I see." We are there with him in the moment of discovery. It is a Proustian (Wordsworthian) moment, a revelation of the inner life. Merrill's fascination with life, people and manners goes together, à la James, with this perennial activity of reflection and emotion. The emotion is distanced and neatly expressed—there is no breakdown in communication, no casting-about for phrases—but is a permanent resource, giving life to the words. *A Different Person* must count as one of the most accomplished "Italian Journeys" on record, though its Italy remains to some extent a background that the traveller absorbs with as much greed as detachment. He is again an American innocent abroad: we recall that Mark Twain also felt quite free to be as impressed or mocking as he liked about the spectacle of Old Europe. Merrill accomplishes the feat that in the late "Self-portrait" poem he attributes to light-hearted Roberto Murolo:

> From love to grief to gaiety his art
> Modulates effortlessly, like a young man's heart... (Merrill 2001, 670)

A confrontation with Italian themes is central to the work of a poet born nine years after Merrill, the Tennessean Charles Wright, who also writes of "specimen days" in free verse, adlibbing and always placing himself in the foreground, musing on his personal history and the language of art and nature. An early admirer of Ezra Pound, Charles Wright is more eclectic in his tastes and more given to enthusiasms than Merrill, but he is often stopped short by a melancholy scepticism. As he writes, he questions and affirms the efficacy of writing. His poetry may seem enervate, but as one gets to know it one sees that he repeatedly hits the mark without seeming to want to. The table of contents of the volume *Negative Blue: Selected Later Poems* (2000) is rich in Italian references: "Mid-winter Snowfall in the Piazza Dante," "Mondo Angelico," "With Simic and Marinetti at the Giubbe Rosse," "To the Egyptian Mummy in the Etruscan Musem at Cortona," "With Eddie and Nancy in Arezzo at the Caffè Grande," "Paesaggio Notturno," "Venexia," "Umbrian Dreams," "In the Valley of the Magra," "Passing the Morning under the Serenissima," "Giorgio Morandi and the Talking Eternity Blues," "Remembering Spello, Sitting Outside in Prampolini's Garden." Wright was in Italy with the army after the war and has mainly returned as a poet, for readings and awards. Three books of his have appeared with three small Milan publishers. So his seems to be a case of Italophilia beyond biographical occasions: perhaps the Italian world, the landscape full of history, functions as a contrast to the southern and western vistas he often describes as a series of mysterious signs, leading to some general statement with a concealed religious import. The Arezzo poem, for example, sketches a very common street scene, since Piero's celebrated frescos remain unseen, "in wraps... sotto restauro." Then comes a quotation, which is a Poundian gesture, though Wright's citations are surely more relaxed, reported as in conversation:

> The Fleeting World, Po Chü-i says, short-hops a long dream,
> No matter if one is young or old.
> The pain of what is present never comes to an end,
> Lightline moving inexorably
> West to east across the stones,
>   cutting the children first, then cutting us. (Wright 2000, 51)

Wright uses everyday speech, sometimes a little obscurely (as here with the short-hopping), and fits together in a seamless weaving his nuggets of wisdom (here the third line) and the signs of nature: note the comma between lines 3 and 4, which implies a relation between what is seen and what is thought. In a way this is Wright's postcard from Arezzo, and the conclusion is after all cheering though somewhat mournful:

> Saturday, mid-May, cloud bolls high cotton in the Tuscan sky.
> One life is all we're entitled to, but it's enough. (Wright 2000, 51)

The latter is after all a good Protestant sentiment: The earth was all before them. James Merrill writes with typical off-handedness (which could be irritating where he not entitled to his condescension by his talent and sympathy):

> We tried the Forum. I might have waxed sentimental over the ruins of Catullus's *garçonnière*, but places that "breathe History" have always left me cold. The chalk-and-blackboard ghosts of "great" (that is, ideologically inspired) human deeds deaden the very air between stroller and scene. (Merrill 2001, 110)

Charles Wright, on the other hand, enjoys the sense of being where somewhat exotic writers he admires sat around, as in the Florentine cafè "Giubbe Rosse":

> Where Dino Campana once tried to sell his sad poems
> Among the tables,
> Where Montale settled into his silence and hid,
> Disguised as himself for twenty years,

> The ghosts of Papini and Prezzolini sit tight
> With Carlo Emilio Gadda
> somewhere behind our backs. (Wright 2000, 48)

This is another postcard, evoking names and events that clearly Wright wants us to know about, also because "Those who don't remember the Futurists are condemned to repeat them," as he says in the same poem-vignette, surreptitiously putting in their place the many experimentalists still writing "parole in libertà" in the United States of the late twentieth century.

Wright and Merrill are both translators of Montale, but in a telling passage of *A Different Person* Merrill tells us that when Morra suggested visiting Montale in Milan, "I assumed a look of interest but, having recently seen in a bookshop a sullen, unprepossessing photograph of the poet, made up my mind to leave well enough alone" (176). Meeting Montale in person would have been a disappointment (though Merrill goes on to discuss this with his psychiatrist and finds that the true reason for his hesitation lies deeper). Wright on the other hand, I assume, would have enjoyed looking upon the somewhat elderly poet in person, if only to confirm that the reality is at variance with the imagination (which is what his poems frequently tell us). When I happened to send Wright a snapshot of Frederick II's mysterious fortress in Puglia, he responded with delight: "That fabulous picture of the Castel del Monte sent us browsing through the Google world—what an amazing place it is, and how beautiful. Thanks for sending the picture and letting us know that it existed! We would love to see it." This spells out Wright's curiosity and directness, as against Merrill's diffidence.

Clearly Italy and its art and history are central to Charles Wright's work. Though he set out under the influence of Pound, he was later much taken with Wallace Stevens, another collector of exotica who listened to the ghosts within landscapes. He would agree with Stevens that "Poetry is a response to the daily necessity of getting the world right" (176). Wright's postcards, which are sometimes longish letters, make precisely this attempt, again and again, hoping against hope, and often succeeding in satisfying poet and reader. These poems are an emotional experience, like a painting created in time, and mostly with a well-defined subject. Merrill on the other hand, for all his detachment, hankers after an explanation: he describes the world as he sees it in its variety and intersection of personalities but is also seeking a general framework: the conclusion of his psychoanalysis in *A Different Person*, the complicated system set forth in *The Changing Light at Sandover*, the first part of which was originally published in a book called *Divine Comedies*. So the difference between these two notable Italophile American poets is the difference between the postcard of the sensitive traveller tentatively sketching a personal impression and the edifice of the imitator of Dante, who summons ghosts from Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise.

Appendix

"Ma" Riess of Rapallo
by James Laughlin

I wish that when I was young I had had the good sense to keep a journal. But I had always gotten the best marks in school and imagined I would remember everything as long as I lived. The confidence of youth. That didn't happen. Along in my fifties the memory disk in the computer that is said to be in our brains filled up. The details, or all of old recollections, began to fade out to make room for new materials. In old age what happened last week, or even yesterday, becomes the hardest to remember. Suddenly now without my searching for it something from far back will flash into my mind very clearly.

A few days ago when Massimo Bacigalupo in Rapallo wrote me a question about her I again saw "Ma" Riess floating in her inner tube on the bosom of the Tigullian Gulf. She was plump enough to have floated without the tube but reclining in it she could read a Tauchnitz paperback. On hot days she wore a tennis visor to shade her eyes and the book. Once her glasses fell off but she was in shallow water and the poet Louis Zukofsky, one of the disciples of Ezra Pound who was visiting the master, was able to dive for them.

I first came to Rapallo to meet Ezra in October 1934. I had written him fan letters from boarding school, which he answered. He loved indoctrinating the young. When I took a term's leave from Harvard and got tired of being lonely in Paris I wrote him to ask if he could spare me a few hours of instruction. There was an immediate reply by telegram: "Visibility high." Arrived in Rapallo, I put up at the Albergo Rapallo on the seafront, where Ezra and Dorothy his wife took their meals. But the "albuggero" as he called it was expensive for a student who had only an allowance from home of a hundred dollars a month.

So when after a few days, not hours, of attentive listening to Pound's polymath monologues which embraced all literature and history I was invited to enroll sans tuition in the famous "Ezuversity," he found me a room in the apartment of his friend "Ma" Riess at about a dollar a day and tutelage in Italian with the octagenarian Signorina Canessa who hated Il Duce because he had put a tax on canaries.

"Ma" Riess's apartment was in a modern building in the western section of town, just beyond the footbridge that spans the ugly little river that comes down to the sea from the steep hills behind Rapallo. Not a large apartment but a pleasant one. It was on the top floor of the building, light and airy with a breeze coming in from the water. From my window I could look out to the small harbor, protected by a breakwater, where fishing boats and a few yachts were at anchor. Across the inner bay I could see the summer villa of the noble Venetians Robilants. Needless to say, I was never invited there, though I met some of the *nobili* when Ezra took me to the backstreet café (they wouldn't be seen at the seafront places frequented by tourists) where they had drinks before lunch. Ezra was a pet of the bluebloods. Their lives were boring and he made them laugh with his stories. Ranieri, Principe di San Faustino was unbearably handsome; as in a Henry James novel his family fortuned had been restored by an American marriage.

"Ma" Riess (I think the "Ma" was Ezra's coinage) was well served by an alacritous Ligurian maid named Margherita, a soft-eyed if somewhat hefty beauty. She was engaged to a handsome young fisherman. They were saving up money to get married. Margherita picked up after me and gave me an excellent breakfast, including a boiled egg in a little china holder. I had my lunch and dinner with Ezra and Dorothy at the "albuggero," paying for my own meals of course. In the corner of the dining room stood Gaudier-Brzeska's "hieratic head" of Pound, one of the masterpieces of modern sculpture. The waiters would bring in tourists from the *terrasse* to see it.

"Ma" Riess ate early but sometimes she would sit with me while I had my breakfast. She told me about her earlier years in Germany. She came from a middle-class English family. She had married a businessman in Weimar who prospered. They had come first to Rapallo on vacation. When Rudi died she sold the house in Weimar and moved to Rapallo for the climate. There was a photograph of Rudi, a good looking man with a Kaiser Wilhelm mustache, on the wall of the parlor. I also remember color prints of Weimar in Goethe's time and a reproduction of Dürer's woodcut of St Jerome and the lion. And a faded needlework her mother-in-law had done that said "Immer Gott mit uns" in Gothic script. She was a Protestant and went to the Anglican church in Rapallo.

What I liked best was when she recited poems of Goethe she had learned in school. I had had a term of German at Harvard but didn't really understand much. She would recite and then paraphrase for me in very good English. I can still recall her favorite lines of Goethe. "Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut." (Let man be noble, helpful and good.) I wish I could have modeled my life on that but I am base clay and use people.

She would sing Heine's "Lorelei": "Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten, dass ich so traurig bin...' (I don't know what it means that I'm so sad.) I still hum the tune when I'm feeling down, now that in old age I have spells of abulia and anhedonia. These were the black moods that plagued Ezra in his last sad years, when he hardly spoke, when he had gone into the much recorded "silence." Some thought that he was meditating about his *paradiso terrestre*. But he told me one day, when he did speak: "I've said all I have to say," and, quoting Ecclesiastes, "*Tempus loquendi, tempus tacendi.*" (There is a time for speaking and a time for keeping silent.)

She would adjure me with Schiller's "Es ist der Geist der sich dem Körper baut" (It is the spirit which builds the body). She was an example of that. At sixty, she had her aches and pains and a touch of asthma but she never let them get her down.

I'm sure she was fond of me, apart from my rent. She certainly was good to me. She never intruded if she heard me typing in my room on the battered little Corona. I was still trying to write the Great American Novel. It was about dreary, philistine Pittsburgh and how an angry young man busts loose "to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of the race" (Joyce). What did I really understand about Pittsburgh that I was trying do hard to escape? I knew that Andy Mellon was a mean old man; he wouldn't let us kids swim in his swimming pool across Woodland Road. Things like that. Just anecdotes. How could I figure that my Presbyterian forebears had built great steel mills which supplied rails for the Northern armies in the Civil War, pipes for the oil discovered in Texas, girders for skyscrapers, and sheet for the cars of Detroit? I realize now that I grew up in Pittsburgh among many people who led lives more useful than mine. But I also remember the mores of some of the contemporaries of my class. They drove too fast, drank too much, and even fornicated in the golf course sandtraps of the Allegheny Country Club. How to put the pieces together? The Great American Novel will always be *Moby-Dick*. Even Norman Mailer with his dreams of glory will never surpass Melville.

"Ma" Riess had a fine little library. She was a cultivated person. But I hadn't enough German to read her German books. And Ezra was constantly lending me his favorites to read. He loaned me Villon and Rochester (that randy man). He gave me Gavin Douglas's Scots version of the *Aeneid* and Golding's *Metamorphoses* of Ovid. He beat Catullus into my head and that is still there. But I flunked on the autobiography of Martin Van Buren. Van

Buren, Ezra thought, was a great president because he figured out that the banking system was crooked. He gave me Cocteau, who later told me about flying saucers when we had lunch at the Grand Véfours in the Palais Royal in Paris. What a charming man, but Valéry and Reverdy were better poets; the best of Cocteau is in his rewritings of the Greek plays.

"Ma" Riess had a brilliant son who changed his name to Holroyd-Reece. Who was Holroyd? She never told me about him. An English lover? She must have been quite beautiful in younger days. Holroyd-Reece had literary stature. He founded the Albatross paperback editions, much better printed than the Tauchnitzes. He reprinted all the right people: Conrad, Forster, Huxley, Joyce, Lawrence... Now and then he drove to Rapallo in his Bentley to see his mother. She was very proud of him. I remember him as florid and jovial. On one of his visits he met Bettina, the young Belgian companion of Gerhart Münch, the gifted German pianist who played, along with Ezra's friend Olga Rudge on the violin, in the concerts Pound organized in the town hall. Wonderful concerts: Mozart, Vivaldi, Bach. . . Before the music Ezra would explain in Italian (with still a slight accent of Amurriker). I found Bettina most glamorous: she was blonde and honey-skinned. When I left Rapallo in the spring she was still there. But when I returned a few years later she was gone. I heard that Reece had set her up in Paris and that Münch had gone to California.

"Ma" Riess didn't approve of my Rapallo girlfriend Leoncina. She was only the daughter of the bank janitor. But she didn't lecture me about her. She understood that "flesh is heir." Of course I never brought Leoncina up to my room in the apartment. We used to walk to the cemetery. Love among the cypresses and the dead. The story of Leoncina is told in my poem "In Another Country." Now she is happily married to a journalist and lives in the Via Santa Caterina da Siena in Rome. The last time I went there for tea she asked me: "Ti ricordi, Giacomino, quando noi due siamo stati ragazzi a Rapallo?" Yes, I remember, I remember often.

Works Cited

Bacigalupo, Massimo. "'A New Girl in a New Season': Stevens, Poggioli, and the Making of *Mattino domenicale*." *The Wallace Stevens Journal* 25, no. 2 (2001): 254-270.

_____. "Pound/Izzo". *Ambassadors: American Studies in a Changing World*. Ed. Massimo Bacigalupo and Gregory Dowling 63-80. Rapallo: Busco, 2006 (*Quaderni di Palazzo Serra* 14 [2006]: 63-80.)

Carrera, Alessandro, and Thomas Simpson. *La luce migliore*: *Poeti americani in Italia*. Milano: Medusa, 2006.

Collins, Billy. *A vela, in solitaria, intorno alla stanza*. Edited by Franco Nasi. Milano: Medusa, 2006.

Corso, Gregory. *An Accidental Autobiography: The Selected Letters*. Edited by Bill Morgan. New York: New Directions, 2003.

_____. *Poesie. Mindfield – Campo mentale*. Edited by Massimo Bacigalupo. Roma: Newton Compton, 2007.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. *Poesie: Questi sono i miei fiumi. Antologia personale 1955/1993*. Edited by Massimo Bacigalupo. Italian trsl. Lucia Cucciarelli. Roma: Newton Compton, 1996.

Gardini, Nicola, ed. *Il senso del desiderio: Poesia gay dell'età moderna*. Milano: Crocetti, 2001.

Ginsberg, Allen and Louis. *Family Business: Selected Letters Between a Father and Son*. Edited by Michael Schumacher. New York: Bloomsbury, 2001.

Laughlin, James. "'Ma Riess' of Rapallo." Unpublished typescript, circa 1990.

_____. *Scorciatoie. Poesie 1945-1997*. Edited by Massimo Bacigalupo. Milano: Mondadori, 2003.

_____. *Angelica: Fragment from an Autobiography*. Grenfell Press, 1992. Italian trsl. by Rita Severi: *Angelica. Frammenti di un'autobiografia*. Rimini: Raffaelli, 2005.

Lowell, Robert. *Poesie (1940-1970)*. Edited by Rolando Anzilotti. Milano: Longanesi, 1972. 2nd ed., revised and with a preface by Massimo Bacigalupo, Milano: Guanda, 2001.

Mamoli Zorzi, Rosella, et al. *In Venice and in the Veneto with Ezra Pound*. Venezia: Supernova, 2007.

_____. and Gregory Dowling, eds. *Gondola signore gondola*: *Venice in 20th Century American Poetry*. Venezia: Supernova, 2007.

McClatchy, J. D. ed., *Vintage Book of Contemporary American Poetry*. New York: Vintage, 1990, rev. ed. 2003.

Melville, Herman. *Opere*. Edited by Massimo Bacigalupo. 2 vols. Milano: Mondadori, 1981.

_____. "*At the Hostelry" and "Naples in the Time of Bomba*." Edited by Gordon Poole. Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989.

Merrill, James. *A Different Person*: *A Memoir*. New York: Knopf, 1993.

_____. *Collected Poems*. Edited by J. D. McClatchy and Stephen Yenser. New York: Knopf, 2001.

Miles, Barry. *The Beat Hotel: Ginsberg, Burroughs and Corso in Paris, 1957-1963*. New York: Grove Press, 2000. Italian trsl. by Francesca Bandel Dragone: *Il Beat Hotel. Ginsberg, Corso, Burroughs e gli alti: l'avventura parigina dei Beat*. Milano: Guanda, 2007.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Roman Poems*. Trsl. Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Francesca Valente. San Francisco: City Lights, 1986, 2005.

Starer, Jacqueline. *Les écrivains beats et le voyage*. Paris: Didier, 1977.

Stefanelli, Maria Anita. "Lawrence Ferlinghetti's 'Surreal Migrations'." In *Ambassadors: American Studies in a Changing World*, ed. Massimo Bacigalupo and Gregory Dowling, 289-300. Rapallo: Busco, 2006. (*Quaderni di Palazzo Serra* 14 [2006]: 289-300.)

Stevens, Wallace. *Opus Posthumous*. Edited by Samuel French Morse. New York: Knopf, 1980.

Wright, Charles. *Negative Blue: Selected Later Poems*. New York: FSG, 2000.

Literary Criticism: Its Transatlantic Past and Its Future

Coordinators: Pia Masiero Marcolin, Mena Mitrano

Mena Mitrano

Introductory Remarks

I would like to offer a few introductory remarks to this workshop on "Literary Criticism: Its Transatlantic Past and Its Future." I thank my gracious co-chair, Professor Pia Masiero, for the conversations over these past months preceding the workshop and for her presence and her voice at the conference. We also thank all the speakers and contributors, without whose work the workshop would not have been possible.

Has literary criticism become an anachronism? This is the question that prompted the workshop proposal.

Marjorie Perloff asked the question a few months ago at the MLA Convention in Philadelphia, noticing that the text and the author have disappeared from our field of study, replaced by cultural investigations of a wider scope. She urged literary scholars to become more "literate" about our field by acquiring more knowledge, both historical and theoretical, about it.

Our panel, on the whole, proposes that this new literacy involves looking at literary criticism as a transatlantic phenomenon, that is, as part of a larger process of communication between Europe and the United States. Even the most cursory glance at the development of literary criticism in the post-WWII decades will show that the movement and relocation of ideas between Europe and the United States has profoundly changed how we think about interpretation and reception, extending these not only to a variety of non-traditional aesthetic artefacts but also to new media and technologies. That process of mutual opening between Europe and the United States that has shaped the path of literary criticism loosely begins in the earlier part of the twentieth-century, culminates in our time with Theory, and ends with the resurgence of fundamentalisms and binary frameworks after the collective trauma of 9/11 as well as with non-Western scholars' critiques of the essentialist assumptions of high theorists (see, for example, Rey Chow's recent book *The Age of the World Target* and her critique of Roland Barthes there).

The workshop was organized in the conviction that approaching literary criticism as a historically delimited form of transatlantic relocation and translation of ideas, whose turns and innovations have changed, among other things, our view of "America," combined with an earnest questioning of commonly held assumptions, may point to fresh directions for the future. To this aim, our speakers and contributors have re-evaluated the past in an attempt to identify questions, topics, and names that might lead our discipline into the twenty-first century.

Anthony Marasco questions the assumption of "presentness" in New Historicist practice and theorizes the pivotal role of what he terms "the antiquarian moment." Roberta Fornari, challenging deep-rooted views about Adorno's anti-Americanism, argues that his critique of contemporary culture and the work of art draws its strength from the philosopher's exposure to more fluid crossovers of European and US culture. Paola Loreto turns to the poetry of A. R. Ammons and, drawing on the work of Jonathan Culler, raises the suggestive question of possible affinities between lyrical and critical address. Igina Tattoni, Salvatore Proietti and Caterina Ricciardi glean new directions for the future from a re-evaluation of the work of literary critic Lionel Trilling. Finally, Pia Masiero Marcolin shifts the focus to where the action is—the classroom—to consider the vital link between literary interpretation and knowledge transfer.

Currently, the critical scene is divided between the temptation of melancholia (for example in Terry Eagleton's recent work) and the call for more ethical reading practices (see Valentine Cunningham's work). But even those who, like Eagleton, mourn the great theorists of the past recognize that the best way to envision the future is to pay due attention to the subtle link between interpretation and democracy. Critical acts, which attest and distribute meaning, are always imaginatively caught up in a distribution and redistribution of human value. The dogma of the death of the author may have undermined this intimacy, but it is now being championed with renewed energy by all those who advocate more ethical ways of reading.

The future of criticism hinges not only on our ability to reconceptualize its historical tenets—the boundary between individual reception and public critical speech, the gap between reader and interpreter, and so forth—but also (and more urgently perhaps) on our willingness to re-draw the democratic foundations of thought, pursuing theories of meaning that are on the side of the unimpeded unfolding of each and every individual's desire for self-realization. Herein lies the creative challenge.

Anthony Louis Marasco

The Antiquarian Moment: A Note on New Historicism

Misquoting Jefferson, we could say that definitions which define least, define best. This is why I rather like a vague definition of New Historicism I recently found on Wikipedia. According to the faceless opinion there recorded, New Historicism is the reverse of New Criticism.[1] Where the latter underscored the literariness of a text, the former emphasized the contextual side of any text. Having been trained as a contextualist intellectual historian, I take comfort in such a historically minded definition. Unfortunately, there is a complication. If nomenclature means anything, "New" Historicism is not historicism of old. And in fact, at close scrutiny, it is a position scouted, developed, and defended, by literary scholars *in opposition* to old-school historicism—ultimately to historians. New Historicism is then the most advanced trench in the ongoing battle for the heart of the Human Sciences. Should the disciplines devoted to the study of human history lean in the direction of the humanities, or should they keep trying to measure themselves up to the standards of the "hard sciences"? Which boils down to one fundamental question on the nature of the historical discipline: literature or science? Hayden White or the number crunch? Now that New Historicism is getting old after more than twenty years of strife, it is perhaps worth pondering what brought it to the forefront of the battle in the first place. As we shall see, the problem it now faces as an ageing warrior lies there.

The easiest and most economic way of coming to the point about what New Historicism is seems theoretical rather than historical. It would take a volume to retell the story of New Historicism, but it takes only a few quotes from Walter Benjamin to come to the point. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940), Benjamin laid down a program for the study of history that all but reversed the theoretical foundations of the discipline. The fulcrum of the reversal is the role the present plays in knowing the past. Thesis XVI reads:

> A historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop. For this notion defines

> the present in which he himself is writing history. Historicism gives the “eternal” image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past. The historical materialist leaves it to others to be drained by the whore called “Once upon a time” in historicism’s bordello. He remains in control of his powers: man enough to blast open the continuum of history. (262)

“Historicism justifiably culminates in universal history,” Benjamin insists in Thesis XVII:

> Materialistic historiography differs from it as to method more clearly than from any other kind. Universal history has no theoretical armature. Its method is addictive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty space. Materialistic historiography, on the other hand, is based on a constructive principle. Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well [*Stillstellung*]. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. (262-263)

While “a historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad” (263), the historicist is content with the piling up of data, which by addition becomes each day more opaque rather than more transparent. What the historical materiallist must seek to overturn is the “objective” inevitability of such accumulation. In the monad, the historical materialist “recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past”:

> He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework, the era: and in the era, the entire course of history. (263)

By conceiving of the present as a state of transition in which time stands still for a moment, Benjamin reversed the role the present plays in knowing the past. Where the goal of historicism had been to know the past objectively—“as it really happened,” to cite Ranke’s famous dictum—the goal of Benjamin’s philosophy of history was to use the subjectivity of the historian as a means with which to politicize history. It is in the experience of the historian that the present and the past constellate, that is, form an unresolved dialectical force field in which there is no reconciliation other than that which takes place in the historical imagination of the engaged historian. In other words, if a voice has been silenced in the past by oppression triumphant, that voice can find in the activity of the materialist historian its own redemption in memory. This is because the materialist historian is said to have the weak Messianic power every living inhabitant of the present has with regards to the inhabitants of the past; that is, we who are alive, if we want, can recall to life dead people in our memory. So we—if we so choose—can recover the victims of oppression to life, just as the Messiah can with regards to history as a whole. For historical materialism is but an apparatus driven secretly by theology, by the faith that unexpectedly—at any moment, even now—time may stop and the Messiah may come.[2]

Benjamin's materialistic reversal does away with the most cherished goal of the historical profession: to be as objective as possible. It should not surprise that its influence has been felt most in departments other than History. There is something, however, that prevents Benjamin's method from becoming a mere exercise in subjective presentism. We could call this its "antiquarian moment." In the activity of the materialist historian, the voice of the victim of history silenced by the oppressor is carefully located before being brought back to life. There is then a truly historiographical moment in its dialectical unfolding, and that moment is the moment of contextual localization of the erased voice calling for redemption at the hands of the historian. What keeps Benjamin's materialistic method from becoming anachronistic is the massive undialectical preponderance of negation over affirmation. Only in the engaged historian can the silenced voices of the oppressed find reconciliation in memory.

It may be too much to claim that New Historicism can simply be prefigured in the work of Walter Benjamin. Michel Foucault, for example, has had a strong and undeniable influence on the movement, one which does not flow in the general direction of Benjamin's theory. But Benjamin's most basic point—the point about the present—is also the basic point about New Historicism. Archeological and genealogical ways of interrogating the historiographic archive are equally presentist in their attempt to recover the voices of the silenced.

What we gain by calling Benjamin's historical materialism New Historicism is that we can also name what is most problematic about it today. At the time of Benjamin's original reversal—1940, arguably Western Civilization's darkest hour—negation was preponderant over affirmation in a way that might have justified the use of such powerful injections of subjective thinking in approaching the past. But in time, and particularly with the shift in demographics that has radically changed the academic environment, particularly in the United States, the preponderance of negation has shifted to a point where we can even talk of a preponderance of affirmation.[3] In this new environment, exactly what kept New Historicism from becoming presentist—its dialectical nature—has begun performing erratically. I'll give you two concrete examples of what I mean.

In the 1961 reprint of the *Concise Dictionary of American History* published by Scribner's in New York in 1940 (incidentally the year Benjamin wrote his theses), we read in the entry on the Reconstruction Era: "The Negro's religion at this time, quite naturally, was tinged with politics, and

Negro churches were used by unscrupulous carpetbag and Negro politicians to gain control of the Negro ballot." Now, in the very word "Negro" we see a moment of danger flashing before our mind's eye, and it may still come as a shocking surprise to us to remember how unrecognized was the voice of black Americans suffering in bondage before the work of imaginative historians like Eugene Genovese (author in 1974 of *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made*) and Lawrence Levine (author in 1977 of *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*), to name the two most prominent authors of this new historiography.[4] A steadfast identification with those voices allowed this new brand of historians to reverse the picture the *Dictionary* painted in just one generation.

But today we find ourselves in a completely different situation. Take the beginning of the historical section of the introduction to the C Volume of the Sixth Edition of the Norton Anthology of American Literature published in 1979. In its 2003 edition, which is still on sale today, we read:

> In the second half of the nineteenth century, the fertile, mineral-rich American continent west of the Appalachians and Alleghenies was occupied, often by force, largely by Europeans, who exploited its resources freely. These new Americans, their numbers doubled by continuous flow of immigrants, pushed westwards to the Pacific coast, displacing Native American cultures and Spanish settlements when they stood in the way. (20)

Now, in this new context, what flashes before our eyes in a moment of danger? Certainly not the image of the dislodged "Native Americans Cultures," and Spanish settlements. They are well taken care of by the narrative itself. Unfortunately, what begins to flash before us is the fate of historical scholarship. "New Americans," largely "Europeans" displacing Spanish settlements? Are Spaniards not Europeans? Obviously they are, but you see what has happened. Wanting to say "white" and then censoring the term, the author of the introduction said European instead, following the de-racialized language approved by the federal Office of Management and Budget directive passed in 1977 to acquire and organize census data. It was then that Whites become European-Americans: Blacks, African-Americans; Red, Native Americans; Yellow, Asian Americans; and Brown—a bit more problematically because "Latin American" was already taken—, Latinos.[5] When these euphemisms, which have performed a great job in the present, are applied to the past heuristically, anachronisms result, tending to reduce their political usefulness to nil.

What redeems the method of writing subjective history for political reasons is what I have called "the antiquarian moment": the long instant in which history is still contemplated as something opaque and continuous, receding in time. Without that moment, radical revisionism runs the risk of catching merely a tail glimpse of itself.

Notes

[1] "New Historicism is an approach to literary criticism and literary theory based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place, and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation. It had its roots in a reaction to the 'New Criticism' of formal analysis of works of literature, which was seen by a new generation of professional readers as taking place in a vacuum." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_historicism.

[2] No day passes without a new book on Benjamin. I still rely on: Martin Jay. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*. London: Heinemann, 1973.

[3] On the changes brought by a new demographic make up of the American historical profession, see: Peter Novick. *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. When I say that the affirmation of diversity has become preponderant over its negation, I always allude to the intramural world of the academia. Outside is a completely different matter.

[4] Eugene Genovese. *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Pantheon Book, 1974; Lawrence W. Levine. *Black Consciousness, Black Culture: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

[5] See: David A. Hollinger. *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Works Cited

Benjamin, Walter. 1940. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." In *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, 253-264. New York: Schocken, 1955.

Roberta Fornari

Adorno in America: A New Beginning for Criticism

Investigating the implications of the critical theory of Theodor W. Adorno means recognizing the wide extent of his research, which ranges from philosophy to literary criticism, from sociological research to music theory. The influence of his interdisciplinary research offers, today more than ever, a compelling terrain of confrontation for criticism as it questions i) the relationship between art and society, ii) the role of culture and the literary product in society, iii) the role of criticism in an age of unchallenged capitalistic forces that permeate all areas of life. Adorno's ideas of culture especially have a long tradition in twentieth-century history. In America, his theoretical analysis influenced the work of Marxist scholars, like Jameson, Kellner and some postmodernist approaches. In Europe, the School of Frankfurt, to which Adorno belonged, continues to attract philosophical investigations and post-Marxist research on aesthetics, social theory and culture. The perspective I would like to propose in this work will begin with the notion that the time Adorno spent in America was crucial for the analysis he carried out later. The investigation shall commence with an intertextual reading of his different writings on the analysis of the cultural industry, written during the years he spent in America as an *émigré*. I will use his experience of intellectual displacement as background and I will thus analyze some claims he made in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *Minima Moralia* and *Notes to Literature* to show how Adorno's critique of contemporary culture and the work of art arose from his new position at the intersection of European and US culture.

In *Minima Moralia*, Theodor W. Adorno wrote that "every intellectual in emigration is, without exception, mutilated," due to the fact that "his language has been expropriated, and the historical dimension that nourished his knowledge, sapped" (Adorno 2005, 33; qtd. in Jay 1985, 120).

The years Adorno spent in the United States between 1938 and 1949 gave him a direct frame of reference and a specific outlook on American society and strengthened in some way the doubts he had already entertained about the power of redemption of high culture. These doubts, according to Martin

Jay, had been instilled in him partially by his Marxist and aesthetic modernist inclinations. The encounter with America led Adorno to elaborate a concept of culture that may be well summed up in a claim he made once he came back to Germany: "In America," Adorno wrote later,

> I was liberated from a certain naïve belief in culture and attained the capacity to see culture from the outside. . . . In spite of all social criticism and all consciousness of the primacy of economic factors, the fundamental importance of the mind the "Geist" was a quasi dogma self-evident to me from the very beginning. The fact that this was not a foregone conclusion, I learned in America. (Jay 1985, 124; Adorno 2005, 25)

This claim may be interpreted in many respects as a double perspective on culture. From a certain point of view, America came to represent a field of observation of how economic forces were shaping society and how tastes instilled by the media on the audiences could be investigated more thoroughly. For Adorno, a meaningful investigation of taste could take place only by examining how objective constellations of social forces present themselves in subjects. As noted by Claussen in a recent article in *New German Critique*, America has merely been ahead of the curve in the global trend toward commercializing intellectual production. The phenomenon of commercialization and the values instilled in audiences by market forces had been addressed by Adorno in his first years in America, when he began to work in New York on the Princeton Radio Research Project with Paul Lazarsfeld and then continued working on a sociological work in four volumes, known as *The Authoritarian Personality*.

From a different angle, the whole notion of seeing culture from the outside may be interpreted as a more subjective attempt to negotiate one's identity. In other words, emigration was a process of mutilation because of the necessity to elaborate a new vision that was all the more inspired by a personal transformation inherent in the move from Europe to America, and in the shifts from European cultural traditions to the American reality.

The intellectual transfer (Claussen 2006) between Europe and the United States during the Thirties, especially in terms of the émigrés who fled Nazi Germany for America launched a period of cultural diaspora and dramatic confrontations with a new culture which is quite unique in the history of criticism. The opportunities offered in the United States were not simply matter of choice but an unavoidable historical necessity that the war years aggravated and made even more urgent. In the case of Adorno, his new experience represented a challenge that, as noted in *Minima Moralia*, not only brought forth ideas of a mutilation of language, identity and intellectual forces, but also allowed him to generate some of the more challenging critiques of contemporary Western society and its cultural production. Facing the historical collapse of European culture and the impossible reconciliation with the American culture, Adorno developed an intellectual program of "transferring that which is not transferable." As noted by Claussen, although Adorno remained keenly aware of his condition as an émigré in the new land, he managed to mature into a philosophical sociologist who emancipated himself from the German tradition he had unwillingly left. In America, he became a theorist who used empiricism to free traditional philosophy from dogma even at the price of intellectual uneasiness with the American context.

The work he carried out in New York and then in Los Angeles with Max Horkheimer contained a multiperspective method that applied philosophy as well as sociology, economy, politics and other perspectives (Best and Kellner 1997, 78). Therefore, Adorno's analysis of cultural production in America may be considered not only one of the most important contributions to criticism between the age and movements of modernity and postmodernity, but also a new beginning for the rethinking of cultural criticism in contemporary society, especially in the light of the transformations experienced today in contemporary capitalistic societies. Despite Adorno's overt disdain of mass culture, radio, television and cinema, these served as extensive subjects for investigation to shed new light on how the critic must approach the work of art in the context of societies with elevated technical development. The capitalistic model, with its technology of mass communication and fetishism of culture, was defined by Adorno as the administered world. In America Adorno became somewhat more Marxist than he had been before leaving Germany and gained insight on the notion of culture that was capable of revealing all the inherent contradictions of the very concept of culture itself.

As highlighted in Claussen, by the late 1960's Adorno had become a kind of institution in Germany and also a major intellectual figure in the States. In 1967, Angela Davis played an active role in introducing and mediating Adorno and Benjamin's contributions to a larger world. In the 1980's, Martin Jay began working on the relationship between European critical theorists of the Frankfurt School and America in *Permanent Exiles*. Despite the influence of Adorno and critical theory on academic and intellectual works of the last decades of twentieth century, the image of the German scholar still clings to a series of stereotypes based on anecdotes and distorted accounts of his experience across the Atlantic.

Considered a snobbish intellectual and autocratic mandarin because of his superior attitude towards America, Adorno was often compared to some French aristocrats who emigrated during the French Revolution (Jay 1985, 122 on Barnouw); several critics attacked his convoluted writing style and his ideas were criticized as reactionary. Others, lacking the Marxist background necessary to understand Adorno's claims and assumptions, and desiring to secure legitimacy for "mass art" or "popular culture" often ignored, and continue to do so, the main point of his critique of the culture industry (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2007, 5).

This in part explains the ambivalent reaction of many scholars to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. When the work first appeared in 1947, it was still far from being recognized as a breakthrough analysis. The lack of recognition was caused in part by the fact that the work appeared first in German and not translated into English until 1972. *Minima Moralia* was considered more a collection of fragments and sparks largely confined to a subjective and pessimistic reaction to modern society than an open work of criticism, perhaps in part due to its personal and often difficult structure of language. It should be acknowledged that Adorno's reception was often hampered by unreliable translations in English. However, since the 1990's new and better translations have appeared in America, along with newly translated lectures and other posthumous works. In the last decade, secondary literature has been published as well as essays devoted to aspects of his thought which had not been previously investigated (O'Connor 2000; Gibson-Rubin 2002; Tiedemann 2003; Burke 2007; Claussen 2003).

In the introduction to a recent publication edited by Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin, the authors recognize the importance of Adorno's thinking beyond his alleged idiosyncrasies regarding American culture, and quote, for example Judith Butler. For Butler, Adorno represented a mode of criticism that was the source of legitimacy at a time when the alternatives of resistance to the forces of capitalism had become less visible. Butler sees Adorno as an example of the intellectual who provides "the intellectual resource we must preserve as we make our way toward the politically new." She furthermore sees Adorno's writing, despite its density and labyrinthine quality as, "one that forces readers to reflect on the power of language to shape the world" (Gibson-Rubin 2002, 1).

Some recent criticism on Adorno takes his Marxist background into account as an underlying aspect of his analysis of contemporary market forces on a global scale after the failure of the socialist model. On the one hand, Adorno is referred to as a philosopher whose importance is more and more recognized in the United States, due to the fact that his investigations represent a model and a vast alternative to the encroaching powers of the market after the transformations of the world on a global scale. On the other hand, he is presented in the context of Western Marxism at the very junction of modernity and postmodernity. Adorno's position as an autonomous thinker who refused the dictates of both the party and the market has kept alive the often embattled space of the intellectual in the late twentieth century. In a context of unchallenged capitalistic production on a global scale, the terms of intellectual and public debate have outlined the virtual space of unlimited possibilities for the subject (Gibson-Rubin 2002, 2). The notion of unlimited possibilities that plays a specific role in the American experience was seen by Adorno as a major contradiction not only for America itself, but for capitalistic societies from the very beginning of the crisis that modernity was experiencing in Europe. It is all the more important to recognize that the American experience made Adorno aware of the overwhelming process of the standardization of culture which was invading all public and private spheres. This problem is extensively investigated in the famous section on the culture industry in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

As recognized by those who have read the *Dialectic*, Adorno and Horkheimer developed an analysis of the American culture industry which is profoundly rooted in the premise that the subject is overwhelmed by market forces. It is from this premise that Adorno's critique of American culture and society should be regarded as an attempt to bridge the gap between his intellectual uneasiness toward mass culture and his experience of emigration in a new social and economic context. Distanced from the cultural collapse of his German home, Adorno thought freedom of the subject was an almost impossible goal in the light of what he discovered about cultural production in America. In *Minima Moralia*, this problem is addressed in a series of fragmented considerations that represented his experience in more complicated terms.

In fact, as Martin Jay shows in *Permanent Exiles*, the relationship between Adorno and his new home was much more articulated and complicated than the conventional image commonly represented. The idea that Adorno's reading of American culture was biased by a substantially conservative inclination towards mass culture is, however, only part of the larger truth. His hostility towards some aspects of mass culture, which are addressed and criticized in the article on jazz and in his analysis of the film industry, should be considered in the context of his German background, one of whose trademarks was a romantic anti-capitalist stance (Jay 1985, 13). After his American experience ended in 1953, Adorno returned to Europe with an intellectual vision permeated by awareness of the fact that "the overwhelming objectivity of historical movement in its present phase consists so far only in the dissolution of the subject, without giving rise to a new one" (Adorno 2005, 15). He also stated, just a few lines earlier, that "the relation between life and production, which in reality debases the former to an ephemeral appearance of the latter, is totally absurd" (Adorno 2005, 15).

It is the absurdity of life reduced to mere consumption that lies at the centre of Adorno's considerations in *Minima Moralia* along with the idea of the impossibility, for the subject, to reconstitute if not its unity, at least its autonomy: "The subject still feels sure of its autonomy, but the nullity demonstrated to subjects by the concentration camp is already overtaking the form of subjectivity itself" (Adorno 2005, 16). Negated by history, subjectivity may be grasped only by a negative dialectic that is aware of the damage exerted on the subject. However, America could not represent the promise of liberation to intellectuals who escaped Europe; this promise was denied by the brand of administered society that the capitalistic model offered in the United States. The pervasive model of the culture industry, a concept not to be confounded with mass culture, served the function of mystification which was could provide only the illusion of fulfillment without sublimation. The pervasiveness of the capitalistic model, permeating the culture industry and private life as well, reduced individual subjectivity to a network of reified relations. In Adorno's writings, this process not only permeates American society, but is also a condition of contemporary society as a whole.

When Adorno returned to Europe, the experience he brought back was permeated by the notion that an impossible reconciliation was a condition inherent to the intellectual role in society. As Claussen puts it, Adorno became a European in the U.S., and *Minima Moralia* may be read as an inverted tourist guide in which the European begins to understand himself through exile (Claussen 2006, 8). It is, in a certain sense, a private journal for the critique of all aspects of life in the twentieth century and its fragmented structure aims ultimately at reconstituting an image of "completeness" through apparently isolated considerations.

In describing emigration as a fragmented set of images drawn from daily life in Los Angeles and Europe, Adorno is committed to transmitting a subjective experience of the cultural deprivation that permeates public and private sphere alike. The damaged life of the subtitle in *Minima Moralia* regards not only the culture industry in America, but also the crisis of European culture and society that forced European intellectuals into exile. This problem is investigated by David Jenemann, who recently dealt with different aspects of the emigration experience and conveys an image of Adorno as a deeply involved intellectual engaged in learning the technology and financing of radio, movies, and television. Applying his interdisciplinary approach, Adorno grasped their inner meanings directly in their production centre, New York. His move to Los Angeles gave him an insight into a different urban and social environment whose alienated city landscape is often evoked in the pages of *Minima Moralia*, along with a sense of the uncanniness of life experience in a big city, a strangeness that is quite familiar to other scholarly approaches to the urban structure.[1]

As Los Angeles is Hollywood and Hollywood is "the industry" *par excellence*, the assumptions on this "archetypal site" (Davis, qtd. in Jenemann 2006, xxiv) become an analysis of the mechanisms of production and redistribution of visual narratives. These mechanisms are not only by-products of the industry, but also assume a basic role in that they represent models of behavior and cultural values for the larger society. The models reflect the market forces at work in society and are addressed by Adorno through a Marxist approach that subverts the traditional distinction between structure and superstructure. Adorno's contribution to Western Marxist tradition may therefore be best defined, in this sense, as the point where the crisis of modernity and the soon-to-be expressed criticism of postmodernism meet. As also indicated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the space of freedom for the subject, in the context of an administered society, is ultimately a space of resistance. Seen from this perspective, the fragments of *Minima Moralia* are not a collection of pessimistic aphorisms, but the ultimate attempt to build upon the fragments of a damaged subjectivity, seen and experienced through the lens of exile. The message should be grasped taking into account the voice of a critical conscience which tries to negotiate a space of autonomy. The critical analysis Adorno proposes of culture in its most hidden recesses, which ranges from film to literature, from lifestyles to comic books and popular icons, is the ultimate attempt to construct a role of desperate awareness for the critic who devotes his analysis to the difficult task of reconciling the meanings of the administered world and his own condition of émigré. The image that emerges from the pages of *Minima Moralia* is one of restricted autonomy and illusory freedom. The individual is continuously confronted with the contradictions inherent in a society permeated by commercialization processes. These processes invade all realms of life, from personal relations[2] to social organization. The reduced autonomy lies in the fact that the individual, deceived by an illusory freedom of choice, is ultimately trapped in a structure capable of reproducing itself.

If this basic contradiction of capitalism is well recognizable in the workings of the market, it is the culture industry that best evidences how market forces produce "objects" and works that are basically commercialized. In America, the aesthetic forms that speak of a free individual are subject to, for Adorno, a type of aesthetic Taylorism that transforms them into efficient market tools (Jenemann 2006, xxii). Translated and transmitted in the American idiom, autonomous artwork is reduced to a function of commerce, and subjects to mere consumers. "Illuminated in the neon-light," Adorno says in *Minima Moralia*, "culture displays its character as advertising" (Adorno 2005, 47).

The implications of this claim may be better assessed in the light of a passage from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in which the process of standardization exerted on the literary text is compared to a form of censorship in that it changes the "original manuscript" into a final marketable product. Censorship and advertising may be seen in some respects as two parts of the same process. The process of controlling literary text involves the activity of the publishing company, whose staff of editors and secretaries (Adorno 1986, 149) exert control from the very beginning of the production process in ways similar to that of the film industry. The control exerted on the final product is invisible in that it gives the illusion of a freedom denied by the process itself in the film industry, as well as in radio and television.

Taken in the context of the culture industry, the work of literature is not exempted from the phenomenon of cultural homologation that reduces the text to a mere product. The novel, like the capitalist system from which it originates, risks obliterating all traces of individuality and losing its autonomy as a subjective expression. This problem is addressed in particular in "The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel," an essay published in 1954 in *Notes to Literature*. Here, the problem of subjectivity is intertwined with the problem of realism in narration. In these pages, the position of the narrator in the novel is in some respects affected by a radical paradox: the impossibility of narrating while the form of the novel demands narration. The novel as a form has been challenged in its traditional status (just as painting was by photography in the nineteenth century) by journalistic reportage and the communication media of the culture industry, cinema being a case in point. The peculiarity of fiction is hampered by a general standardization generated by the administered world; what was unique in fiction is cancelled by a process of homologation. This is in part because the position of the narrator in the contemporary novel is an expression of the system of exchange that ultimately coincides with that of the political economy in general. The colonization and commercialization capitalistic production cancels all alterity because the market system cannot conceive of having anything outside the sphere of production. And what has come to be known as freedom of expression in the culture industry is only an illusory condition: the autonomy of the subject is a unilateral identity, moulded and "other-directed" by the function the subject has in the administered world.[3] Since the products of the culture industry are created for a purpose of exchange rather than for the fulfilment of authentic needs, a truly literary experience should be aware of this alienation.

The transformation of subjects into objects that is inherent to the alienation experience lends itself well to fictional portrayal. Aesthetically the novel is uniquely suited to portray this transformation because through form it can reveal a distance between reality and its literary construction, as in the case of such writers as Thomas Mann and Samuel Beckett. "The reification of all relationships between individuals," Adorno says, "which transforms their human qualities into lubricating oil for the smooth running of the machinery, the universal alienation and self-alienation, needs to be called by name, and the novel is qualified to do so as few other art forms are" (Adorno 1991-92, 32).

In *Notes to Literature*, a collection of essays and texts which in part resulted from radio broadcasts that Adorno made in Germany and which were in part written in America, the pessimistic stance of *Minima Moralia* gives way to an objective, albeit implicit, assumption: the distance between high culture and popular culture, between the various forms of artistic expression, blurs under the pressures and constraints of the market. The divide between "serious" and "mass" culture makes sense only insofar as one pole is the bad conscience of the other. The collapse of definitions like "high" and "low" and the difficulty in distinguishing the two lie at the essence of what has come to be known as postmodernism. In *On Jazz*, Adorno attacked the futility and bad conscience of distinguishing between high-, middle- and low-brow. And such a distinction, to him, was the major sign of the way mass culture promotes its products through hyper-rationalized channels of production. Literature is not exempted from this process, as Adorno understood when he approached hard boiled fiction, magazines and comics in California. These genres provided him another "branch" of culture that helped him further clarify the contradictions inherent in the notion of culture against the backdrop of a Marxist background and an elitist personal taste.

Unlike earlier representations of an Adorno who hated America and dedicated his intellectual background to analyzing the American culture industry, recent critical works from Jenemann to Claussen and others offer a much more articulated analysis. For Claussen, Adorno loved America in his fashion and returned to Germany as a dialectician of enlightenment (Claussen 2006, 9). His experience was one of "substantive democratic forms." These forms, as he put it after his return to Europe, permeated American society much more substantively than they did in Germany. For Jenemann, Adorno's work in his exile years is the most vivid example of the force an intellectual deploys to understand the "most hidden recesses" of modern life. Probably, America represented for Adorno a type of "sirens' call," to employ a classical image present throughout literature. America represented a form of seduction which also contributed to the destruction of dialectical reason. The dialectic of enlightenment that Adorno proposed to counteract this seduction is, after all, a form of transfer of that which is not transferable, and ultimately, as Adorno himself said, a form of resistance.

Notes

[1] My reference here is to the description and analysis of Los Angeles offered by Davis, 1992.

[2] See in *Minima Moralia* the acute observations in the fragments "Fish in Water," pp. 23-24, and "They, the people," p. 28.

[3] On this aspect, see also Riesman, 1961, especially the section "The Mass Media in the Stage of Other Direction," pp. 96-107. This work was known to Adorno who cited it in various essays; see Jenemann 2006, 160.

Works Cited

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1986.

Adorno, Theodor W. *Prismi*. 1972. Torino: Einaudi, 1982.

_____. *Notes to Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991-92.

_____. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. London and New York: Verso, 2005.

Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner. *The Postmodern Turn*. New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1997.

Claussen, Detlev. "*Malentendu*? La ricezione di Th. W. Adorno. Una storia di malintesi?" In *Theodor W. Adorno (1903-2003): L'estetica. L'etica*, eds. Elio Matassi and Elena Tavani, 13-26. Donzelli: Roma, 2005.

_____. "Intellectual Transfer: Theodor W. Adorno's American Experience." *New German Critique* 97, Vol. 33, no. 1 (2006): 5-14.

Davis, Mike. City of Quartz: Excavating the future in Los Angeles. New York: Vintage Bookes, 1992.

Jay, Martin. *Theodor W. Adorno*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1984.

_____. "Adorno in America." In *Permanent Exiles*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Jenemann, David. *Adorno in America*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Riesman, David with Nathan Glazer and Reul Denny. *The Lonely Crowd*: *A Study of the Changing American Character.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961.

Rubin, Andrew and Nigel Gibson Nigel, eds. *Adorno: A Critical Reader*. London: Blackwell, 2002.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. *Theodor W. Adorno*. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/adorno/ (2007)

Paola Loreto

Lyric Address: A.R. Ammons's Theory and Practice

> my readers are baffling and
> uncommunicative (if actual) and I don't know what to make
> of or for them
> (Ammons, *Sphere,* #124)

The international comparatist Jonathan Culler has been leading an attempt to redefine the lyric for a couple of decades now. His confrontation with historical and modern theories and with ancient and contemporary practices has brought him to the conclusion that a crucial element of the lyric is its unique form of address. In his last and seemingly definitive essay on the subject, which appeared in the first issue of the new Italian comparative literature review *Letteratura e letterature* (University of Milan), Culler suggests that we resist the normative modern notion of the lyric[1] in favor of an alternative model in which the lyric "is not a fictional imitation of a speech act but a speech act addressed to readers by a poet, who writes." Although he agrees that "the writing does give rise to an image of voice," Culler maintains that lyrics are "offered to readers, written to be constructed belatedly as providing an image of voice speaking to us" (Culler 2007, 34). "Paradoxically, the more such poetry addresses natural or inanimate objects, the more it proffers *figures* of voice, the more it reveals itself at another level as not spoken, but as writing that through its personification engenders an image of voice, for the readers to whom it presents itself again and again" (Culler 2007, 25). The reason why "there is always a *you* in the lyric. . . whether expressed or not" (Culler 2007, 36) is that lyrics, by means of the figure of apostrophe—which is a "turning aside from supposedly real listeners to address someone or something that is not an ordinary, empirical listener" (Culler 2007, 22)—"strive to be an event in the special temporality of the lyric present" (Culler 2007, 36). "To apostrophize birds, for example," he wrote in his seminal essay "Apostrophe," "is to locate them in the time of the apostrophe," the timeless present of the temporality of writing, "a time of discourse rather than story" (Culler 1981, 149). This special, present temporality serves the purpose of the lyric, which is to induce in the reader a vicarious experience, in which he identifies with an act of consciousness on the part of the constructed speaker (Culler 1988, 295; Culler 2007, 28). My own approach is to take into consideration poets' say in this. The move is part of a larger research project aimed at exploring the possibility of poets' contribution to a definition of the lyric in our time. I thought of starting by examining A. R. Ammons' ideas, because he so generously and accurately expressed them both in his interviews and in his metalyrical verse. Moreover, I want to compare his conscious opinion with, in his own words, his only "half-conscious" practice.

In the seminal *Poets on Poetry* series volume of The University of Michigan Press, *Set in Motion* (1996), Ammons seems to corroborate Culler's theory by admitting, rather reluctantly, that his poems are ultimately written for—if not literally addressed to—a reader. In a 1993 interview he agrees with Helen Vendler that many of his poems are apparently addressed to nobody and finds this form of address—"when you don't address anyone"—interesting. He finds it an important part of what poetry makes possible: "all conventional means of addressing someone have been put aside and yet the pressure to communicate a presence is never greater or more successfully done" (Ammons 1996, 73). "I wrote in such a vacuum for most of my life," he adds. "Address didn't seem to be important . . . I didn't seem to be wanting to say anything to anybody" (Ammons 1996, 74). Later, and to a more congenial interviewer,[2] he expresses a fuller awareness of the motivations that were probably latent in his earlier career. He confesses that he writes for love, respect, money, fame, honor, redemption: to be included in a world he feels rejected by; to engage people's feelings and interests and to change them a bit (Ammons 1996, 91).

An earlier interview provides a useful specification. The Ammons who speaks in his own poems is a person "who has found it more comfortable to be lonely, to be alone, than to join into established groups." Consequently, "I never address a group of people," he declares, "I never seem to think there is such thing as an audience, and certainly never try to *reach* an audience."[3] In a poem, he speaks "as a single person" to another, "equally single . . . person," who, he hopes, will find the poem and "say 'Yes, this is true for me as well'" (Ammons 1996, 51). Otherwise put, and again in his words, "I would just like to say, as truthfully as I can, what seems to me to be true for me, as an individual, and then *if* that's true for anyone else in the world who happens across my poems then he will recognize it" (Ammons 1996, 52). This does not mean that the self invades the space of Ammons's poems. As David Kalstone has rightly remarked, Ammons "has found a grammar that almost erases the speaker who uses it" (Bloom 1986, 100), "veiling the observer," making us forget he is there for the sake of the prominence of the details observed (Bloom 1986, 112). But the speaker is unmistakably the poet

A.R. Ammons, one of whose main achievements is the creation of a distinct, recognizable individual voice.

Ammons's metalyrical poems expound his poetics in a mode that is still partly discursive but leaves some space for the recognition of more profound desires. These are generally long and experimental poems that debate, for example, the pros and cons of the lyric versus a looser and more comprehensive form, like the "Essay on Poetics" (1970), or chronicle the writing of "a long thin poem," like *Tape for the Turn of the Year* (1965), which was written on a roll of adding-machine tape. But there also are shorter—one could say "more lyrical"—poems like "Aubade," published in 2005 in the posthumous *Bosh and Flapdoodle* and made up of open couplets only occasionally accompanied and sometimes linked by rhyme effects. "Hibernaculum," for example—a "variable" poem "willing to try anything" (Ammons 1980, 81)—transposes into verse some of Ammons's statements in prose, like "I really do not want to convince anyone of anything" (Ammons 1980, 76), "public, I have nothing to say to you, nothing" (Ammons 1980, 79), and the apparently contradictory "I want people to say, // did you hear that, that sounded good" (Ammons 1980, 85). But it also adds two interesting openings, in the same perfectly controlled and rational stance; the first is that "I'll have to have found something to say to the // people: this scratching around in the private self has / to yield something beyond a private waste of time" (Ammons 1980, 84), and the second is "I address the empty space where the god / that has been deposed lived; it's the godhead" (Ammons 1980, 73). The more lyrical language of the 1965 turn-of-the-year journal—composed of "shorter lines moving down the page instead of across" (Ammons 1996, 101)—is less guarded in its treatment of the I-Thou relationship that binds a poet to his readers.[4] A direct apostrophe in the second person singular opens a section of the poem in the 11th December entry and poses the essential ontological question, "you—who are you?" (Ammons 1965, 35). Repetitions, exhortations and questions heighten the vocative mode. Paradox is the logic of the speech act. A spare and accurate use of the pronouns features an I addressing a You and drawing her/him closer into an intimate relationship through the transition to the first person plural of the "'we's' and 'us'."[5] The vocabulary selects words referring to encounter, love, belief, elation, healing and resolutions, reciprocal possession, light, beauty. The passage is two pages long, so I can only quote it sparsely and thus spoil it:

> you—who are you? How do
> I feel about you?
> do I hate it that I love
> to be tied to you by love?
> . . .
> encounter me with
> belief:

> . . .
> are we resolving most of
> the [black] areas, are we touching
> on elation
> enough?
> do I love you mostly, or
> the thought of us
> together?
> . . .
> . . . have
> you been had?
> you've had me: . . .
> . . .
> you are
> beautiful: you are
> just beautiful:
> beautiful: thank you:
> (Ammons 1965, 35-37)

"Aubade" tempers the nihilistic edge of the existential pose in the second opening in "Hibernaculum" by lifting the poet's voice "to the lineations of singing," that is, of the lyric, which alone can still address a consciously personified "lord above" with the vocative "you, you are the one, the center," because it knows that "the onhigh // is every time the on low, too, and in the / middle;" that "that 'you' has / moved out of the woods and rocks and streams // … and is, in a way, nowhere to // be found" except "in our heads now as a bit of // yearning, maybe vestigial." "And it is a yearning," the poet sings, "like a painful sweetness, a nearly reachable // presence that nearly feels like love" (Ammons 2005, 22-24). Apparently, it is in a medium that denounces its own artificiality through a more evidently constructed disposition of its elements on the page, and through the exhibition of the apostrophic device, that Ammons manages to allow us to probe more deeply into the poet's paradoxical thinking, which runs directly against the logic of human rationality, and adhesively along with the coherence of human feelings. Culler reminds us that modern poets find the apostrophe embarrassing, "the mark of a vatic mode to which one hesitates to pretend" (Culler 2007, 34). But here, by means of its ironic treatment, Ammons is allowing himself to tread the clearest Emersonian path and say that: 1) exactly when he appears to be addressing no one, he is putting forth the strongest effort to communicate his most authentic sense of truth, that is, of experienced reality, to an individual who is his equal; 2) that this gift of self, besides being the only possible one, is also the greatest gift a poet can offer a fellow human being, because it provides a vicarious experience of sense, presence, ultimate reality. The poet, in Ammons as in Emerson, is a channel for the circulation of being. Consistently, his creation reflects a logic that overcomes the limits of a purely human rationality. In "A Poem is a Walk," the single most exact and powerful essay on poetics, Ammons says that "the work of art, which overreaches and reconciles logical paradox, is inaccessible to the methods of logical exposition" (Ammons 1996, 13). Rationality cannot exhaust the poem (Ammons 1996, 15) because—in a felicitous and famous formulation—"Poetry is a verbal means to a nonverbal source" (Ammons 1996, 20), and because poetry "makes use of the whole body, involvement is total, both mind and body" (Ammons 1996, 16).

How is this so? Let's turn, as a last stage in the analysis, to Ammons's lyrics—or at least to what in his production I would define as endowed with a lyrical quality if only because of its highly structured form—and to what is *not* openly intended as a metalyrical discourse. Let's take, for the pleasure of it and for its the representativeness, a poem that is commonly agreed upon as being one of his best lyrics, "The City Limits" (*Briefings: Poems Small and Easy*, 1971; Ammons 1972, 320). Harold Bloom has called "The City Limits" "an extraordinary" and "majestic" poem (Bloom 1986, 31). David Kalstone has compared its "wonderfully sustained rhetorical structure" to that of the most controlled and contemplative of Shakespeare's sonnets. The text is made of an eighteen-line single sentence, six stanzas of three lines each, and five clauses beginning with the anaphora "When you consider" and twice repeating "the radiance," making it also echo with a twice repeated "abundance," which is bestowed on every earthly thing that is open to receive its light:

> When you consider the radiance, that it does not withhold
> itself but pours its abundance without selection into every
> nook and cranny not overhung or hidden; when you consider
>
> that birds' bones make no awful noise against the light but
> lie low in the light as in a high testimony; when you consider
> the radiance, that it will look into the guiltiest
>
> swervings of the weaving heart and bear itself upon them,
> not flinching into disguise or darkening; when you consider
> the abundance of such resource as illuminates the glow-blue
>
> bodies and gold-skeined wings of flies swarming the dumped
> guts of a natural slaughter or the coil of shit and in no
> way winces from its storms of generosity; when you consider
>
> that air or vacuum, snow or shale, squid or wolf, rose or lichen,
> each is accepted into as much light as it will take, then
> the heart moves roomier, the man stands and looks about, the
>
> leaf does not increase itself above the grass, and the dark
> work of the deepest cells is of a tune with May bushes
> and fear lit by the breadth of such calmly turns to praise.

It would be hard not to read the radiance of this poem as the *claritas* that in the Thomistic tradition is one of the three attributes of the divinity, as Stephen Dedalus reminds us in Joyce's *Portrait*. So it would be hard not to read the poem's performativity as the attempt to summon in the *now* of the lyric event the other, vestigial "presence" that the poet feels compelled to communicate, besides that of his most intimate subjectivity. But in Ammons' typical form of address the "I" is not assertive, and its acts of persuasion are delicate. The poet's self withdraws to leave space for gentle, unobtrusive invitations to the reader to observe how things can come alive under his own eyes, how epiphanies happen and turn fear into praise.

It is in the form of the lyric, I think, that Ammons' poetics of address is best accomplished. In his metalyrical poems he wrote: "If / I cannot look at you, I can look with you: since there is something between us, let it be a thing we share" ("Hibernaculum," Ammons 1980, 79); and:

> I look for the form things want to come as
> . . .
> how a thing will
> unfold:
> . . .
> not so much looking for the shape
> as being available
> to any shape that may be
> summoning itself
> through me
> from the self not mine but ours.
> (Ammons 1972, 199)

In "A Poem is a Walk" he also declared that he wanted a poem that "is not simply a mental activity" but "has body, rhythm, feeling, sound, and mind, conscious and subconscious" (Ammons 1996, 16). Accordingly, the "physiology" (Ammons 1996, 16) of "The City Limits" had been prepared by the experiment with *Tape*, and its primary motion seems to be "down the page instead of across" because its syntax and its sound flow independently of its metrical structure (or rather visual disposition), culminating with the conclusive "then," which gathers all the propulsion of the five preceding, introductory and suspended "when"s. For Ammons, music is the mode of expression that most nearly conveys the motion that animates the universe. "But the music in poems is different," he says in another metalyrical passage, "by the motion of its motion [it] resembles what moving is" ("Motion," Ammons 1972, 147). That is why "The City Limits" takes on the pace of a ritual song, the sentence pattern of parallel repetition and variation of a psalm. If Ammons's lyric address is often as masked and subdued as our age requires, it ultimately rings more openly suasive, as in the ritualistic discursive events of the classical lyrics recalled by Culler, which, with their invocations of the muse or of the Gods, belonged and contributed to a poetic tradition that conceived of speaker and listener as directly related to each other in a community (Culler 1981, 11, 3). If Ammons's metalyrical exhortations more often sound cautious and alluring as in the entire quote from "Hibernaculum," which runs: "public: I have nothing to say to you, nothing, except, / look at the caterpillar under this clump of grass: it / is fuzzy: look at the sunset: it is colorful: listen:" (Ammons 1980, 79), his lyrical invocations can genuinely resonate with the inspired oratory of a Whitmanian demiurgic imperative, as in the sealing apostrophe to the reader of "Pray Without Ceasing," which urges: "run my poem through your life and // exist… pray without ceasing" (Ammons 1980, 15).

Notes

[1] Anglo-American theory especially, following the New Critical position, has tended "to see all lyrics as dramatic monologues" (Culler 1988, 293); "the dominant modern notion of the lyric—at least in Anglo-American criticism—is that of a brief personal utterance addressed to oneself or a listener" (Culler 2007, 6-7). But this interpretive tradition is larger and longer, including Charles Baudelaire, John Stuart Mill, T.S. Eliot, Northrop Frye and others (see also Culler 1981, 1985 ["Reading Lyric"], 1985 ["Changes in the Study of the Lyric"]).

[2] David Lehman, in the unpublished piece commissioned by *The Paris Review* of November 1994 (Ammons 1996, 85-108).

[3] The interview was conducted by Jim Stahl in 1984. In an interview conducted the previous year, Ammons had said: "I don't address groups but look for the single person in this room. He's the person I try to mean something to. I don't address an already defined stratum of society or a particular cause. Poetry has never seemed to me to be the best instrument for communication of a practical kind… There is a one-to-one correspondence, a relationship between poet and reader whose undercurrent may radiate outward to affect the way other individuals perceive things" ("Event: Corrective: Cure," in Bloom 1986, 216). On the other hand, three years earlier Ammons had declared to be "wanting to reach everyone in the country" (Haythe 1980, 181).

[4] According to Gilbert Allen, in the late 50's and early 60's Ammons's relationship with the reader underwent a dramatic change. The speaker ceases being "an isolated seer, hoping for the empathy that he seems unable to extend to anyone else"—as in *Ommateum*—and frequently addresses the reader in the second person, thus bringing an explicitly social dimension to his rhetoric (Allen 1986, 91).

[5] In a literal sense, the address appears at first to be directed to a lover, but at the end of the book is revealed as an open address to the reader, which alternates with a mock-heroic address to the Muse; it is interesting to note that Culler suggests an indirect invocation to the Muse as the ultimate reading of all poetic addresses (Culler 1981, 143.)

Works Cited

Allen, Gilbert. "The Arc of a New Covenant: The Idea of the Reader in A.R. Ammons's Poems." *Pembroke* 18 (1986): 81-103.

Ammons, Archie Randolph *Collected Poems 1951-1971*. New York and London: Norton, 1972.

____. *Sphere: The Form of a Motion*. New York and London: Norton, 1974.

____. *Selected Longer Poems*. New York and London: Norton, 1980.

____. *Tape for the Turn of the Year*. 1965. Reprint, New York and London: Norton, 1993.

____. *Set in Motion: Essays, Interviews and Dialogues*. Edited by Zofia Burr. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.

____. *Bosh and Flapdoodle*. New York and London: Norton, 2005.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *A.R. Ammons: Modern Critical Views*. New York: Chelsea, 1986.

Culler, Jonathan. "Apostrophe." In *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotic, Literature, Deconstruction*, 135-154. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981.

_____. "Changes in the Study of the Lyric." In *Lyric Poetry Beyond New Criticism*, eds. Chaviva Hosek and Patricia Parker, 38-54. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985.

_____. "Reading Lyric." *Yale French Studies* 69 (1985): 98-196.

_____. "The Modern Lyric: Generic Continuity and Critical Practice." In *The Comparative Perspective on Literature: Approaches to Theory and Practice*, eds. Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes, 284-299. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.

_____. "Lyric Address." *Letteratura e letterature* 1 (2007): 21-36.

Haythe, Cynthia. "An Interview with A.R. Ammons." *Contemporary Literature* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 173-190.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. 1916. Reprint London: Penguin, 1992.

Pia Masiero Marcolin

Criticism in The Classroom: A Theory in Practice

What follows is an account of what happens in the circumscribed field of my literary theory classes to undergraduate students and some reflections born from the years spent in teaching them.

First, let me situate myself briefly as far as literary theory is concerned. As an undergraduate, I did not receive any training in literary theory. Retrospectively, I think I can detect, here and there, this or that critical vocabulary at work, but I wasn't told *apertis verbis* what literary critical discourse was, which, I guess, was rather typical at the time. I was taught to question texts and delve deep into their rhetorical structures, but I wasn't told that what I would find in them would depend upon the kind of questions I posed.

Back in 1993, at the University of California at Irvine, I attended my first institutional course in literary theory taught at that time by Murray Krieger (who wasn't that young any longer). On that same occasion, I had the opportunity to spend a number of fruitful and engaging hours discussing literature (and literary theory) with Brook Thomas. As I spent only the first semester of the academic year at Irvine, I missed Jacques Derrida, who taught his course in the second semester. Might this be an instance of how chance may change one's life? From that semester on, my interest in literary theory has kept growing through readings, encounters, and discoveries both illuminating and puzzling.

At the examination to become assistant professor, the committee told me that I was "strong in critical discourse." I have trouble defining what "strong" could have meant. If there was something "strong" in me, it was the conviction that teaching literary theory was definitely worth trying, even if I had already come across quite a number of discouraged instructors who had become convinced that literary theory was "out of place" in the undergraduate classroom.

Besides, Frank Lentricchia's words resounded in my ears: "what is now called literary criticism is a form of Xeroxing" (Lentricchia 1996, 64). I couldn't but detect in his bitter sentence an instance of the so called "against theory" line of thought.[1] I keep treasuring it in my heart as a precious reminder that the "against theory" (and "the after theory") reactions stem from a practice that reduces theory to a rhetorical exercise nourishing itself upon self-referential moves and statements. If, as I believe, a professor's duty and objective is to enable students to read profitably and pleasurably, literary theory cannot be done away with without losing both profit and pleasure. So I gave it a try myself.

I teach an introductory course of narratology and critical theory to first-year students taking North-American literature for the first time. The idea for the course stemmed from the need to strengthen their reading skills as regards both primary texts *and* critical texts, a mixture of which constitutes the standard syllabus for each course of literature we teach at Ca' Foscari University in Venice and, I assume, everywhere else. I have been well aware since I first reflected on the actual organization of the course and ever since, for that matter, that thinking of covering the two distinct areas well was an impossible task, even if I agreed to a heavy-handed selection. Whatever meaning of the word "well" we may agree upon, it would undoubtedly be much more sensible to do either one thing or the other, first of all so as to be able to give more thought and scope to each. And yet, in spite of this obvious fact, I stuck to the initial idea stubbornly, all logical considerations notwithstanding.

Teaching *both* narratology *and* literary theory has been a conscious effort to avoid the monopolist bent which might lurk in both disciplines on the one hand, making the text the unique legitimate object of literary study, on the other launching into (and inebriated by) more and more abstracted trajectories forgetting about the text altogether. This effort amounts to resisting a much subtler and insidious temptation, namely that of collapsing theoretical discourse and its object of study. This conflation may take the rather typical shape of aprioristic determination of *any* text which is thus reduced (and forced) to fit an interpretive template that pre-exists the reading itself. This choice is a reminder, first of all to myself, that the rhetorical study of literature must remain at the core of whatever theoretical approach we may apply to it. In this respect, I consider close-reading a practice standing at the crossroads of narratology and literary theory. As such, it has revealed itself to be central to my classes. This has obviously nothing to do with the awareness that a given theory inevitably informs the apprehension of its closely read object. Far from denying this, "conditioning" is one thing, whereas "determining" is definitely another.

Each year I confront a strikingly diverse range of skills among our students as far as both the theory and practice of reading are concerned. And each year I ask myself the same set of questions while I prepare the reading list for their coursepack. Leaving aside for the moment the narratological side of the course and concentrating on literary theory, the first (and probably most obvious) question I have to tackle is very simple: is it better to adopt a (possibly) user-friendly manual placing the various schools historically and mediating their typically difficult vocabularies, or to put together an *ad hoc* selection of critical thinkers speaking in their own voices?

Thus, well before beginning to teach, I am already deep in theoretical quandaries: a coursepack is, in fact, an anthology on the smaller scale. In the process of selecting, in choosing and excluding I am already determining and orienting not only my teaching, but my subject matter as well. In a sense, I am making my own theory canon. The coursepack cannot but condense my own subject position, but it does so tacitly. I use this adverb to point to a very basic, but crucial fact: the readers of my coursepack cannot know what a theory canon is and have to be told about it. In a sense, this is what the course is all about. That's why preparation of the coursepack in itself may be considered an objective correlative for the whole endeavour of teaching literary theory, insofar as it constitutes the presentation of an epistemological paradigm of the relativism of any critical discourse and of knowledge itself, well in keeping with the much larger epistemological reflections dominating the twentieth century.

I have tried both approaches, user-friendly and original voice, well aware that what the critical enterprise amounts to depends irrevocably on what we think literature is and, most crucially, on what we think it does. One way or another, the first stumbling block I happen invariably to face is what may be called my students' need of closure. At the end of it all, they expect you to tell them how to read and how to extract meaning from primary texts and usable interpretative trajectories from secondary literature. Their need for closure amounts to their need for a critical template; they seem satisfied only when they feel they are given graspable norms of validity. Confused by the maze of different vocabularies and caught in the whirlwind of conflicting interpretative contexts, students crave stable and objective knowledge. It is no easy task to shift the focus and redefine the term "objectivity," displacing the term from interconnected concepts such as verifiability and validity and eroding its reassuring boundaries. The work of erosion I refer to does not revolve around the deconstructive notion of erasure but around Hirsch's redefinition of the term: "Objectivity in criticism as elsewhere depends less on the approach or criteria a critic uses than on his awareness of the assumptions and biases that deflect his judgements" (Hirsch 1967, 157).

Hirsch and Derrida definitely make an odd couple: Derrida's *Writing and Difference* and Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* were published in the same year (1967), but this simple yet somewhat curious fact enables me to drive home to my students the sense of the provisional nature of critical discourses. If such strikingly different critical stances can be worded in the same moment, it means, as one of my students put it, that "everything is possible." When the concept of relativism dawns on the students, it becomes easier to convey the idea that literary theory has a lot to do with, and to say to, our common humanity—both to our epistemological curiosities and needs and to our resistances.

And yet, the idea of nourishing and exercising relativism through a tolerance for ambiguity which runs as an undercurrent throughout my classes should be, so to speak, handled with care. Once students show they have appropriated for themselves the concept that there is no such thing as a neutral reading of whatever text, that critical perspectives are not dogmatic universals, they pass through what may be aptly called the babelic phase, in which every interpretation is deemed not only possible, but acceptable. The need for closure they had initially expressed is replaced by a euphoria of interpretative freedom. At this point, the work to be done consists in steering them away from arbitrary subjectivism toward subjective perspectivism. In its redundant tautology, the phrase nevertheless touches upon the two interdependent halves of every critical stance, namely, positioning and perspective in their many and richly nuanced inflections.

I'm well aware I haven't said much about my actual syllabus. When I taught my first literary theory course, I considered this crucial. I now tend to believe that the stakes at play in teaching literary theory have a lot more to do with vaster epistemological issues than with actual schools. Once the issue of interpretation is brought to the fore, in fact, one must be prepared to address a number of interrelated questions such as the modification of the observed object by the observing subject and the unstable nature of a text in spite of the fixity of the words on the page, to name just two. What I thus privilege is the creation of a working vocabulary to help spell out the general assumptions about what each school considers relevant in the interpretative act, namely, what the literary object is and what the critical act amounts to for each school. Insisting on the importance of appropriating for themselves a working vocabulary is another way to elicit in students the awareness that a significant part of the problem of reading and interpreting is definitional.

I have said that "a teacher's objective and duty" amounts to teaching how "to read profitably and pleasurably." To do so, it is crucial to create the conditions to help the transition from passive to active reading. The true ambition of teaching literary theory to undergraduate students lies in the epistemological folds of this decisive transition: dwelling more on ground that may be helpful to structure knowledge, not so much in the sense of providing more and more abstract notions, but in the sense of cultivating a never-ending experience of the interactive and dynamic relationship between object and subject. This implies viewing literary theory as a dwelling place. It is a bad host when it quashes the possibility of feeling at ease because of its intimidating and opaque jargon; it is a good host (one we look forward to being with often) when it mobilizes and encourages articulation both in asking questions and in attempting to formulate provisional answers. Needless to say, it is the teacher's responsibility to introduce this latter host to the students. Frank Madden writes: "I try to bring my students to a place where they can experience literature" (Madden 1997, 104). I would add "meaningfully"; I take this place to be literary theory.

The spatial metaphor—literary theory as a dwelling place—helps redirect one's attention to the etymological origin of the word "theory." *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines theory as "a looking at, viewing, contemplation, speculation; also a sight, a spectacle." Both contemplation and speculation require a dwelling. Rather basically, you cannot contemplate while moving. You have to stop and be exposed to what is before your eyes. The word contemplation, rich in mystical implications, suggests the idea of absorption: subject and object become reciprocally interconnected. Significantly enough, the same word theory conflates etymologically two distinct moments which may be said to make up the critical enterprise: first you experience literature (contemplation); then you find it meaningful (speculation). Do we really believe we can teach our students to read profitably and pleasurably without teaching them to dwell (that is, contemplate and speculate) in the theoretical space?

Fine. But how is this to be accomplished?

In the pedagogical battle that is the teaching of literary theory, I have come up with no strategies to guarantee a sure victory; the term itself would need careful re-definition (but which one doesn't?). I consider it a success if my students learn something both *about* literary theory and *from* it, that is, if criticism has shown them the path to self-criticism and how to articulate their own subject positions when these are recognized in any piece of critical writing. I consider it a success when my teaching keeps to the side of discovery rather than validation, when I succeed in rewarding my students when they manage to read actively, meeting the text with its own vocabulary, rather than passively projecting stereotyped readings and repeating what they think I want them to repeat.

I'm well aware that I haven't answered the crucial question: how is this to be accomplished? It looms large in the background, a sword of Damocles over every honest attempt at devising a feasible format for teaching literary theory to undergraduates. Let me put it bluntly: the answer lies in *believing* that literary theory may harvest its most precious fruits *in* the pedagogical moment.

The phases my students go through during the course I described above may provide a clue to systematizing the pedagogical effort. I firmly believe, in fact, that a teacher's foremost concern should be the pedagogical. This implies seconding the students' changing positioning and making the most of it. By way of example, the students' marked need for closure, which characterizes the first phase of their exposure to literary theory, enables them to grasp every critical school's ambition to tap the source of interpretative truth. This obviously renders the re-definition of objectivity all the more difficult, but it also provides an opportunity to engage in and explore the self-centeredness of each critical stance.

The juxtaposition of different—and at times discordant—interpretations inaugurates a decentering which involves first of all the authority of the teacher him/herself. But, again, this is in itself a useful example of how every positioning implies a point of view which informs the reading process. To succeed at giving life to real readers' reading, the teacher has to be the first to accept the provisional nature of his/her own words. Thus on the one hand, teaching literary theory becomes a pedagogical technique in itself; on the other, it remains connected with life. This connection remains the most ambitious objective of all: saving reading which Geoffrey Hartman defines as "the methodical willingness to scrutinize texts again and again" (Hartman 1996, 385)—from that version of literary theory which resorts to mere philosophical and rhetorical abstraction at the tragic expense of all direct and emotional response. If teaching literary theory kills the pleasure of reading, there is absolutely no point in doing it at all.

Notes

[1] The "against theory" debate was inaugurated by Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels's homonymous essay in *Critical Inquiry* back in 1982. Some twenty years later, the "after theory" controversy took place. Such books as Butler, Guillory, Kendall's *What's Left of Theory* (2000), Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* (2003) and Eagleton's *After Theory* (2003), to name a few, argue along similar lines.

Works Cited

Butler, Judith, Guillory, John, and Kendall, Thomas, eds. *What's Left of Theory: New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory.* New York: Routledge, 2000.

Derrida, Jacques. *L'Écriture et la différence*. Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1967.

Eagleton, Terry. *After Theory.* New York: Basic Books, 2003.

Hartman, Geoffrey H. "The Fate of Reading Once More." *PMLA* 111 (May 1996): 383-389.

Hirsch, E.D. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1967.

Lentricchia, Frank. "Last Will and Testament of an Ex-Literary Critic." *Lingua Franca,* Sept./Oct. 1996, 39-67.

Madden, Frank F. "Teaching Literature in the Academy Today: A Roundtable." *PMLA* 112 (January 1997): 101-112.

Spivak, Gayatri C. *Death of a Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Salvatore Proietti, Igina Tattoni, Caterina Ricciardi

What Lionel Trilling Might Mean to Us Today: A Dialogue*

Salvatore Proietti

Opposing Selves and Democratic Humanism: Reassessing Lionel Trilling

I would like to take this dialogue (the two voices that originally engaged in it during the Macerata conference, and the third one, felicitously gathered along the way) as an opportunity to raise questions, rather than provide definitive answers about Lionel Trilling, perhaps the most contradictory figure in US criticism. Somewhere at the back of any discussion of Trilling, there lurks the issue (the real culture war, on both sides of the ocean) of the meaning of "liberalism."

According to the mainstream interpretive narrative, Lionel Trilling was a Cold War reactionary, a disaffected far-Leftist who shifted over to the other extreme, becoming a symbol of literary conservatism, turning into a sort of American version of F. R. Leavis, always chasing for some Great Tradition. In many accounts of the history of literary criticism in the United States, a systematic thinker is construed out of a figure who produced only two book-length studies and most of whose works are collections of miscellaneous, even occasional, essays. The shift in his political allegiance is of course undeniable, and so is (as for example Edward Said remembered in one of his last books, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*) his canonizer's struggle to place a core reading of Great Books at the roots of the American university curriculum.

Yet the appreciations he has received from intellectuals who certainly would have never defined themselves as reactionary are to be included into the picture: examples range from Leo Marx to Edward Said himself. Moreover, Trilling's insertion in the neo-conservatives' ideal ancestry, attempted by prominent figures such as Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb, has proved highly controversial in the cultural arena (e.g. see the review-articles by Alterman and Glick).

Trilling appears to alternate, often within the same pages, highly conflicting views, in a very Emersonian—and very frequent—self-conscious, ironic undercutting of his own claims. And readers of *The Liberal Imagination* know that in Trilling's formulation conservatism doesn't exist now, and is nowhere to be found in the past: a very strange kind of reactionary indeed, who defined himself, more than once, as an "anarchist" (e.g., Trilling 1950, 5). The use of "liberal," in one sense, marks his allegiance to the anti-Stalinist side; thus, it has been easy to posit an analogy or even an equivalence between the realism of the Progressive age and social-political commitment (e.g. Reising 1986, 93 ff.). Reacting to a cultural climate in which the Old Left school assumed the issue of "politics" in literature (and in literary criticism) as little more than simple agit-prop, or in which William Empson could shrewdly perceive shadows of idealizing pastoralism in the tradition of "proletarian literature," can be hardly simplified into a wholesale rejection of *engagément*. True, the a priori segregation of political commitment from the realm of aesthetics is the evident flaw in Trilling's argument—the idea that choosing sides goes contrary to the search for artistic achievement.

But Trilling's implied (but no less forceful and influential) "theory of culture" (Reising 1986, 94) does not lead to a prescriptive view of American literature, or to a definition of Americanness—a later common practice whose first echo can perhaps be found in Richard Chase's *The American Novel and Its Tradition*. In this direction we have only, scattered through *The Liberal Imagination* and *The Opposing Self*, a few thematic hints, without claims to exhaustiveness. In one of the most sustained among these hints, Trilling argues that one specific difference of American culture is the primacy of those presences Trilling calls "figures—that is, men who live their visions as well as write them, who are what they are, whom we think of as standing for something as men because of what they have written in books," and, so doing, "preside . . . certain ideas and attitudes." Among these "figures" are Twain, Thoreau, Whitman, Henry Adams, and William James. Henry James, Trilling adds, may be added to the list, "although posthumously and rather uncertainly"; instead, "our more recent literature" has only provided "anonymous" writers, or at best "ambiguous and unsatisfactory" figures such as "Sherwood Anderson, or Mencken, or Wolfe, or Dreiser" (Trilling 1955, 155). Thus, Trilling brings together two well-known rhetorical strands, a jeremiad of intellectual declension and the idea of literature as incarnation of the national essence—adding a twist to the latter: a recuperation of the role of the writer as active force shaping those representative (in Emerson's sense of the term) fictional worlds.

In fact, I would argue that Trilling's evocation of liberalism amounts to a proud assertion of the civic, political relevance of literature, foregrounding an oppositional stance against both the dominant New Critical orthodoxy and T.S. Eliot's approach, with his insistence on the critic's civic role. When addressing American literature, Trilling selects authors endowed with the aura of high culture, yet in discussing Henry James he focuses his analyses on his most overtly political novels, *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima*. Even without delving into the issue of James's politics, or into Trilling's role in James scholarship, this is a noteworthy choice.

Furthermore, the chosen texts of his American canon and his recipe for a renewal of US literature are not made to voice a single, unifying statement. I would take his declarations of "anarchism" as summarizing his overall stance. After all, one of his least commented readings of the later years concerns the utopian socialism of William Morris (see Shoben 1981, 100 ff.). The end of the preface to *The Liberal Imagination* is a plea for a notion of liberalism predicated on the "imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty" (Trilling 1950, 10): a proto-postmodern attitude of plurality and openness. Closure is, in fact, the main flaw he finds in the realist tradition of US literature, summarized in his critique of Vernon Louis Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*. As Trilling writes in "Reality in America," his most sustained attempt at a poetic:

> A culture is not a flow, not even a confluence; the form of its existence is struggle, or at least debate—it is nothing if not a dialectic. And in any culture there are likely to be certain artists who contain a large part of the dialectic within themselves, their meaning and power lying in their contradictions; they contain within themselves, it may be said, the very essence of the culture, and the sign of this is that they do not submit to serve the ends of any one ideological group or tendency. It is a significant circumstance of American culture, and one which is susceptible of explanation, that an unusually large proportion of its notable writers of the nineteenth century were such repositories of the dialectic of their times—they contained both the yes and the no of their culture, and by that token they were prophetic of the future. (Trilling 1950, 20-21)

As Trilling continues, to dismiss or underrate authors like Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, or James because they "cannot be conveniently fitted into a theory of American culture" as much too (in Trilling's own words) eccentric, skeptic, less noble, or escapist,

> is not merely to be mistaken in aesthetic judgment; rather it is to examine without attention and from the point of view of a limited and essentially arrogant conception of reality the documents which are in some respect the most suggestive testimony to what America was and is, and of course to get no answer from them. . . . Parrington . . . expresses the chronic American belief that there exists an opposition between reality and mind and that one must enlist oneself in the party of reality. (Trilling 1950, 21)

In The *Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx calls this strategy of Trilling's a "dialectical theory of culture." The "very essence" of a culture, he says, "resides in its central conflicts, or contradictions, and its great artists are likely to be those who contain a large part of the dialectic within themselves" (Marx 1964, 342).

In *The Liberal Imagination*, the opposition is between productively contradictory and exceedingly self-conscious (hence monological) writers. On the one hand, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* "is indeed a subversive book" because Huck's "moral crisis" is not the challenging standpoint of an outsider; the subversions may take place *because* Huck has been brought up inside the "moral code" of whiteness he rejects in refusing to return Jim to slavery: "The intensity of his struggle over the act suggests how deeply he is involved in the society which he rejects" (Trilling 1950, 114, 113). Analogously, the strength of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* stems from the incongruity of Gatsby's character as a personification of "America itself" (Trilling 1950, 242). On the other hand, Thomas Wolfe's limit is his "unrelenting, tortured egoism," which blots out all "the ideas that might have brought the variety and interest of order to the single, dull chaos of his powerful self-regard" (Trilling 1950, 281): an unfair objection perhaps, formulated in almost Bakhtinian terms.

The Opposing Self opens with a suggestion to critics to move from "self vs. society" to "self vs. culture" (Trilling 1955, x). Whereas such a statement is in part an evidently depoliticizing move, it must be added that it is no call to certainty, no Eliotian appeal to unchanging authorities, whether cultural or religious. The ever-unsatisfied opposing self is not an imperial self who sheds the light of unchanging, unchangeable tradition on the mundane sphere below, nor someone who recoils in horror away from the tragedies of a Philistine world, towards some sort of ivory tower: like Huck, the critical self is actively involved in the society he opposes.

My hypothesis is, therefore, that Trilling's poetics—albeit with essentialist moments at least partly countered by his use of Freud (cfr. Ricciardi)—points directly towards both postmodernism and the new, heretic forms of political criticism. Among later generations, the readings influenced by Bakhtin or Althusser may have found fertile ground in his skeptical search for democratic contradiction. One thing Trilling teaches us is that Mitrano's "subtle link of interpretation and democracy" (cfr. her "Introductory Remarks" to this workshop) is something subtle indeed, but is never erased, and the critic's role is to dig it up.

Throughout Trilling's work, of course, what is missing is power, the strife not within the domain of abstract ideas, but between power and powerlessness. This is, from a margin of the canon that he couldn't have been aware of, what many native American writers focussed on, and an issue that has consistently been associated with a renewal of the aesthetic endeavor, as well as with the role of tradition in the tension between selfhood, culture, and society. Let us think of Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* ("in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing;" Silko 1977, 126) or of Linda Hogan's *Solar Storm* ("it was this same desire in me, this same longing for creation. . . . I had been empty space, and now I was finding a language, a story, to shape myself by. I had been alone and now there were others"; Hogan 1997, 94).

But as a seeker for the contradictions by which cultures and selves shape themselves, I would add, Trilling's anarchic humanism might still be useful to us as democratic critics.

Works Cited

Alterman, Eric. "Stop, Thief!" *The Nation*. http://www.thenation.com/doc/20001016/alterman (September 28, 2000).

Glick, Nathan. "The Last Great Critic." *The Atlantic Monthly*. http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/07/glick.htm (July 2000).

Hogan, Linda. *Solar Storms*. 1995. Reprint, New York: Scribner, 1997.

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden*. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Reising, Russell J. *The Unusable Past*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Said, Edward W. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Shoben, Edward J., Jr. *Lionel Trilling: Mind and Character*. New York: Ungar, 1981.

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. 1977. Reprint, New York: Penguin, 1986.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950.

_____. *The Opposing Self*. New York: Viking, 1955.

Igina Tattoni
Lionel Trilling: In Defence of Freedom, in Defence of Literature

Lionel Trilling's work asserts that a mind can be free of powerful, disparate and even subtle pressures. One of his most interesting statements is the paradoxical assertion that culture reinforces the idea of the existence of a "primitive," non-cultural essence at the core of human nature. This paradoxical claim is a recurring, if not inherent, characteristic of American letters, inherent in what we call the American experience.

Trilling really is interested in "the product of the free play of moral imagination" ("Elements"). Evoking the issue of freedom includes, for him, looking at society, literature, institutional religions, as well as at their ideologies, psychoanalyses, and even biology. His strenuous defence of the free critical mind led him to point out limitations, "elements that are wanted" in every group and ideology he takes into consideration: Marxism, liberalism, radicalism, Christianity.

Trilling was aware of the biases of righteous attitudes—his own and others.' In "Elements that Are Wanted," he stresses the "'danger . . . of a moral righteousness' that preens itself upon being 'progressive'" (qtd. in Himmelfarb 2005, 5). To prevent such a danger, he proposes and asserts "moral realism," that is, the relation of morality to reality: "the abiding sense of morality that defines humanity and, at the same time, the imperatives of a reality that necessarily, and properly, circumscribes morality" (Himmelfarb 2005, 5). This interactive moral attitude, he claims, is necessary in order to prevent or, at least, identify corrupted human behaviour, especially abuse of power:

> Some paradox of our natures leads us, when once we are made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on to make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion. It is to prevent this corruption, the most ironic and tragic that man knows, that we stand in need of the moral realism which is the product of the free play of the moral imagination. (Himmelfarb 2005, 5)

Many are the keywords in this short passage, all in some way related to convey a concept of freedom: *paradox, fellow men, objects*; fellow men who become objects of an *enlightened interest*, an image of the subtle obstacles to freedom in our *paradox*ical society. Furthermore, *pity* and *wisdom* are characteristic of a society that does not consider fellow men as neighbors [ethimologically *near*, in Italian, *prossimo*] but sees them at a distance, in order to make them the *objects* first of its *pity*, then of its *wisdom* and eventually—and inevitably—of its *coercion*. This is inevitably so, because the idea of coercion is already embedded in the first part of the process: in distancing the neighbors, we make them "other," enemies or, even worse, objects—of pity, of wisdom, of coercion. Significantly enough, “coercion” is a recurring word in Trilling’s criticism: a stronger and more encompassing word than imprisonment, as coercion not only expresses limitation in space but also suggests an action intended to control one’s entire personality.

Human freedom, then, is inconceivable without changing the perspective towards our fellow men, turning them from distanced objects into neighbor human beings. The idea of the human is a crucial issue in Trilling’s work; in recognition of this, he received the Thomas Jefferson Award from the National Endowment for Humanities. On that occasion he delivered his speech “The Mind and the Modern World,” which warned against the tendencies of our culture to underestimate the authority of the mind.

Freedom implies reducing distances between human beings. It implies, as well, a necessary critical distance from institutional ideologies and religions. This is Trilling’s claim in “Elements that are Wanted,” a 1940 piece published in *Partisan Review*, in which he points out what he considers missing in his contemporary wartime culture. In such a critical moment, he argues, one can rely only on “the critical intellect,” and, going back to Matthew Arnold—on whom he had recently written a book—and especially to T. S. Eliot, he insists that literary criticism “must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fullness of Spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent” (Trilling 1940, 367). In this case, Trilling’s originality and provocation lies in his recommending T. S. Eliot’s *The Idea of a Christian Society* to the readers of *Partisan Review.* Though he was a Jewish intellectual, and thought that Christianity, in the practical sphere, “may be maleficent,” he considered Eliot’s promoting the ideal of “moral perfection,” the most effective corrective of any kind of totalitarianism (Trilling 1940, 378).

The *Partisan Review* was debating, at that time, the issue of the relationship between politics and literature. In his provocative proposal, Trilling recommends T. S. Eliot’s works, not *despite* his political ideas, but *because of them*. Marxism is not the only idea that Trilling calls into question. He also contends that radicals and liberals had “elements that are wanted” (Trilling 1940, 367). Trilling’s “moral realism,” in his continuously questioning the relationship between morality and reality, overcomes any sharp division even between conservatism and liberalism; and in the “Preface” to *The Liberal Imagination* (1950) he argues that without the conservative perspective liberal ideas would eventually become “stale, habitual, inert” (Trilling 1950, viii). Labels are misleading; what is important is the free exercise of a critical intellect.

In every author Trilling takes into consideration he finds evidence of the importance of challenging political machination and social engineering in order to fulfill the fundamental humanity of the human being. This is the role of literature. In opening up spaces where one can exercise the free play of moral imagination and critical intellect, literature is "the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty" (Trilling 1950, viii). Those, together with "contingency," "complication," "ambiguity," "ambivalence," are Trilling's keywords. He considers contradictions, in his own and others' writings, vital expressions of meaning and power found, for example, in Walt Whitman's and R. D. Laing's works. He offers a way of thinking—and here the Emersonian "man thinking" comes easily to mind—that keeps a revolutionary tradition alive.

In his last book, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972), the main champion of freedom becomes the unconscious and the emphasis is on the "primitive" non-cultural core of human nature. Trilling, defending its "authenticity," emphasizes "the essential immitigability of the human condition . . . its hardness, intractability, and irrationality" (Trilling 1972, 144-145).

In 1955 Trilling delivered a speech, "Freud: Within and Beyond Culture," which was republished ten years later in the book entitled *Beyond Culture*. Trilling raises there the issue of biology *vs* culture, where biology represents the "given," the immutability of human nature, whereas culture is seen as the strength of society. This is what Freud—and Mark Twain as well!—defined as "civilization," struggling to change and overcome biology. Contrary to most of his audience for his 1955 speech—all members of the psychoanalytical Society of New York, which, at the time, considered any idea of a non-cultural "given" reactionary—Trilling insisted that the "datum" of our biological condition is actually liberating in that it can free us of a culture that, otherwise, might be absolute and overwhelming:

> somewhere in the child, somewhere in the adult, there is a hard, irreducible, stubborn core of biological urgency, and biological necessity, and biological *reason* that culture cannot reach and that reserves the right, which sooner or later it will exercise, to judge the culture and resist and revise it. (Trilling 1955 b, 115)

This is his answer to the problems that G. Orwell had raised so dramatically in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1949 (Trilling 1950, 151-172).

If it is true—and I believe it is—that American literature, at least to a point, is characterized by its desire to free itself of European inheritance, Trilling seems also particularly attracted by the inherent capacity of literature itself to create a free space. Trilling believed that the "modern self, like Little Dorrit [and, we would add, like Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*] was born in a prison"—but in a new kind of prison, "not built of stone":

> as soon as the Bastille had fallen, the image of the prison came to represent something more than the gross injustices and irrationalities. Men began to recognize the existence of

> prisons that were not built of stone, not even of social restrictions and economic disabilities. They learned to see that they might be immured not only by the overt force of society but by a coercion in some ways more frightful because it involved their own acquiescence. The newly conceived force required of each prisoner that he sign his own *lettre de cachet*, for it had established its prisons in the family life, in the professions, in the image of respectability, in the ideas of faith and duty, in (so the poets said) the very language itself. The modern self, like Little Dorrit, was born in a prison. It assumed its nature and fate the moment it perceived, named, and denounced its oppressor. (Trilling 1955 a, x-xi)

Though this quote is considered by many critics today as a rather vast misreading of social history, a way to minimize and underestimate dramatic social injustices, it is hard to deny the reality and strength of the insight. Throughout his work, Trilling points at different strategies for getting out of those prisons—tactics that depend on the critical mind. He also makes it clear that every kind of prison wall both keeps inmates in and keeps others out, thus emphasizing another split in the society—what Juri Lotman would call "in" and "out" (in *The Structure of the Artistic Text*)—that puts *us* above and against the *others*. Trilling's work, on the contrary, proposes an idea of literature that is meant to overcome that prejudice through the correct use of a moral and critical imagination with the human being and the human mind at the centre of its vision.

Through his search for a balance between a New Critical vision of the text as an autonomous reality and an idea of the text seen in its interrelation with history and society, Trilling sees literature as a way to explore, describe and preserve "something primitive" that he considers the core of humanity:

> For in the great issues with which the mind has traditionally being concerned there is, I would submit, something *primitive*. I know that it must seem a strange thing to say, for we are in the habit of thinking of systematic ideas as being of the very essence of the non-primitive, of the highly developed. No doubt they are, but they are at the same time the means by which a complex civilization keeps the primitive in mind and refers to it. (Trilling 1950, 278-279)

In a culture—our postmodernist culture—that increasingly values narrative and images as the only "data" of reality, the idea of something "primitive" becomes provocative and challenging, certainly something worthy of reconsideration and reflection.

Works Cited

Himmelfarb, Gertrude. "The Trilling Imagination." *The Weekly Standard*, Feb. 14-21, 2005 [issue on *The Centenary of Lionel Trilling*]. http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/213jfgtq.asp?pg=1 (2007).

Lotman, Jurij. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Gail Lenhoff and Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977.

Trilling, Lionel. "Elements that Are Wanted." *Partisan Review*, Sept.-Oct. 1940, 367-378.

_____. *The Liberal Imagination*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950.

_____. *The Opposing Self*. New York: Viking, 1955 a.

_____. *Beyond Culture*. New York: Viking, 1955 b.

_____. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1972.

Caterina Ricciardi

Re-Considering Lionel Trilling

It is quite surprising to re-consider today, after somewhat more than forty years, what Lionel Trilling wrote in his essay "On the Teaching of Modern Literature" (1961) with regard to the necessity of highlighting the relationship between literature and culture in the classroom: "since my own interests," he argued, "lead me to see literary situations as cultural situations, and cultural situations as great elaborate fights about moral issues, and moral issues as having something to do with gratuitously chosen images of personal being, and images of personal being as having something to do with literary style, I felt free to begin with what for me was a first concern, the animus of the author, the objects of his will, the things he wants or wants to have happen" (Trilling 1965, 27). First and last comes "the animus of the author." That's why in the 1960s and 1970s Trilling was usually read for what he had to say about individual authors in medallion-like monographic essays (among the Americans, Hawthorne, Howells, James, Twain, Anderson, Fitzgerald), authors who were the "repositories of the dialectic of their times," the spokesmen of "the yes and no of their culture" (Trilling 1953, 7) and never, as far as I remember, for his overall view of literature as a dialectical mirror to the "stuff" of culture.[1]

If the above formulation—tangled as it may appear, yet sustained by a quite interesting, hierarchical value order (literature, culture, ethics, individual, imagination, aesthetic, and eventually [or first of all] the "author")—seems to differ from the categories of today's Cultural Studies (which give preference to difference, gender, ethnicity, race), that statement must nevertheless have sounded heterodox when viewed against the background of textual formalism still hegemonic in the American 1960s. And perhaps in its heterodoxy a provocation of sorts can be detected. With his "cultural and non-literary method" (27), Trilling was invoking due attention to the "historicity" of literature ("the literary work is ineluctably a historical fact . . . literature is a historical art" [Trilling 1953, 179]), and the "historicity" of the critic him/herself: "We are creatures of time, we are creatures of the historical sense" (180). However, albeit fascinated by the dynamic exchanges between the personality of the producer of the art-work and an awareness of the context, Trilling also believed in the relativity of the historical method itself. The "sense of the past" can never be entirely retrievable: Shakespeare, therefore, will never really be "our contemporary." The critic is to pave the way toward the re-discovery of some particle of that which, even though once "dominant," is now lost in the void of collective memory. In terms *à la* Foucault, today we would call for a retrieval of discursive practices. One may argue that, with his proposal for the study of culture, not only did Trilling accept (against the grain, as did Raymond Williams in his *Culture and Society* [1958]) the legacy of Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot,[2] but he tried as well to apply it to the contemporary world. And, in the end, as a critic and a teacher, he devoted himself to such a task through the use of Freudian theories.

As "a Freudian, a Marxist, and a Jew," in 1932 Trilling was reluctantly accepted at Columbia University ("he might not be happy" there! [Anderson]), where he would be a professor for over forty years, becoming eventually—notwithstanding that "questionable" triple identity—its most respected authority. Less popular, instead, was the influence of his thought, seen as the result of a complex mix of Neo-Humanism, "liberal" (progressive, radical) philosophy, Freudianism, and a revamping of the role of "culture" in literary studies. Nonetheless, along with Edmund Wilson, F. O. Matthiessen, and Alfred Kazin, Lionel Trilling must be credited with participating in the foundation of a socio-historical literary criticism in America—a tradition that, in overt competition with the dominant Formalism of the New Criticism, would persist until the advent of Structuralism and Poststructuralism.

Alfred Kazin (also of Jewish origin) was the one who in 1942 raised the issue of the critic's function in America. "Criticism at the Poles" he called the then much debated question. From Emerson and Thoreau to Mencken and Brooks, Kazin contended, literary "criticism had been the great American lay philosophy, the intellectual conscience and intellectual carryall. It had been a study of literature inherently concerned with ideals of citizenship, and often less a study of literary texts than a search for some new and imperative moral order within which American writing could live and grow" (Kazin 1942, 400-401). A "secret intermediary" between literature and society, criticism had for a century and more constituted itself as "a form of moral propaganda" rather than as "a study in esthetic [sic] problems," seeking "—now as a midwife to talent, now as a common scold of the national manners—to unite American writers in the service of one imperative ideal or another": keeping alive, one may infer, through its "messianic drive toward social action" (401), the dialectic between culture and counterculture.

If, with a drop of romanticism, Kazin was then idealizing the critic's role, he had good reasons for doing so. With his 1942 *On Native Grounds*, focusing on the writing of latest decades but firmly grounded in the primeval imagination of the American soil, he meant to recover, somewhat polemically, the relationship between critic and society, at a time when that relationship was obscured on a ground fanatically divided between two opposing "groups of extremists": the Marxist-sociological approach of V. F. Calverton, Bernard Smith and Granville Hicks, and the aesthetic "new" Formalism (bound to live a longer academic life), the "elaborate hauteur" of the New Criticism of J. C. Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, and R. P. Warren. As Trilling argued, "criticism became a totalitarianism in an age of totalitarianisms, rather characteristic of the times in its rigidity and pride, and not the easiest to live with" (401). However, in between those dominating "poles," psychoanalysis had also just started reaping its harvest, blurring once again, in a different fashion, the ancient hermeneutic umbilical cord between book and reader.

Shortly afterwards, Northrop Frye's archetypes and Leslie Fiedler's psycho-sociological anthropology would launch new, influential models of reading, while further developments and compounds would sprout from the ranks of New Criticism: Kenneth Burke's symbolic/rhetorical approach, R. S. Crane's Neo-Aristotelian probes, and Yvor Winters's moralistic biases. Thus—alongside older, major figures such as V. L. Parrington and Robert E. Spiller, engaged in setting up the canon—American criticism in those years displayed a variety of approaches, channelled through two major journals, the more radical *Partisan Review* and the formalist *Kenyon Review* (and a number of others).

In overt competition with the school of "technical skill and subtlety" (Kazin 1942, 401) advocating the self-contained meaning of the text, and out of the conflation of the extremes of some of those strategies (Marxism, Freudianism, Formalism), Edmund Wilson, F. O. Matthiessen, Lionel Trilling, and Kazin himself found ways to emerge in the arena, practicing the craft of criticism as an intellectual discipline encapsulating the history of ideas and the socio-historical genesis of the art-work without excluding the concern for aesthetic form and close exegesis and, last but not least, for psychoanalytical readings, just as in Wilson's investigation of Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*.

Possibly, with such a balanced cluster of forces on the field, it may have sounded plausible to re-capture the idea of the responsibilities of the critic as a "lay" philosopher. As a matter of fact, Wilson would become the undisputed arbiter of the literary scene with his "criticism that sought not to be esthetic criticism or social criticism per se (that fatal either/or in modern criticism), but a felicitous blending of the two in the interest of the fullest possible understanding of the work as a fact *in* civilization, a repository rather than a symbol" (Kazin 1942, 451). Matthiessen's 1941 *American Renaissance* would be bound to forge the oncoming generations of Americanists. On his behalf, Trilling—who in his two debut monographs on *Matthew Arnold* (1939) and *E. M. Forster* (1943) had discovered the importance of English "liberalism"—engaged in devising a personal, complex theorem which he regularly submitted to tests and trials in the classroom. The pedagogical intercourse is relevant to the theoretical goal he was articulating, as for example in his acknowledgement of the "readiness of the students to engage in the process that we might call the socialization of the anti-social, or the acculturation of the anti-cultural, or the legitimization of the subversive" (Trilling 1965, 37).

One might eventually recognise here the echo of the early 1960s milieu: from his prestigious academic position, Trilling had possibly perceived the symptoms of a generational uneasiness, the "disenchantment of our culture with culture itself"—evidence, for Trilling, of the truthfulness and "authority" of modern literature, characterized by "the bitter line of hostility to civilization which runs through it" (19). The dialectic of the relationship between art and culture, and the individual and the dominant culture, was about to become his main concern: "It is a belief still pre-eminently honoured," he would write in 1965, "that a primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture in the environmental sense and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgement" (Trilling 1965, 12). Of course, he admits, "it is not possible to conceive of a person standing beyond his culture. His culture has brought him into being in every respect except the physical." Thus, even "when a person rejects his culture (as the phrase goes) and rebels against it, he does so in a culturally determined way." And yet, the "belief that it is possible to stand beyond the culture in some decisive way is commonly and easily held" (Trilling 1965, 11-12).

Not by chance, and perhaps thanks to his embryonic fieldwork in the classroom, he would subsume his inquiries in specifically targeted essays (rather than books)—whether on single authors or on thematic nodes ("Reality in America," "Freud and Literature," "Art and Neurosis," "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," "Art and Fortune," "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," "The Fate of Pleasure," "Freud: Within and Beyond Culture," "Sincerity: Its Origin and Rise," "Society and Authenticity," "The Authentic Unconscious")—, later collected in organic volumes[3] that now stand as a historical record of the modular steps of his own education as well as of his ongoing theoretical project kept, apparently, constantly in progress: from the Emersonian "modern self" to "culture," and from Liberalism to Irving Babbitt's Neo-Humanism, Hegel, Freudianism, and to the final formulation of the idea of a sort of double culture, the legitimation of an "adversary" (14) culture within the primary, cultural mainstream. Such an absolutely original/personal trajectory, which in the end gave way to conservative implications, can be traced in his best known volumes: *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), *The Opposing Self* (1955), *Freud and the Crisis of Our Culture* (1955), *Beyond Culture* (1963), *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972).

Among the multifarious currents flowing in Trilling's writings, the presence of Freud keeps indeed on revolving in a decidedly more sympathetic vortex. Trilling's focus, however, is not on the use of Freud in the exegesis of literary texts, but on the acknowledgement of the outstanding role of literature in Freud's own thought. Literature seems in fact to constitute the Shakespearean "stuff" that "dreams are made on" (*The Tempest*, IV, i, 156-157): "the human nature in Freudian psychology is exactly the stuff upon which the poet has always exercised his art. It is therefore not surprising that the psychoanalytical theory has had a great effect upon literature. Yet the relationship is reciprocal, and the effect of Freud upon literature has been no greater than the effect of literature upon Freud" (Trilling 1953, 32). But Trilling pushes his Freudianism further. Having assessed the dependence of psychoanalysis on the literary imagination, Trilling turns trustfully to Freud in order to probe a more pressing issue: a hermeneutics of culture, aimed at verifying the incontrovertible persistence of the "absoluteness of culture" (Trilling 1965, 101). In "the dissemination of the idea of culture," he argues, Freud "has no doubt had a chief part," making "the idea of culture real for a great many of us" (Trilling 1965, 99).

Freud "made it apparent to us how entirely implicated in the culture we all are" (Trilling 1965, 100),[4] and made us aware as well of the uneasiness of modern man within his own culture. He was capable of uncovering "certain powers of indignant perception" (recorded in literature for more than two centuries) which, "turned upon the unconscious portions of culture, have made them accessible to conscious thought. Freud's view of culture is marked by this *adverse* awareness, by this indignant perception. He does indeed see the self as formed by its culture. But he also sees the self as set against the culture, struggling against it, having been from the first reluctant to enter it"

(Trilling 1965, 101).[5] Through Freud Trilling turns back to his 1955 Hegelian "opposing self"—a *self* shaped by one's own culture while at the same time hostile to it. Freud, he concludes, "would have understood what Hegel meant by speaking of the '*terrible* principle of culture'" (Trilling 1965, 100).[6] To be estranged from one's own culture, however, is a mere delusion, and yet, Trilling claims, Freud "needed to believe that there was some point at which it was possible to stand beyond the reach of culture" (Trilling 1965, 102), a "point" which may become tangible if one thinks, as Freud possibly did, of the individual "as a biological fact," and of "a *given*, a *donnée*—a gift" (Trilling 1965, 105),[7] calling for the preservation of a "subculture" within the "general culture." That primeval "*given*" was indeed Freud's (and Trilling's) "ethnic situation" (Trilling 1965, 105-106). It is through the legitimation of an alternative space, of a different culture (of a double culture) that the sense of community/society of a culture is preserved.

Illusory as such a solution may sound, with that "inside/outside" one's culture, Trilling aimed perhaps at preserving a territory free from cultural pressures, or at reconciling individual "uneasiness" with the issues of solidarity and integration held by liberal humanism, or at legitimating the presence of ethnic (or "biological") diversity within the general culture, or, rather, he tried to understand, in due time, the teenage subculture (or traditional American counterculture) in the classrooms of Columbia during the 1960s, a movement that would somewhat affect *Sincerity and Authenticity*, his last book before his death.

A lucid and yet, in the end, unsystematic critic when articulating his overall project, constantly engaged in refining his views, and isolated in proposing the centrality of the study of culture in literature, in the Fifties and Sixties Trilling was definitely an oppositional critic. Nonetheless, in his heterodoxy he was capable of anticipating issues familiar with the field of Cultural Studies, especially when he advocated a "methodological sympathy" aimed at approaching what he called the "closed book" of a "different culture":

> without this sympathy and admiration a culture is a closed book to the student … It is not merely that the student of culture must make a willing suspension of disbelief in the assumptions of cultures other than his own; he must go even further and feel that the culture he has under examination is somehow justified, that it is as it should be. (Trilling 1965, 100)

It was perhaps with this aim in mind that Trilling sought (for himself as well) a balancing "point" between the "within" and the "beyond" of a given culture, and it is with this aim in mind that his books are now worth re-reading, approaching them with different cultural experiences and methodological tools.

Notes

[*] A shorter version of this essay appeared in *Manifesto/Alias* (August 4, 2007). Translated into English by Salvatore Proietti, it served as the ground for further investigation.

[1] It was in fact solely for Trilling's criticism of individual authors or works, and quite unaware of the "cultural" frame he was debating, that I myself approached Trilling in the 1970s.

[2] On Trilling and Arnold and Eliot (and Hegel) see Trilling's "Preface" to *The Opposing Self*.

[3] Trilling admits that he "wrote the essays with no thought of achieving an interconnection among them. In each case my intention was only to serve the given subject, to say what makes a particular book or author interesting and valuable to us. Yet inevitably an interconnection among the essays does exist—apart, I mean, from whatever coherence is to be found in their writer's notion of what constitutes 'us'" (Trilling 1955, ix).

[4] Exactly like the child in the "family romance," or the individual within the family absorbing "the mother's milk" (Trilling 1963, 100).

[5] Here Trilling is quoting from his "Preface" to *The Opposing Self*: "The modern self is characterized by certain powers of indignant perception which, turned upon this unconscious portion of culture, have made it accessible to unconscious thought" (Trilling 1963 x). In 1955 Trilling was also neatly separating the idea of "culture" from the (more Marxian) term "society" (Trilling 1963 x).

[6] See again *The Opposing Self*: "And it was he [Hegel] who, speaking of the principle of culture, and of course speaking in its defence, referred to it as the *terrible* principle of culture" (Trilling 1963 xi).

[7] What Guido Fink terms the "'biological' *quid*" (Trilling 1963 xiii).

Works Cited

Anderson, Quentin. "Lionel Trilling at Columbia." *Columbia Magazine*, Summer 2001. http://www.columbia.edu/cu/alumni/Magazine/Summer2001/Trilling.html

Fink, Guido. "Trilling: è vero per me?" Introduction to Lionel Trilling. *Al di là della cultura*, edited by Guido Fink. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1980: vii-xvi.

Kazin, Alfred. *On Native Grounds. An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1942.

Trilling, Lionel. *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday-Anchor Books, 1953.

_____. *The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1955.

_____. *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965.

_____. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.

Peace, War and International American Studies

Coordinators: Giorgio Mariani, Stefano Rosso

Laura Salvini

Sheila Watt-Cloutier: The Inuit[1] Way to Environmental Peace

When it comes to a definition of peace, most of us would instinctively respond that peace is the absence of war. However, peace researchers find it quite hard to define this complicated concept by means of one simple assertion.

Moving from the idea of negative peace as the absence of war, Johan Galtung (Galtung 1964, 1-4; 1969, 167-191) introduced the notion of positive peace as the absence of structural violence; along the same lines, Birgit Brock-Utne increased the scope of the latter with further distinctions between "organized physical violence" and "unorganized physical violence," and also between "organized structural violence" and "unorganized structural violence" (Broke-Utne 1989). Brock-Utne argues that a society cannot be considered peaceful when violence exists not only on a systematic level, but also on a private one, for instance against women or children within their own families.

More recently, Christina Schäffner and Anita Wenden (Schäffner and Wenden 2004, 4-11) suggested that, along with the previous definitions, the very word "peace" needed to be considered in all its different usages. Fields for investigation could be, for example, the annual press releases of the Nobel Peace Prize Committees, major cultural traditions, and peace movements.

I share the conviction that the three areas mentioned above may work as fundamental indicators of possible shifts in the common perception of the idea of peace. This aspect deserves emphasizing because so many people are often unaware that, particularly in a globalized world, to live in a peaceful society means to gain control over a range of different issues simultaneously, from equality to environment, from gender fairness to poverty.

This presentation intends to investigate such assumptions. It will both address several of the shifts that, in my opinion, are relevant to framing the notion of peace in our time, and trace these in the writings and speeches of Inuk environmental activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier,[2] a Nobel Peace Prize nominee for 2007. I will conclude with some considerations on the choice of words used by Watt-Cloutier and a group of Inuit to describe their observations on climate change.

Environment and Peace

Every year since 1901, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee has appointed one or more recipients of the award to promote, in Alfred Nobel's words, "the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses" (Nobel 2007). At first, the Committee members chose personalities involved in humanitarian relief (Red Cross), disarmament, international arbitration and conciliation (Schäffner and Wenden 2004, 4-11). In other words, subjects who were able to achieve excellent results in supporting victims of conflicts and preventing or ending wars.

In my view, by awarding the prize to the Quakers in 1947,[3] the Nobel Committee showed for the first time a specific interest in the struggle against intolerance and social injustice, a remarkable precept held by this religious community that has always rejected violence in all its forms. Over the years, besides the original categories of conflict resolution and weapon control, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded for work in a wider range of fields, including human rights, food supply, health issues, ethno-cultural reconciliation, poverty and, in 2004 with laureate Wangari Maathai, sustainable development.

In the press release awarding Maathai, the Nobel Committee affirmed that "[p]eace on earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment,"[4] underlining how Maathai's holistic approach, which links democracy, economy, human rights, and the environment, allows local action to become relevant on a global scale. I agree that Maathai's work has trigged off a call for the recognition of a global interdependence. But I also believe that it has encouraged researchers, politicians and common people alike to think and act outside their geographical and cultural borders. This is why the cry of the Tuvaluans (Adams 2007), who are afraid of being evacuated in the near future from their narrow island in the rising waters of the Pacific, cannot remain unheard. For the same reason, the claims of the Inuit, who see the ice cap melting under their feet, deserve attention from the powerful governments over the globe. In both cases the inhabitants of these supposedly remote areas of the planet are transforming their local worries into a global warning. In particular, the 155,000 Inuit of the Arctic regions (Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russian Far East) have been seizing the spotlight on climate change, undertaking actions with the support of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) under the vigorous leadership of its former chair, Sheila Watt-Cloutier.

The Woman Who Wants to Remain Cold

Watt-Cloutier was born in Kuujjuaq, a small Inuit village in northern Quebec, and now lives in Iqaluit, the capital of the new Canadian territory of Nunavut. As a child she was brought up in traditional Inuit manner, traveling near her Arctic home by dog team. In a radio interview, she described those first ten years of her life as a formative period of bonding "with the ice, snow and cold," during which she established ties with her family and community and came to understand that to her "the bounty from the ice and snow represented life and nurturance in the best of ways" (Watt-Cloutier 2007).

Today, she jets across the world, eschews talk of that prestigious awards she has won, uses the skills she learned from her native hunting culture to challenge powerful national bureaucracies, overcome the skepticism of the economic lobbies worldwide, and advocate the right of the Inuit for protection from what the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called "one of the most serious and pressing challenges of our time"—climate change.[5]

I recently interviewed Watt-Cloutier in Rome.[6] She explained that passing on traditional knowledge and wisdom provides a strong foundation for the young generations, because "all of those skills of sound judgment, creativity, courage, patience are not only requirements to survive the land: they are transferable in the modern world." As a result, she argued that traveling around the world to speak about climate change in her stylish suit and briefcase outfit is like preparing for the hunt with furs and harpoons. She performs it as a strategic act, in which she metaphorically checks the horizon and tries to stay focused, "so [I] become the hunter," she told me, "and—even as a woman—[I] carry that wherever [I] go."

In one of her speeches as ICC chair, Watt-Cloutier used an emblematic image to re-enforce her request for the banning of persistent organic pollutants (POPs): "we wish to speak out on behalf of the land," she said, "that has sustained us for hundreds of generations. We are the land and the land is us. We cannot stand by, waiting for slow moving governments to step in and make everything right, rather we must try to effect what change we can." In addition to the idea of the "connectivity" between human beings and the land expressed to an international audience, Watt-Cloutier urged her Inuit audience to take action. When she spoke of traditional skills "transferable into the modern world," she meant that young generations of Inuit must find the capacity to react for themselves without relying on forms of dependence like addiction to drugs, alcohol, welfare, or unemployment. She concluded her speech by stressing the need to overcome the self-perception of being a victim who inhabits a peripheral zone. She stated: "If we can help people to see that a poisoned Inuk child, a poisoned Arctic and a poisoned planet are one and the same, then we will have effected a shift in people's awareness that will result without doubt in positive change."[7] She advocated a strong connection between the local and the global.

As I mentioned previously, the above remarks are from a speech about POPs and their consequences on health. A dramatic topic, particularly in the case of Inuit women who by storing high level of toxins in their blood pass the poisons to their children through the placenta and breast milk. The speech called for positive peace too, because, as Brock-Utne argues, when life spans are shortened by the effects of pollution, we suffer a state of "organized structural violence."

However, a pacifist society cannot thrive by denying the right to positive peace to other peoples. Therefore, the campaign against POPs also deals with the negative side effects that their banning could generate for populations of tropical countries who, for example, need protection from malaria. Watt-Cloutier addressed this problem in a speech she gave at the University of Aberdeen, in which she stated that ICC "cannot take a 'North versus South' approach in these negotiations."[8] She insisted on the necessity of strong co-operation on an equal base with the indigenous peoples of tropical countries and with the scientific community worldwide.

After the May 2001 signing of the "Stockholm Convention on POPs,"[9] which marked an important step in the participation of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic regions in the international debate on pollution, public health and human rights, Watt-Cloutier launched a campaign against climate change. In 2002, during an UN conference on sustainable development, Watt-Cloutier urged her audience to "give climate change in the North a human face—an Inuk patiently waiting for a seal to surface on the sea ice or flow edge; a Gwich'in hunter pursuing caribou near the Old Crow river; or a Nenets family herding reindeer on the Yamal Peninsula."[10]

Although this request may seem to touch upon a minor issue, it could help create a feeling of empathy in people living in other parts of the world. It is a fact, almost a commonplace, that the Arctic region is normally perceived as wilderness. As Watt-Cloutier told me during the interview,

> there is no wilderness, there is no even a name for wilderness in our language; it's just going out in the land, going camping around our land, there's no separation between us and nature . . . when we go to these meetings and everything is about technology, carbon sinks, emission trading, when there's no human face to any of this and the urgency of the matter is not there, people don't connect.

Thus the issue of global warming assumes a human face. Consequently, the whole issue shifts from the environmental agenda into the wider arena of human rights, creating a complex interaction between pollution and environment, health and food web, culture and human rights, and ultimately positive peace. The Inuit, who belong to a culture that originated from a frozen land, claim for themselves the "human right to be cold."[11]

Technology Embedded in Words

At the end of 2005, Watt-Cloutier, “with the support of the ICC and on behalf of all Inuit of the Arctic regions of USA and Canada,” submitted a 167-page petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, DC, “seeking relief from violations resulting from global warming caused by acts and omissions of the United States.”[12] This is the last document I would like to consider in my paper.

I will begin by examining its content. Ten chapters structure the text. Some of them (I, II, III, VIII, X) are concerned mainly with legal aspects grouped under formal designations like summary, jurisdiction, names of the petitioners, and so on. Chapter V analyzes the crimes “for which the United States are responsible,” with reference to the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. But from a cultural point of view the most interesting section is Chapter IV.

Since childhood I have heard that indigenous peoples of the Polar Regions use many different words to describe what we call simply “snow” or “ice.” Even Umberto Eco mentions the four possible translations in the Eskimo culture of the word “neve”[13] when he explains the meaning of “unità culturale” (Eco 1991, 99).[14] However, neither our common opinion on the matter nor Eco go beyond mere comments.

Is the richness of Eskimo-Aleut languages truly unique? First of all, such a statement should be proved by a sort of taxonomic process to demonstrate that the difference between these languages and, for instance, English, really exists. Furthermore, many linguists would object that due to morphological differences[15] a comparison of this kind proves anything.

What I would like to highlight in Chapter IV is not the vocabulary, but rather the quality of the descriptions on climate change in the petition document given by the 62 members of the Inuit community. Hunters, women and elders from Canada and Alaska formed the group of petitioners. In Watt-Cloutier’s words this booklet is “a thick document, a very powerful piece of a legal assertion that weaves together a remarkable, incredible, indigenous wisdom of our hunters and their observations.” Their remarks based on traditional knowledge are presented side-by-side with data, graphics and statistic charts by official entities. This binary structure is implied at the beginning of the chapter in a long quotation that ends as follows: “Inuit recognize the importance of maintaining the oral tradition as a part of our culture and way of learning. At the same time we realize that there are other ways to understand the past through activities such as archeology and the study of historical documents. Both ways of knowing must now be used by Inuit.”[16] It sounds like a polite request to people of different backgrounds to share information on a mutual base in the name of common well-being.

The language used by the Inuit in their descriptions stems from what they call: “Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, (IQ),” which translated in English means “Traditional Ecological Knowledge” (TEK). It resembles the accuracy of detailed technical jargon more than the imagery of storytelling. A hunter cannot misread the land; to interpret incorrectly his habitat and act accordingly even once could cost him his life. For instance, “pukaq” is the snow at the bottom layer and “aqilluqaq” describes a more recent snowfall, enabling expert hunters to detect any shifts in the proportions between the two different snow layers when they test them for igloo building, or when they judge the performances of their sled dogs. TEK, this technology of observation and practice, expresses itself in words, not in numbers.[17]

Watt-Cloutier told me that she considered the petition document a gift to the government of the United States. When she went to submit it in Washington, DC, all the media were there, waiting for what they called their “David versus Goliath’s confrontation.” On the contrary, however, she claims that she meant it as a testimony of “a place of peace, a place of strength and assertiveness.”

With the creation of a peaceful movement that allowed the Inuit to enter the international debate on vital issues, Watt-Cloutier succeeded in “putting a human face” on climate change. But I would like to point out that in the petition document the approach has the accuracy of technical discourse, a feat which demonstrated that Watt-Cloutier could master another skill, which she probably learned when she worked for the Ungava Hospital as an Inuktitut translator and linguistic mediator, the skill—and the talent—of reconciling different systems of thoughts without demeaning either. After all, mediation is constitutive of peace.

Notes

[1] The Inuit of the Arctic are the native people who live in the Arctic North, that is Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and the Russian Far East. Inuit means “people” in the Inuiktitut language; the singular form of the noun is “Inuk.” They have lived for ten thousand years in one of the coldest areas on the planet. Their population today is more than 155,000. Traditionally they lived in small groups or bands, but in recent times have settled in small towns. In 1999 a separate territory was created in North Western Canada. The territory is named Nunavut.

[2] For her work as environmentalist Watt-Cloutier has won many international awards, including the Sophie Prize (2005), the Order of Canada (2006), and the Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Award (2007).

[3] In 1947 the Nobel Committee awarded the British Friends Service Council and the American Friends Service Committee, both linked with the Quakers, turning down Mahatma Gandhi, who never won the Prize.

[4] See *Nobelprize.org*, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2004/press.html (October 31, 2007).

[5] Ban Ki-moon made this statement while awarding Watt-Cloutier with the Mahbub Ul Haq Award. See http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/statments_full.asp?statID=94 (October 31, 2007).

[6] I interviewed Watt-Cloutier in August 2006, while she was visiting Italy with a mutual friend. Forthcoming excerpts in *Ácoma*.

[7] Plenary Intervention in Montreal, Canada, at the First Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Nego-

tiating Committee Toward a Global Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, June 29, 1998. http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?auto_slide=&ID=110&Lang=En&Parent_ID=&current_slide_num= (October 31, 2007).

[8] Keynote Address to the 12th Inuit Studies Conference at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, August 23, 2000, http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?auto_slide=&ID=102&Lang=En&Parent_ID=&current_slide_num= (October 31, 2007).

[9] See the *Official Stockholm Convention Website* at http://www.pops.int (October 31, 2007).

[10] *Arctic Connections: Local/Global Linkages for Sustainable Development*, United Nations, New York City, February 6, 2002, http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?auto_slide=&ID=90&Lang=En&Parent_ID=&current_slide_num= (October 31, 2007).

[11] ADM Forum on Globalization, Identity and Citizenship, Ottawa, Ontario, October 27, 2004, http://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/index.php?auto_slide=&ID=265&Lang=En&Parent_ID=&current_slide_num (October 31, 2007).

[12] The petition may be downloaded from the ICC website at: http://inuitcircumpolar.com/files/uploads/icc-files/FINALPetitionICC.pdf (October 31, 2007). The petition was submitted on December 7, 2005. The commission rejected it, but later decided to hold a general hearing to investigate the relationship between climate change and human rights. The hearing was held on March 1, 2007. See the invitation at http://www.earthjustice.org/library/legal_docs/inter-american-commission-on-human-rights-inuit-invite.pdf (October 31, 2007). Watt-Cloutier's speech at the hearing is available at: http://www.sophieprize.org/noop/page.php?p=Articles/220.html&print=1 (October 31, 2007).

[13] Italian for "snow."

[14] Of course, before Eco, Franz Boas wrote about the four different words for "snow" in *The Handbook of North American Indians* (1911).

[15] Eskimo-Aleut languages are polysynthetic, which means that most of their words are translated in our languages into long sentences. This aspect makes comparison very difficult.

[16] From *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Cultural Origins*, http://www.itk.ca/5000-year-heritage/cultural-origin.php (October 31, 2007).

[17] A documented demonstration of TEK's reliability is the "bowhead whale count of 1977." US government scientists made an estimation of the whale population. Their figures were very low, and using their TEK, Iñupiat hunters were able to demonstrate that those figures were wrong. See Petition, p. 20.

Works Cited

Adams, Jonathan. "Rising Sea Levels Threaten Small Pacific Island Nations." *International Herald Tribune*, May 3, 2007.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. *Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Peace Education*. New York: Pergamon, 1989.

Eco, Umberto. *Trattato di Semiotica Generale*. 1975. Milano: Bompiani, 1991.

Galtung, Johan. "Editorial." *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 1-4.

_____. "Violence, Peace and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-191.

Nobel, Alfred. "Excerpt from the Will of Alfred Nobel." *Nobelprize.org*. http://nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/will/short_testamente.html (October 31, 2007).

Schäffner, Christina, and Wenden, Anita, eds. *Language and Peace*. 1995. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Watt-Cloutier, Sheila. "This I Believe." *CBC.ca*. http://www.cbc.ca/thisibelieve/essays/may23_Sheila_Watt-Cloutier.html (October 31, 2007).

Massimo Rubboli

Patriotism and Religion in the American Civil War

When the United States, founded at the War of Independence, strayed from its divine mission to be a redeemer nation[1] and fell from grace, a new war became necessary to redeem it. The Civil War added to the growing mythology of the American nation the new elements of a fall, repentance, sacrifice, death, and rebirth. On the eve of that war, it was quite difficult to accept that the new "chosen people" had divided into two distinct nations. The reason was clearly explained by a Boston Baptist minister: "We cannot have two or more republics on this soil. God and nature have forbidden it" (Eddy 1861, 19). However, the pastor of St. James's Church in Concord, North Carolina, expressed a different opinion: "Nature and nature's God has marked us out for two nations" (Dreher 1861, 5).

Even more difficult to accept was the fact that these two nations were going to fight not against an external enemy but against each other. If the colonies, as Rev. Ebenezer Baldwin said in November 1775, had been "engaged in a most unhappy War . . . a most unnatural War," because "those of the same Nation, of the same common Ancestors, of the same language, of the same professed Religion, and heirs of the same Privileges, should be imbuing their hands in each other Blood" (Baldwin 1776, 21-22), the new war was again a "most unhappy" and "unnatural war."

Both the War of Independence and the Civil War played an essential role in the formation of the American belief system, a set of ideals and myths that pervade the American national consciousness. This belief system—first called "Publick Religion" by Benjamin Franklin (see Frankiln 1876, 336) in 1749 and, more recently, "civil religion" by sociologist Robert Bellah[2]—is strictly connected to religion and patriotism.

In this paper, in order to look at the Civil War as the crucial event in the process of consolidation of the religious character of American patriotism, I will use sermons preached by both sides. The Christian churches—more than other social groups—possessed networks of communication which influenced their members' vision and understanding of reality. Preaching was the most important instrument for Northern and Southern ministers alike. They devoted the greater part of their time preparing and delivering sermons. Ministers of one church preached at least two sermons a week, one on Sabbath morning and another in the afternoon. Occasionally they might preach to a group outside the church or deliver a sermon at a funeral or on other special occasions. During the war, they also preached regularly to the troops and, when presidents Davis and Lincoln proclaimed various days of national fasting and atonement, they were called to give thanks for God's help or to enumerate national failings and to express repentance.

Awash in a Sea of Patriotism

When the election of Lincoln in November 1860 prompted Southern secession, the initial reluctance of many Northern and Southern ministers to support the war gave way to uncritical support of the war. Christian ministers on both sides found scriptural grounds for ardently supporting their respective causes, and their sermons could not have been other than central to mobilize popular support and maintain loyalty.[3] Only a minority of ministers opposed the call to arms and persisted in invoking the end of the armed conflict in order to allow God to solve the North-South problem (see Magie 1867).

As the war progressed, patriotism[4] on both sides displaced religious and partisan loyalties. Many sermons reveal that the clergy fell victim to the sheer power of patriotism. "To a high and holy patriotism, we are solemnly called. God summons us to it," proclaimed James H. Appleton, minister of Union Baptist Church in Jersey City, N.J. (Appleton 1862, 14). And in Cleveland, Ohio, Presbyterian minister William H. Goodrich declared: "We find our hearts thrilled with strange emotion; at once beating with new impulses of patriotism" (Goodrich 1861, 5).

Many Protestant preachers used "Patriotism" and "Christian Patriotism" as the title or the central subject of their sermons.[5] In addition, a Catholic priest pointed out that "patriotism is not only a social virtue, commanding respect, but a Christian virtue, to be rewarded by the blessings of God here and hereafter" (Fransioli 1864, 2). And Rabbi Maximilian J. Michelbacher, in a sermon preached in the German Synagogue of Richmond, quoted several times the words of Nehemiah 4: 8, "Fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives and your houses" (Michelbacher 1863, 5, 9, 10, 12). In the concluding prayer, Michelbacher beseeched God's support for the Confederation:

We believe, O God, that piety cannot subsist apart from patriotism—we love our country, because Thou hast given it unto us as a blessing and a heritage for our children; and, now, O God, we call upon Thee, to bring salvation to the Confederate States of America, and to crown independence with lasting honor and prosperity. (Michelbacher 1863, 10)

Sometimes the same biblical text was used for sermons delivered on opposing sides. This is the case, for instance, of Samuel II, 10: 12, "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good." Congregational minister Silas McKeen used this "thrilling charge given by a General, long since, to his officers and soldiers on the eve of battle" (McKeen 1861, 3) in a sermon he delivered at Bradford, VT, on April 28, 1861:

> The impressive address of Joab to his army is entirely appropriate to the loyal citizens of the United States at this tremendous crisis,—especially to the patriotic soldiery, assembling in such great numbers for the support of our Government and national honor. . . . The people of the loyal States are all moved by the same mighty spirit of patriotism, and, without regard to former political divisions, now stand firmly together. (McKeen 1861, 4)

Robert Lewis Dabney, the moderator of the Presbyterian Synod of Virginia destined to become General "Stonewall" Jackson's chief of staff, preached the same text at the funeral service of Lieutenant Abram Carrington held in Richmond, VA, in December, 1862. The hitherto reluctant Presbyterian minister urged the young men of his congregation to "play the men for your people and the cities of your God," and emphatically said that "the blood of our country's martyrs becomes the seed of our new armies" (Dabney 1863, 13), paraphrasing Tertullian's famous metaphor, *semen est sanguis Chirstianorum* ("the blood of the martyrs is the seed of new Christians") (Dabney 1863, 8). Another sermon was preached on the parallel passage of Chronicles I, 19: 13 by the Rev. Robert N. Sledd in the Methodist Episcopal Church of Petersburg, Virginia on September 22nd, 1861 (Sledd 1861).

Although patriotism called for a ringing affirmation of hatred and blood revenge, the sense of belonging to the same family of believers in Christ was not completely lost. For example, on May 5, 1861 the Right Rev. Thomas Atkinson, Episcopal Bishop of North Carolina, urged his parishioners "to check in ourselves and others the growth of rancorous, vindictive, malignant feeling and the use of bitter, scornful opprobrious language concerning those once our brethren, now, alas, it would seem our enemies. For after all we are Christians" (T. Atkinson 1861, 12).

Two Christian Nations

The task of interpreting God's involvement with the Confederate cause and defining the role of the Christian churches in the Confederate nation required much more than simply borrowing preconceived theological categories or rhetorical formulas pulled from the Old Testament or from the tradition of political preaching in Puritan New England.

In the South, the clergy's new burden of political preaching was made immensely easier by the new Constitution, adopted on March 11, 1861 by seven Confederate States. Many religious leaders rejoiced that the Confederate constitution explicitly recognized the nation's dependence upon God and declared its Christian identity, "invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God." This invocation of God would not only solidify the South's identity as a Christian republic, but would also supply a surprisingly powerful critique of the "godless" Northern Constitution that failed to invoke—or even mention—God. The Federal Constitution, "whether through inadvertence, or, as is unfortunately more probable, from infidel practices imbibed in France by some members of the Convention . . . contained no recognition of God. Our present Constitution opens with a confession of the existence and providence of the Almighty" (Reed 1861, 9).

The Confederate motto, *Deo Vindice* ("with God as our defender"), added additional weight to the South's claim to be a uniquely Christian nation. President Davis proclaimed the first national fast for June 13, 1861; now was the time to consecrate the new nation and "to recognize [our] dependence upon God . . . [and] supplicate His merciful protection for the future":

> PROCLAMATION To the People of the Confederate States:
>
> When a people, who recognize their dependence upon God, feel themselves surrounded by peril and difficulty, it becomes them to humble themselves, under the dispensation of Divine Providence, to recognize His righteous government, to acknowledge His goodness in times past and supplicate His merciful protection for the future.
>
> The manifest proof of the Divine Blessing hitherto extended to the efforts of the people of the Confederate States of America to maintain and perpetuate public liberty, individual rights and national independence, demand their devout and heartfelt gratitude. It becomes them to give public manifestation of this gratitude, and of their dependence upon the Judge of all the Earth, and to invoke the continuance of His favor. Knowing that none but a just and righteous cause can gain the Divine favor, we would implore the Lord of Hosts to guide and direct our policy in the paths of right, duty, justice and mercy, to unite our hearts and our efforts for the defence of our dearest rights, to strengthen our weakness, crown our arms with success, and enable us to secure a speedy, just and honorable peace.
>
> To these ends, and in conformity with the request of Congress, I invite the people of the Confederate States to the observance of a day of fasting and prayer, by such religious services as may be suitable for the occasion and I recommend Thursday, the 13th day of June next, for that purpose; and that we may all, on that day, with one accord, join in humble and reverential approach to Him in whose hands we are, invoking Him to inspire us with a proper spirit and temper of heart and mind to bear our evils, to bless us with His favor and protection, and to bestow His gracious benediction upon our Government and country.
>
> (Signed) JEFFERSON DAVIS
>
> By the President R. TOOMBS, Secretary of State.
>
> (*The Charleston Mercury*, May 27, 1861)

Richmond's preachers, like clergymen throughout the Confederacy, rallied to make the religious grounds of political union explicit. "The United States Government," the rector of St. James Church in Warrenton, Virginia, declared on June 13, 1861, "ignores God and makes no reference to an overruling Providence!" (Barten 1861; see Jacobs 1861).

A few days after the national fast, God's purposes seemed to be gloriously revealed with the resounding Confederate victory on July 21 at Bull Run or Manassas Junction, a little town about thirty-five miles southwest of Washington. Preaching a thanksgiving sermon on July 21, 1861, to commemorate the victory, William C. Butler declared in Richmond's St. John's Episcopal Church that the opportunity to constitute a truly Christian nation amounted to a special calling for the South. The Confederacy did not receive its divine commission from heaven when men ratified the Confederate Constitution: God had to ratify it, and He did so by bestowing the remarkable victory at Manassas. That astounding success proved that the South fought for principles that were fundamental to God's "Divine government":

> God has given us of the South today a fresh and golden opportunity—and so a most solemn command—to realize that form of government in which the just, constitutional rights of each and all are guaranteed to each and all. . . . He has placed us in the front rank of the most marked epochs of the world's history. He has placed in our hands a commission which we can faithfully execute only by holy, individual self-consecration to all of God's plans. (Quoted in Stout, Grasso 1998, 323)

The Episcopal bishop of Georgia, Stephen Elliott, preaching in Savannah one week after the Confederate victory, declared that the victory was "the crowning token of His [God's] love—the most wonderful of all the manifestations of his divine presence with us" (Elliott 1861, 14). The Rev. T.S. Winn affirmed that God's assistance to the Confederacy was similar to His aiding the Israelites against the Philistines and he compared the victory at Manassas to David slaying the giant Goliath (Winn 1861, 6).

Through words like those of Butler, Elliott, and Winn, repeated in similar settings throughout the Confederacy, a nation was being born. The poet Walt Whitman, who endorsed the Civil War as a catharsis which would purge the nation of political corruption and preserve the union, responded to the victory with "recruitment poems" such as "Beat! Beat! Drums!" published in September 1861 in *Harper's Weekly* and the New York *Leader*:

> BEAT! beat! drums!—Blow! bugles! blow!
> Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,
> Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation.

Believing the hand of God was in every event, the Northern clergy asserted that through the disastrous defeat of the Union forces, God had punished the

United States for slavery. God had thus signaled that the oppressed should go free. However, other Northern ministers explained it as an expression of the wrath of God against the Northern people. For example, influential Congregational pastor Horace Bushnell explored this theme with peculiar force and interpreted the defeat as an instrument used by God to punish the people for their idolatry and sinfulness. He told his parishioners in Hartford, Conn., that more reverses were needed:

> There must be reverses and losses, and times of deep concern. There must be tears in the houses, as well as blood in the fields. . . . Peace will do for angels, but war is God's ordinance for sinners, and they want schooling of it often. In a time of war, what a sense of discipline is forced. Here, at least, there must and will be obedience; and the people, outside, get the sense of it about as truly as the army itself. (Bushnell 1861, 179, 181)

Only by the path of humiliation and suffering could America purge its dross and attain a new, more nearly perfect identity. But once the ordeal had been passed, he prophesied, the United States would become a true "nation—God's own nation" (Bushnell 1861, 183).

A few months later, the North had regained its confidence in the rightness of its cause. Many Yankee ministers thought Union soldiers were preparing the way for the kingdom of God on earth. William Buell Sprague, editor of the famed *Annals of the American Pulpit*, predicted that Northern success would usher in "a flood of millenial [*sic*] glory," "the great Thanksgiving Day of the World" (Sprague 1861).[6] Julia Ward Howe, a Unitarian abolitionist from Boston, visiting Washington, DC, in autumn 1861, expressed a widespread faith when her eyes saw "the glory of the coming of the Lord" in the marching ranks of the Union Army (Howe 1862, 10).

Like their Northern counterpart, Southern clergy also viewed their cause as just and holy. In their sermons, they assured the people of the South that in the "eyes of God and man" their cause was just, since they were fighting to maintain their institutions against a despotic power, and they were urged prayer for the welfare of the Confederate government and armies.

In May 16, 1862, a Presbyterian minister in Fayetteville, North Carolina, proclaimed:

> Our cause is sacred. . . . You are fighting for everything that is near and dear, and sacred to you as men, as Christians and as patriots; for country, for home, for property, for the honor of mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and loved ones. Your cause is the cause of God, of Christ, of humanity. It is a conflict of truth with error—of the Bible with Northern infidelity—of a pure Christianity with Northern fanaticism—of liberty with despotism—of right with might. (Tucker 1862, 10-11)

The citizens of the new Confederate nation bore a special mission: to set before the world the ideals of ordered liberty, states' rights, and biblical values, all of which the Yankees had perverted.

At the outset of the struggle, the North fought to save the Union, not to end slavery. Only those with strong abolitionist convictions argued that departure of the errant states might prove a blessing, freeing the United States from the taint of slavery. In a sermon delivered on Thanksgiving Day 1860, Henry Ward Beecher of Brooklyn's Congregational Church invited the North to act against "the secret intentions of those men who are the chief fomenters of troubles in the South":

> What do those men that are really at the bottom of this conspiracy mean? Nothing more or less than this: Southern empire for slavery, and the reopening of the slave-trade as a means by which it shall be fed. . . . Their secret purpose is to sweep westward like night, and involve in the cloud of their darkness all Central America, and then make Africa empty into Central America, thus changing the moral geography of the globe. . . . They mean slavery. They mean an Empire of Slavery. They don't any longer talk of the evil of slavery. It is a virtue, a religion! (Beecher 1863, 45)

During 1862 many Northern ministers increasingly indicated the abolition of slavery as the meaning of the war (see Gaylord 1862).[7] On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and fundamentally altered the character of the war.

Northern churches reflected—and, in some cases, promoted—this shift in direction. Initially most ministers were reluctant to support an all-out campaign for abolition, but conversion to this point of view did not proceed at an even rate. Some clergy and church bodies were demanding liberty for the captives in 1861; others did not speak out until well after the Emancipation Proclamation. But early or late, Northern Protestants concluded that God wished slavery to die.

With a few notable exceptions, Southern ministers believed that preserving slavery was an integral part of their nation's mission. God had ordained the institution as the most humane means of relating labor to capital, of protecting an inferior race, and of introducing that race to the blessings of Christianity (see Stringfellow 1856, Palmer 1861).

Most Southerners considered themselves not the oppressors of African-Americans but their defenders. "We do not place our cause upon its highest level," wrote Stephen Elliott in 1862, "until we grasp the idea that God has made us the guardians and champions of a people whom he is preparing for his own purposes, and against whom the whole world is banded" (Elliott 1862, 14). In a sermon before the General Assembly of South Carolina in December 1863, Benjamin Palmer claimed that the Confederate war effort would eventually "enlarge our power to protect and bless the race committed to our trust" (Palmer 1864, 23).

Several ministers demanded an end to laws prohibiting slave literacy and limiting slave preaching, claiming that these kept African Americans from the gospel. Similarly, reformers desired statutory recognition of slave marriages and families. Although such proposals encountered opposition and were never enacted into law, they did win much favorable comment. Advocates suggested that reform might be necessary to the success of Confederate arms. Southern ministers thundered that God would not bless the Confederacy until it honored its covenant with God and made bondage fully humane.

National Sins and the Wrath of God

Throughout the war the hand of God was read into every military victory and defeat. On both sides, ministers presented the war as the expression of the wrath of God and His chastisement for national sins.

In a sermon preached in Baltimore on September 26, 1861, Rev. Richard Fuller—a Baptist raised in South Carolina and educated at Harvard—declared: "as a nation we are guilty, and God is angry with us for our sins" (Fuller 1861, 4). Reflecting on "the reverses which have recently attended our arms," Southern theologian James Henley Thornwell (the most influential person in Southern Presbyterianism and professor of theology at the denomination's seminary in Columbia, South Carolina)[8] suggested that "the swords of our enemies may be His chosen instruments to execute His wrath. . . . We must abandon our sins" (Thornwell 1862, 11-12; see also Thornwell 1861).

The war was also interpreted as God's method of disciplining His people. Benjamin Palmer said that God was using the war as a disciplinary action on the Southern people, preparing them "for greatness and for glory" (Palmer 1864, 23). Presbyterian minister T.V. Moore of Richmond declared that the war was God's way of disciplining people and nations, and of "breaking up mammon worship and effeminacy" (Moore 1861, 9).

Although each side reflected on its own transgressions, and despite regional differences over the sinfulness of slavery, the transgressions named by the clergy were often surprisingly similar in North and South: intemperance, Sabbath breaking, lack of loyalty to authorities, avarice, bribery and gaming.

In a sermon delivered before the General Assembly of Alabama, Baptist minister Isaac T. Tichenor declared: "One of our national sins is the covetousness of our people. . . . Another of our national sins has been proud and boastful self-reliance. . . . Cotton was our hope, enthroned the god of our confidence, and almost worshipped as our national deliverer" (Tichenor 1863, 8, 10).

On March 27, 1863, one of the days appointed for "Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer," Stephen Elliott—at that time Presiding Bishop of the Protestant

Episcopal Church in the Confederate States—preached that “God has thought it best for us that this cruel war should endure yet longer and should be waged with an increased ferocity. . . . Our sins are to be more heavily punished, at the same time that our faith is to be more thoroughly sifted, and our submission to His will made more complete and perfect” (Elliott 1863, 6-7).

Preaching on August 21, 1863, another Fast Day, John J.D. Renfroe, Baptist chaplain of the 10th Alabama Regiment, ascribed the recent reverses to the lack of trust in God: “We have failed to confide in the God of our mercies, we have trusted in our own strength, and he is subjecting us to severe vicissitudes. . . . We need to be deeply convinced that the battle is not ours, but God’s” (Renfroe 1863, 11, 25). After the end of the war, Fuller was still convinced that “the chastisements now upon us” were an expression of the wrath of God for the “national sins” (Fuller 1865, 9, 22). A month later, on Independence Day, Rev. James T. Robinson of North Adams, MA, told the members of his congregation that “the great lesson of this war” was that “it is Punishment, Retribution for National guilt and crime, North and South” (Robinson 1865, 4).

Baptism of Blood

As casualties rose to unimaginable levels, the people felt that something profoundly religious was taking place, a sort of massive “sacrifice on the altar of their country’s freedom” (Tucker 1862, 10).[9]

Protestants hoped that the Civil War might prove a baptism of blood. As Charles Reagan Wilson has pointed out (see Wilson 1980), that phrase recurred frequently in the utterances of Confederate clergy. Even before the first shot had been fired, James Thornwell was warning that “our path to victory may be through a baptism of blood” (Thornwell 1861). In 1863 the Episcopal rector B.T. Lacy declared: “A grand responsibility rests upon our young republic and a mighty work lies before it. Baptized in its infancy in blood, may it receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and be consecrated to its high and holy mission among the nations of the earth” (Lacy 1863, 7). Through the shedding of blood might come atonement for sin and newness of life. It also consecrated the Confederate cause: “Our cause . . . has been consecrated by a holy baptism of fire and blood” (Tucker 1862, 10).[10] While Stephen Elliott reminded his listeners that “nations . . . must win their way to a place in history through the baptism of blood” (Elliott 1862, 4), Benjamin Palmer praised the sacrifice of “our martyrs,” who were “undergoing the . . . baptism of blood” (Palmer 1864, 23).

For Northern clergy, the blood baptism received a final ritual enactment when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, 1865. The

President's death symbolized the expiation of national sins. His shed blood—token of all similar effusions during four years of war—purchased new life for America. As George Washington had been immortalized as a type of latter-day Moses who led his people out of British bondage and to a "sweet land of liberty,"[11] so Lincoln became an American Christ, who was sacrified so that the nation might be reborn. A Presbyterian minister, preaching right after Lincoln's death, stated: "The life of the just departed LINCOLN, after having wrought out the painful salvation of the Republic, has been offered, a bloody sacrifice, upon the altar of human freedom and the happiness of his fellow countrymen" (Bingham 1865, 36).

Gods and Generals

The religious character of Civil War patriotism has been recently celebrated in Ronald F. Maxwell's film *Gods and Generals* (2003), based on Jeffrey M. Shaara's novel by the same title (Shaara 1997), a depiction of a society organized around moral duty to one's family and country and of a nation at war with itself. The film begins on April 20, 1861—the day that General Robert E. Lee, played by Robert Duvall, turned down command of the Federal Army, and the Virginia convention responded to Lincoln's call for troops by voting overwhelmingly to withdraw from the Union. Very soon thereafter, Lee is summoned before the Virginia legislature and called to command the armies of Virginia, to defend against the invading troops from the north. *Gods and Generals* covers the first two years of the war, from the battle of Fredericksburg to the battle of Chancellorsville, and is actually a prequel to Maxwell's 1993 epic movie *Gettysburg*, based on the novel *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara (father of Jeff Shaara). The two movies are part of a trilogy, whose third part would be *The Last Full Measure*, covering the last two years of the war.

The film largely focuses on Confederate General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, played by Stephen Lang. Earlier in the film, "Stonewall" Jackson explains that while he believes in the Union, his home state, Virginia, has a "primal claim" on his loyalties: "That's my understanding of patriotism." General Jackson's death on May 10, 1863 made him the saint of a cult that grew steadily in the Southern secular and religious press, fusing his military prowess with his staunch Presbyterianism. A constant refrain throughout the movie is that God's will be done.

Stonewall Jackson Monument, Manassas National Battlefield Park, Manassas, VA.

Bob Dylan's song, "Cross the Green Mountain,"[12] from the soundtrack of *Gods and Generals*, is about the Civil War, but the musical setting is somehow out of time. Dylan describes the scene as a "dim Atlantic line" with the "ravaged land" lying "miles behind." He looks for a good that could come from all that destruction, and directs his gaze "upward beyond / The darkness of masks, the surprise of the dawn." There he finds truth in the simple, distinctly human bravery and courage of the people whose memory turned tragedy into a triumph of spirit. "Pride will vanish / And glory will rock," he sings, "But virtue lives / And cannot be forgot." Evoking the nature of the Civil War itself, Dylan asserts the hypocrisy of both sides, the agendas that seem to always lead to violence and death: "There's blasphemy on every tongue."

Notes

[1] See, e.g., Thornwell 1861, 670: "America was destined to spread civilization and religion over all the lands and be a shining light for all to see."

[2] Robert N. Bellah's seminal essay, "Civil Religion in America," was originally published in 1967; it has been reprinted in several places, notably in McLoughlin, Bellah 1968, 3-23; Bellah 1970, 168-186; and Richey, Jones 1974, 21-44.

[3] It is important to note that a large number of sermons were printed and became widely circulated pamphlets.

[4] Patriotism, a term coined in the 1720s and given currency by Bolingbroke's first *Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism* (1736), originally indicated a civic sense and love of country, built around a shared constitutional tradition.

[5] Orville Dewey, *On Patriotism: The Condition, Prospects, and Duties of the American People* (1859); Robert L. Dabney, *The Christian Best Motive for Patriotism* (1860); Silas McKeen, *Heroic Patriotism* (1861); Joel F. Bingham, *The Hour of Patriotism* (1862); Robert L. Dabney, *The Christian Soldier* (1863); William Adams, *Christian Patriotism* (1863); Thomas Brainerd, *Patriotism Aiding Piety* (1863); Edmund B. Fairfield, *Christian Patriotism* (1863); Thomas N. Haskell, *Christian Patriotism* (1863); Henry C. Lay, *The Devout Soldier* (1864); H. Clay Trumbull, *Desirableness of Active Service* (1864).

[6] George Whitefield (1714-1770) had preached a sermon with a similar title, "Glorifying God in the Fire" (Whitefield 1836, 83-93).

[7] See also James D. Liggett, "Our National Reverses," quoted in Chesebrough 1991, 325.

[8] Before the outbreak of the war, Thornwell was called "the Calhoun of the Southern Church" (see Farmer Jr. 1986, 39).

[9] See also Fransioli 1864, 7: "The true Christian patriot brings before the altar of his country, his property and his life cheerfully ready for the sacrifice when it is demanded."

[10] See also J.M. Atkinson 1862, 8: "A conflict . . . consecrated by the martyr-blood of the best men in these Confederate States."

[11] These words are the second line of the patriotic song "My Country, 'tis of Thee (America)," written by the Baptist minister Samuel Francis Smith in 1832.

[12] "I cross the green mountain, I slept by the stream Heaven blazin' in my head, I dreamt a monstrous dream.

Somethin' came up out of the sea
Swept through the land of the rich and the free.
I look into the eyes of my merciful friend
And then I ask myself, is this the end?
Memories linger, sad yet sweet
And I think of the souls in heaven who will meet.
Altars are burnin' with flames far and wide
The foe has crossed over from the other side
They tip their caps from the top of the hill
You can feel them come, more brave blood to spill.
Along the dim Atlantic line
The ravaged land lies for miles behind
The light's comin' forward and the streets are broad
All must yield to the avengin' God.
The world is old, the world is gray
Lessons of life can't be learned in a day.
I watch and I wait an' I listen while I stand
To the music that comes from a far better land.
Close the eyes of our captain, peace may he know
His long night is done, the great leader is laid low.
He was ready to fall, he was quick to defend
Killed outright he was, by his own men.
It's the last day's last hour of the last happy year
I feel that the unknown world is so near.
Pride will vanish and glory will rot
But virtue lives and cannot be forgot.
The bells of the evening have rung
There's blasphemy on every tongue.
Let 'em say that I walked in fair nature's light
And that I was loyal to truth and to right.
Serve god and be cheerful, look upward, beyond
Beyond the darkness of masks, the surprises of dawn.
In the deep green grasses of the blood stained wood
They never dreamed of surrenderin', they fell where they stood.
Stars fell over Alabama, I saw each star
You're walkin' in dreams, whoever you are.

Chilled are the skies, keen is the frost
The grounds froze hard and the morning is lost.
A letter to mother came today
Gun shot wound to the breast is what it did say.
But he'll be better soon, he's on a hospital bed
But he'll never be better, he's already dead.
I'm ten miles outside the city an' I'm lifted away
In an ancient light that is not of day
They were calm, they were blunt, we knew 'em all too well
We loved each other more than we ever dared to tell."

Works Cited

Adams, William. *Christian Patriotism*. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1863.

Appleton, James H. *Piety and Patriotism, the Demand of the Times, Sanctioned and Enjoined by Christ: A Discourse Delivered before the Union Baptist Church, Jersey City, N J on Sabbath Morning, August 24th, 1862*. New York: Westcott, 1862.

Atkinson, Joseph M. *God, the Giver of Victory and Peace: A Thanksgiving Sermon, Delivered in the Presbyterian Church, September 18, 1862*. Raleigh, NC: n.p., 1862.

Atkinson, Thomas. *Christian Duty in the Present Time of Trouble*. Wilmington, NC: Fulton & Price, 1861.

Baldwin, Ebenezer. *The Duty of Rejoicing under Calamities and Afflictions*. New York: Gaine, 1776.

Barten, O.S. *Fast Day Sermon*. Richmond: Enquirer Book and Job Press, 1861.

Beecher, Henry Ward. *Freedom and War*. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1863.

Bellah, Robert N. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* 96 (Winter 1967): 1-21. Reprinted in McLoughlin, Bellah 1968, 3-23; Bellah, *Beyond Belief*, 168-186; and in Richey, Jones 1974, 21-44.

_____. *Beyond Belief*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Bingham, Joel F. *The Hour of Patriotism*. Buffalo: Franklin Steam Printing House, 1862.

_____. *National Disappointment: A Discourse Occasioned by the Assassination of President Lincoln, Delivered in Westminster Church, Buffalo, Sunday Evening, May 7th 1865*. Buffalo: Breed, Butler and Co., 1865.

Brainerd, Thomas. *Patriotism Aiding Piety: A Sermon, Preached in the Third Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, on the 30th of April, 1863, the Day Appointed by the President of the United States for Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer*. Philadelphia: Geddes, 1863.

Bushnell, Horace. *Reverses Needed: A Discorse Delivered on the Sunday after the Disaster at Bull Run in the North Church, Hartford*. Hartford, CT: Hunt, 1861. Reprinted in *The Spirit in Man: Sermons and Selections*. New York: Scribner, 1907.

Chesebrough, David B., ed. *God Ordained This War: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Dabney, Robert L. *The Christian Best Motive for Patriotism: A Sermon Preached in the College Church, Hampden Sidney, Va., on the 1st of November, 1859*. Richmond: Wynne, 1860.

_____. *The Christian Soldier: A Sermon Commemorative of the Death of Abram C. Carrington. Preached and Published by Order of the Session of College Church, Dec., 1862*. Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1863.

Dewey, Orville. *On Patriotism: The Condition, Prospects, and Duties of the American People. A Sermon Delivered on Fast Day at Church Green, Boston*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1859.

Dreher, Daniel I. *A Sermon*. Salisbury, NC: Watchman's Office, 1861.

Eddy, Daniel C. *Our Country: Its Pride and Its Peril, or Liberty and the Union*. Boston: Hewes, 1861.

Elliott, Stephen. *God's Presence with Our Army at Manassas!* Savannah: Williams, 1861.

_____. *Extract from a Sermon Preached by Bishop Elliott, on the 18th September, Containing a Tribute to the Privates of the Confederate Army*. Savannah: n.p., 1862.

_____. *New Wine Not to be Put in Old Bottles*. Savannah: Steam Power Press, 1862.

_____.*"Samson's Riddle." A Sermon Preached in Christ Church, Savannah, on Friday, March 27th, 1863, Being the Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, Appointed by the President of the Confederate States*. Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin & Co., 1863.

Fairfield, Edmund B. *Christian Patriotism: A Sermon Delivered in the Representatives' Hall, Lansing, Michigan, February 22, 1863,* Lansing, MI: Kerr, 1863.

Farmer, James Oscar, Jr. *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986.

Franklin, Benjamin. *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*. 1749. In *Writings*. New York: Library of America, 1987.

Fransioli, Joseph. *Patriotism, a Christian Virtue: A Sermon Preached by the Rev. Joseph Fransioli, at St. Peter's (Catholic) Church, Brooklyn, July 26th, 1863*. In *Pamphlets Issued by the Royal Publication Society, from Feb. 1, 1863, to Feb. 1, 1864*, vol. 24. New York: Loyal Publication Society, 1864.

Fuller, Fuller. *Mercy Remembered in Wrath: A Sermon Preached . . . on Thursday, September 26, 1861, Being the Day of National Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer*. Baltimore: Taylor, 1861.

_____. *Wrong and Right Dispositions under National Judgments: A Sermon Preached . . . on the First Day of June, Being the Day of National Fasting and Humiliation*. Baltimore: Weishampel, 1865.

Gaylord, William A. *The Soldier God's Minister*. Fitchburg, NH: Rollstone Printing Office, 1862.

_____. *A Sermon on the Christian Necessity of War; by William H. Goodrich, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Cleveland. Preached April 21, 1861*. Cleveland: Fairbanks, Benedict & Co. 1861.

Haskell, Thomas N. *Christian Patriotism: A Medium of God's Power and Purpose to Bless Our Lands. A Fast-day Sermon*. Boston: Hollis & Gunn, 1863.

Howe, Julia Ward. "Battle Hymn of the Republic." *Atlantic Monthly* 9, no. 52 (February 1862): 10.

Jacobs, Ferdinand. *A Sermon for the Times*. Marion, AL: n.p., 1861.

Lacy, B. T. *Address Delivered at the General Military Hospital, Winston, NC*. Fayetteville, NC: n.p., 1863.

Lay, Henry C. *The Devout Soldier: Preached by Request to the Powhatan Troop at Emmanuel Church, March 6th 1864*. 1864. In *Sermons, 1861-1865*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999. http://docsouth.unc.edu/imls/layhenry/layhenry.html

McKeen, Silas. *Heroic Patriotism: A Sermon Delivered at Bradford, VT., Sabbath Afternoon, April 28, 1861, in the Presence of the Bradford Guards, When Under Call to Join the First Regiment of the Vermont Volunteers, and Go Forth in Their Country's Service*, Windsor, VT: Vermont Chronicle Book and Job Office, 1861.

McLoughlin, William G., and Bellah, Robert N., eds.. *Religion in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

Magie, David. *A Discourse Delivered in the Second Presbyterian Church*. New York: Hart, 1863.

Michelbacher, Maximilian J. *A Sermon Delivered on the Day of Prayer Recommended by the President of C.S. of A., the 27th of March, 1863, at the German Hebrew Synagogue "Bayth Ahabah."* Richmond: Macfarlane & Fergusson, 1863.

Moore, Thomas V. *God Our Refuge and Strength in This War: A Discourse Before the Congregations of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches, on the Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, Appointed by President Davis, Friday, Nov. 15, 1861*. Richmond: White, 1861.

Palmer, Benjamin M. "Slavery a Divine Trust: Duty of the South to Preserve and Perpetuate It." In *Fast Day Sermons*. New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1861.

_____. *A Discourse Before the General Assembly of South Carolina, on December 10, 1863: Appointed By the Legislature as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer*. Columbia, SC: Pelham, 1864.

Reed, Edward. *A People Saved by the Lord*. Charleston: Steam-Power Press, 1861.

Renfroe, John J. D. *The Battle is God's. A Sermon Preached Before Wilcox's Brigade, Fast Day, the 21st August, 1863, Near Orange Court-House, VA*. Richmond: MacFarlane & Fergusson, 1863.

Richey, Russell E., and Jones, Donald G., eds. *American Civil Religion*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Robinson, James T. *National Anniversary Address, Delivered at the Baptist Church, North Adams, Mass. July 4th, 1865*. North Adams, MA: Phillips, 1865.

Shaara, Jeffrey M. *Goods and Generals*. Westminster, MD: Ballantine Books, 1997.

Sledd, Robert N. *A Sermon delivered in the Market Street, M.E. Church, Petersburg, VA*. Petersburg, VA: Crutchfield, 1861.

Sprague, William B. *Glorifying God in the Fires: A Discourse Delivered in the Second Presbyterian Church, Albany, November 28, 1861, the Day of the Annual Thanksgiving, in the State of New York*. Albany, NY: Van Benthuysen, 1861.

Stout, Harry S., and Grasso Christopher. "Civil War, Religion, and Communications." In *Religion and the American Civil War*, eds. Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson, 313-359. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Stringfellow, Thornton. *Scriptural and Statistical Views in Favor of Slavery*. Richmond: Randolph, 1856.

Tichenor, Isaac T. *Sermon Delivered . . . in the Hall of the House of Representatives of Alabama, on Friday, August 21st, 1863*. Montgomery, AL: Montgomery Advertiser Book and Job Printing Office, 1863.

Thornwell, James H. *National Sins: A Fast-Day Sermon, Preached in the Presbyterian Church, Columbia, Wednesday, November 21, 1860*. New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1861.

_____. *Our Danger and our Duties*. Columbia, SC: Southern Guardian Steam-Power Press, 1862.

Trumbull, H. Clay. *Desirableness of Active Service*. Hartford, CT: Case & Lockwood, 1864.

Tucker, Joel W. *God's Providence in War*. Fayetteville, NC: Presbyterian Office, 1862.

Whitefield, George. *Sermons on Important Subjects*. London: Fisher & Jackson, 1836.

Wilson, Charles Reagan. *Baptism in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980.

Winn, T.S. *The Great Victory at Manassas Junction. God the Arbiter of Battles: A Thanksgiving Sermon Preached in the Presbyterian Church at Concord, in Greene County, Alabama, July 28, 1861*. Tuscaloosa, AL: Warren, 1861.

Richard T. Kidder

“Be Done by as You Do unto Others”: Joe Haldeman’s *Forever Peace*

In 1997, Joe Haldeman published *Forever Peace*, a science-fiction novel set in 2043, whose title suggests a continuity with his well-known *The Forever War*, originally published in 1974 and whose definitive version dates from 1997; in 1999, he published *Forever Free*, which was in fact a sequel to *The Forever War*, the novel that established him in the forefront of anti-war writers, and which was drawn from his experiences as a combat engineer in Vietnam, where he had been seriously wounded.[1] The three novels were published together in an omnibus edition in 2006 as *Peace and War*,[2] forming what seems to be a trilogy; the first two novels, which have a strong contextual orientation to Vietnam, are set in the distant future, as it were, and the third novel, *Forever Peace*—second, however, in terms of composition—closes the omnibus edition and recalls not Vietnam, but contemporary geopolitical struggles between North and South. As Haldeman notes at the beginning of the novel: “Caveat lector: This book is not a continuation of my 1975 novel *The Forever War*. From the author’s point of view it is a kind of sequel, though, examining some of that novel’s problems from an angle that didn’t exist twenty years ago” (*FP*, 430). The novel in fact re-locates the “problems” in a technological and geopolitical near-future scenario allegorically situated around the time of its publication.

Much of Haldeman’s writing, indeed, many of his protagonists, reflect his own background as a student of physics and astronomy and as a wounded Vietnam War veteran. Haldeman graduated from college shortly before being drafted and sent to Vietnam in February of 1968, during the first Tet offensive. Trained as a scientist, and most frequently classified as a science-fiction writer owing to the early success of *The Forever War*, Haldeman is understandably adamant about distinguishing between science and technology, insisting that what is called science fiction has nothing to do with science and everything to do with technology. This is not the place to enter into complex debates concerning the definition of science fiction; however, it is helpful to note that for Haldeman science can only be expressed in “various dialects of mathematics" and that "it's extremely difficult to write a science fiction story about science that has both literary value and scientific rigor . . . Technology is another matter." It is in fact the "secondary humanity" of the technological, because it was "designed for human needs," that makes it the center of attention in science fiction writing and that creates, if not perpetuates, the confusion between science and technology, as well as the "childlike, more or less *boy*-like, fascination with machines" which is a "dominant motif in science fiction, especially the sub-genre of military SF" (Haldeman 1993, 138). In *Forever Peace*, Haldeman, as in *The Forever War*, debunks the fascination for the technological fix. Whereas in the earlier novel his irony is aimed at glorifications of technowar, in *Forever Peace* he explores the morally ambiguous fantasy of achieving peace through the violent imposition of a technological solution.

In *Forever Peace* what Haldeman considers the generic imperative of the technological is articulated in a near-future scenario in which nanotechnology has supplanted traditional forms of production and where the Alliance nations, the wealthy nations, have control of "nanoforges" capable of providing all the material needs of the wealthy societies; these nation-states in turn deny the nanoforges not only to their own private citizens but also to the poor nations, represented by the Ngumi, with whom they are in a state of war. The double plot line centers on the perverse quest of an apocalyptic cult to use nanotechnology to destroy the universe, and on the efforts of a group of scientists to on the one hand thwart the cult, and on the other, to use the technology to institute a reign of world peace by implementing the various technologies which it enables and which had in fact been developed for military uses.

The protagonist of *Forever Peace*, Julian Class, an African American physicist who works at the University of Texas, is, as Haldeman was, also a draftee, whose service consists of ten-day periods each month during which he is part of a ten-member platoon of Alliance soldiers who are fighting the Ngumi:

> It was partly an economic war, the "haves" with their automation-driven economies versus the "have–nots," who were not born into automatic prosperity. It was partly a race war, the blacks and browns and some yellows versus the whites and some other yellows. Julian was uncomfortable on some level about that, but he didn't feel much of a bond with Africa. (*FP*, 456-457)

The conflict in fact has its "roots" in the "twentieth century and even beyond" (*FP*, 457). Whereas the first two *Forever* novels took Vietnam as their context, in *Forever Peace* Haldeman refocuses on the confrontations between North and South characteristic of the period after Bretton Woods and of post-Reagan globalization, shifting from Southeast Asia to Central America, Africa and Southeast Asia, where the North-South economic conflict is transformed from a series of covert operations, secret wars, assassinations, and North-sponsored class warfare into an all-out conflict involving the whole globe, the haves against the have-nots.

The soldiers who comprise the platoon of which Julian Class is the leader do not actually fight, but remain at their base in Panama, an Alliance client state, immobile in their plastic armor shells, "jacked-in," to use the now omnirecurrent term coined by William Gibson in *Neuromancer* in 1984; they are connected to immense proxy robots which they control remotely during missions in Costa Rica, and whose nanotechnological armamentarium reads like the discursive annotation of every militaristic fantasy from Robert Heinlein's exoskeletons in *Starship Troopers* (1959) to Neil Stephenson's nanotech weapons of destruction and social and economic repression in *The Diamond Age* (1995):[3] "One soldierboy platoon could do as much damage as a brigade of regular infantry. They did it quicker and more dramatically, like huge invincible robots moving in silent concert" (*FP*, 439). The soldiers in Julian Class's platoon have been selected to work together not for their viciousness in battle, but for their psychological predispositions as mediators; their primary mission is harassment and interdiction, as opposed to that of the hunter/killer platoons, and often they are sent in to calm the waters: "Mechanics aren't in any physical danger, deep inside the Operations bunker in Portobello. But our death and disability rate is higher than the regular infantry. It's not bullets that get us, though; it's our own brains and veins" (*FP*, 433). There is, however, a catch to the efficiency with which they work together: these soldiers, referred to by the military as "mechanics," remain connected to and able to control the robotic soldierboys for no more than ten days at a stretch, because when they are jacked in to the soldierboys they become intensely conscious of the thoughts and feelings of the other members of the platoon: they suffer each other's pains and joys, the males synchronizing to the menstrual cycles of the women in the platoon; in short, they share each other's most intimate emotional and cognitive experiences. It is in fact this sharing of inner experience, this becoming one, that makes them such an effective fighting force. If, however, they are "jacked in," left in such tight contact with each other for more than ten days, they develop, as the reader learns later in the novel, a sense of empathy that goes beyond the feelings that they entertain for the other members of the platoon. After ten days, they begin to develop empathy for all humans, rendering them useless to the military. In fact, the plot revolves around the attempt by Julian and his repentant colleagues at the University of Texas, who had helped to develop the soldierboy technology, to extend this capacity for empathy to the whole of humanity, making violence impossible.

The military action is set in Panama, where the soldierboys are based, an Alliance client state infiltrated by Ngumi sympathizers, and Costa Rica, where the soldierboys actually operate, a hotbed of Ngumi activism because of its proximity to Nicaragua, a Ngumi state. The forces are very unequal: the high-tech military organization of the Alliance, euphemistically standing in for the United States and NATO throughout the novel, is set against the crafty catch-up-from-behind subterfuge of the Ngumi. The war started from a "terrorist" action, the nuclear bombing of Atlanta, an action that the Ngumi may have undertaken on their own, or that may have been undertaken by the Alliance in order to legitimize their war against the Ngumi.

When Julian Class is not off in Panama fighting the Ngumi in Costa Rica, he is back at the University in Texas, with his lover and immediate superior, Amelia Harding, a white professor of physics fifteen years older than he, who has uncovered what seems to be an apocalyptic endgame on the part of the Hammer of God, a secret right-wing, racist and homophobic Christian cult embedded in the highest echelons of the US and Alliance government, military, and academia, which is part of a larger apocalyptic movement, the Enders. The monstrous plan of the Hammer of God involves no less than the destruction of the universe, occasioned by a run-away reaction at an immense particle collider, the Jupiter Project, that has been built around the moons of Jupiter utilizing nanotechnology. The action of the novel moves between these two plots: the attempt to end the war and all wars by extending empathic abilities first through the Alliance military and the Ngumi, balanced against the race to thwart the apocalyptic plot set off by the Hammer of God: "Like all Enders, they believed God was about to bring about the destruction of humankind. Unlike most of them, the Hammer of God felt called upon to help" (*FP*, 455).

The diegetic space opened by the narrative thus moves from the United States and Central America to the moons of Jupiter; the plot threads are held together by discursive materials that reflect not only American military incursions in Central America and the attendant economic interests revolving around Nicaragua and Panama through the 1980s that go by the name of free trade or globalization, but also the conflict between science and various forms of fundamentalist religion in the United States. Thus the conflict between various forms of fundamentalist religion and science so endemic to American culture is projected not only upon the effort to control global markets, but also upon the destiny of the universe itself.

In his response to Emory Elliott's presidential address at the 2006 meeting of the American Studies Association, Winfried Fluck addresses the difficulty of thinking of the notion of transnationalism as it was first introduced by Amy Kaplan in her October 2003 Presidential address, and then re-elaborated in the subsequent years. In Fluck's terms, the concept of transnationalism rests uneasily with some European scholars of American Studies for whom it seems to mean a concentration on the diasporic transnationalism of American writers moving from the center to the margins, whose work would then be re-evaluated in order to demonstrate the porosity of borders and frontiers. According to Fluck: "The theoretical starting point here seems to be the assumption that extending the field of study beyond the nation-state can finally destroy the imaginary hold of American exceptionalism" (Fluck 2007, 26). This would not, according to Fluck, address the central fact of the global and international situation in which US economic and political policy continue to constitute the reality with which European scholars are continually faced. As the notion of transnationalism is developed in Emory Elliott's address, the result would seem to place European scholars in the unproductive role of echoing American scholarship; thus the center would remain in place, while from the outside, contributions would come from the margins concerning the margins:

> As we have seen in the discussion of a possible reconceptualization of American studies, for US-American scholars who are inside this system, transnationalism holds a promise of critical resistance to the ideology of the American nation-state. Even though many US-American studies scholars feel politically alienated at the present time, many see themselves nevertheless as participants in a political struggle on the home front and are therefore looking for oppositional options. Scholars from abroad, on the other hand, will most likely see themselves not as participants in the American political process, but as possible objects of American politics. They are exposed to the power effects of the political system as a whole, and in this situation, as the politics of the Bush administration have shown, it is of little or no consequence whether the foreign minister or the attorney general is a minority member or not. (Fluck 2007, 28)

The realities of globalization would, according to Fluck, seem to impose other priorities on European scholars, for whom the notion of transnationalism remains confused and confusing.

Haldeman's *Forever Peace* implicates questions of militarism and globalization directly, inviting a response not simply from the American center but from Seattle and Genoa, the sites where anti-globalization movements reached a kind of troubled peak. The conflict between the Alliance and the Ngumi pits the haves against the have-nots in the sort of allegorical dystopian projection and remapping that Fredric Jameson has described at work in science fiction (see Jameson 1987 and 2000). The materials treated in this novel seem to invite commentary not only in terms of transnationalism, but in terms of globalization. Amitava Kumar's notion of World Bank Literature[4] would seem to offer the intriguing possibility of adding an important dimension to the discussion, with respect to the notion of transnationalism, by recontextualizing the ideological discourse surrounding the US adventures in Central and South America during the 1980s and 1990s to the context of the NAFTA and FTA agreements which were the hallmarks of the American administrations during those years. The notion of World Bank Literature also has the advantage of not being exclusively centered on the United States and on the concerns of American scholars.

In the absence of direct violence, such economic policies wreak "structural violence" upon the targeted states. These are truly cases in which borders have become porous, to return to one of the terms of the debate concerning transnationalism, initiated by Amy Kaplan and the more recent contributions by Emory Elliott and Winfried Fluck. But the Weberian definition of the state as the agency invested with the power to wield violence[5] has been moved outside the realm of the nation-state to that of the international agencies invested, through their economic reach, with the power to wreak "cultural violence," to use the term developed in the field of peace research by Johan Galtung:

> By "cultural violence" we mean those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere or our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence. (Galtung 1990, 291)

In Galtung's terms, "[c]ultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right—or at least not wrong" (Galtung 1990, 291). For this to occur, there must be shared values, or shared consensus. Finding shared values or consensus on the global stage that would somehow legitimize World Bank decisions to withdraw funds from African nations engaged in birth control practices not endorsed by the Christian Coalition, or from India based on local interpretations of copyright law, has not happened and is not likely to happen outside of the cultural context in which these values originate. Galtung argues:

> Generally, a causal flow from cultural via structural to direct violence can be identified. The culture preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on, and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing them (particularly not exploitation) at all. Then come the eruptions, the efforts to use direct violence to get out of the structural iron cage, and counter-violence to keep the cage intact. (Galtung 1990, 295)

Thus, the spiral of violence between the Alliance forces and the Ngumi "rebels." Galtung schematically outlines the areas in which the notion of cultural violence might most successfully be investigated—religion, ideology, language, art, empirical science, formal science, and cosmology—invoking the Gandhian principles of *unity-of-life* and *unity-of-means-and-ends*, and in closing his argument claims that:

> Violence can start at any corner in the direct-structural-cultural violence triangle and is easily transmitted to the other corners. With the violent structure institutionalized and the

> violent culture internalized, direct violence also tends to become institutionalized, repetitive, ritualistic, like a vendetta. This triangular syndrome of violence should then be contrasted in the mind with a triangular syndrome of peace in which cultural peace engenders structural peace, with symbiotic, equitable relations among diverse partners, and direct peace with acts of cooperation, friendliness and love. (Galtung 1990, 302)

In Galtung, the approach is holistic, not aiming at the notion of peace as the absence of conflict, but as a positive or dynamic peace.

In *Study War No More*, an anthology of science fiction compiled and edited by him in 1977, Haldeman writes in the introduction: “Alternatives are what this book is about. Ten authors have approached from ten different directions the question ‘If not war, what else?’” (Haldeman 1979, 5). Most of the contributions, in fact, such as those by Isaac Asimov and by Haldeman himself, aim at technological solutions to the question posed in the introduction. This is not surprising, given the scientific and technological optimism at the heart of much of the SF tradition, but it is nonetheless disconcerting, given the current lack of faith in the Occidental Enlightenment project. As Richard Rorty writes in “Love and Money”:

> The fear that is beginning to gnaw at the hearts of all us liberal gentlefolk in the North is that there are no initiatives which will save the southern hemisphere, that there will never be enough money in the world to redeem the South . . . Of course, there might be enough money, because science and technology might once again come to the rescue. There are a few scientific possibilities—e.g., a breakthrough in plasma physics which makes fusion energy, and thus (for example) desalination and irrigation on a gigantic scale, possible and cheap. But the hope is pretty faint. As things stand, nobody who reads the statistics about the unthinkably poor of the South can generate any optimism. (Rorty 1999, 226)

One of the stories in the collection edited by Haldeman, Damon Knight’s “Rule Golden,” prefigures Haldeman’s own tale in that the alternative to war is imposed, rather more violently in Haldeman’s case, by a stronger culture upon a weaker one. In Knight’s story the peace alternative is provided by visitors from an interstellar confederation who travel about the universe initiating worlds that are ready for change to peace, infecting them with a state of intense empathy, thus making it impossible for the members of the converted species to inflict pain on one another, as doing so brings the effects of the pain, through empathic action, back upon the perpetrator: “It was the *lex talionis*—or the Golden Rule in reverse: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” (Knight 1979, 241). In Damon Knight’s story, which dates from 1954, the solution comes from the stars, brought, not without danger to themselves, by enlightened beings whose manner of explaining their motivations is curiously Ghandhian, but whose strategy for instituting peaceful behavior among humans resembles Haldeman’s fable of technologically induced empathy. Through the chemical stimulation of evolutionistically atavistic capacities to sense “pain thoughts” in others, the aliens render the causing of pain highly undesirable by making those who inflict pain feel intensely that which they have wrought: “Automatic instant retribution, mathematically accurate: an eye for an eye” (Knight 1979, 247). The consequences of inflicting pain and suffering outweigh any possible gain in causing it.

In *Forever Peace* the solution derives from human reason and feeling, but the fix is technological. By getting significant numbers of people involved in the Alliance-Ngumi war to jack for extended periods, by forcing huge numbers of the world’s population to submit to the dangerous surgical implant procedure that makes jacking possible, the sense of empathy that the common experience creates would serve as the basis for a culture of peace. This peace is begotten by an original act of violence, but so be it. Julian learns from friends and colleagues involved in the research that the military uses for jacking the mechanics into the soldierboys produces, after a certain period, effects that are the opposite of what the military would want:

> “What happens is that after a couple of weeks in the soldierboy, you paradoxically can’t be a soldier anymore.”
>
> “You can’t kill?” I said.
>
> “You can’t even hurt anybody on purpose, except to save your own life. Or other lives. It permanently changes your way of thinking, of feeling; even after you unjack. You’ve been inside other people too long, shared their identity. Hurting another person would be as painful as hurting yourself.”
>
> . . .
>
> “You just used random people in the experiment?” Reza asked.
>
> He nodded. “The first one was random paid volunteers, off-duty soldiers. But not the second group.” He leaned forward. “Half the second group were Special Forces assassins. The other half were civilians who had been convicted of murder.”
>
> “And they all became... civilized?” Amelia asked.
>
> “The verb we use is ‘humanized’,” Marty said. (*FP*, 566-567)

The catch of course is that in order to implement this plan on a world-wide scale, many hundreds of millions of people would die simply as a reaction to the neurosurgical implant procedure required to make jacking possible. Yet the project to induce world-peace is seen by these scientists as an historical necessity: “Sometime within the next ten or a million years, we have to direct human evolution away from aggressive behavior. In theory it’s not impossible. We’ve directed the evolution of many other species” (*FP*, 565). Herein resides the ambivalence that characterizes the means-ends argument in which the technological fix that promises to usher in a utopia is predicated upon an originating act of violence on a scale that makes “Hitler look like an amateur, by two orders of magnitude” (*FP*, 568). In the end, the novel undercuts the notion of pacifism that it presents, conceding a naturally violent human nature that could only be mitigated by a violent intervention in the course of "evolution," and implicitly justifying this intervention from the same position of cultural and scientific superiority from which the Ngumi war proceeded from the beginning.

Notes

[1] For an excellent discussion of Haldeman, Vietnam, and American SF, see Franklin 2000, 164-165.

[2] Joe Haldeman, *Peace and War: The Omnibus Edition*, Contains *The Forever War*, 1974, 1975, 1997, *Forever Free*, 1999, *Forever Peace*, 1997 (London: Gollancz, Orion, 2006). Subsequent references throughout the text will be to this text unless otherwise noted, and will be abbreviated as *FW* (*The Forever War*), *FF* (*Forever Free*), and *FP* (*Forever Peace*).

[3] For a discussion of Haldeman and Heinlein, see Hantke 1998.

[4] "Moreover, the notion of the 'bank' implies a fundamental shift in terms of how the very identity of a 'culture' is imagined. It is no coincidence that the first articulations by Goethe of the concept of *Weltliteratur* occurred in the moment of the explosive rise of nationalism in Europe and the Americas. World literature adopts a conceptualization of different cultures as spatially bound and discrete entities, often imagined on the 'scale' of the nation-state. In contrast, the figure of World Bank Literature turns our attention to the deep relationality of spaces and levels within the contemporary capitalist world system—on the one hand, the continuous interchange between the 'levels' of the economic, the political, and the cultural; and, on the other, the ceaseless flow of finance, commodities, information, and populations through the various networks that now link disparate locales" (Wegner 2003, 281).

[5] "Discussion of the state may begin with Max Weber's celebrated definition of it, as that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence. The idea behind this is simple and seductive: in well-ordered societies, such as most of us live in or aspire to live in, private or sectional violence is illegitimate. Conflict as such is not illegitimate, but it cannot rightfully be resolved by private or sectional violence. Violence may be applied only by the central political authority, and those to whom it delegates this right" (Gellner 1983, 3).

Works Cited

Fluck, Winfried. "Inside and Outside: What Kind of Knowledge Do we Need? A Response to the Presidential Address." *American Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (March 2007): 23-32.

Franklin, H. Bruce. "The Vietnam War as American Science Fiction and Fantasy." In *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*, 151-172. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000.

Galtung, Johan. "Cultural Violence." *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 3 (August 1990): 291-305.

Gellner, Ernst. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.

Haldeman, Joe. "Introduction." In *Study War no More: A Selection of Alternatives*, ed. Joe Haldeman, 207-281. London: Futura, Orbit, 1979.

_____. *Peace and War: The Omnibus Edition*. Contains *The Forever War*, 1974, 1975, 1997, *Forever Free*, 1999, *Forever Peace*, 1997. London: Gollancz, Orion, 2006.

_____. “Vietnam and Other Alien Worlds.” In *Vietnam and Other Alien Worlds*, 135-147. Boskone: NESFA Press, 1993.

Hantke, Steffen. “Surgical Strikes and Prosthetic Warriors: The Soldier’s Body in Contemporary Science Fiction.” *Science Fiction Studies* 25, no. 3 (November 1998): 495-509.

Heinlein, Robert A. *Starship Troopers*. New York: Putnam, 1959.

Jameson, Fredric. “Cognitive Mapping.” 1988. In *The Jameson Reader*, eds. Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks, 277-287. Oxford, and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000.

_____. “Science Fiction as a Spatial Genre: Discontinuities and the Problem of Figuration in Vonda McIntyre’s *The Exile Waiting*.” *Science Fiction Studies* 14, no. 41 (March 1987): 44-59.

Knight, Damon. “Rule Golden.” 1954. In Haldeman 1979, 207-281.

Rorty, Richard. “Love and Money.” In *Philosophy and Social Hope*, 223-228. London: Penguin, 1999.

Stephenson, Neal. *The Diamond Age*. New York: Bantam, 1995.

Wegner, Phillip E. “Soldierboys for Peace: Cognitive Mapping, Space, and Science Fiction.” In *World Bank Literature*, ed. Amitava Kumar, 280-296. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Stefania Porcelli

Language and Violence: Hannah Arendt and the American Sixties

> Words can be relied on only if one is sure
> that their function is to reveal and not to conceal.
> (Arendt 1970, 66)

Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* (written in 1969) is an outstanding example of the strict connection between her philosophical reflections and her analysis of the social and political circumstances she lived in, from both the U.S. and the international perspective. As Arendt puts it:

> These reflections were provoked by the events and debates of the last few years as seen against the background of the twentieth century, which has become indeed, as Lenin predicted, a century of wars and revolutions, hence a century of that violence which is currently believed to be their common denominator. (Arendt 1970, 3)

The book considers the atmosphere in America in the period between World War II and the Vietnam War, including the upheavals in the universities where Arendt taught Political Sciences between 1955 and 1968. Yet, because of its focus on the general course of twentieth century wars and revolutions, *On Violence* can also be seen as an essay of political theory. Its inception recalls the beginning[1] of Arendt's previous book, *On Revolution* (1963)—more specifically dealing with the concepts of freedom and "political happiness"—which, I think, should be read jointly with *On Violence*.

The aim of this paper is, however, to underscore a third dimension in Arendt's essay, one that intermingles and fuses with the other two throughout the book: i.e. her analysis of language and language structures. Such analysis, I argue, anticipates contemporary linguistic debates about the militaristic metaphors used in ordinary speech as well as studies about violence *per se*. Works about war, Arendt points out, are numerous, but they never deal with violence as such (Arendt 1970, 8). On the other hand, the first systematic investigations on the nature and function of metaphors in language and thought appeared around 1980. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* is, according to one of its authors, the "first book outlining the contemporary theory of metaphor" (Lakoff 1992).

Looking at American society in the Sixties, Arendt highlights the reversal from the non-violent philosophy of the early Civil Rights Movement to the rhetoric of violence typical of new political groups, for instance Black Power. "The first generation to grow up under the shadow of the atom bomb" (Arendt 1970, 14) learned about concentration camps, crimes against humanity, the massacre of civilians during the last war. Hence the rejection of any use of violence. These first pacifist groups were followed by the movement against the Vietnam War. The new generation turned instead towards a new idea of power. The rhetoric of the New Left was based more on Mao Tse-tung's axiom that "power grows out of the barrel of a gun" (Arendt 1970, 11) than on Marx's theory, in which violence is described as playing only a secondary role in history.

In spite of the common use of these words, *violence* is indeed different from *power*, as is evident from Arendt's first important linguistic specification. In the second part of her book, she makes a clear distinction among the terms *power*, *strength*, *force*, *authority*, and *violence*, in order to distinguish the struggle for civil rights from the pull towards destruction: "To use them as synonyms not only indicates a certain deafness to linguistic meanings, which would be serious enough, but it has also resulted in a kind of blindness to the realities they correspond to" (Arendt 1970, 43).

Power and *violence* are held to be synonyms, because they have the same function, i.e. to indicate the means by which man rules over man, but they will appear in their diversity if one ceases to consider public life as a business of dominion of one or some over others/many (Arendt 1970, 44). According to Arendt, "*Power* corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. . . . In current usage, when we speak of a 'powerful man' or a 'powerful personality,' we already use the word 'power' metaphorically; what we refer to without metaphor is 'strength'" (Arendt 1970, 44).

Strength is an individual quality, which can always be overwhelmed by the association of many people, "who often will combine for no other purpose than to ruin strength precisely because of its peculiar independence" (Arendt 1970, 44). *Force* actually refers to nature or natural circumstances, but is never associated with people. *Authority* resides both in the individual and in institutions, and "its hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed" (Arendt 1970, 45). On the other hand, violence is an implement (Arendt 1970, 46): "the extreme form of power is All against One, the extreme form of violence is One against All" (Arendt 1970, 42). Since power depends on multitudes, whereas violence is the means used by the few against the many, violence is the opposite of both power and political life, whose specific condition is plurality, as Arendt repeatedly suggests in her works (see, for example, Arendt 1998, 7, and Arendt 1978, 19).

But what about the word *peace*? Like power, and unlike violence, the word indicates not a means, but an end in itself. That's why the political situation of the Sixties defined the "Cold War" cannot be considered a form of "peace," because it represents only a deterrent from other wars. As Johan Galtung theorized in those years, one has to tell a "negative peace" (absence of war) from a positive one, which he defines as "the absence of structural violence" (Galtung 1964, 1969).

Arendt's interest in language and metaphors is not new: it can be traced back to her analysis of the political space, characterized by action and speech (Arendt 1998, 22). The Greek *polis*, the political space *par excellence*, intends politics as based on persuasion and not upon violence. Regarding the relationship between language and violence, Arendt argues:

> The point here is that violence itself is incapable of speech, and not merely that speech is helpless when confronted with violence. Because of this speechlessness political theory has little to say about the phenomenon of violence and must leave its discussion to the technicians. . . . in so far as violence plays a predominant role in wars and revolutions, both occur outside the political realm. (Arendt 1990, 19)

Strictly speaking, wars and revolutions—because of their connection with violence—cannot be a part of the political activity. Violence is mute (Arendt 1998, 26), political life is always a matter of words.[2]

On Revolution analyses the metaphoric implication of such words as *revolution*, *persona*, *hypocrite*. Arendt stresses the strong linguistic connection between the natural world and political practice on the one hand, and theater and the political arena on the other. Thus, Arendt underscores—although in an unsystematic way—the double bind between ordinary speech and the language of war, violence, and revolution. The same word *revolution* (from the Latin verb *revolvere*) is a metaphor based on the astronomic concept of the rotation of a planet around its orbit. Another example of metaphor taken from the natural world is Marx's comparison between the violent outbreaks which precede a revolution and "the labor pangs that precede, but of course do not cause, the event of organic birth" (Arendt 1970, 11). *On Revolution* had already mentioned this:

> It is quite characteristic that, of the two similes currently used for descriptions and interpretations of revolutions, the organic metaphor has become dear to the historians as well as to the theorists of revolution—Marx, indeed, was very fond of the "birth-pangs of revolution"—while the men who enacted the Revolution preferred to draw their images from the language of the theatre. The profound meaningfulness inherent in the many political metaphors derived from the theatre is perhaps best illustrated by the history of the Latin word *persona*. (Arendt 1990, 106)

The image of natural birth is particularly important with regard to the more recent studies about metaphors and war. As Helen Cooper, Adrienne Munich and Susan Squier put it in 1989:

> The epic tradition figures arms as being engendered through the mother by linking making babies and making arms. The pattern of associating a story of arms making with human birth begins in the *Iliad* with the story of Thetis approaching Hephaistos to make weapons for her son, Achilles. (Cooper, Munich, Squier 1989, 9)

If war can be thought of as a maternal action and represented through the birth metaphor (see also Mariani 1999), it is not surprising that the maternal image has been used so often to glorify and sustain war, above all World War I, both in the propagandistic production and in the literature supporting the conflict.[3] Arendt stresses "[t]he danger of being carried away by the deceptive plausibility of organic metaphors"; this is, she points out, "particularly great where the racial issue is involved" (Arendt 1970, 75). Such metaphors, quite surprisingly, are not only typical of the language of dominant groups. Indeed, some Black Power adherents believed in racial separation and in the use of violence as well.[4]

The maternal image is just one example of how organic metaphors constantly enter military language, whereas military metaphors figure prominently in everyday speech. As George Lakoff shows, the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions:

> Argument is war
> Your claims are *indefensible.*
> He *attacked every weak point in* my argument. His criticisms were *right on target.*
> I *demolished* his argument.
> I've never *won* an argument with him.
> You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*
> If *you* use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out.* He *shot down* all *of my* arguments.
> (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 4)

Since one can actually win or lose an argument, we do not "just *talk* about arguments in terms of war" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 4), we actually see the person we are arguing with as an opponent and the ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor structures the actions we perform in arguing.

Susan Sontag has analysed the use of military metaphors in connection with AIDS. War and illness have been linked in language, the disease being seen as an invader of the body which has to defend itself. Sontag objects to this DISEASE-AS-WAR metaphor, because

> the effect of the military imagery on thinking about sickness and health is far from inconsequential. It overmobilizes, it overdescribes, and it powerfully contributes to the excommunicating and stigmatizing of the ill… We are not being invaded. The body is not a battlefield. The ill are neither unavoidable casualties nor the enemy. We—medicine, societies—are not authorized to fight back by any means whatever. (Sontag 1990, 183)

As a matter of fact, this language, justifying the attack against the enemy, introduces the us/them dichotomy that structures the identification of the self in opposition to the other.

If, as Lakoff and Turner argue, "metaphors reside in thought, not just in words" (Lakoff and Turner 1989, 2), what does this widespread use of war metaphors mean? Could it mean that our brain naturally thinks in terms of war?[5] And that war is conceivable as a natural event? As discourse analysis has shown, language can further attitudes and conditions which may lead to war. It can also shape enemy images essential to justify ongoing wars. A population's acceptance of militaristic actions often entails a great linguistic effort by politicians and media. The study of linguistic structures, including syntax, lexicon, and metaphors, reveals what those discourses actually hide, which is usually an ideological conflict between *us* and *them* (Van Dijk 1995, 18ff).

As we have seen, both the use of natural metaphor in politics (for instance, Black Power's radicalization of the organic issue) and the militarization of organic matters (see the case of diseases seen in terms of wars) have the same effect of radicalizing a series of oppositions strongly connected with the justification of violence. One of these oppositions, namely the dichotomy friend/enemy, has been used by Carl Schmitt to justify and support Hitler's totalitarianism and wars.

Yet, Hannah Arendt also stresses that we are not always aware of the sort of words and metaphors we use. As Lakoff and Johnson put it, "our conventional ways of talking about arguments pre-suppose a metaphor we are hardly ever conscious of. The metaphor is not merely in the words we use—it is in our very concept of an argument" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 6). On the other hand, Arendt makes clear that the language of violence is not a prerogative of extremist groups, but features prominently in peaceful activities as well. As a matter of fact, violence has entered the language of leftist humanism and affected its fundamental ideas. Sartre, for example,

> is unaware of his basic disagreement with Marx on the question of violence, especially when he states that "irrepressible violence . . . is man recreating himself . . . . These notions are all the more remarkable because the idea of man creating himself is strictly in the tradition of Hegelian and Marxian thinking; it is in the very basis of all leftist humanism. But according to Hegel man "produces" himself through thought, whereas for Marx, who turned Hegel's "idealism" upside down, it was labor, the human form of metabolism with nature, that fulfilled this function. (Arendt 1970, 12-13)

The achievement of self-creation has been intended as a non-violent action by both Hegel and Marx. On the contrary, for Sartre the metaphor of birth ("man creating himself") is associated with violence. Arendt refers to

Sartre simply to show that "this new shift toward violence in the thinking of revolutionaries can remain unnoticed even by one of their most representative and articulate spokesmen" (Arendt 1970, 13). Arendt uses Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and Sartre's introduction to it because of their great influence on her generation of students, but acknowledges that Fanon "is much more doubtful about violence than his admirers" (Arendt 1970, 14, n. 19).

However, if the rebels she refers to misinterpret the words of the theorists of the revolution, it is also true that established power often confuses violent groups with non-violent activists: "sit-ins and occupations of buildings are not the same as arson or armed revolt, and the difference is not one of degree" (Arendt 1970, 91, appendix III). Again the organic metaphor appears, now applied to society:

> Nothing, in my opinion, could be theoretically more dangerous than the tradition of organic thought in political matters by which power and violence are interpreted in biological terms. . . . The organic metaphors with which our entire present discussion of these matters, especially of the riots, is permeated—the notion of a "sick society," of which riots are symptoms, as fever is a symptom of disease—can only promote violence in the end. (Arendt 1970, 75)

A case in point here is the reaction of the police to the Berkeley upheavals in 1969. The students' fight for the transformation of an empty building in a "People's Park" ended with the killing of a student, the blinding of a carpenter, and the wounding of more than one-hundred and twenty people. The California Governor Ronald Reagan had sent in National Guard troops against a group of non-violent rebels.

The students' revolt—based on different claims in every country, but spread throughout the world—showed the frustration of not being able to act, in the political sense Arendt gives to the word *action*, namely the beginning of something new. In their desire to be politically active, the rebels mistook violence for real action. Yet, the only analogy between the two is that the "practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world" (Arendt 1970, 80).

The younger generation turned to those whom Arendt calls "prophets" of violence—Mao Tse-tung, Jean Paul Sartre, George Sorel, and a misinterpreted Marx—also because they were overwhelmed and disappointed by the chess game between the superpowers involved in the Cold War. Thus, in dealing with the American attitude to violence, Arendt makes the connection with the international political arena as well, shaped as it was by the contraposition between the two blocs. The students' revolts coincided with the rise of the nuclear age, when the progress of science no longer corresponded to the progress of mankind: "No doubt the emphasis on the sheer faculty of living, and hence of love-making as life's most glorious manifestation, is a response to the real possibility of constructing a doomsday machine and destroying all life on earth" (Arendt 1970, 74).

However, despite its incredible strength in military and scientific fields, the United States could not establish its power in a country as small as Vietnam. Lack of power, according to Arendt, always means increasing violence. America, as a matter of fact, could not use all its military potential, as it would have led to total destruction. The old war theories had indeed become obsolete. For instance, the use of Clausewitz's old definition of war as the continuation of politics by other means was no longer possible in the Sixties. As Arendt argues, a new war could only mean "universal suicide" (Arendt 1970, 12). In his analysis of the first Gulf War rhetoric, Lakoff confirms that Clausewitz's definition must be understood as a mere metaphor:

> Clausewitz's metaphor is commonly seen as literally true. We are now in a position to see exactly what makes it metaphorical. First, it uses the State-as-Person metaphor. Second, it turns qualitative effects on human beings into quantifiable costs and gains, thus seeing political action as economics. Third, it sees rationality as profit-making. Fourth, it sees war in terms of only one dimension of war, that of political expediency, which is in turn conceptualized as business. (Lakoff 1991)

On the other hand, the situation of non-belligerency with the Soviet Union in the Sixties represents, according to Arendt, nothing more than "the continuation of war by other means" (Arendt 1970, 11). Far from Galtung's positive peace, this "nuclear peace" (Schäffner 1995, 80) might better be defined as "ostensible peace," with the unique function of avoiding conflicts without constructing a non-violent society. According to Arendt, peace, on the contrary, is not a means, but an end in itself, just like power.

Arendt's rejection of the use of metaphors in the political scenario does not entail a rejection of metaphorical language as such. She recognizes the great role metaphors play in the conceptualisation of abstract situations and models: "Language, by lending itself to metaphorical usage, enables us to think, that is, to have traffic with non-sensory matters, because it permits a carrying-over, *metapherein*, of our sense experiences. There are not two worlds because metaphor unites them" (Arendt 1978, 110). Lakoff totally subscribes to this idea, for example when he writes: "Abstractions and enormously complex situations are routinely understood via metaphor. Indeed, there is an extensive, and mostly unconscious, system of metaphor that we use automatically and unreflectively to understand complexities and abstractions" (Lakoff 1991).

"Metaphors can kill" (Lakoff 1991) only because metaphorical discourse can support war action. It is "metaphors backed up by bombs" (Lakoff 1991) that can actually kill. On the other hand, Lakoff asserts:

> There is no way to avoid metaphorical thought, especially in complex matters like foreign policy. I am therefore not objecting to the use of metaphor in itself in foreign policy discourse. My objections are, first, to the ignorance of the presence of metaphor in foreign policy deliberations, second, to the failure to look systematically at what our metaphors hide, and third, to the failure to think imaginatively about what new metaphors might be more benign. (Lakoff 1991)

Nowadays, linguistic scholars know much about the way we apply systems of metaphors to understand complexities and abstractions. We need only to encourage the use of different sets of metaphors both in our everyday life and in political discourse, trying "to imagine a culture where arguments are not viewed in terms of war, where no one wins or loses, where there is no sense of attacking or defending, gaining or losing" (Lakoff, Johnson 2003, 4). Of course, a language shift will not be enough to stop either violence or war. Yet, Chilton and Lakoff's "re-metaphorizing"[6] (Chilton, Lakoff 1995, 58) or Anita Wenden's "Critical Language Education" (Wenden 1995, 213ff) could help to develop discourse structures that sustain peace instead of war, cooperation instead of violence, and that respect "the human condition" as Arendt sees it. Although not a linguistics scholar, Hannah Arendt has effectively acknowledged the intermediate role language always plays between political theories and social events, and her deductions may be profitably applied not only to the American Sixties.

Notes

[1] "Wars and revolutions—as though events had only hurried up to fulfil Lenin's early prediction—have thus far determined the physiognomy of the twentieth century. And as distinguished from the nineteenth-century ideologies—such as nationalism and internationalism, capitalism and imperialism, socialism and communism, which, though still invoked by many as justifying causes, have lost contact with the major realities of our world—war and revolution still constitute its two central political issues" (Arendt 1990, 11).

[2] Yet, Arendt is aware that the theoretical distinction is hardly reflected in the real world, where violence and power never occur in a pure state (see Arendt 1970, 47).

[3] With regard to English literature, on this subject see, for example, Boxwell 1993.

[4] Such positions were in contrast with those of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet the two groups were not always as antagonistic as might appear from Arendt's criticism of the Black Power, and not every adherent to the latter would sustain violent activism. Indeed, some people or groups participated in both movements.

[5] The *Seville Statement on Violence*, written by an international team of specialists in 1986 and adopted by UNESCO in 1989, states that "modern war is not a matter of emotion so much as the institutional use of obedience, suggestibility, idealism and social skills, such as language . . . traits of violence are exaggerated in the training of soldiers and in the preparation of support for war in the general populations" (quoted in Wenden 1995, 212).

[6] "The possibilities for change are limited by our everyday metaphors. What can be changed, however, are the theorist's elaborations of the folk metaphors. Among the things that policy makers can do is to find new metaphorical elaborations that highlight realities that their current metaphors hide" (Chilton, Lakoff 1995, 57).

Works Cited

Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. 1969. New York: Harvest, 1970.

_____. *The Life of the Mind: One/Thinking, Two/Willing*. New York and London: Harvest/HJB Book, 1978.

_____. *On Revolution*. 1963. London: Penguin, 1990.

_____. *The Human Condition*. 1958. Reprint Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Boxwell, D. A. "The (M)Other Battle of World War One: The Maternal Politics of Pacifism in Rose Macaulay's Non-Combatants and Others." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 85-101.

Chilton, Paul, and Lakoff, George. "Foreign Policy by Metaphor." In Schäffner, Wenden 1995, 37-59.

Cooper, Helen M., Munich, Adrienne, and Merril Squier, Susanne. "Arms and the Woman: The Con[tra]ception of the War Text." In *Arms and the Woman. Gender, and Literary Representation*, eds. Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich, and Susanne Merril Squier. Chapel Hill, and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989: 9-24.

Galtung, Johan. "Editorial." *Journal of Peace Research* 1 (1964): 1-4.

_____. "Violence, Peace and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-192. Reprinted in Johan Galtung. *Peace: Research, Education, Action. Essays in Peace Research*, vol. I, 109-134. Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1975.

Lakoff, George. "Metaphor and War: The Metaphor System Used to Justify War in the Gulf." January 1991. *Peace Research* 23 (1991): 25-32. http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Texts/Scholarly/Lakoff_Gulf_Metaphor_1.html.

_____. "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor." 1992. In *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Andrew Ortony, 202-251. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~market/semiotic/lkof_met.html

Lakoff, George, and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By*. 1980. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Lakoff, George, and Turner, Mark. *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Mariani, Giorgio. "Tra Omero e l'America." In *Le parole e le armi: Saggi su guerra e violenza nella cultura e letteratura degli stati uniti d'America*, ed. Giorgio Mariani, 13-53. Milano: Marcos y Marcos, 1999.

Schäffner, Christina. "The 'Balance' Metaphor in Relation to Peace." In Schäffner and Wenden 1995, 75-91.

Schäffner, Christina, and Wenden Anita L., eds. *Language and Peace*. Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1995.

Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*, transl. George D. Schwab, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors*. Doubleday: Anchor Books, 1990.

Van Dijk, Teun A. "Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis." In Schäffner and Wenden 1995, 17-33.

Wenden, Anita L. "Critical Language Education." In Schäffner and Wenden 1995, 211-227.

Return of the Natives: Italian Americans and Italy in the Era of Globalism

Coordinator: John Paul Russo

John Paul Russo

Introduction

The workshop examined representations of the "return" to Italy by Italian Americans, with reference to other Americans closely tied to Italy. In a period marked by increasing transoceanic exchange, immigrant nostoi have been portrayed in fiction, poetry, memoir, film, and journalism, sometimes with commercial success. Although the immigrant or the descendant's return is not a new genre or subgenre—Jerry Mangione's *Reunion in Sicily* or John Ciardi's *Fragments from Italy* come to mind—recent decades have seen a proliferation of examples: William Murray's *The Last Italian*, Theresa Maggio's *Mattanza*, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather III*, Martin Scorsese's *Viaggio in Italia*, Barbara Grizzutti Harrison's *Italian Days*, Susan Caperna Lloyd, Gregory Corso, Tony Ardizzone, Mark Rotella, Paul Paolicelli, Loretta Paganini, Gloria L. Collins, Thomas Belmonte, and many others.

Panelists considered a wide range of topics associated with nostos. Giuliana Muscio (Università di Padua) pursued the Italian American actor John Turturro in his search for the origins of theatrical traditions by his adapting Eduardo De Filippo's *Questi fantasmi* for the New York stage and then performing this classical text of Neapolitan theatre in Naples. The cultural return had such an impact on the actor that he toured sites dedicated to the "anime del purgatorio," the cult of ghosts in Southern Italian culture. Theodora Patrona (University of Thessaloniki) studied the nightmarish description of hunger in Tony Ardizzone's *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*. Influenced by folklore and Catholic tradition, the novel consists of the narrations of the Girgenti family, which acquired its last name from its place of origin after the first born son's immigration to America. Storytelling proves to be a strong weapon for sustaining ethnic identity and turns into a proletarian manifesto, awakening and uniting the masses in their struggle for social justice.

Federico Siniscalco (Università di Siena) reported on individual Italian Americans who came to Italy and ventured well beyond the beaten path to find the places where their ancestors came from, in the hope of finding long lost relatives. The reactions of the travelers confronted by the images of their family's past, and the interaction between the locals and the suddenly materialized relatives from the New World are documented through the relatively unobtrusive digital audio-visual technology. Gregory D. Sumner (University of Detroit Mercy) investigated the transatlantic friendship between Nicola Chiaromonte and Dwight Macdonald, who together, from the 1940s to the 1970s, forged a prophetic critique of American mass culture in its "giganticism," violence, material pursuits, and ideology of limitless technological progress and power. Finally, John Paul Russo does close readings of ekphrastic poems by John Ciardi and Jorie Graham. Ciardi, the son of Italian immigrants, was born in Boston's North End; Graham, the daughter of a *Newsweek* correspondent and an artist, grew up in Rome. Invoking Carlo Crivelli and Luca Signorelli respectively, Ciardi and Graham explore the Italian component in the development of their poetic vision.

Theodora Patrona

“Hunger Is a Harsh Master”; or, the Struggle for Social Justice in Tony Ardizzone’s *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*

In *From Beast to the Blonde*, her brilliant study on fairy tales, Marina Warner graphically views the fairy tale as “an airy suspension bridge, swinging slightly under different breezes of opinion and economy” (Warner 1995, 24). In the colorful universe of Tony Ardizzone’s *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu* (1999), the Grigenti family history is presented as a frame tale that starts and ends with the intervention of the Sicilian mother and later grandmother Rosa Dolci, a story for her New World children and grandchildren. This way the recollections of the difficult years under the scorching Sicilian sun, inhabited by witches and fairies, absentee lords and overseers as villains, as well as the painful relocation in *La Merica,* ultimately become the suspension bridge between two worlds and two eras.

In his novel Tony Ardizzone reenacts the Sicilian custom of storytelling around the winter fire; each addition of a new log coincides with the beginning of a new story narrated by another member of the Grigenti family. In Fred. L. Gardaphé’s words, these stories “dig deeper than pure folktales by delving into the conflicts that arise between self and family, old country and new” (Gardaphé 2003, 68). Influenced structurally by the tradition of classic literary works like Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* or Geoffrey Chaucer’s The *Canterbury Tales*, *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu* was, however, published in 1999 and has been characterized as a postmodern literary product. Following the medieval literary norms, Ardizzone has provided the novel with twelve first-person narrations with participants transgressing the barriers between the stories; reflecting the postmodern artistic conventions, however, the author focuses on the marginalized, the oppressed, the previously voiceless. The narrations of the novel’s heroes and heroines become the rings of the same chain of strenuous existence and painful memories, the different perspectives and life-courses of the two generations of Sicilian men and women relocated in the urban setting of the New World. It is precisely this multivocality that Chris Weedon views as a prevailing characteristic of postmodernity whereby "subjectivity is often theorized as an effect which produces not unified identity but a subjectivity which is fragmented, contradictory and which comprises multiple identities" (Weedon 1999, 3).

With the chapter narrated by Gaetanu Grigenti, a first generation Sicilian immigrant, and devoted to the strikes, protests, and struggles against the capitalist system, Ardizzone follows the chronicles of a period of major social upheaval. Through his character's pains to bring about a more just society for "the wretched of the earth," the Sicilian American author flirts with the radical novel. As Walter B. Rideout states, in the radical novel the author "objects to the human suffering imposed by some socioeconomic system and advocates *that the system be fundamentally changed*" (Rideout 1992, 12). This way, Gaetanu is presented as the passionate worker and polemicist of inequality and exploitation serving as the clarion of a world of equality.

Aiming at the socialist education of children, Gaetanu's blazing words are meant to encourage poor workmen's children in their role as messengers of their parents' fight against capitalism. The setting is the town of Lawrence Massachusetts at the time of wool laborers' walkout in the winter of 1912; the strikers' offspring are sent away before the outbreak of open fighting. They are urged to communicate proudly to the rest of the world the situations that they and their families face. A. P. Foulkes stresses the critical role of language in the process of social integration and positioning; the children's young age is a period of formation for their "modes of perception and value systems which determine their own historicity" (Foulkes 1983, 38).

It is through Gaetanu's urgings that the children's role evolves from that of a passive listening audience of a tale in Rosa's contemporary narration to dynamic agents of social change and hope. The changes in the living standards of the Italian American immigrant family are also indirectly underlined; nowadays children are no longer deprived of their innocence and youthful carefree spirit. Nonetheless, contrary to Rosa Dolci's audience, the audience of Gaetanu's storytelling, the strikers' children, are less fortunate because they have been raised in a social milieu where even the underage must battle constantly for what should be theirs by right. Walter B. Rideout considers the corporate power of capitalism as being itself a state of war (Rideout 1992, 82). It is a war experienced as poverty and disease in the slums, considered as lives lost in industrial accidents, and where open fighting breaks out in strikes. This war, presented in Gaetanu's tale, rages in the lives of innocent youth, but, ultimately, through hardship and hunger, makes future social fighters out of them. Ardizzone, as the director of this emotionally charged scene, further accentuates the polemical atmosphere and appeals to the emotional world of both readers and participants by adding the lyrics of the songs of the International Workers of the World.

Acting as the children's guardian and socialist educator, Gaetanu Grigenti unravels the thread of the story of the princess who would not laugh, resorting to folklore—"the art of the oppressed classes" in Vladimir Propp's wording (Propp 1984, 5). For the group of immigrant children, though, the presentation of the traditional story from the home country, besides being a temporary distraction from their problems, further strengthens their feelings of belonging to their own ethnic group. Stephen Stern points to the crucial role of folklore for the perpetuation of "social and cultural equilibrium" and to the part ethnic folklore plays in the codification and transmission of shared values and beliefs (Stern 262). On the other hand, Homi K. Bhabha argues that "the every act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects" (Bhabha 1990, 297). Through the embedding of Sicilian tales the immigrants' offspring keep the memory of *bedda Sicilia,* beautiful Sicily, alive and also maintain the demarcation between "others" and themselves, as participants and actors of their specific cultural heritage.

While waiting for the train to arrive, Gaetanu Grigenti starts telling a tale about the princess who couldn't laugh. The radical character of the tale is explicit from the first description of the young princess and her father. To the hungry audience's surprise, even though she had everything, the princess was extremely unhappy. Among her credentials, Gaetanu characteristically adds, "she was the daughter of the king, the biggest labor boss of all, the worst of all thieves and so she was just like him, selfish and vain, and even though she was a child just like you she never laughed" (Ardizzone 1999, 24-25). The special emphasis that the storyteller places on the king's identity reveals the anti-capitalist moral of the story, to be fully revealed in the end. Instead of the usual fair female protagonist probably suffering from heartache and melancholy, the storyteller surprises the listeners with a heroine that is consumed by egotism and vanity, constant attributes of the bosses irrespective of space and time. The socio-historical conditions which these children experience justify the changes that the traditional tale undergoes. Exploring myth and tale Joseph Campbell notes that "to account for elements that have become for one reason or another meaningless, secondary interpretations are invented often with considerable skill" (Campbell 1972, 247).

Indulging the whims of the princess, the poor peasants of Gaetanu's story squander their precious energy on meaningless quests that keep them divided and thus weak. Their motive, that is, their survival, is all powerful and the means they will employ to achieve it limitless. They torture, ridicule and disgrace almost everyone: the lawyer, the scribe, the poet, the blind judge, the skinniest old woman, the pompous doctor (Ardizzone 1999, 25). With need and ignorance on their side, the powerful, in a display of cruelty, enjoy themselves while ensuring the practical annihilation of the oppressed: "Soon the castle's walls were decorated by a thousand and one poles bearing a thousand and one heads" (Ardizzone 1999, 26). Clearly, this graphic depiction of the atrocities the working classes suffer in the hands of the capitalists uses as its agent "the double vision of the tales" that Marina Warner refers to. That is "the perennial drives, and terrors, both conscious and unconscious, and on the other mapping actual, volatile experience". Sicily's blood-stained history before and after the Risorgimento attests to the sufferings of its inhabitants.

Whether expressing unuttered fears of possible devastation or recording actual events, Gaetanu's tale by its conclusion achieves the goal Warner attributes to the genre, namely "fascination and the power to satisfy" (Warner 1995, xxi). While tension builds at the narration of the obscenities the working classes suffer, the listeners' craving for social justice is finally satisfied in the face of the traditional tale simpleton named Giufà. Justin Vitiello, exploring Sicilian folklore, enumerates Giufà's attributes in the following terms "The popular Sicilian hero, incarnate in the Giufà of Arabian nights origin, is the waggish 'fool' who always gets out of the trouble into which his apparent ingenuousness plummets him by a stroke of luck and/or his own bizarre, native geniality" (Vitiello 1993, 66). Ardizzone's Sicilian narrator of the children's tale involves the familiar figure of Giufà in his story and paints his adventures in shades of the socialist struggle, always aiming to influence the children's political sympathies.

However, apart from the attribute of simple-mindedness for Giufà and selfishness for the princess, Gaetanu refrains from a detailed portrayal of the tale's characters, whether heroes or villains. In his study *Fairy-Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France, 1690-1715,* Lewis C. Seifert clarifies the one dimensional character portrayal of fairy tale figures who basically embody specific traits and values, desirable or harmful, highlighting in this manner the importance of community unity as opposed to individual interests and selfishness that can be devastating for the general welfare (Seifert 1996, 138). Therefore, the narrator focuses on the most vital aspects of the two opposing sides, their contrasting status and their contribution to the common welfare. Any further exploration of the two protagonists of the story would transgress the dictates of the tale and also sidetrack listeners from the proletarian orientation.

When Giufà, after his adventures with the farmer's daughters and the innuendos concerning his tremendous sexual energy, accidentally wins the contest, the conclusion of the tale subverts the expectations of the children. Gaetanu sarcastically comments on the audience's romanticized notions that involve a happy marriage to the "sour princess," as he calls her, and half the kingdom for a dowry (Ardizzone 1999, 29). The pedagogical core of the tale is imbued with the proletarian cause: Giufà might be simple but he is not stupid, Gaetanu adds. So, like any person of average intellectual capacities, he not only marries the princess and gets half her kingdom but also proceeds with symbolic as well as "socialistically oriented" actions. For example, after connecting the dead heads to their respective bodies, Giufà shares the endless food supplies with the starving population of the kingdom and teaches the egotistical princess hunger and destitution. Jack Zipes underlines the omnipresent theme of a princess's or a noblewoman's education in the fairy tales and considers it as "an important didactic motif in the medieval, oral and literary tradition" (Zipes 2001, 688). When the princess happens to be the daughter of one of the most ruthless capitalists, as initially mentioned, the educational purposes of the tale are emphatically emphasized. Its political moral—the fair distribution of the wealth which is unreasonably gathered in the hands of the capitalists and the prompt satisfaction of the workers' needs—finally satisfies the audience's longing for justice.

Walter Benjamin elaborates on the wisdom of the fairy tale throughout the centuries and highlights the optimistic teachings of the fairy tale for children (Benjamin 1968, 102). Echoing the socialist credos, on the one hand, and following his traditional tale representations on the other, Giufà's carefree spirit and spontaneity result in his winning the laughter contest, while his inherent feeling for justice leads to the redistribution of wealth, the constant dream of every proletarian fighter. The conclusion of the tale that Giufà orchestrates is contrasted with the naïve expectations that involve the fruitful cooperation and peaceful coexistence between the capital and the working classes. Gaetanu declares the contradictory interests of the classes when he ironically adds:

> Shall I give you a real children's tale?
>
> Then the king and the farmer became friends, and the farmer ruled the *campagnoli* until they could govern themselves, and everyone lived with honor, dignity, and peace. (Ardizzone 1999, 30)

Simultaneously, Gaetanu shatters all possibility of fruitful cooperation and peaceful coexistence between the capitalists and the working classes, declaring their opposed interests. For him anyone who would ever expect such an outcome is a naïve fool or, as he says,, a believer in children's tales (Ardizzone 1999, 30). This way, not only does the storyteller reproduce the perpetual entrenchment of the social classes, but he also reveals the militant character of his story, which in its turn is the role of leftist literature (Murphy 1991, 1). The storyteller's goal, like the leftist writer's, is to awaken the audience, or the readership, and urge them to fight for what has been cunningly stolen from them. The utmost necessity to redeem this case of social decomposition is emphasized by Giufà's presence. Even a simpleton can understand the dead end at which the low classes find themselves: following the whims of the bosses they continually suffer, and the only way out is a radical move that will re- establish peace and alleviate the suffering.

The ending of the tale and the children's departure, though, initiate the immigrants' return to brutal reality. The narrator is not only emotionally affected by the children's departure; he is also intrigued and inspired to narrate another tale, a story addressed to his adult listeners. Through it he reveals the trials and tribulations of his people at the hands of the bosses on both sides of the Atlantic. Gaetanu recalls the strikes of the immigrants and their passion for justice that surpass all linguistic barriers but ideally unite them around a common cause. He retraces the hellish fifty-six hour work week, his friend's fatal industrial accident, the figures of Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti reinforcing the workers' struggles, and also the scabs and the bloodshed. Gaetanu stretches his memory as far back as his life in Sicily. He uncovers the irony behind the lives of these early Sicilian immigrants: breaking out of the grasp of Sicily's blood-sucking overseers only to fall prey to America's patrons and bosses.

Gaetanu's daydreaming ends with the fire in the factory, the final catharsis on the stage of their dramas that liberates him and the other immigrants from all debt, burning all their documents. However, like a genuine fighter for social justice, Gaetanu does not cease struggling for the establishment of a fairer, classless society beyond mere personal interest. He ends his story with the wish that the strikers' and the children's stories, and the songs, "will shame the selfish bosses into giving us workers our just due" (Ardizzone 1999, 45).

On the whole, through his chapter on Gaetanu and his battles against social evil, the author manages to reproduce the flavor of the leftist novel of the early twentieth century; as Gustav Klaus states, in those years of social turmoil "fiction would be the means of both educating readers about political work and galvanizing them for future action" (Klaus 1992, 16). With the sole mission being to inform and instigate to action, Gaetanu's stereotypical portrayal as the striker on the picket line justifiably remains the only dimension of this character, at least in this chapter. Obsessed with repaying his debt and bringing his family from Sicily, the young immigrant stands out as a representative of all the immigrant victims of American capitalism. His portrayal as the starving hard worker is the only one that makes him accessible to readers, since it is the one that serves the militant role of leftist literature. Furthermore, the polar opposition of capitalists as villains and workers as heroes, the pace set by the propagandistic workmen's lyrics included, and most importantly Gaetanu's tale to the children and the unique topic of social injustice all underline one goal: to reproduce the polemical atmosphere of that period of immigration in America as well as to underline the call for social justice.

Surprisingly Gaetanu's flame is abruptly spent at the end of the novel by the last and contemporary narrator, Rosa; what Ardizzone attempts to re-enact with his chapter on the strikes and Gaetanu's arduous political involvement, he later smothers under the blanket terms and conditions of prosperity. Unpaid, unbearable labor, misery and bitterness as well as all the revolutionary passion displayed in Gaetanu are strikingly erased from memory and replaced by an all-telling phrase coming from Rosa, the prototypical grandmother figure: "Thank God, *figghi di mi figghi*, daughters of my daughters, sons of my sons, that each of you is a stranger to real hunger" (Ardizzone 1999, 331). Once the goal of survival and a certain standard of living have been achieved, the New World no longer represents a battleground for the proletarian struggle, but conveniently becomes, in Rosa's terms again, a beloved country, "just like here, only with more food and better work" (Ardizzone 1999, 336). This feeling of oblivion is captured by Jacques Derrida with the use of the word "amnesia," forgetfulness prevailing after the accomplishment of the revolutionary task (Derrida 1994, 111). But were the goals of the revolution fulfilled for the multitudes of unhappy immigrant workers demanding the realization of a classless collectivity? The reality of the sweatshops and slums still shakes its head negatively today.

Through the frame tale structure of his novel Tony Ardizzone anthologizes some of the most representative issues like the immigrant strikes and women's rights that troubled the previous century immigrant population. The postmodern influences on the author lead to the creation of a pastiche, and the Sicilian-American author yields to the end-of the century literary dictates and works on previously set literary trends and themes. Fredric Jameson generally condemns these literary techniques characterizing them as unproductive and lifeless: "in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (Jameson 1998, 7). Since innovative spirit is now dead, the authors appear to create by reproducing relics of the past, aspiring to rest on the laurels of previous literary pursuits. Under this disguise of literary communication Jean Baudrillard senses a frantic effort to stage communication, "a gigantic process of simulation that is very familiar" as he notes, aiming to hinder the traumatic revelation of the truth, that of "a radical loss of meaning" (Baudrillard 1995, 80). In *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu* the diverse tales lead to Rosa's ultimate admission and declaration of the salvaging powers of capitalism without which the immigrants would have died in *bedda Sicilia* (Ardizzone 1999, 336). After all the reactionary energy released by Gaetanu's enumeration of the immigrant sufferings, Rosa chooses to sacrifice everything at the altar of consumerism and "suburbia" status. This way the proletarian sacrifices appear to be justified and Gaetanu is vindicated by his children's and grandchildren's material well-being. In the end, through Rosa's lips in her concluding story, the death of the proletarian warrior is declared, since there is no longer reason to fight.

Apart from the contrast between the two chapters, Ardizzone in Gaetanu's narrations chooses to replicate the proletarian novel atmosphere, and portrays the immigrant proletarian experience only superficially. What the chapter lacks is an explicit reference to the radical ideological framework—some mention of the hero's enlightenment about Socialist credos. This omission should not go unnoticed, for it unveils the author's goal: to draw only a rough sketch of the laborer's environment without wandering down the dangerous paths of ideological explorations. By sterilizing the socialist struggles through his writings, the author places them in the distant historical or mythic past, and fossilizes what was once a vibrating organism. Jean Francois Lyotard accuses Capitalism for its inherent power to strain the vitality of all creative and revolutionary vectors by embracing them and mummifying them through the means of either nostalgia or mockery (Lyotard 1984, 74). Consequently, Gaetanu's pains for a socialist society are revered and admired but unfortunately, they are ultimately never practiced, never followed.

At the end of the chapter Gaetanu dreams of that wonderful day when social justice is eventually achieved: "Then the masters of this New World will be made to feed us from their big pot of beans that never grows empty, their big silver platter of meat that can never be licked clean, their bee's nest full of honey so smooth and sweet that one taste nearly makes you want to die". With this optimistic, "fairy tale" ending Gaetanu gives vent to his hope, albeit unfortunately transfers to his readers the feeling of withdrawal from the active realization of their wishes and restricts them to the "power of wishful thinking." The contemporary reality of the working class attests to the deprivation and exploitation that are still the proletarian's everyday companions. And this is something that even a simpleton like the Sicilian fairy tale hero Giufà would admit.

Works Cited

Ardizzone, Tony. *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*. New York: Picador USA, 1999.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken, 1968.

Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. London, New York: Routledge, 1990.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Foulkes, Peter A. *Literature and Propaganda*. London: Methuen, 1983.

Gardaphe, Fred. "Re-Inventing Sicily in Italian American Writing and Film." *MELUS* 28, no. 3 (2003): 55-71.

_____.*Dagoes Read: Tradition and the Italian-American Writer*. Toronto: Guernica, 1996.

Handlin, Oscar. *The Uprooted*. Boston, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1990.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*. London, New York: Verso, 1998.

Klaus, Gustav H. *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition*. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1992.

Murphy, James F. *The Proletarian Moment:The Controversy Over Leftism in Literature*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

Propp, Vladimir. *Theory and History of Folklore*. Edited by Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Rideout, Walter B. *The Radical Novel in the United States (1940-1954): Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Seifert, Lewis Carl. *Fairy Tales, Sexuality and Gender in France, 1690-1715: Nostalgic Utopias*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Stern, Stephen. "Ethnic Folklore and Foklore of Ethnicity." In *Foklore, Culture and the Immigrant Mind*, edited by George E. Pozzetta, 249-265. New York, London: Garland, 1991.

Vitiello Justin. "Sicilian Folk Narrative Versus Sicilian-American Literature:Mangione's "Mount Allegro"." *MELUS* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 61-75.

Warner, Marina. *From Beast to the Bold: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1995.

Weedon, Chris. *Feminism, Theory and Politics of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

Zipes, Jack David, ed. *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. New York: Norton, 2001.

John Paul Russo

The Nostoi of John Ciardi and Jorie Graham

John Ciardi and Jorie Graham have mediated their response to Italy through Renaissance art and culture, Ciardi through Carlo Crivelli and Graham through Signorelli. At the seventh AISNA conference, "Italy and Italians in America," held in Catania in 1983, Fedora Giordano explored archetypal images of Italy in Ciardi's poetry: the mother, nature, Dante, the ruins of Rome, rural southern villages. Shortly after her essay appeared, she sent a copy to Ciardi in New Jersey. According to Edward Cifelli, the seriously ailing Ciardi said he was "thrilled" to read her "richly laudatory article" (Cifelli 1997, 476). While pleased to acknowledge the Italian component of his poetry, however, he was ambivalent about the Italian American one. He was frankly puzzled by his connection to Italian America, which never went as far as outright denial, nor as near as warm acceptance, but remained in suspension throughout his career.

Ciardi (1916-1986) was the youngest child of Italian immigrants who settled in Boston's Little Italy, the North End. When he was three, his father died in an auto accident, and his resourceful mother moved her son and three daughters to a mixed ethnic, working-class neighborhood in Medford, a suburb of Boston, then almost in the country, and shared a house with numerous relatives. One reason why Ciardi writes so often of nature and spiritual immanence may be owing to the fact that in his childhood his backyard opened to the country and the Mystic River flowing through it. Still, the family would return often to visit the North End. "I myself have never really lived amidst Italians," said Ciardi, "and have been to the communities only as a privileged visitor." That is a strange way of saying he visited his grandmother. "I got to know the North End by visiting my cousins and relatives there, but I always lived *outside*" (Cifelli 1997, 150). But what about his immediate and extended family who spoke Italian in the home?

Despite his sense of distance, Ciardi wrote about his Italian background frequently, almost obsessively. When his *Selected Poems* appeared in 1984 he reflected, "I'm a bit surprised at how heavily Italo-American it is" (Cifelli

1997, 438, 440). Why should the intimate expression of his autobiographical allegory come as a surprise? About 30% of *Selected Poems* concern his family past and Italy, which is a high percentage and bears out his own conclusion. Among his most anthologized poems have been those that draw upon his Italian American family and community, e.g., "Bridal Photo, 1906." *Selected Poems* opens with a section entitled "Tribal Poems," an unusual phrase, signifying the bond of his Italian American connections. His three children recall an Italian father of the old school; according to his wife, he was actually quite permissive.

Another time Ciardi both concedes and withholds his *italianità*: "the Italian background was my first pasture, not where I went" (Cifelli 1997, 438) Or more strenuously: "I'm an American man of letters. There's no hyphenation in that" (Cateura 1987, 150). Yet, combining his fluency in Italian with his skill as a poet, he went on to produce one of the finest translations of Dante into English; and his quasi-autobiography in verse, *Lives of X* (1971), is saturated by Italian American images, rituals, and culture. According to Cifelli, Ciardi's relation to Italian America is an important theme in his letters. It is the subject of his contribution *Growing Up Italian* where he writes "*sono un italiano diracinato* (sic)," misspelling a word (Caetura 1987, 141). Through one of his favorite devices, etymology, he would convince his audience that "Ciardi" is German, of Longobardo descendent. "[I am] more German than Italian" (Caetura 1987, 152). By this patently false genealogy he protests too much; he did not have a drop of German blood and never spoke German. He even would cross swords with Robert Lowell, who said that a poem of Ciardi's that he had read in the *Atlantic* was "the best Italian American poem he had ever seen." As Ciardi sulked, "does that son of a bitch think he is more American than I am?" (Caetura 1987, 150). For him, Lowell had made an ethnic slur; he was as much an *American* poet as Lowell.

If Ciardi's Italian background seemed something of an enigma to himself, at least on one level, his situation is familiar to sociologists. He falls into one of Irvin L. Child's three categories of second-generation Italian Americans, the "rebels," who stand apart from the peer group, and who seek self-expressiveness, career orientation, solitude, and assimilation. In some artists, like Frank Stella, abstract art might be a means of distancing oneself from one's background; Gilbert Sorrentino chose high Modernist poetics. Ciardi cut his own path through the woods.

In "Letter to Mother"—the first poem in his collected works, and therefore in a position of strength—he traces his rebellious streak to Concetta Ciardi, who had refused a marriage proposal in Italy to join her brothers and sisters in America. By example she taught that he should make his own version of America, as she herself had:

> It was good. You found your America. It was worth all
> The coming: the fading figures in the never-again doorway,
> The rankness of steerage, the landing in fog,
> Yes, and the tenement, the reek and the shouting in the streets
> All that night and the terror. It was good, it was all good.
> It is important only that you came. (Ciardi 1997, 1)

The language and grammar are plain, especially compared to Ciardi's other poems. His mother was not literate, so he seems to have written the first stanza in a way that captures an essential simplicity: *It was good, it was all good*. The mother's accomplishment is in "the coming," worth the travail of the voyage and all the sadnesses and losses that followed.

In the second stanza, as much his as the first stanza was hers, Ciardi must take the next step in assimilation but, like each Italian American, he has to face the "wheeling imperative sea." What for his mother was a reality becomes for him a symbol of overwhelming hardship. The mother's crossing had served to convey the seemingly never-ending process of arriving in, and assimilating to, America:

> There is no hailing yet of the hoped-for land.
> Only the enormous, wheeling, imperative sea,
> And the high example of this earlier coming—
> But there will be no Americas discovered by analogy. (Ciardi 1955, 97)

Columbus, honored as the first Italian American, is implicated in the final line: immigrants (and their children) must discover America on their own. In terms of Garibaldi M. Lapolla's *The Grand Gennaro* (1935), they must "make America," and not accept a second-hand version, not assimilate vicariously, by parents or grandparents, by books, or as Ciardi says, "by analogy." This poem appeared in *Homeward to America* (1939) (it is the first poem in that volume too): the title places in anticipation the voyage, the traveler, the goal, and perhaps too the immigrant offspring in their contested process of assimilation; "homeward" is not towards the parental home of southern Italy, but America. While Ciardi sees himself as not yet arriving "home" in America, that is his direction; the book will be one of his means, a vessel, for arriving home; the poetry is both the vehicle and the destination.

Though Ciardi did not write as long a poem on Venice as he did on Rome, he did write on the Venetian artist, Carlo Crivelli. In 1952 he was invited by the Phi Beta Kappa chapter of Harvard to be their annual poet; his chief and only duty, to recite an original poem before the chapter at the Commencement Exercises. For a young poet it was a prestigious honor which had great predecessors. Twenty-five years earlier, Robert Frost had read his long poem "New Hampshire" before the chapter. Ciardi, who was teaching at Harvard at the time, knew that the audience would likely expect an ambitious philosophical poem, no mere *vers d'occasion*. Perhaps he made his task more arduous for writing an ekphrastic poem, and one to be delivered orally. In the event, Ciardi depended on a learned and sophisticated audience to be presented with his aesthetic credo. In "Carlo Crivelli Muses before a Madonna" the poet "muses," dreams, and searches for inspiration; the very process of meditation serves as the poem itself. As the classical muse Mnemosyne is the daughter of Zeus, Crivelli's muse, the Madonna, is the Mother of God.

Ciardi would have known first-hand several works by Crivelli (ca. 1435-1495)—there are two in Boston—but it was the *Madonna and Child* in New York's Metropolitan Museum that must have drawn his attention. Pietro Zampetti, who dates the picture to 1472-73 (the late 1470s have also been suggested), praises it as coming from Crivelli's "most creative" period, with its mixture of International Gothic and Renaissance motifs and forms, its Byzantine influence, vivid Venetian coloring, meticulous detail, and courtly elegance; this, he believes, is the painting that Baldassarre Orsini, commenting in 1790, said was the product of the artist's "sottilissima diligenza" (270). Ciardi was particularly attracted by the presence of a large fly that rests on the balustrade, which is cracked, signifying the fall of man and the breakdown of paganism. Crivelli intended the illusion of a fly landing on a finished painting, in Chinese-box fashion, so that we "actually" look at two paintings, the *Madonna and Child*, and "the Fly Looking at the Painting of the Madonna and Child," all through the medium of language, ekphrasis taken to its limit. Yet the fly also appears to be "in the painting" and to look at the Madonna, who gazes back upon it, while Christ clutches a goldfinch, a pet bird in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance, and a traditional symbol of sacrifice and resurrection.

Paul Barolsky took the fly as an example of Renaissance wit, an illusionistic trick (Barolsky 1978, 17). Rejecting this interpretation, Raymond B. Waddington argues that the fly is too significant symbolically to be a mere *jeu d'ésprit*; rather, the fly stands for sin and figures "in the proleptic pattern completed by the goldfinch in the Christ Child's hands"; "the illusion of an apparently real fly on the pictorial surface makes a serious point, the reality of sin and evil in life, while unsettling the viewer's easy sense of which plane represents the ultimate reality" (Barolsky 1978, 119). It is worth noting that the Crivelli *Madonna and Child* in Ancona has a goldfinch but no fly: Christ holds a string attached to the pet goldfinch which flutters its wings. Barolsky has a point, which does not deny the seriousness of the symbolism. In Homer's *Iliad*, the goddess Athena saves Menelaus from Paris's arrow and is likened to a mother who brushes a fly away from her child (4.130). Also, Michelangelo's sculpted goldfinch in the Bargello scares the Christ Child himself who, with hand outspread, flees towards his mother.

Ciardi chose Crivelli as a surrogate for various reasons: the fact of his being an Italian artist may have been significant for an Italian American one, seeking links with his tradition. There was the mutual Catholicism. Crivelli was also one of Pound's favorite artists, and Ciardi stands in the first "post-Modernist" generation of poets that took to heart the Modernist lessons. Like Pound, Ciardi would have appreciated Crivelli's traditionalism, his "fondness for accessory symbols" which "derives from his tradition-loving archaizing tendency" (Friedmann 1946, 82), his formal elegance, highly polished surface, and accomplished technique. "Of all fifteenth century Italian artists," Ronald Lightbown comments, "Crivelli makes the most continuous and systematic use of every sort of symbolic motif to enrich his pictures with deeper allusions to doctrines of the Church" (Friedmann 1946, 8)—rose, apple, cherry, cucumber, gourd, peach, fig, goldfinch, cherry, garland, flower, and other fruits, executed with "consummate finish" (Friedmann 1946, 8), many descending from the medieval period and gathering multiple valences; "no amount of repetition, voluntary or imposed, ever wearied Crivelli" (Friedmann 1946, 83).

Ciardi's poem is not only linked intertextually to Crivelli but also to Robert Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," one of the finest dramatic monologues in English. The subject in both poems is a major Quattrocento artist. In both poems the artist has been accused of impiety; in the first person, the poet himself defends against his so-called "transgressions," and in doing so offers an apologia for his life and aesthetic philosophy. In Ciardi's poem Crivelli refers by name to his slightly older contemporary Lippo Lippi and claims that he, Crivelli, knows better how to honor the Virgin than Lippi himself. On Ciardi's part, this may be a sly retort to Robert Lowell's recent Marian poetry.

A poem of 109 lines in eleven parts, "Carlo Crivelli Muses before the Madonna" might go down well in a reading because, for all its ekphrastic difficulties, its genre is the dramatic monologue. Ciardi writes in his typically open, flexible form of blank verse, which, Edward Krickel comments, he can "relax" into a colloquial idiom approaching prose or "tighten" into a gravely formal style (Krickel 1980, 42, 86). At this time Ciardi was in the midst of his translation of the *Inferno*, and Dante's influence manifests itself in the adaptation of terza rima, though, as in the translation, it is a relaxed terza rima, with only two rhymes and sometimes none at all. The poem opens with the cry "'Impiety!' they scream. 'Impiety!'" As in Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi," one breaks in upon the artist's musings at a dramatic moment, when he has been provoked by an unjustified attack. Why impiety? "Because I sent a fly to shine beside her!" If he pretends to honor the Madonna in this way, as they believe, he flirts with sacrilege because flies are ugly, dirty, and symbolic of the devil. Yet Crivelli paints the fly like a jewel and pleads, "was it not God who made the fly a jewel?" At the outset he identifies the creative artist with God the Creator, enlisting God on his side against the charge of impiety. The fly is a *fly to shine*: God's light falls on the fly which like a jewel refracts its beams as if to emit light of itself. Crivelli does not imitate the empirical world in its rough, spiky realism, something he accuses Lippi of doing; instead, he paints objects in a "punctiliously naturalistic" (Lightbown 1984, 264) fashion, but detached from their contexts and rearranged, in a new formal pattern, under the aspect of divine love. Compared to Lippi, Crivelli's paintings tend to be more elegant in detail, more formal in organization.

Drawing on Italian Catholic immanentism to make his case, Ciardi invokes the distinction between the transcendent world of timelessness and the natural world of time and mutability.[1] The transcendent world of the spiritual Madonna is a "dream," an "Idea," a "separation":

> I dream the Idea of the Lady—a separation
> Of all she is from all that nature is.

Echoing Eliot on the "Lady" in *Ash-Wednesday* II, Ciardi presents the realm of transcendence in an abstract language because it is non-natural: "eternity," "timelessness," "perfection," "memory," "serenity," "infinity in her eyes." The Madonna's world is the "unnatural completion of the natural," not the natural itself, but the natural perfected, in the sense of "finished," on a higher plane. The natural world, on the other hand, appears in the poem in the profusion of objects and concrete detail, though they are "imperfect" objects touched by imagination or in the process of being so: a cucumber with its "warts," the "great laps" of ordinary mothers, the spaniel that substitutes for the "hound of Heaven," the "ruby offered in the wound," a Christ Child resembling a "wooden doll," and the fly attracted by these images. Crivelli liked to paint the blemishes on his fruit to intensify both the realism and the symbolism implied by the processes of growth and decay, which the artist, imitating the Madonna, arrests in the moment of "art and adoration."

If one will pardon the hastily schematic version of things, between the realms of transcendence and nature, divine love enters to permeate and connect. In Ciardi, this love often expresses itself through light symbolism; working in an incarnationist mode (for example, St. Bonaventure's mysticism of light), Ciardi treats light as both a physical and metaphysical entity. As in Crivelli's painting, so in the poem, light falls on the objects and creates the shine and shadow: the "jewel"-like incandescence of the fly; the three-dimensionality to the "swollen peach"; the "cauliflower heart of light"; the dead dog's teeth like "phosphor"; "crystal" snakes. At its most intense, the light flows from the eye of the Madonna interceding in quotidian reality, linking what is otherwise in division. Her eye sheds "light upon the object and the object / within her light." To honor the Madonna as intercessor Crivelli paints "not objects / but the presence of the object in her look," that is the object imbued with divine love. "Instructed by her eye," Crivelli finds the "sufficient place / between the world and what we love." One line (not his best) is repeated four times, like part of a litany, conveying the praise of creation: "Let there be adoration of pomegranates" (Ciardi 1955, 99, 100, 101). The two four-syllable words, which share the o's, r's and a's and which have the same rhythm, balance the abstraction with the concrete object: an example of immanence.

In Aquinian terms, moments of pure being contain infinity, freedom, and possibility; in their completeness and perfection, these moments float out of time and lack the connected, entangling facts of the world of becoming, of nature, growth and decay. Crivelli aspires to express a moment of pure being. That is the meaning behind the phrase, "in the arrest and random of her eye." As a sign of the divine, the stillness amid the random movements of the natural world is perfection ("perfection / arrest in adoration all about her"). Ciardi speaks of this moment as "out of [natural] time"; like Eliot's moment simultaneously "in and out of time" and Yeats's "once out of time." Arrest in perfection is what God by his Intercessor the Madonna confers on the world of objects, and what the artist imitating her look does in turn:

> Nature can only visit her attention
> Asking for its perfection in her look.
> Praying to be completed to itself
> In the arrest and random of her eye. (Ciardi 1955, 97)

Through her aid, by the end of the poem, he will be given a "glimpse of the world / rumpled upon itself beyond her folds." Her garment's folds are perfect, not "rumpled" (*sgualciato, scompigliato*), as are ordinary folds of cloth. The world beyond her folds *is* rumpled, that is, much less than perfect in the scale of being, yet at the same time evoking the perfection that the world lacks in its suggestive rumpledness. The best example of immanence is when the Madonna's eye falls upon the fly and causes it to "shine" in her light. This is not to deny evil but to illuminate it; evil is seen in its potential agency, Beelzebub, the Lord of the Flies.

The eye of the painter and poet imitate the eye of God and the Madonna in their creating/seeing a world informed by love and imagination in its perfected form, of which the painting and Ciardi's poems are examples. Just as the Madonna has "till the end of time to look away,"she will not look away from the world, will never abandon her role as Intercessor, because of her love for God's creation. Similarly, the ideal artist has an "eye that has exhausted time" because he has shown the love and patience needed to "look upon the natural where it is" and to recreate it in art—at the crossroads between being the purely natural and the purely transcendent. Just as the "The Lady needs the world / to evidence herself in timelessness"; just as nature asks for perfection in her look, so the artist "rescues perfection from its process of decay." The empirical world, made immanent by her look, acts too as a kind of intercessor by which we experience her inspiration. "And—through the world—her formal beckoning," where "formal" applies to the Madonna's artistic inspiration and her call to Paradise.

Jorie Graham's relation to the nexus Italian and American is of an entirely different nature. Her background is Irish and Jewish; she is the daughter of a *Newsweek* editor stationed in Rome and an artist. She spent most of her first eighteen years in Rome, that is, through the 1950s and 60s. Then, speaking English with a slight Italian accent, she attended New York University, where she hoped to study film and eventually work with Martin Scorsese. She turned to poetry, published her first work in the 1980s to great acclaim, and is currently the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard.

In *Erosion* (1983) Graham published ekphrastic poems on Massaccio's "Expulsion" and "At Luca Signorelli's Resurrection of the Body." Signorelli painted the fresco cycle from the Book of Revelation in the cathedral of Orvieto from 1499 to 1503. Graham's poem protests Signorelli's version of the apocalypse because, in her interpretation, his figures recycle their old lives (which they appear to want to live again in a finer tone) rather than inhabit a new transcendental spacetime. She focuses upon one of the frescoes, the *Raising of the Dead,* which presents two larger-than-life angels blowing trumpets downward over numerous figures "pulling themselves up," some still skeletal, some in the process of reassuming human flesh, others already standing, walking, conversing, even dancing:

> See how they hurry
> to enter
> their bodies,
> these spirits.
> Is it better, flesh,
> that they
>
> should hurry so?
> From above
> the green-winged angels
> blare down
> trumpets and light. But
> they don't care,
>
> they hurry to congregate,
> they hurry
> into speech, until
> it's a marketplace. (Graham 1983, 74)

The figures hurry, impatient to regain natural space and time:

"weightedness," "color," "distance," and "perspective." The word "hurry" occurs six times in the poem, hurry being the mark of "our temporal natures" (Costello 2005, 26), speed being a condition of modernity; the word "hurry" also describes the busy little streets outside the cathedral, "hurrying" in all directions. Driven by desire, the figures "do not know how . . . to stop their / hurrying," as if they have not accustomed themselves to the new spacetime. Graham does not mention some contrary evidence in the fresco: the figures do not rise "through the soil," but through cracks in what appears to be a white marble floor: the afterlife is already derealized. Also, several figures do gaze upward and thus "care," that is, they appear to acknowledge the difference between the remembrance of earthly time and the adoption of eternity. In Fra Angelico, by contrast, the saints and angels have nothing to forget: they are in a fully transcended realm of being.

For Graham, however, Signorelli confuses the two realms of nature and transcendence; she wants to maintain their absolute separation. The difference is crucial, one of several by which Graham departs from Signorelli's approach to apocalypse. Signorelli expresses the High Renaissance attitude towards death and the afterlife, which was promulgated a decade later by the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517). Summoned by Julius II, the Council affirmed "the doctrine of individual immortality, which proclaimed personal rather than collective integrity in eternity as well as in history" (Partridge 1996, 16).[2] Instead, Graham asks, in Thomas Gardner's words, "Can a home for the spirit ever be fully located in the fixed and weighted body?" (Gardner 2005, 117).

Her answer is obviously *no*—it becomes clear when the viewpoint shifts to the visitors in the chapel who question the figures:

> Standing below them
> in the church
> in Orvieto, how can we
> tell them
> to be stern and brazen
> and slow,
>
> that there is no
> entrance,
> only entering. They keep on
> arriving,
> wanting names,
> wanting
>
> happiness. (Graham 1983, 75)

The figures insist on becoming themselves, regaining consciousness of their individual identity ("names"), and seeking the "happiness" they knew formerly. Creighton E. Gilbert points out that some figures who are embracing "are readily perceived as old friends from life on earth now reunited," the first appearance of this topos in Western painting.[3] Yet Graham urges these figures to be "Stern and brazen/and slow." Not a matter of chronological time, eternity is all times simultaneously and the possibility of all times simultaneously; one might intuit the eternal if the rhythm of time could be *slowed* almost to a full stop, as happens with Graham and the visitors in the chapel—or good close readers. Aesthetic time allows for an intimation of eternity. As she says in "Erosion," the title poem in the collection, "it is our slowness I love, growing slower, / tapping the paintbrush against the visible, / tapping the mind." The artist seeks to go beyond or "against" the visible, into the mental space of the invisible. Is not this the "slow time" that Keats associates with eternity in one of the greatest of ekphrastic poems, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn"?

Graham wants the figures (and Signorelli) to realize that there is "no entrance/only entering," no "arrival," only "arriving": no place, only a process in time: "it seems likely that [Graham's] denial of 'entrance' to the souls and of 'arrival' to Signorelli," writes Catharine Sona Karagueuzian, "is in fact a function of her own skepticism about the likelihood of divinely orchestrated resurrection" (Karagueuzian 2005, 65). Further, Graham counsels the figures to be "stern" and "brazen": "stern" implies a needed stoicism and endurance—a resistance to thinking that happiness in eternity would be the same as on earth.[4] "Brazen" can mean bold, reinforcing "stern," but it also refers to the bronze glow of the muscle and flesh tone of many of the nude figures.

Otherwise, Graham can endorse Signorelli's vision of the afterlife: although the figures seek "distance" and "perspective," that is, real-world three-dimensionality, he painted the fresco with a whitish floor and background so that the vanishing point is "so deep/and receding/we have yet to find it." This dematerialized spacetime of the spirit resembles the abstract space of Modernist and postmodernist art, going back to Wilhelm Wörringer on the distinction between time-free abstraction vs. time-bounded naturalistic empathy:

> He cut
> deeper,
> graduating slowly
> from the symbolic
>
> to the beautiful. How far
> is true? (Graham 1983, 76)

Helen Vendler comments that the question "How far is true?" is left "open-ended, but that it is the poet's duty to take the symbolic through the beautiful into the true is not in doubt" (Vendler 1995, 77). She instances Graham's faith in the mind's patience and "deliberate respect for the resistance of matter" (Vendler 1995, 77) and in Signorelli's (and more generally, the artist's) attention to technique and craft. Arguing against Vendler, Karagueuzian writes that "the symbolic import of the resurrected bodies is very nearly eclipsed by the anatomical detail that Signorelli strove to perfect. His art has thus moved into what is for Graham the dangerous ground of the "'beautiful,' which always seems to distort 'the true'" (Karagueuzian 1995, 66).[5] Yet Graham puts the matter into the interrogative because the jury remains out. "How far is true?" might mean that the truth depends on how far one takes pains to pursue it; "graduating slowly" is a matter of degree, "slowly" being a positive adverb. The phrase "He [Signorelli] cut / deeper" is also positive, lending support to Vendler's position; Signorelli is later praised for pursuing "beauty," meaning that he moved beyond the symbolic to the realm of the beautiful. The phrase "He cut / deeper" refers to a Quattrocento tradition of painting that invoked the principle of carving in the drawing of the sharp line and scrupulously outlined forms. In addition, "cut/ deeper" anticipates the final section of the poem.

Graham questions Signorelli's Renaissance individualist approach to the apocalypse, with all its physical reminders of space, time, and desire, though she finds areas of agreement with him. Then, in the final stanzas, she comes close to an identification with him. While painting the frescoes, he learned that his son had been killed in Cortona. As Vasari (Signorelli's grand-nephew) reports, the son was "a youth of singular beauty in face and person, whom he had tenderly loved"; Signorelli had the body brought to Orvieto and stripped of its clothing, and "with extraordinary constancy of soul, uttering no complaint and shedding no tear, he painted the portrait of his dead child" (1978, 352-353). In Graham, Signorelli instead dissects the body, an artistic mimesis of the son's violent death:

It took him days
that deep
caress, cutting,
unfastening,

until his mind
could climb
the open flesh and
mend itself. (Graham 1983, 77)

Signorelli studies death scientifically like an anatomist, but also emotionally like a father. He labors "slowly," lovingly ("Caress"), and revealingly ("unfastening"), as he approaches the immanence of spiritual time. While the figures do not "care," Graham implies that it is through "beauty and care/and technique/and judgment" that the artist (and the reader/viewer/listener) might approximate the spirit. “Climb / the open flesh” indicates an upward spiritual movement, like the physical climbing the ladder to paint the fresco on the chapel’s upper wall. Yet, for Graham, Signorelli was closer to the apocalypse (*her* version of the apocalypse) when he was dissecting his son than when he was painting his fresco.

Formally, Graham presents a mimesis of her subject matter: her lines are short, two to four syllables long, and move slowly down the page; the six line stanzas have a spare, highly chiseled appearance of the page. “They embody,” comments Vendler, “a process the poet at times calls erosion, at times dissection, in which something is crumbled, bit by bit, to dust; or something is opened, layer by layer, to view” (Vendler 1995, 75). The figures in the painting, whose limbs are “perfect,” are not themselves seeking “perfection,” but the artist *must* do so, even if the artist falls short of the goal.

As the figures, seeking “arrival,” had hurried from the inside out into space as quickly as they could, Signorelli moves from the outside inward, “entering” as slowly as possible. James Longenbach writes that the final lines “suggest that the painter himself is ‘mended’ not by seeking spiritual wholeness but by confronting the physical evidence of the most unbearable kind of human suffering” (Logenbach 2005, 88). This may be too stark an opposition: spiritual wholeness *is* a worthy goal, but it is a matter of degree, and one had better be aware (and suspicious) of premature closure. In “The Sense of an Ending,” the next and last poem in *Erosion*, Graham writes that “the terrible insufficiencies of matter in the face / of any kind of spent / time, were better than any / freedom, any wholeness—horribly better—even for a / single hour.”[6]

Ciardi and Graham: there are many ways of returning to Italy.

Notes

[1] The most characteristic theme of the Italian American writer, from Carnevale to DeLillo, is spiritual immanence, and Ciardi is no exception. Italian Catholicism combines the concept of a single transcendent deity with the belief in the local presence or immanence of the divine, often through intercessors and correspondencies, within everyday life. Although God is the *mysterium tremendum*, he reveals himself in the sacraments, ritual and the Church, the saints and holy people, works of mercy, prayer, festa, food, the ordinary, and nature. This doctrine of immanence with its affinities in Greco-Roman paganism (which Ciardi would cherish) lends authority to the image, and especially the artistic image: devotional pictures, statues of local saints (some not officially recognized), crosses, rosaries, scapulars, ex-votos, yard and roadside shrines (*edicole*), crèches, decorative frescoes, colorful processions.

[2] “This doctrine provided a context for the colossal egos of both the patron and the artist” (Partridge 1996, 16).

[3] “Nothing like this seems to have been included in earlier images of the Raising of the Dead episode of a Last Judgment. It is astonishing that no note has been taken of this novelty in Signorelli” (Gilbert 2003, 121). Philippe Ariès locates the theme in Romantic cult of the dead, a belief that friends tend to meet again in future lives (Ariès 1981, 473, 610). The British Idealist philosopher J.M.E. McTaggart held this view.

[4] "A prominent feature of modernity," writes Philip R. Wood, "has been the inflection of religious experience into secular humanist forms" (Wood 2005, 93).

[5] "From an ekphrastic standpoint" Karagueuzian faults Graham for ignoring "the aspect of pain and struggle that is evident in Signorelli's fresco. The soul's transition as they are 'pulling themselves up' is depicted as arduous; their faces and bodies are contorted with exertion . . . the omission of these details from the poem is explicable if Graham's omission is viewed as her effort to focus on the artist's dispassionate, detached exploration of human anatomy" (Karagueuzian 2005, 66).

[6] Spiritual time as prefigured in aesthetic form is taken up in Graham's "The Sense of an Ending," whose title recalls Frank Kermode's study. One way we understand apocalypse, notes Kermode, is as a narrative with a beginning and an end, a narrative of which we are "in the middest" (*in medias res, nel mezzo del cammin*) (Kermode 1967, 7). Graham describes a personal narrative from childhood in Rome to her thirties in America: "So the words of the palm came in. So the hiss of / Noon over the umbrella pines and the long insuck/ Just as the cicadas started up again" (Graham 1983, 78). According to Nicholas J. Perella, the concept of noon in French and Italian poetry is associated with silence, timelessness, the sacred, and death because of the sun's overpoweringness at this hour; but noon may signify, by identification with that power, an infusion of strength. Linked to noon, cicadas symbolize midday tension and discomfort; they do not cancel the silence with their stridulating noise but accentuate or intensify it (Perella 1979, 13, 14, 191, 201).

Works Cited

Ariès, Philippe. *The Hour of Our Death* [*L'homme devant la mort*], trans. Helen Weaver. New York: Knopf, 1981.

Barolsky, Paul. *Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in the Italian Renaissance.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1978.

Cateura, Linda Brandi. *Growing Up Italian*. New York: Morrow, 1987.

Child, Irvin Long. *Italian or American? The Second Generation in Conflict.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1943.

Ciardi, John. *As If: Poems New and Selected*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955.

_____. *Collected Poems*. Edited by Edward M. Cifelli. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997.

Cifelli, Edward. *John Ciardi: A Biography.* Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997.

Costello, Bonnie. "Jorie Graham: Art and Erosion," in Gardner 2005, 13-33.

Friedmann, Herbert. *The Symbolic Goldfinch: Its History and Significance in European Devotional Art*. Washington, DC: Pantheon, 1946.

Gardner, Thomas, ed. *Jorie Graham: Essays on the Poetry.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

_____. "Jorie Graham's Incandescence," in Gardner 2005, 113-146.

Gilbert, Creighton E. *How Fra Angelico and Signorelli Saw the End of the World.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.

Giordano, Fedora. “An Archetypal World: Images of Italy in the Poetry of John Ciardi,” *RSA* (*Rivista di Studi Anglo-Americani)* 4-5, 1984-85, 305-315.

Graham, Jorie, *Erosion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983

Karagueuzian, Catharine Sona. “*No Image There and the Gaze Remains”: The Visual in the Work of Jorie Graham*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Krickel, Edward Francis. *John Ciardi*. Boston: Twayne, 1980.

Longenbach, James. “Jorie Graham’s Big Hunger,” in Gardner 2005, 82-101.

Lightbown, Ronald. *Carlo Crivelli*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

Partridge, Loren. *Michelangelo: The Sistine Ceiling*. New York: George Braziller, 1996.

Perella, Nicholas. J. *Midday in Italian Literature: Variations on an Archetypal Theme*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Russo, John Paul. “DeLillo: Italian American Catholic Writer.” *Altreitalie* 25, (2002), 4-29.

Vasari, Giorgio. *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. Mrs. Jonathan Foster. Bohn’s Standard Library. London, 1878.

Vendler, Helen. *The Breaking of Style: Hopkins, Heaney, Graham*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Waddington, Raymond B. *Review of Paul Barolsky’s Infinite Jest: Wit and Humor in the Italian Renaissance*. *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10, no. 1 (1979), 118-119.

Wood, Philip. R. “Beyond the Simulacrum of Religion versus Secularism: Modernist Aesthetic ‘Mysticism’; Or, Why We Will Not Stop Revering ‘Great Books.’”*Religion & Literature* 37, no. 1 (2005), 93.

Zampetti, Pietro. *Carlo Crivelli*. 2nd ed. Florence: Nardini, 1988.

Self and Others in the Twentieth Century: from William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore to the New Italian American Poets

Coordinator: Lina Unali

Lina Unali

Introduction

If we analyze the poems written by William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore, certainly among the most representative of the twentieth century, we realize that the authors' firm intention is to help themselves and others survive in a decaying world, and to resuscitate lost energies. The central aim of these authors is to save, to redeem. They refuse to acknowledge the ruin of civilization as expressed by Oswald Spengler, T. S. Eliot, and others. Lina Unali's paper deals precisely with William Carlos Williams's and Marianne Moore's poems as inspired by the desire to meliorate others' lives and overcome psychological conditions. Franco Mulas's paper separately introduces Robert Lowell's translatability into other European languages. Elisabetta Marino explains the latest tendencies of Mazziotti Gillan's most recent production and summarizes the lesson plans she proposes for her students. Paola Malva, too, mainly treats Mazziotti Gillan's reaction and adjustment to the American environment.

Lina Unali

Moral Purpose in the Poetry of William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore

It has often been pointed out that one of the elements that characterizes the poetical avant-garde at the beginning of the past century is its anti-Victorian stance. It may be said that anti-Victorianism, in so far as poetry was concerned, meant elimination of rhetoric and ornamentation as well as limitations of contents and restraint, a pronounced interest in form, a renewed perception of the musicality of the phrase, and the development of a line that differed from *free verse*, being at the same time more synthetic and more pliable. From a theoretical point of view the new attitude may be explained with the criticism of Victorian values, such as that of the Motherland—with its high imperial destinies and *the white man's burden*—, the sanctity of family, the practice of virtue, philanthropy, charity and a benevolent consideration for the poor, etc. But it is not difficult to realize that in some outstanding representatives of the poetry written at the beginning of the twentieth century in the US, another kind of intention of a didactic, philosophical and psychoanalytic nature insinuates itself between the lines almost surreptitiously, somehow in contrast, to a degree, with the objective clarity of the poetic diction prescribed by contemporary poetics, in particular by Pound's poetics, as expressed in "A Few Don'ts," the first of which was "Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective" (Pound 1968, 3).

Quite often the didactic and moralistic attitude that Poe had condemned in the poetry of the eighteenth century appeared or, better, reappeared in very brief, almost unnoticeable segments of poems by William Carlos Williams (1883-1963). In "The Red Wheelbarrow" all the relevance, admonition, teaching and encouragement toward one's fellow citizens are to be found in the apparently meaningless line "So much depends upon" (Williams 1986, 224), placed at the very beginning of the composition. The vision of the object, "the red wheelbarrow," which Williams derived from Chinese ancient culture,[1] was precisely modified by the words that could be read as an invitation to take a special care of oneself, attributing relevance to what is sometimes difficult to appreciate because of its smallness, minuteness, its apparent triviality.

One could imagine a scene in which a woman patient, hospitalized at the medical hospital where Williams worked for many years as an obstetrician, addressed him, in *Paterson*'s style with words such as: "Doc, how can I go on in these pitiful conditions?" and the doctor answered: "You would not believe it, but *so much depends* on how you see things, on joyful visions, on a peaceful concentration on simple objects, on an abstention from complaint, on being happy with apparently insignificant experiences." The poet suggests a particular training of eye and mind. He is at all times teaching.[2] The principles of imagism, fully absorbed by him, are transformed into a special kind of invitation to salvation, beyond the tenets of a Christian tradition.[3] I have chosen the example below from one of Williams's short poems, but it may be said to extend to almost all his poetical pieces. They may be described as *exemplary*, in the sense that they show at every line what is right and, by contrast, what is not. The poet is always moralizing, giving advice. He finds it healthy, for instance, to have a detailed, unromantic, appreciation of flowers; it is good to find fresh fruit in the refrigerator when returning home from work; to observe even the apparently insignificant details of a natural environment, to imitate "the clustered faces of the flowers / straining to look in" as in the poem entitled "Cherry Blossoms at Evening" (Williams 1988, 10).

In a world as forgetful and absent-minded as modern societies are, it is advisable to place new emphasis on the attentive eye, on renewed mental attitudes, on observation, on successfully dealing with inattention.

The poetry of William Carlos Williams may be seen as always connected with themes of survival. The poet's intent is sometimes expressed even in the title of poems such as "The World Narrowed to a Point." What can be clearly seen may please the eye, it may cure the deepest anxieties. Mental sickness has, by definition, no object. The poet doctor prescribes that limitation of vision that we may also define as *imagistic restraint*.

It can be said that Williams produces for his readers several poetical gems that never abstain from a vital prescription, from admonition, from teaching—and are never separated from the attempt to cure, to sustain, to support. Such activities may be seen as congenial with his official occupation and duties as hospital doctor and, as I once defined them, as part of *a medical method* of composition (Unali 1982, 344). It is not difficult to agree with Brian A. Bremen when he says that "Specifically it is the act of diagnosis that is at the core of both Williams's medicine and his poetry" (Bremen 1993, 85).

Where this method is employed to the full, it might even be said (where we can see it to extend to a long composition) to *explode*, as in the long poem entitled *Paterson*, in which the underlying analysis of American society acquires new complexity and is mainly evidenced through the inclusion of elements that are traditionally alien to poetry and sometimes defined by the avant-garde itself as *antipoetic*. They are organizations such as the United States Department of the Treasury, the Post Office, the City Hall, administrative papers, reports of exceptional occurrences, the most minimal events of city life These elements also include the transcription of letters of friends such as Allen Ginsberg and Charles Olson, of certain ladies who wished to write poetry and asked advice of the already famous poet. The long poem also deals with the behaviour of poor girls who walk along the streets of America, ignorant of their origins and of their destinies.

From this heterogeneous social and individual complexity, *presented* through a never ending associative process as in a long psychoanalytic session, the poet attempts to draw meaning, to restore ruined tissues by *recapitulation*, one might say, by *reorganization*, to teach according to the principles we have already identified in the simulation "Doc, what shall I do?" and his response: "So much depends upon." One of the prescriptions indicates *things* as necessary counterparts of *ideas* as in Paterson's frequently repeated phrase *no ideas but in things*. In addition, he seems to be willing to define who the *false prophets* are, and where they are. The poet tells us that they can be mainly found inside the universities, they are the professors; they work alone or in groups within the educational institutions, they are officially responsible for the quality of culture. They are defined by him as "spitted on fixed concepts, like roasting hogs" (Williams 1963, 44). Perhaps the poet has a Chinese restaurant window in mind, where little pigs hang spitted in rows to attract customers. In "He has beaten about the bush long enough" Williams represents the academician's brain in a quite uncomplimentary way, apparently from inside, as a medical doctor should: "the slowly hardening // brain / of an academician" that has "the cristal- / ine pattern / of // new ice on / a country pool" (Williams 1988, 405).

One of the solutions the poet offers in the succession of lines is probably connected with considerations on the subject of *change*. He seems very interested in the vitality of change and in its influence on individual experience. In a very famous passage of *Paterson* we read "Certainly I am not a robin nor erudite, / no Erasmus nor bird that returns to the same / ground year by year. Or if I am / the ground has undergone / a subtle transformation, its identity altered" (Williams 1963, 29). The poet is teaching flexibility, the capacity to change and be changed to fit circumstances that have become different in nature or form; he is suggesting the ability to adjust to one's environment, the avoidance of that particular anxiety caused by fixity, by sticking to obsolete ideas and lifestyles, by blocked certainties. We may say that his frame of mind appears to be influenced by ancient philosophers such as Heraclitus and Parmenides, and that he opposes, as do the ancient Taoist texts that had become so familiar to his generation, resistance to change, setting the image of a *smiling child* against that of a *stiff corpse*.

Unfortunately, while Williams's theory of change may be applied to individuals such as himself who are aware of their inner mental processes, it is probably less applicable in the case of the most relevant diagnosis contained in *Paterson* where he refers, for instance, to the above-referenced girls who walk like *automatons* along the streets of America, unaware of themselves, *incommunicado*: "They walk outside their bodies aimlessly / for the most part" (Williams 1963, 14). They show primary symptoms of schizophrenia; they have no roots, no moral or psychic centre of cohesion. In reality, they can be taught nothing.

If we analyze Marianne Moore's (1887-1972) *Collected Poems*, we realize that her overall aim is fundamentally similar to that expressed in Williams' poetry, but her poetical compositions are fundamentally of Christian religious inspiration[4]. She was both the daughter and sister of Presbyterian ministers, and the spiritual education she absorbed within the family seems to permeate her literary production. Considering her poetical compositions and prose writings, we may perhaps coin a phrase calling hers a *Christianity enriched* by other cultural sources that, one may assume, derived mainly from extended consultation of volumes from the New York Public Library where she worked for many years, especially of texts on the theory and practice of Asian art and poetry, in particular Chinese and Japanese.[5] Through these images assimilated from foreign traditions, the poet seems first to aim at healing herself by proposing models of successful behaviour like that of the seagull that flies over the abyss in the poem entitled "What are years," or that of Love that avoids stepping on the weeds "of beanstalk height" (Moore 1951, 14). She urges upon herself a superiority that is not, as it is commonly understood, superiority over other human beings, a concept generally seen in connection with acquisition and dominance, but a superiority that implies self-reliance, spiritual balance and independence of the kind typical of people who need not be guided in their visit to the Glass Museum at Harvard. The curious association between superiority and the visit to the Glass Museum at Harvard may be seen as typical of her method of indirection,[6] of modestly suggesting values.

It should be further added that it is as though the magnificent models she chooses out of an heterogeneous number of sources are presented first to herself and then to others. Every line of her poetry contains a double suggestion addressed to her soul, to her psyche, to her capacity for endurance, to hers and others' aesthetic sensibilities, the "others" extending even to include baseball players, some of whom she successfully addressed and into whose company she was enthusiastically welcomed.

The phrase *enriched Christianity*, here used to describe her intellectual experience as it is manifest in her poems, might better be defined as *Hebrew-Christian tradition integrated with other sources of prevalently Asian belief and wisdom*. Marianne Moore seems to understand the necessity to integrate a spiritual heredity and predilection with what, in successive periods of her life, her mind acquired through reading, through the discovery and appreciation of different cultures, through the influence of poet friends who were the best of her generation and with whom she shared intellectual pursuits and hopes.

Her short poem entitled "O to be a Dragon" succeeds in linking the words of Salomon, that are, as we understand from the footnotes, "O God give me an understanding heart" to the reference to the Chinese dragon that is the symbol of the Emperor, capable in her own words of both a maximum of extension and power and an extreme contraction and reduction ("of silk worm size"). It is her way of suggesting an alternative to the popularly accepted aspiration to always aggrandize oneself, extend one's power, and never humbly withdraw (Moore 1959).

We could say that like her famous contemporaries, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, along the trail blazed by Ernest Fenollosa, Marianne Moore searched in the so-called Orient, and in China in particular for new sources of artistic inspiration and regeneration. Most often this led to a rephrasing of old values with new and more agreeable turns of phrase. At times the sentences they read in Indian and Chinese scriptures revealed something completely new, something to which the Western intellect and culture were still unaccustomed, something hitherto incomprehensible, something extraordinary. Conscious as Marianne Moore was of the fact that only *the new* could stimulate the poetic imagination and regenerate morality—that newness to which both her friend William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound aspired, that they considered as one of the most outstanding achievements of all art—she often transplanted her moral and religious aspirations into oriental settings, among *oriental* pieces of China; she exhibited these in her poems, she underlined their significance.

It should be noted that unlike Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams, several outstanding American poets, some of them belonging to the same generation, did not seem particularly interested in entertaining and benevolently instructing others. One might tend to include even their close contemporary Wallace Stevens in the list of those who did not care to instruct the people on anything and, and, among poets of a younger generations, Louise Bogan, Theodore Roetke, Charles Olson, Gregory Corso, Allen Ginsberg and several others who had no special interest in *saving* the people who lived in the *Waste Lands* (a plural found in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Dartur* which may have inspired T. S. Eliot's title) of contemporary America. The central aim of these authors seems not at all *therapeutic*. They acknowledged the decay and ruin of civilization as expressed, somewhat differently, by Oswald Spengler and others, but they were not the true heirs of Whitman's optimism and faith. They did not suggest methods of perseverance and renovation. At times they seem to do just the opposite.

In American poetry, with the passing of time Williams's and Moore's attitude tends to be neglected. The American poets seem to deny poetry the power to heal people's depression; they limit themselves to introducing scenarios in which adverse living conditions, loneliness, dull routine, poverty and despair predominate. We may comprise Robert Lowell among them. Bukowski's attitude may be seen as representing the apex of this tendency. In his poems, life is never represented as something to be carefully preserved but rather as already worn out and wasted. As in De Lillo's novel entitled *Underworld*, poverty and desolation prevail.

Notes

[1] One is led to understand this through Amy Tan's *A Hundred Secret Senses*. Tan's passing remark on the *wheelbarrow* as part of an ancient Chinese pictorial tradition is confirmed by the earliest depictions of single-wheel Chinese wheelbarrows on the Han Dynasty tomb murals. Other such depictions were successively added elsewhere. (The reference to the wheelbarrow is not present in later editions of *The Hundred Secret Senses* such as that of 2004.)

[2] For a presentation of the didactic element in William Carlos Williams's poetry see: Unali 1970, 1982, and 1993.

[3] James Laughlin, who was well acquainted with William Carlos Williams's poetry, wrote a short poem entitled "So much depends" (1983) (in an unbound leaflet printed in a limited number of copies and found enclosed in an untitled envelope in the British Library) in which he presents Williams's work as capable of teaching others how to see, how to look at things, how to discover worlds that are hidden from view. In an appreciative manner he says that the people around the poet are able to see only through him: "Bill on the way you saw / the way your heart saw . . . wheelbarrow or the falls . . . so many things the / rest of us would never / have seen except for you."

[4] The didactic element in the poetry of Marianne Moore has been already introduced in Unali 1964 and 1995.

[5] The author that immediately comes to mind is Mai-Mai Sze and his volume entitled *The Tao of Painting*.

[6] See Marianne Moore's "Silence" (1951, 94, 169).

Works Cited

Beck, John. *Writing the Radical Center:William Carlos Williams, John Dewey, and American Cultural Politics*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Bremen, Brian A. *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Crawford, T. Hugh. *Modernism, Medicine & William Carlos Williams*. Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.

Ginsberg, Allen. *Notes After An Evening With William Carlos Williams*. Brooklyn, NY: Samuel Charters, c[1953?].

Laughlin, James. *So Much Depends*. Vancouver: Slug Press, 1983.

Moore, Marianne. *Collected Poems*. New York: Macmillan, 1951.

_____. *Poems*. New York: Viking Press, 1959.

Pound, Ezra. *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*. Edited by T. S. Eliot. London: Faber, 1968.

Sze, Mai-Mai. *The Tao of Painting (A Study of the Ritual Disposition of Chinese Painting with a translation of the Chieh Tzu Yuan Hua Chuan or Mustard Seed Garden* Manual of Painting). New York: Pantheon, 1963.

Tan, Amy. *The Hundred Secret Senses*. London: Harper Collins, 1996.

Unali, Lina. "Marianne Moore." *Studi Americani* 9 (1963): 377-410.

_____. *Mente e misura: La poesia di William Carlos Williams*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura: 1970.

_____. "William Carlos Williams." In *Letteratura Americana: I contemporanei. Novecento americano*, ed. Elémire Zolla, vol. I, 341-366. Roma: Lucarini Editore, 1982.

_____. "Love versus Academy." in *The Rhetoric of Love in The Collected Poem*s *of William Carlos Williams,* eds. Cristina Giorcelli and Maria Anita Stefanelli, 99-108. Edizioni Associate: Roma, 1993.

_____. "Taoist Concepts and Chinese Imagery in the Poetry of Marianne Moore." In *Le aperture del testo: Studi per Maria Carmela Coco Davani*, eds. Mirella Billi, Lidia Curti, Elio Di Piazza, Daniela Corona, 203-212. Palermo: Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Palermo, 1995.

Weinberger, Eliot, ed. *The New Directions Anthology of Classical Chinese Poetry.* New York: New Directions, 2003.

William Carlos Williams. *Paterson*. New York: New Directions, 1963.

_____. *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams. Vol. I: 1909-1939*, eds. A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1986.

_____.*The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams. Vol. II: 1939-1962,* ed. Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions, 1988.

_____.*William Carlos Williams and James Laughlin: Selected Letters*, 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1989.

Francesco Mulas

Un'altra "Imitation" di Robert Lowell

Non al Lowell poeta—"The most important poetic voice of post-war America" (Lombardo 1979, 78)—ma al Lowell traduttore di una lirica spagnola mira questo saggio.

Nel continuo esercizio del traduttore lowelliano, la poesia spagnola occupa un posto singolare per almeno due motivi: uno è la paucità dei testi tradotti; l'altro è la scelta dei testi da tradurre. Nella raccolta *Near the Ocean* (1967), dove figurano traduzioni di Giovenale, Dante e Orazio, quelle dallo spagnolo sono raccolte col sottotitolo "The Ruins of Time." Si tratta in tutto di quattro poesie, due di Gòngora e due di Quevedo. Nella breve "Note" che precede la raccolta—una sorta di prefazione simile nelle intenzioni a quella già allestita per *Imitations* (1961), dove non compare alcun modello spagnolo Lowell spiega indirettamente il perché dell'apertura alla Spagna poetica. Qui infatti si legge: "[t]he theme that connects my translations is Rome, the greatness and horror of her empire. My Jouvenal and Dante versions are as faithful as I am able or dare or can bear to be. The Horace is freer, the Spanish sonnets freer still" (Lowell 1967). È un'indicazione illuminante sotto vari aspetti. Il mito di Roma è colto in una traiettoria che va da Orazio, il sommo forgiatore del grande mito, a Giovenale, il satirico che quel mito incrina, a Dante, il restauratore di un mito ormai rinnovato, ai due poeti spagnoli che cantano il tramonto del mito con meditazioni metafisiche sul tempo e sull'assoluto. La Spagna appare così come l'epigono del mito romano e come la coscienza di una crisi. La poesia che canta questo tramonto perde la solarità, la trasparenza del dettato: è la poesia dell'artificio barocco; e la sua traduzione non può essere che libera. La scelta di Góngora e di Quevedo è pertanto imposta dal disegno di ricostruire le grandi tappe del mito di Roma e di privilegiare al momento del suo tramonto—i poeti di maggior fama, i poeti che una lunga tradizione storiografico-letteraria dichiara come meteore brillanti nella opalescente mitografia romana. La nota del traduttore serviva forse a prevenire severe critiche (Rizzardi 1979, 135-142) come quelle già mossegli in occasione delle sue traduzioni "troppo libere" di *Imitations*; ma valeva soprattutto a dare il filo del motivo della sua selezione di testi da rendere in inglese.

Ora, il capitolo spagnolo del Lowell si direbbe chiuso con queste traduzioni. Sennonché alla Spagna l'inquieto bostoniano (Luzi 1979, 50) si rivolse ancora una volta per attingervi un modello da tradurre. Ma non dichiarò mai questa sua nuova incursione in terra iberica.

Nel 1969 Lowell pubblica il suo *Notebook 1967-68*, e l'anno successivo ne appresta l'edizione definitiva dove indica tutte le fonti da lui tradotte. Fra le poesie che qui raccoglie figura un componimento dal titolo spagnolo "Volverán," compreso nella sezione "Eight Months Later," ma di questo componimento non ci dà alcuna indicazione che specifichi se si tratti di traduzione o meno. Quando nel 1973 il poeta pubblica *History*, nella prefazione accenna solo alle 80 nuove poesie lì contenute e al fatto che "the rest are taken from my last published poem, *Notebook*, begun six years ago. All the poems have been changed, some heavily" (Lowell 1973). Nessun cenno viene fatto, anche in questa occasione, alla poesia "Volverán" il cui titolo è però reso in inglese con "Will not Come Back", mentre "Volverán" rimane come sottotitolo. Nel 1976 Lowell pubblica un'ulteriore raccolta di poesie, *Selected Poems*, dove figura ancora una volta il sonetto "Will not Come Back" sempre con il sottotitolo "Volverán."

Nel novembre del 1977 il critico americano Irving Ehrenpreis nel recensire quest'ultima raccolta sulle colonne di *The New York Review of Books* si sofferma in particolare su questa poesia citandola per esteso e facendone una breve analisi; e aggiunge che essa era nata da un'esperienza sentimentale messicana (a Cuernavaca, più precisamente) del poeta. Ma un mese dopo, sulla stessa rivista letteraria, Constance A. Sullivan faceva notare che il recensore era incorso in un errore giustificabile solo col fatto che Lowell aveva depistato i suoi lettori non dichiarando che questa composizione, stampata per ben tre volte nel giro di pochi anni non era mai stata dichiarata per quello che in realtà era: una traduzione dallo spagnolo di una "Rima" di Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. La segnalazione della Sullivan metteva in luce un dato ovvio per chiunque avesse una minima familiarità con la letteratura spagnola: l'incipit era quello di una celeberrima poesia bécqueriana, una delle più note e antologizzate liriche spagnole. Eppure, a tutt'oggi, il fatto che "Will not Come Back" sia la resa di un testo spagnolo è pressoché ignorato, e perfino la *Norton Anthology of American Literature* (1980, 1604) riproduce il testo lowelliano senza indicare in alcun modo che si tratta di una traduzione, perché evidentemente questo fatto è ignoto anche alla critica più recente su Lowell.

Ora, perché Lowell avrebbe taciuto, e in più di una occasione, l'origine di questo componimento? Potrebbe essere il caso di una "literary deceit"? Ma avendo già prodigato molte energie alla traduzione, e, anzi, tenendo molto alla sua fama di traduttore, non sembra verosimile che abbia voluto celare il frutto di una sua pratica prestigiosa. È più probabile, semmai, che egli abbia sentito questo suo nuovo lavoro come un rifacimento piuttosto che come una traduzione, un rifacimento che prendeva solo lo spunto dal testo spagnolo per farne poi una cosa assolutamente nuova e forse anche per presentare una sua esperienza sentimentale realmente vissuta. E dall'analisi comparativa che ci accingiamo a fare si vedrà che "Will not Come Back" è una "imitation" più che una traduzione.

Ma prima di arrivare a questa analisi sembra opportuno soffermarsi, almeno brevemente, sulla questione del "Lowell-Translator." La questione è alquanto frequentata dalla critica lowelliana, e ad essa si è guidati da alcune note teoriche e programmatiche che lo stesso Lowell dedicò alla traduzione nella sua "Small Anthology of European Poetry." Eccone il pernio: "I have been reckless with literal meaning, and labored hard to get the tone. Most often this has been a tone, for the tone is something that will always more or less escape transference to another language and cultural moment. I have tried to write alive English and to do what my authors might have done if they were writing their poems now and in America" (Lowell 1961, xi). Quest'idea ci sembra affine a quella di Dryden: "the translator assumes the liberty not only to vary from the words and sense, but to forsake them both as he sees occasion; and taking only some general hints from the original, to run division on the ground-work, as he pleases" (Kinsley, in Dryden 1958, 182). Ora, la poesia di Bécquer viene tradotta con "molta libertà" fino al punto che essa può essere considerata una "imitation" anziché una resa letterale. Vediamo pertanto i due testi:

LIII (Rima)
    Volverán las oscuras golondrinas
en tu balcón sus nidos a colgar,
y, otra vez, con el ala a sus cristales
    jugando llamarán;
pero aquéllas que el vuelo refrenaban
tu hermosura y mi dicha al contemplar,
aquéllas que aprendieron nuestros nombres...
    ésas... ¡no volverán!

    Volverán las tupidas madreselvas
de tu jardín las tapias a escalar
y otra vez a la tarde, aun más hermosas,
    sus flores se abrirán;
pero aquéllas, cuajadas de rocío,
cuyas gotas mirábamos temblar
y caer, como lágrimas del día...
    ésas... ¡no volverán!

Volverán del amor en tus oídos
las palabras ardientes a sonar;
tu corazón, de su profundo sueño
tal vez despertará;
pero mudo y absorto y de rodillas,
como se adora a Dios ante su altar,
como yo te he querido..., desengáñate:
¡así no te querrán!
(Bécquer 966, 469-70)
WILL NOT COME BACK
(Volverán)

Dark swallows will doubtless come back killing
the injudicious nightflies with a clack of the beak;
but these that stopped full flight to see your beauty
and my good fortune... as if they knew our names—
they will not come back. The thick lemony honey-
suckle,
climbing from the earthroot to your window,
will open more beautiful blossoms to the evening;
but these... like dewdrops, trembling, shining,
falling,
the tears of day—they will not come back...
Some other love will sound his firewords for you
and wake your heart, perhaps, from its cool sleep;
but silent, absorbed, and on his knees,
as men adore God at the altar, as I love you—
don't blind yourself, you'll not be loved like
that.
(*Norton Anthology* 1980, 1604)

La poesia di Bécquer si divide in tre strofe, divise a loro volta in tre endecasillabi più un settenario di chiusura. Lo schema delle rime è il seguente: ABCdEBFd/ GBHdIBLd/ MBNdOBPd. Questo schema ci indica immediatamente che ad alcuni versi liberi si intercalano dei versi rimati che sono sempre Bd. I versi B sono tutte rime costituite da infiniti eccetto l'ultima rappresentata da un sostantivo. Anche tutti i versi in d sono rappresentati da verbi, al futuro. Già questa struttura pone in primo piano gli assi temporali su cui si svolge il poema; e su ciò ritorneremo. Ma stando all'aspetto musicale si noterà che ogni strofa comincia con il verbo "volverán" che dovrebbe rimare con il verso d e le prime due strofe terminano con "no volverán" quasi a chiudere la singola strofa in modo speculare ma con segno negativo, creando quindi una similarità / dissimilarità. Si dovrà notare che nella terza strofa il verso d non costituisce una rima perfetta e che anche la chiusura non replica il ritornello "esas no volverán!" Ma come vedremo la terza strofa introduce un motivo nuovo nella poesia. La divisione di ogni strofa corrisponde a due tempi diversi: nella prima parte si ricorda il ritorno di tre soggetti, nella seconda, anticipata sempre dalla disgiuntiva "pero," si individuano alcuni di quei soggetti che hanno accompagnato la vicenda amorosa del poeta e della sua amata. Mentre la prima parte di ogni strofa ha sempre versi al futuro, la seconda ha sempre versi al passato (ad eccezione del verso di chiusura), e tutti gli elementi deittici indicano lontananza nel tempo e nello spazio. Ogni strofa è dunque caratterizzata dalla enunciazione di un futuro il cui soggetto è "ritornerà," e una seconda parte in cui i soggetti legati ad una storia sono persi nel passato. Fra quel passato e quel futuro è tutto lo spazio lirico della poesia che, con implacabile ripetizione del "volverán" all'inizio di ogni strofa, avente per soggetto una volta le rondinelle, un'altra la madreselva ed infine l'amore, sottolinea il fatale andare ciclico della natura, ciclo dal quale, come si vede alla fine, rimane escluso proprio il poeta. Tutta la poesia ha nelle prime due strofe un dolce senso di nostalgia. Nell'ultima strofa, che ha per soggetto l'amore che tornerà, ma sotto altra forma, la nostalgia cade e le subentra un'affermazione orgogliosa dello stesso poeta, dell'unicità e irripetibilità del suo amore per la sua donna. Tutta la poesia è un monumento al poeta che vive solo nel ricordo ed è spento al futuro.

Cosa rimane di tutto questo nella resa di Lowell? Rimangono il tema generale con alcune immagini disposte nella stessa sequenza per cui è forse meglio dire prima ciò che non rimane del modello. La perdita più vistosa è dovuta alla sostituzione di una forma metrica con un'altra. La "Rima" di Bécquer viene resa nella forma di sonetto a rima libera per cui si perde la possibilità di recuperare quei settenari che, dividendo e chiudendo ogni strofa, creavano l'intreccio delle rime. Viene eliminato anche il gioco dell'anafora "volverán / no volverán" che nell'originale sbalzavano in modo bellissimo il ritmo del ciclo positivo e negativo. È vero che il Lowell avvia una catena simile di corrispondenze con "will come back" del quinto e dell'ottavo verso. Ma intanto il "will not come back" del verso ottavo non ha un corrispondente simmetrico e per giunta la disposizione di questi verbi è una volta nel mezzo, un'altra all'inizio e un'altra alla fine del verso e modifica la strategia ritmica escogitata da Bécquer. C'è, invece, come nel modello la disgiunzione "but" ma, mentre nel primo il "pero" appare in modo prevedibile perché regolato dal ritmo, nella traduzione di Lowell essa appare sì all'inizio di verso ma questi versi sono il terzo, l'ottavo e il dodicesimo, con una disposizione asimmetrica. Forse l'unica simmetria la si può vedere nel fatto che tanto il terzo verso quanto il dodicesimo sono rispettivamente preceduti e seguiti da altri due versi.

Dal punto di vista dei motivi, la differenza più marcata ci è data proprio dai primi due versi. Mentre l'originale ci parla delle rondini che fanno il nido nel balcone dell'amata e sfiorano con le ali il vetro della sua finestra, Lowell ci dice di rondini "killing / the injudicious nightflies with a clack of the beak." In Bécquer le rondini sono animali gentili che, come il poeta, a loro modo corteggiano la stessa donna. In Lowell al contrario sono animali crudeli la cui presenza porta morte e violenza. Perfino il suono onomatopeico del chiudersi del becco sottolinea il loro comportamento inumano seppur naturale. Per giunta l'allusione agli insetti notturni fa delle rondini uccelli crepuscolari o addirittura notturni, quasi un'estensione del loro colore "oscuro" presente anche nell'originale. Insomma laddove in Bécquer l'immagine delle rondini è gioiosa, in Lowell è cupa e crudele. Eppure con questa innovazione Lowell stabilisce un contrasto più forte di quanto non fosse nell'originale tra queste rondini e quelle "that stopped full flight." In Bécquer questo contrasto è presente ma attenuato. Si capisce infatti che tra le rondini che vengono a battere le loro ali sul vetro Bécquer isola quelle che quasi si fermavano fuori del balcone a contemplare la bellezza dell'amata e la felicità dell'amante rinchiusi nella stanza. Anche qui il poeta trasferisce alle rondini quel sentimento d'amore che lui ha per l'amata; le rondini colgono entrambi in un momento di felicità che è anche il ricordo del poeta. Ora Lowell traduce "esas" cioè "quelle" con "these", "queste." Ciò è una spia della deissi che sottrae quelle rondini al ricordo per farne una visione al presente. Lowell in questo modo sottolinea una distanza, una chiara distinzione fra ricordo e tempo presente. Questa operazione è ripetuta anche al verso ottavo ed è confermata poi dal "as I love you" del verso tredicesimo che rende al presente ciò che nell'originale è al passato: "le he querido."

Il senso che si evince da questi mutamenti ci sembra chiaro. La poesia di Bécquer è, come abbiamo detto, un monumento all'amore irripetibile del poeta, ma un amore finito e senza possibilità di ritorno. In Lowell l'amore è vivo e senza orgogliose rivincite, per cui l'affermazione dell'unicità del suo amore, da parte dell'io poetico, sembra piuttosto una preghiera di ritorno anziché un'asseverazione di unicità, ma nel passato, di questo amore. La poesia di Bécquer ha qualcosa di dolce-amaro dove perdita e orgoglio si equilibrano in una soffice musicalità; in Lowell l'amore brucia ancora. Quelle rondini del passato, quella madreselva del passato che lui vede ora presente non appartengono più a quella consonanza d'amore perché quell'amore è finito. Ma il poeta si aggrappa a questi simboli perché li possiede sperando quasi che possano operare la magia di riportargli l'amata. In Bécquer l'episodio è chiuso; in Lowell è ancora aperto. La crudeltà della donna amata potrebbe sconfiggere ogni speranza, ed è proprio questa crudeltà che detta al Lowell la sostituzione delle gentili rondini bécqueriane con rondini edaci. Eppure la speranza è lì, come ci dice il poeta che professa il suo amore in ginocchio davanti alla sua donna quasi come davanti ad una divinità.

Dissolto così l'asse temporale del modello e sostituita la dolcezza malinconica di questo con un tono di amarezza, si perde quell'aspirazione al monumento dell'io lirico per creare invece un senso di preghiera sconsolata. È chiaro allora che la resa di Lowell sia piuttosto un esercizio di riscrittura con un messaggio diverso. E questo basta a giustificare la definizione di questo esercizio come un'altra *Imitation*; e ciò, inoltre, può forse spiegare il silenzio di Lowell sulla paternità della sua fonte di ispirazione.

Works Cited

Anzillotti, Rolando, ed. *Robert Lowell: A Tribute*. Pisa: Nistri-Lischi, 1979.

Bécquer, Gustavo Adolfo. *Obras Completas*. Madrid: Aguilar, 1966.

Dryden, John. *The Poems of John Dryden*. Edited by James Kinsley. London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Lombardo, Agostino. "Notes on Robert Lowell's Early Poetry." In Anzillotti 1979, 78-89.

Luzi, Mario. "Lowell: l'inquieto bostoniano." In Anzillotti 1979, 50-53.

Lowell, Robert. *Imitations*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1961.

_____. *Near the Ocean*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967.

_____. *History*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973.

Norton Anthology of American Literature: *VoI. II*. New York: MacMillan, 1980.

Rizzardi, Alfredo. "Robert Lowell's Imitations of Italian Poetry." In Anzillotti 1979, 135-142.

Elisabetta Marino

An Italian American Poet between the Family Circle and the Outside World: Maria Mazziotti Gillan

In her 2005 seminal essay entitled "Family Ties and a Sense of the Past in Italian American Women Writers" Lina Unali explored what she described as "the literary inclination of Italian American writers," often stemming from a "deeply felt and conscious regression, [from] an ardor for retrogression, retreat" (Unali 2007, 71). Through close analyses of some of the works by Maria Fama, Toni Libro, Chickie Farella and Rachel Guido De Vries, Unali highlighted the striking, almost overwhelming presence of family figures. She delved into the writers' renewed "cult for the family bond" (Unali 2007, 74) and argued that, at times, it seems to become provocatively *ostentatious*, an often effective means to oppose and undermine the downsides of the "American way of life" and previously felt urges to "blend in."

This tendency towards folding into oneself and one's family circle, the Italian American writers' frequent withdrawal from the outside world, their seeming lack of concern for "the health and welfare of whoever does not belong to the family" quoting the words of this workshop descriptionare both progressively acknowledged and powerfully overcome in the works of Maria Mazziotti Gillan, a poet born in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1940, to immigrant parents from the Salerno area. Mirroring a process of inner growth on the part of the writer, her literary production and its development throughout the years seem to turn the very idea of a treasured "family" from a self-sufficient, protective but mutually confining *circle* which kept away the threats of the world outside into a *radiating center* that allows the poet to draw a wider circumference capable of accommodating (and enlightening) what was previously excluded. Through Maria Mazziotti Gillan's writings, Italian American poetry and its themes seem to powerfully merge with the lessons of William Carlos Williams,[1] another poet from Paterson whom she particularly admires and seems to regard as a source of inspiration.[2] Just as doctor and obstetrician William Carlos Williams developed what Lina Unali defined as "un metodo medico, un metodo poetico che vuole guarire cantando" (Unali 1982, 344), a *medical method*, aiming at healing the waste land of a "decaying society" through poetry, Maria Mazziotti Gillan, the beloved professor of creative writing, the resolute founder in 1980 and then cherished director of the Poetry Center at Passaic County Community College in Paterson, feels an equal responsibility towards herself and mankind and, as a teacher, carries out her *educational healing mission* by turning her collections of poems into carefully planned *life lessons*,[3] to be read in sequence by learners who do not necessarily share her cultural background but can still draw from it as an invigorating source of endurance, strength and energy. As Maria pointed out in a recently published interview, which stresses the *inclusive quality* of her poetry, "I'm trying to write about what it means to be human, and I hope that subject matter transcends social class [,] gender"(Dougherty 2006, 22) and, one might be tempted to add, ethnicity.

In just over a decade, Maria has published four collections of poems: *Where I Come From* (1995), *Things My Mother Told Me* (1999), *Italian Women in Black Dresses* (2002), and *All That Lies between Us*, released at the beginning of 2007. The first three volumes appear to be tightly linked with one another: from their very title the reader can appreciate the importance Maria Mazziotti Gillan attaches to her origins, which are the core of the first two *life lessons* she wants to teach and which I shall subtitle *Breaking the Silence* and *Strategies for Survival*. The intimate connection between the collections is also confirmed by the frequent reiteration of tropes, images and even by the presence of the same poems republished in different volumes, as if *Professor* Mazziotti Gillan wanted to make sure that her learners fully absorb the message conveyed in her words before proceeding to the next stage. The third *life lesson*, that might be called *Healing*, is central in her latest collection, where themes that transcend the Italian American experience are mainly dealt with and where her ethnic origin, previously perceived as a either a burden or character flaw or as an embracing, protective nest, is ultimately deemed an active source of confidence and general empowerment.

This paper will now explore in detail the three *life lessons* in Maria Mazziotti Gillan's poetry.

Lesson 1: Breaking the Silence

"I didn't write about my family, except for one poem about my father and another about my mother until I was forty years old" (Dougherty 2006, 15). These words by Maria Mazziotti Gillan perfectly summarize the experience shared by many Italian American families, whose origins were often consciously shrouded in silence for fear of being stigmatized, whose past was considered an unutterable secret, whose mother tongue was forcefully muted so that the younger generations could more easily assimilate into an often hostile and intimidating environment. What may be diagnosed as a form of *cultural amnesia* is extensively featured in poems such as "Columbus and the Road to Glory" (*Where I Come From*) where, besides sketching portraits of so many Italian immigrants who "were afraid to speak" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 81), apart from quoting the never-ending list of derogatory stereotypes which labeled their lives ("Dago, Guinea, Wop, Gangster, / Garlic Eater, Mafioso"; Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 82), Maria remembers her mother's warning: "*Sta zitta*, Don't make trouble! *Non far mala figura*" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 83). *Educator* Maria Mazziotti Gillan is always most careful to highlight the responsibility of several teachers who, lacking any form of understanding and cultural awareness, instead of building bridges consolidated ingrained fears of, and widened the existing gap between, Italian American children who were often singled out and the rest of society. Miss Elmer, with her punitive ruler across Maria's little hands[4], Miss Peenyroyal, who used to say that whoever spoke another language at home "would score 100 points lower / at the SAT" ("Kitchen", Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 10), "icy eyed" Miss Barton, who taught her "to be frightened, to keep [her] hands folded / on [her] desk and try to be quiet 'as a mouse'" (Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 33) are just a few examples. The description of Miss Wilson, in "Public School No. 18, Paterson, New Jersey," however, is probably the most remarkable. She humiliates Maria by checking her hair for lice, then she fixes the child with her "opaque" eyes, incapable of reading below the surface, and says: "We must speak English. / We're in America now" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 12). Maria would like to reply, by saying "I am American" but, as she continues, "the evidence is stacked against [her]" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 12), and she remains *silent*. This progressive denial of "that booted country" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 12), to quote Maria's words, her conscious albeit induced attempt at erasing her *Italianness*, prompt her to mimic the paraphernalia of mainstream society. She fantasizes about a "Doris Day life"; she changes her daddy's name Arturo into Arthur and hers into Marie; she mentally transforms the paternal figure "into the imaginary father / in the three piece suit" ("Arturo," Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 50) that she desired instead of her own; she dreams of him as the mirror image of *Father Knows Best* "in his dark business suit, carrying his briefcase into the house" ("Daddy, We Called You," Mazziotti Gillan 1999, 90). When her moment of realization comes, however, she finally understands that she has to *break the silence*. Regaining the powerful voice she had been previously deprived of, she compels America, this time, *to listen;* she decides to take back her name and, echoing the words of Walt Whitman, Maria begins to "celebrate / [her] Italian American self" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 57) and sing a "new anthem":

Here I am
And my skin is warm in the sun
And my dark hair shines,

And today, I take back my name
And wave it in their faces
Like a bright, red flag.
("Growing up Italian", Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 57)

Lesson 2: Strategies for Survival

After acknowledging the value of her cultural heritage, Maria proceeds to teach her readers how to survive the pressures of America. In doing so, she seems to develop two parallel strategies. The first one consists of cherishing to the utmost the members of her family, especially the female figures she eventually identifies with, thus abiding by the "cult of the family bond" that Lina Unali had written about, and turning, in the words of Sean Thomas Daugherty, into a "metaphysician of the household" (Daugherty 2006, 15). Family is pictured as a protective and "luminous circle of love"("Seventeenth Street: Paterson, New Jersey," Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 71) where she can rest peacefully, far from the hectic rhythm of the American way of life. In the poem entitled "Heritage," she compares herself to "those Russian peasant dolls / . . . where the larger dolls open / to reveal smaller dolls" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 112), for her mother, her mother's mother, her daughter, and her son's daughter are all "nested inside [her]" (Mazziotti Gillan 1995, 113). The ring Maria's mother had received as a present for her fiftieth wedding anniversary reminds the poet of the most important lesson her mother taught her: "to treasure [her] children and keep them close. And to approach the world with open hands"("My Mother Gave Me Her Ring," Mazziotti Gillan 1999, 95). Moreover, as we read in the poem meaningfully entitled "Learning How to Love Myself," which concludes the collection entitled *Italian Women in Black Dresses*, she discovers that the tremendous energy oozing from her "thick body" (so distant from the "slender grace" of female American pop icons) actually stems from the empowering "long line of women who taught [her] to laugh / [her] deep belly laugh and grab the world / in [her] arms and squeeze the sweetness out" (Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 141).

The second strategy the poet devises can be summarized in the words that Maria pronounced in the above-quoted 2006 interview: "poetry and my work on behalf of poetry has been for me a kind of salvation" (Dougherty 2006, 13). Besides nurturing the cult of storytelling, a passion with her family members—often compared to sweet and soothing music or to a soft "cashmere shawl"("Kitchen," Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 28) that keeps her warm Maria soon discovers the restorative power of books, the regenerating quality of literature. Reading the masterpieces of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy means being transported "to other / places that caught and held [her] imagination and taught [her] / the power of language to make even the darkest place / beautiful" ("My First Room," Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 24). Plunging into books represents a much more valuable and enjoyable alternative to the superficial life of the American suburbs, as in the poem entitled "Parties," where Maria Mazziotti Gillan describes herself as "always reading, escaping into the world of books / that seemed so much more beautiful and alive / than the world of 19th Street" ("Parties", Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 36). But more than anything else, writing things down, recomposing, objectifying, giving a recognizable shape to grief through words allows the writer (and then the reader) to survive: as she says in the poem "So Many Secrets," "only words [are] able to take away / the ache like baking soda and water" (Mazziotti Gillan 2002, 63). It's not surprising, therefore, that as Maria's husband's disease worsens (he suffers from Parkinson's disease), she feels the urge to devote even more poems to it.

Lesson 3: Healing

This last lesson is entirely taught through the pages of her latest collection, *All That Lies between Us*, that well exemplifies the writer's statement of intent: "writing is an extension of myself, of what I am as a person, and what I do to change the world, to help other people, is part of what I am and part of my own poetry" (Dougherty 2006, 25). Whereas books and literature had been considered a "strategy for survival" in the previous volumes, they now become an effective means of *possessing* that place in the world which was previously denied to Italian Americans and, according to the wider perspective typical of this volume, to women in general. In the poem entitled "Superman," Maria explores the accessory role assigned to girls in the '50s: similar to Lois Lane, they were the ones in the background who provided support, "who helped / but never took center stage" (Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 19). Thus proposing a new and *active* role-model, she affirms that, ever since she was a teen-ager, she never wanted "to be married and pregnant . . . right before [she] graduated, or right after" (Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 19). Rather, she wanted to be a writer, she wanted to develop *her own* talent, aware of the fact that, as a kind of "Superwoman," "words were the way / [she] could leap tall buildings in a single bound" (Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 20). Maria's broader and more inclusive gaze adopt in her latest collection prompts her to deal with world problems, with the excruciating wounds of contemporary history, thus developing and strengthening her civil and social engagement. This is the case of the poem entitled "My Grandson and GI Joe," where "the exploding missiles on TV" and the boys "who went off to Iraq at nineteen" (Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 78), only to come back traumatized and mutilated, are painfully remembered. However, the most striking lesson that Professor Mazziotti Gillan wants to impart in this volume is how the Italian American experience, how the values she herself has learnt since childhood and wants to pass on, can actually contribute to "heal the world" (Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 79). In the same way as her father used to protectively wrap his fig trees and bury them underground each winter, only to resurrect them to life in spring,[5] Maria wants to bring her ailing husband and with him, her variously ailing students who turn to her for help back to her vitalizing roots to reinvigorate him, to rejuvenate with him, to *heal* the wounds of life:

> I would take us both back
> To the 17th Street kitchen, pull you
> Into my memory of that place so filled
> With soft light and arms that held me.
> My father could stir an egg for you
> In a cup. My mother break off a piece
> Of hot bread for you; spread butter on it
> From the Lakeview Dairy crock the milkman
> delivered. My sister and brother could help
> us bake sugar cookies. We could play Monopoly.
> We could leave all our grief in a sack by the door. (Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 62)

Notes

[1] As David Ray wrote on the back cover of the collection *Where I Come From*, "The ghost of William Carlos Williams seems to bless these poems."

[2] Maria Mazziotti Gillian is currently co-editing a collection of essays entitled *Celebrating William Carlos Williams's Influence on American Poetry*.

[3] It should be noted that one of Maria Mazziotti Gillian's collections of essays is called *Identity Lessons*.

[4] "Talismans," Mazziotti Gillan 1995.

[5] "My Father's Fig Trees in Hawthorne, New Jersey," Mazziotti Gillan 2007, 23.

Works Cited

Dougherty, Sean Thomas. "Words Rooted in the Body, An Interview with Maria Mazziotti Gillan." In *Maria Mazziotti Gillan: Essays on Her Work*, ed. Sean Thomas Dougherty, Toronto: Guernica, 2006, 12-28.

Izzo, Donatella, Mariani, Giorgio and Zaccaria, Paola, eds. *American Solitudes: Individual, National, Transnational*, Roma: Carocci, 2007.

Mazziotti Gillan, Maria. *Where I Come from*. Toronto: Guernica, 1995.

_____. *Things My Mother Told Me*. Toronto: Guernica, 1999.

_____. *Italian Women in Black Dresses*. Toronto: Guernica, 2002.

_____. *All That Lies between Us*. Toronto: Guernica, 2007.

Unali, Lina. "*William Carlos Williams.*" In *Letteratura Americana: I contemporanei. Novecento americano*, ed. Elémire Zolla, vol. I, 341-366. Roma: Lucarini, 1982.

_____. "Family Ties and a Sense of the Past in Italian American Women Writers." In Izzo, Mariani, Zaccaria 2007, 71-79.

Constructions/Deconstructions of the Self in Twentieth-Century America: History, Literature and the Arts

Coordinators: Francesca Bisutti De Riz, Gigliola Nocera

Alessandro Clericuzio

Dramatizing the Process of Americanization: Contemporary Asian American Theater

Before D. H. Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* reached Broadway in 1988, Asian American drama was considered an embryonic and localized phenomenon. It had actually started over two decades earlier, when the East West Players company was founded in Los Angeles in 1965. The group was the first theater ensemble to use the words Asian American instead of "oriental," which was starting to be considered improper, offensive and colonialist.

At the beginning of their activity, the group staged intercultural performances of Western classics, as for instance an Asian version of Carlo Goldoni's *Il servitore di due padroni*, set in an imaginary Chinatown inside Venice. As was happening in African American theater as well, the notion of an immutable race was being attacked through a denial of the racialized body as a predetermined signifier. With the Asian American political and intellectual movement in its early stages, the atmosphere was ripe for the emergence of a distinctive voice in the theater. The group held a playwriting contest, whose 1971 winners, Frank Chin and Momoko Iko, are now considered the actual originators of contemporary Asian American drama. It should be specified that these are the beginnings of "continental" drama, for the Hawaiian theater of the territorial period through 1950 had had a meaningful output, voiced by an older Asian community.

At the University of Hawaii, Professor Willard Wilson had encouraged a pioneering generation of Asian American authors and achieved the publication of ten volumes of College Plays. Some of those works have survived, overcoming the limitations of amateurish college activity. One playwright among them is Charlotte Lum, whose 1948 play, *These Unsaid Things*, uses what would become a recurring trope of Asian American drama, the image of the double. Her one-act work presents a Chinese-American family whose three components, Pa, Ma and Lee, are staged side-by-side the personification of their inner selves, Father, Mother and Daughter.

These deeper selves articulate the unspoken feelings of the title, without being heard. Oppressed and repressed, they are portrayed as "faded," or dressed in "light grey" (Lum 1989, 90). Duplication, fragmentation, and the dichotomous expression versus silence are some of the effects brought about by the process of Americanization which is the explicit or implicit subject of most Asian American plays.

Of the ever-expanding canon of this dramatic literature, the first comprehensive bibliography listing fifty published and/or produced authors as of 2002, I will focus on just a few, tracing a selection of recurring elements that have to do with the creation of the Asian American identity, the reaction to the awareness of the concept of otherness, and the negotiation of the role of the stereotype.

By Americanization I intend not only mean the final assimilation but also those acts of confrontation with the hegemonic culture that Asians or Asian Americans must experience in the creation of his/her personal identity. This identity is an individual and social construct which is not—as some would have it—either Asian nor American, and not, simplistically, the result of the acceptance of both, but something new and different. It is the space of the tensions created by "hyphenation."

In some instances, such psychic ruptures find an immediate semiotic counterpart in the highly space-specific genre of theater. In other cases, they directly influence the performing style. Elizabeth Wong's *Letters from a Student Revolutionary*, set at the time of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, objectifies the insurmountable separation of the two protagonists, one living in China under Communism and the other living in California under Consumerism: "The play consists of two separate areas representing China and the United States, respectively. The center space is a neutral territory wherein the rules of time and geography are broken" (Wong 1993, 268). Philip Kan Gotanda's *Yankee Dawg You Die* requires a setting that is "minimal with a hint of fragmentation and distortion of perspective to allow for a subtle dreamlike quality" (Gotanda 1992, 81).

Some characters find a solution and a fusion in a loving marriage, but tragic events can again impose a sense of loss and dislocation that takes the shape of racism and cultural schizophrenia. In Velina Hasu Houston's *Tea*, Himiko addresses her multiracial daughter with a revealing and moving request: "Let me smell the confusion of your American skin" (Houston 1993, 163). Her child is not enough, though, to give her peace of mind and a sense of belonging. Her husband has died, and women like her, once widowed, are "left to wander between two worlds forever," for, as another character says, "countries last; love is mortal" (Houston 1993, 163, 171).

In such connoted spaces, and in situations constantly under scrutiny, as is always the case when identities must be established, small acts belie larger processes at work. In Wakako Yamauchi's 1977 *And the Soul Shall Dance*, Masako, the teenage Nisei girl, teaches newcomer Japanese Kiyoko how not to laugh with her hand in front of her mouth, thus making her lose some Asianness and gain—according to the point of view—some Americanness.

Many of these characters are pitted not only against a WASP counterpart, as is evident in Ross, the American son-in-law of the protagonist of Frank Chin's *The Year of the Dragon* (1974). They are also often measured against another, more Asian character to display or evaluate the different stages of assimilation. This doubling has sometimes been read as a sign of self-hatred.

D. Henry Hwang's 1979 play *FOB* opens with Dale lecturing on the differences between FOBs (Fresh-Off-the-Boat immigrants) and ABCs (American Born Chinese). The ensuing drama is a duel between two such characters over the affection of a girl. In the doubling lies the structure of Hwang's next play as well, *The Dance and the Railroad*. In Wong's *Letters to a Student Revolutionary* there is a Chinese girl who dreams of a forbidden America and an Asian American girl she meets when the latter is touring her parents' homeland on a brief vacation. In Laurence Yep's *Pay the Chinaman* (1987), the two characters lie to each other about their real background and the exact date of their arrival in the United States, thus differently determining their power positions.

For some of these characters the abandonment of old habits for new ones is as painless and immediate as Kiyoko's learning Masako's "belly laughter" (Yamauchi 1990, 165). For Emiko, in the same play, exposure to America becomes the site of resistance. She is the Japanese wife of Kiyoko's father, and during her stay in California she does nothing but dream of her homeland. With her silences and her solitary dances in the desert, she withstands the process of Americanization and protects her Asian self. What she wants to avoid is the same that her Issei, or first generation Japanese American, neighbor Hana, explains as a natural process: "Well, it's not easy… but one has to know when to bend… like the bamboo" (Yamauchi 1990, 148).

Some of these characters completely refuse such a metamorphosis. The Nissei (a second generation Japanese American) Nobu, in Philip Kan Gotanda's *The Wash* (1987), not only feels terribly ashamed of his Sansei, or third generation, daughter's marriage to a black man. He also insists that his grandson be raised with the line of descent still identifiable: he has a name for fourth-generation Japanese Americans, as if to suggest that the ethnic line or matrix will never be blurred by Americanization. "But *happa* [multiracial] kids are the next generation," says his daughter, to whom he responds, "*No*. Japanese marry other Japanese, their kids are *Yonsei* [fourth-generation Japanese American]—not these damn *ainoko* [multiracial]!" (Gotanda 1990, 63-64)

In *Pay the Chinaman*, immigration and Americanization are transformed into an allegorical game of cards, with the passage across the ocean symbolized by the passage of cards from one player to the other, and the aim of players being to win as much money as possible from their opponents. The names of the two players are Con Man and Young Man, but they are both actually quite tricky: this short play is an indictment not only of the economic nature of the process of Americanization, but also of the identification and the marginalization of "otherness."

Self and other, Asian and American, Asian and Asian American, Yep suggests, are like the stakes at risk in an illegal gambling. The play takes place in 1893; shortly after that period, the image of the bet will give way to a more explicit capitalist market of identity. In *And the Soul Shall Dance*, set in the 1930s, Emiko saves her pennies to be able to buy herself a ticket back to Japan, only to discover that the money has been stolen by her husband to satisfy his newly arrived daughter's needs. Emiko's chances of resisting Americanization and returning to Japan are thus explicitly monetized, and indeed, literally stolen from her. The equation between money and identity is even clearer when Emiko finds out that her savings have been used to pay for the girl's hair perm: just arrived, Issei Kiyoko can "look like a regular American girl" (Yamauchi 1990, 170). And the only thing Emiko herself has brought from Japan, her silk kimonos, reminders of her Asianness, is what she tries to sell when she finds out she's been robbed.

The male characters in D. H. Hwang's *FOB* relate to each other in a complex, even contradictory, economic context that defines Asian American identity. Ideally, material success is thought to be incompatible with a pure Chinese immigrant, who has a "social conscience," but whose personal identity—as opposed to de-individualization, marginalization and identity erasure—is finally never truly separated in America from an active position in the capitalistic arena.

If Asian Americans are often annihilated as "nobodies," as many characters complain they are, it is mainly because their economic status must be denied in a capitalistic society where it is everything. So, a character in Yamauchi's 1980 play *The Music Lesson* tells of the impossibility of gaining a social presence in the California of the Depression Era, when thousands of Japanese survived by doing part-time farm work with no fixed income: "you go to a produce company—in Los Angeles—put on a good suit, talk big… how you going to make big money for them. Get in debt. Then you pay back after the harvest. (*The futility of it occurs to him*) Then you borrow again next year. Then you pay back. If you can. Same thing next year. You never get the farm. The farm gets you" (Yamauchi 1990, 68).

Otherness is thus construed as just another commodity in the capitalistic market that the United States evolved into from the end of the nineteenth century on. In this economy of identity and otherness, the stereotype is a universally recognized coin. As such, it can also be falsified. The greatest manipulator of stereotype on stage is notoriously D. H. Hwang. Much of his worldwide fame is due to his—and his character Song Li Ling's—clever exploitation of the enormous power of the stereotype to psychologically control the other. In the case of *M. Butterfly*, instead of a process of Americanization, though, we witness what could be defined as Gallimard's slow and painful Asianization. But Hwang returns to the stereotype, "a theatrical sign that is violently and rigidly oversignified" (Lee 1997, 93), in his 1992 play *Bondage*.

Here, the marketability of the stereotype is not, in the action of the play, a metaphor: it is a sheer monetary negotiation between buyer and seller. Terri, the dominatrix of an erotic parlor, assumes various predetermined and mainly racial identities: the wild African American, the submissive Asian, the powerful Caucasian. She does so as nothing more, nothing less, than a job. At the beginning of the play, her customer is chained, showing the symbolic ties to a single racial social role. She immediately unchains him, thus giving him the possibility, in the sexual game in which they are both masked, to choose the identities he prefers. He chooses, or is forced to choose, Gallimard. According to his apparently masochistic tastes, he is most demeaned, getting down on all fours, when she projects the Bruce Lee stereotype on him: "I'm defeated, I'm humiliated. I'm whipped to the bone" (Hwang 2000, 260).

It is not that this revelation of the insubstantiality of the stereotypical image comes from a highly sexually connoted setting. Among the many stereotypes that have been imposed on Asian Americans, one of the most wounding has been that of the emasculated man. Frank Chin's plays, *The Chickencoop Chinaman* and *The Year of the Dragon*, initiators of contemporary Asian American drama, have been the most controversial to date. They have been read as misogynist, homophobic and male chauvinist. But for Chin, writes scholar Josephine Lee, "the crisis lies in compounding this castration anxiety for the Asian American male by a historical racism that defines 'Asian' and 'male' as incompatible" (Lee 1997, 64). In his work, even an Asian American woman who "marries out white" is considered an enemy and a perpetrator of the prejudice which sees the Asian man as not virile enough. This why she must be insulted and ascribed the easily classifiable role of the stereotypical man-eater.

If, for a long time, the stereotype has been used by dominant culture to silence the tensions of encounter, in the hands of the previously marginalized it becomes a sharp weapon that exposes the same tensions. This is what happens in Chay Yew's 1998 play *A Beautiful Country*, where an immigrant officer explicitly declares that money alone can provide a way to legally reside in America. He stops a Malaysian character at the immigration and naturalization counter and asks:

> Can you demonstrate—show me—the funds you have for the trip?
> Funds
> Money
> Yen
> You have the money? Cash? Traveler's Checks?
> (Yew 2002, 173)

The Malaysan character is a drag performer who uses the stage name "Miss Visa Denied" and is dressed like Madonna. This pinpoints another recurring element of Asian American drama: the huge responsibility that the mass media assumes in providing role models. Many characters look to media-induced images to shape the American side of their identity: Bibi, the Asian American woman in *Letters from a Student Revolutionary*, acts like Bette Davis; Chiz in *Tea* identifies with Audrey Hepburn; John Travolta sets the standard for normalcy to be imitated in Hwang's *FOB*; Tam, in *The Chickencoop Chinaman*, imagines his boyhood cartoon hero, The Lone Ranger, to be a Chinese American in disguise, passing as white thanks to the mask that hides his features.

Philip Kan Gotanda's *Yankee Dawg You Die* is a detailed investigation of the role of the stereotype in the formation of a racist American attitude towards Asian Americans. Brad and Vincent, two Japanese-American actors, must compete in order to be chosen as the fittest for the mass-media portrayal of the Asian Other. Again the economic nature of identity is underscored by the almost inevitable metaphorical use of the acting profession—through visibly distinct racial body features—to further the representation of the stereotype, especially when no better roles are available on the market-place. To survive financially, the actor must comply with an act of dehumanization.

This is comically staged by Vincent playing the 1940's Japanese Sergeant Moto:

> You stupid American G.I. I know you try and escape. You think you can pull my leg. I speakee your language. I graduate UCLA, Class of '34. I drive big American car with big-chested American blond sitting next to… Heh? No, no, no, not 'dirty floor.' Floor clean. Just clean this morning. 34. No, no, no, not 'dirty floor.' Listen carefully. Watch my lips. (Gotanda 1992, 84)

But it is also tragically presented as a lack of coherence between reality and art. Stage directions follow, indicating that he "*moves his lips but the words are not synched with them à la poorly dubbed Japanese monster movie*" (Gotanda 1992, 84).

In the case of Yew's *A Beautiful Country*, the much-feared feminization of the Asian American male is now deployed as a reminder that the act of migration destabilizes more boundaries than the geographical, social and racial categories may contain. Significantly, Yew's play also blurs historical boundaries, for it dramatizes Visa's present interspersed with glimpses of an Asian-American past. Many of these plays are also meant to negotiate the definition of Asian-America through a rewriting of history. Genny Lim's 1910s in *Paper Angels*, set in the infamous San Francisco detention center; Wakako Yamauchi's 1930s, Momoko Iko's 1940s, Velina Hasu Houston's 1960s in *Tea* (which stages the drama of segregated "war brides"), Laurence Yep's turn-of-the nineteenth century and Hwang's modification of history in literally rewriting an 1867 episode in *The Dance and the Railroad*.

By focussing on the early—or recent—stages of development of Asian American identity, and unveiling a history of systematic exclusion, these plays go to the roots of the stereotype as the ultimate product of an institutionally constructed difference. Theater, in many such cases, is history in the making, and the act of performance gains a greater than usual political significance.

Works Cited

Gotanda, Philip Kan. *Yankee Dawg You Die*. 1988. In *New American Plays: Vol. 1*, ed. Peter Filichia. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1992.

____. *The Wash*. 1987. In *Between Worlds. Contemporary Asian American Plays*, ed. Mischa Burton. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1990.

Houston, Velina Hasu. *Tea* (1987). In *Unbroken Thread. An Anthology of Plays by Asian American Women*, ed. Roberta Uno. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.

Hwang, Henry David. *Bondage*. 1992. In *Looking for Chinatown: Selected Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2000.

Lee, Josephine. *Performing Asian America. Race and Ethnicity on the Contemporary Stage*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.

Lum, Charlotte. *These Unsaid Things*. 1948. In *Paké. Chinese Writing in Hawaii,* eds. Eric Chock and Darrell H.Y. Lum. Honolulu: Bamboo Ridge, 1989.

Wong, Elizabeth. *Letters from a Student Revolutionary*. 1991. In Uno, ed., *Unbroken Thread*.

Yamauchi, Wakako. *And the Soul Shall Dance*. 1977. In Burton, ed. *Between Worlds*.

____. *The Music Lessons*. 1980. In Uno, ed., *Unbroken Thread*.

Yew, Chay. *A Beautiful Country*. 1998. In *The Hyphenated American*. New York: Grove, 2002.

Marina Coslovi

Old Sentiments, New Rules: The Issue of Feminine Identity in Dorothy Parker

> I'm a feminist, and God knows I'm loyal to my sex
> and you must remember that from my very early days,
> when this city was scarcely safe from buffaloes,
> I was in the struggle for equal rights for women.
> (Parker 2006, 577)

Dorothy Parker was a feminist, but she was first and foremost a wit. Maybe she became a wit precisely because she was unable to fully identify with anything else. For example, the statement above might encourage one to construe her as the type of feminist she was not. Loyalty did not imply group solidarity for her, as the closing remark—her usual punch line (not published above)—shows: "But when we paraded through the catcalls of men and when we chained ourselves to lamp posts to try to get our equality—dear child, we did not foresee those female writers."[1]

There were many other elements of the new female identity that left her unconvinced. Her friend Ruth Hale's fight for preserving one's maiden name, for instance (Cott 1987, 179). Parker deeply admired Ruth's courage and determination, yet she would never have dreamt of reverting to her maiden name. "I married him [her first husband, Edwin Pond Parker II] in order to change my name," she had declared once—and although this had sounded like a joke at the time, there was some truth in it. Taking on the identity of Parker's wife was, among other things, a way of hiding her Jewish background—a background that for Dorothy Rothschild, who was sent by her Catholic step-mother to a school run by nurses in order to "redeem" her, had been problematic from an early age (see Meade 1988).[2] "I was just a little Jewish girl, trying to be cute," she added on another occasion. And again, as is always the case with Parker, there was more truth in what she said than people thought.

She was a woman, she was Jewish, she was born into an age of great social change accelerated by WWI, she was one of the "Lost Generation." She belonged to all of these realities, and she could fully identify with none of them: for she could not help seeing how contradictory and how artificially imposed these selves were.[3] There was nothing she could do to change these circumstances, but she could use her wit to signal her discomfort—which is what she famously did.

Indeed, her career was launched by her subtly grappling in her poems and short stories with one of the popular and most controversial ideas of her time: modern love, that is to say, love in the Jazz Age. Modern love implied a revolution in sex relations. The new fashionable young women—the flappers who, as is well known, dismayed their elders by discarding corsets, shortening their skirts, bobbing their hair, drinking and smoking—wanted a new, equal relationship with the members of the opposite sex (see Cott 1987, Hanson 1999, Meade 2004). They flouted the Victorian morality of their elders that wanted them passive and demure, and were as free and active in enjoying love and sexuality as their male counterparts. This is Parker's prototypical flapper:

> "Figures in Popular Literature: The Flapper"
>
> The playful flapper here we see,
> The fairest of the fair.
> She's not what Grandma used to be—
> You might say, au contraire.
> Her girlish ways may make a stir,
> Her manners cause a scene,
> But there is no more harm in her
> Than in a submarine.
>
> She nightly knocks for many a goal
> The usual dancing men.
> Here speed is great, but her control
> Is something else again.
> All spotlights focus on her pranks,
> All tongues her prowess herald,
> For which she may well tender thanks
> To God and Scott Fitzgerald.
> (Parker 1999, 292-293)[4]

Flappers were not supposed to idealize love as their mothers had. They were supposed to take its comings and goings as matter-of-factly as their partners did—or so went the discourse of modern love, popularized by magazines, films, advertising and books. To belong to the Jazz Age meant to practice modern love. And the daring young women who wanted to be part of modernity tried to conform to the model.

Here is another flapper:

“Observation”

If I don’t drive around the park,
I’m pretty sure to make my mark.
If I’m in bed each night at ten,
I may get back my looks again.
If I abstain from fun and such,
I’ll probably amount to much;
But I shall stay the way I am,
Because I do not give a damn.
(Parker 1999, 112)

And here are two instances of modern love, expressed again through Parker’s signature ironic verse, in which the dogtrot rhythm reinforces the seriousness of the subject:[5]

“Ultimatum”

I’m wearied of wearying love, my friend,
Of worry, and strain and doubt;
Before we begin, let us view the end,
And maybe I’ll do without.
There’s never the pang that was worth the tear,
And toss in the night I won’t—
So either you do or you don’t, my dear,
Either you do or you don’t!

The table is ready, so lay your cards
And if they should augur pain,
I’ll tender you ever my kindest regards
And run for the fastest train.
I haven’t the will to be spent and sad;
My heart’s to be gay and true—
Then either you don’t or you do, my lad,
Either you don’t or you do!
(Parker 1999, 312)

“Unfortunate Coincidence”

By the time you swear you’re his,
Shivering and sighing,
And he vows his passion is
Infinite, undying—
Lady, make a note of this:
One of you is lying.
(Parker 1999, 96)

The punch line of the poem above hits much harder when one realizes that it may be the woman, not the man, who is lying. Equality in love could lead to a reversal in traditional gender dynamics and could affect a modern woman’s attitude to men:

> "Men"
>
> They hail you as their morning star
> Because you are the way you are.
> If you return the sentiment,
> They'll try to make you different;
> And once they have you, safe and sound,
> They want to change you all around.
> Your moods and ways they put a curse on:
> They'd make of you another person.
> They cannot let you go your gait;
> They influence and educate.
> They'd alter all that they admire.
> They make me sick, they make me tired.
> (Parker 1999, 109)

This was only the theory of modern love, though. In practice, modern love was an imperfect affair, since it antagonized and intersected other current discourses about gender relations.[6] And it was precisely these contradictions that Parker hit with her smart poems and her stories.

As "Men" shows, there came a moment when even men started to "influence and educate," or in other words, to apply other, older parameters of morality on modern women. The positions of their elders were still endorsed and prevalent, after all, and the truth was that, try as they might, many young women were not able to change or abandon them.

The new love based on sexual expression could prove a source of vitality and personality—but for many young women romantic love continued as the ideal, and the struggle to conform to the fashionable idea of love put them under tremendous pressure. On the one hand, they suffered from age-old pains of love because of their partners' treatment of them; on the other, they were expected to follow the rules of the game coolly and nonchalantly. This is the experience of the protagonist of "The Last Tea," for instance. Parker exposes her predicament at the very opening of the story:

> The young man in the chocolate-brown suit sat down at the table, where the girl with the artificial camellia had been sitting for forty minutes.
>
> "Guess I must be late," he said. "Sorry you've been waiting."
>
> "Oh, goodness!" she said. "I just got here myself, just about a second ago. I simply went ahead and ordered because I was dying for a cup of tea. I was late myself. I haven't been here more than a minute." (Parker 2006, 182)

A flapper is not supposed to "crab," so the protagonist lies. After that, she has to listen to the young man telling her of his new passion for another girl without showing any sign of resentment. Finally, she withdraws from his life as a pal is expected to do:

> "Wait till I pay the check," he said, "and I'll put you on a bus."
>
> "Oh, don't bother," she said, . . . "I suppose you want to stand and call up your friend from here?"
>
> "It's an idea," he said. "Sure you'll be all right?"
>
> "Oh, sure," she said. Busily she gathered her gloves and purse, and left her chair. He rose, not quite fully, as she stopped by him.
>
> "When'll I see you again?" she said.
>
> . . . "I'm all tied up, down at the office and everything. Tell you what I'll do, I'll give you a ring."
>
> "Honestly, I have more dates!" she said. "It's terrible, I don't know when I'll have a minute. But you call up, will you? (Parker 2006, 185-186)

The modern young woman of "The Last Tea" does not cry, does not make a scene. In practice, the behavior required of her by her Jazz Age identity deprive her of the outlet her mother and grandmother would have been granted in a similar situation—although it is obvious that she suffers in the same old-fashioned way. Comradeship between lovers who part is "A Fable," as Parker states in a poem that could have been written by our unfortunate flapper:

Oh, there once was a lady, and so I've been told,
Whose love grew weary, whose lover grew cold.
"My child," he remarked, "though our episode ends,
In the manner of men, I suggest we be friends."
And the truest of friends ever after they were—
Oh, they lied in their teeth when they told me of her!
(Parker 1999, 219)

If you dared scratch a flapper, Parker indicates, you could easily find beneath the surface a romantic woman experiencing love in a quite different way:

"Two-volume Novel"

The sun's gone dim, and
The moon's turned black;
For I loved him, and
He didn't love back.
(Parker 1999, 239)

The discourse of modern love urged women to behave like their male partners. But, as Parker's poems and stories pointed out, there was only deceptive equality in this. In theory, men and women were now allowed to meet on common ground. In practice, Parker suggests, it was the girls who had to walk all the way, assuming an identity modeled on male habits and needs.

Parker never sanctions the flapper's behavior as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a feminist belonging to an earlier generation, did; and yet her writings show that like Gilman, she was perfectly aware that there was a basic flaw in this model that women tried to identify with to keep up with the times. Gilman explicitly condemned modern female "licentiousness" regarding it as an imitation of the vices of men "precisely in the manner of that of any servile class suddenly set free" (Cott 1987, 150). By pitting modern love against other discourses of love, Parker's writings endorse, through irony, Gilman's criticism.[7]

Women, Parker shows, kept on thinking and feeling differently from men, as "General Review of the Sex Situation" clearly shows:

> Woman wants monogamy;
> Man delights in novelty.
> Love is woman's moon and sun;
> Man has other forms of fun.
> Woman lives but in her lord:
> Count to ten, and man is bored.
> With this the gist and sum of it,
> What earthly good can come of it?
> (Parker 1999, 115)

"What earthly good can come of it?" Parker was never able to answer to hat question, but like Gilman she thought women were often the victims of their own confused groping for identity. And her loyalty to her sex, her brand of feminism, urged her to depict the situation implacably. She did so in "Big Blonde," the most autobiographical of her short stories, in which she portrays the main character, Hazel Morse, wrestling with contrasting female identities: the modern, carefree "good sport" and the sentimental, retiring housewife. Parker does not commiserate with Hazel—she shows her for what she is: a confused woman who depends on the others, men especially, for her own identity, and never tries to choose for herself. Identity for her means compliance with the requirements of her circle of friends; when she becomes too tired to respond to their expectations, the only alternative she can think of is suicide:

> The thought of death came and stayed with her and lent her a sort of drowsy cheer. It would be nice, nice and restful, to be dead. . . . She played voluptuously with the thought of cool, sleepy retreat . . . She dreamed by day of never again putting on tight shoes, of never having to laugh and listen and admire, of never more being a good sport. Never. (Parker 2006, 101)

When her suicide attempt fails, she simply goes back to her toilsome role of cheerful blonde in high heels.

The case of the protagonist of "The Waltz" is different. Here Parker gives us a woman who is perfectly aware of playing a role that camouflages her real identity. The part she takes on is that of the yielding, ladylike woman described with scorn by the flapper of "Interview":

> The ladies men admire, I've heard,
> Would shudder at a wicked word.
> Their candle gives a single light,
> They'd rather stay at home at night.
> They do not keep awake till three,
> Nor read erotic poetry.
> They never sanction the impure,
> Nor recognize an overture.
> They shrink from powders and from paints.
> So far, I have had no complaints.
> (Parker 1999, 117)

What the protagonist of "The Waltz" pretends to be is reported in her replies to the clumsy young man who invites her to dance: "Why, thank you so much, I'd adore to . . . I'm simply thrilled. I'd love to dance with you" (Parker 2006, 46-47). But another self is revealed by what she actually thinks of her dancing partner:

> I don't want to dance with him. I don't want to dance with anybody. And even if I did, it wouldn't be him. . . . Just think, not a quarter of an hour ago, here I was sitting, feeling so sorry for the poor girl he was dancing with. And now *I'm* going to be the poor girl . . . I wonder what I'd better do—kill him this instant, with my naked hands, or wait and let him drop in his traces. . . . Still, if we were back at the table, I'd probably have to talk to him. Look at him—what could you say to a thing like that! Did you go to the circus this year, what's your favorite kind of ice cream, how do you spell cat? (Parker 2006, 46-52)

Her real thoughts and her identity are not socially viable, and she chooses to disguise them in order to be accepted—or in other words, in order to trap men in the dance of life. But in prevailing upon her real self and convincing herself that she has no way out—save death—she falls in a trap of her own making, as Parker emphasizes:

> And I had to go and tell him that I'd adore to dance with him. I cannot understand why I wasn't stuck right down dead. Yes, and being dead would look like a day in the country, compared to struggling out a dance with this boy. But what could I do? Everyone else at the table had got up to dance, except him and me. There I was, trapped. Trapped like a trap in a trap. (Parker 2006, 47-48)

Parker offered no winning solution to the predicament of women looking for an unaffected identity. She never wrote a *Herland*; and indeed, she made the contrast between her accentuated feminine appearance—her exquisite manners, her penetrating perfume, her elegant dresses and hats—and her sharp, wild, "unfeminine" tongue, the key to her success as a wit. Her dissection of the plight of women torn between contrasting identities was a crucial contribution to the development of women's awareness and self-respect, though. And this has been recognized by women readers through the years.

As the opening of this paper hinted at, feminine identity was not the only problematic identity for Parker. Her identity as a pro-Communist fighting for workers' rights in the Depression era while earning—and squandering—a lavish salary in Hollywood was equally troublesome, as was that of an alcoholic planning suicide who died of old age.

Parker wrote her epitaph when she was still young. It is an epitaph that calls attention to her manifold identities, and with an unbeatable concluding line: EXCUSE MY DUST. Here Parker gives us the housewife, apologizing for her untidy house; and the flapper, speeding by us in her fashionable motor car and covering us with street dust. Finally, she tenders us her ashes: the ashes of a female wit.[8]

Notes

[1] "The Misses Baldwin, Ferber, Norris." Edna Ferber was one of the members of the so-called Algonquin Round Table, of which Parker was, notoriously, another associate. On the Algonquin Round Table see Gaines 1977.

[2] On Parker as a Jewish writer see Bloom 1998.

[3] For a discussion of cultural identity see Hall 1998.

[4] F.S. Fitzgerald's "philosophers," as he called the flappers' partners in his collection of short stories *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920).

[5] On Parker's verse see Kinney 1998. On Parker's use of modern love in her poetry see Miller 2005.

[6] For a discussion of sentimentalism, one gendered aspects of Parker's divided self, see Pettit 2000.

[7] Gilman's social thought and struggle for women's emancipation is exemplified by her *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898). On the New Woman (of which the flapper was a later, if banal and degenerate, popular embodiment), see Smith-Rosenberg 1986.

[8] For the tragic-comic story of the interment of Parker's ashes (after her death in 1967 her ashes sat for twenty-one years, first in the cabinet of a mortuary, then in a lawyer's office, before her final interment in a memorial garden in Baltimore dedicated to her by the NAACP, the heir of her literary estate) see the *Dorothy Parker Society*, http://www.dorothyparker.com/dot33.htm.

Works Cited

Bloom, Harold. *Jewish Women Fiction Writers*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1998.

Cott, Nancy F. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1987.

Dorothy Parker Society, http://www.dorothyparker.com.

Gaines, James R. *Wit's End: Days and Nights of the Algonquin Round Table*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1977.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Women and Economics. The Economic Factor between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, ed. Carl Degler. New York: Harper, 1966.

Hall, Stuart, ed. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, 1998.

Hanson, Erica. *A Cultural History of the United States through the Decades: The 1920s*. San Diego, CA: Lucent Books, 1999.

Kinney, Arthur. *Dorothy Parker*. New York: Twayne, 1998.

Meade, Marion. *Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell is This? A Biography*. London: Heimann-Mandarin, 1988.

____. *Bobbed Hair and Buthtub Gin: Writers Running Wild in the Twenties*. New York: Harcourt, 2004.

Miller, Nina. "Making Love Modern: Dorothy Parker and Her Public." In *The Critical Waltz. Essays on the Work of Dorothy Parker*, ed. Rhondha S. Petitt. Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005: 41-61.

Parker, Dorothy. *Complete Poems*. New York: Penguin, 1999.

____. *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, ed. Marion Meade. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Pettit, Rhonda S. *A Gendered Collision: Sentimentalism and Modernism in Dorothy Parker's Poetry and Fiction*. Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000.

Smith-Rosenberg, Caroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Stefano Luconi

Italian Americans' Self-Representation at the Dawn of the 21st Century

In the last few years, the grail of "whiteness" has shaped the great bulk of research into the experience of US ethnic groups from European backgrounds both within and outside academia. As a result, an extensive and still growing bibliography is now available about how, after making their way across the Atlantic, the Irish, the Jews, and other ethnic minorities from the Old World struggled to be accepted as white and to be separated from blacks in US public opinion (Ignatiev 1995; Brodkin 1998; Roediger 2002).[1]

Historical and sociological inquiry concerning Italian Americans has been no exception to this trend. Drawing a subtle distinction between race and color in such a case study focusing on Chicago, Thomas A. Guglielmo (2003) has contended that in late-nineteenth century, immigrants from the Italian peninsula were considered "white on arrival." In other words, in his own view, although Italian newcomers were understood as belonging to a different "Latin race," they enjoyed all the legal privileges of "whiteness": naturalization, property ownership, and access to material resources that, conversely, were denied to African Americans. Nonetheless, previous and subsequent studies have insisted on the initial racial status of Italian Americans as "in between" and their subsequently slow emancipation from the "non white" category. From Robert Orsi (1992), James R. Barrett and David R. Roediger (1997) to Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (2003), including once again David R. Roediger (2005), scholars have focused on the timing and mechanics of the acquisition of a white identity by the offspring of the turn-of-the-20th-century Italian immigrants, whom US society initially placed halfway between Caucasian and black groups because of the dark complexion of many of these immigrants from the southern regions of the peninsula. In the mid 1980s, sociologist Richard Alba (1985) stressed the demise of an Italian-American self-image based on national roots in favor of a white identity that members of this minority had come to share with other immigrant minorities of European extraction. Even law scholar David A.J. Richards (1999) has pointed to the racialization of Italian Americans' collective identity. In his opinion, Italian

Americans turned to whiteness and embraced its system of racial values to distance themselves from African Americans and avert the bigotry of members of the WASP component of the US society—especially in the latter's bloodiest and most vicious manifestations such as lynchings.[2]

However, the hypothesis of Italian Americans' "whitening" has not been without controversy. This process of redefinition in both self-representation and public perception has implied some kind of progressive accommodation within the US establishment, the access to the skin privileges enjoyed by the mainstream, and even the eventual acquisition of white supremacist attitudes. Fearful of the negative implications of an Americanization in terms of a racial assimilation hinting at some continuity between the "Plymouth Rock whiteness" and the "Ellis Island whiteness" (Jacobson 2006, 7), a number of historians of Italian ancestry have made a point of arguing that the present-day US population of Italian descent still retains an ethnic self-perception based on its national origin as opposed to any sense of white affiliation and solidarity (Vecoli 1995; Gambino 1997). In this perspective, the allegedly persistent anti-Italian prejudices and discrimination in the United States have made key contributions to inhibiting the demise of Italian Americans' ethnic identity and awareness. However, it seems that, in the wake of the growing polarization of US society along racial lines despite cosmetic commitment to multiculturalism and diversity, such commentators have primarily endeavored to prevent their own fellow ethnics from being associated with the white backlash at African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics that has periodically undergone revitalization even after the passing of civil rights legislation in the mid 1960s (Vecoli 2006).

On the other hand, less politically—or ethnically—motivated academicians have pointed to the survival of an ethnic consciousness among European minorities into the early third millennium. Contrary to the idea of a "quintuple melting pot" of European Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans as defined by David A. Hollinger (1995, 19-50) in his own interpretation of a currently "post-ethnic America" where racial affiliations have nowadays replaced ethnic identities, Matthew Frey Jacobson (2006) has recently offered a case in point for such scholarship by highlighting how immigrant groups from the other northern shore of the Atlantic, including specifically Italian Americans, have continued to revitalize and recreate ancestral cultures and markers in the last few decades. Consequently, in his view, the ethnic revival of the late 1960s and early 1970s was not the last hurrah before assimilation and has actually never come to a close.

Data from the latest federal census of the population apparently corroborate such a thesis. Almost sixteen million US residents claimed Italian ancestry in

2000, as opposed to about fifteen million in 1990 (US Bureau of the Census 2000, table QT-02). Indeed, a few community activists and even scholars have referred to this slight seven-percent rise to suggest that the ethnic identity of Italian Americans has undergone significant recovery in the last few years and enjoys remarkable vitality today (Annotico 2002; Vecoli 2002, 55, 85-86; Juliani 2008, 14-15).

Yet this interpretation blurs the difference between the quantity of Italian Americans and the quality of their Italianness. Actually, although the federal census reports list national ancestries, they do not record ethnic self-images. In other words, the census data provide quantitative information about the existence of roughly sixteen million US residents from an Italian background but do not tell us to what an extent the lives of these people are Italian-American or are perceived as such.

During the 1990s fashion, foodways, and a few achievements in the Italian state's battle against organized crime as well as some of its political reforms which seemed to curb corruption and misgovernment helped improve the image of Italy in the eyes of US public opinion as opposed to the perception of the country as the "flawed" democracy that had been its widespread image in the United States at the end of the previous decade (Chubb andVannicelli 1988). In 2001, for instance, 78 percent of the American people had a "very favorable" or "mostly favorable" opinion of Italy (Gallup 2002, 35, 43, 84). Against this backdrop, an increasing number of individuals of Italian extraction may have been encouraged to declare rather than disavow their ethnic ancestry while reporting to census takers (Martellone 2002, 741).

However, there are other parameters that offer more reliable insights into the real sense of identity of the present-day US population of Italian extraction than mere census figures. An examination of such issues calls for a reassessment of the hypothesis concerning the current strength of the Italian-American self-perception.

Ethnic clubs and organizations were the backbone of the Italian-American communities in the decades of mass immigration from the Italian peninsula (Bugiardini 2002). Nevertheless, membership in such associations has undergone a steady decline in the last few years. When the 2000 Census figures were released, the largest one association—the Order Sons of Italy in America (2002)—claimed fewer than six hundred thousand members.[3] This figure included members who were not of Italian ancestry but joined the association after the Order had opened its doors to all individuals "who love Italian things" regardless of their national extraction. Moreover, even if all the fewer than six hundred thousand members of the Order had been of Italian descent, they would have been a very small fraction of the nearly sixteen million Italian Americans listed in the 2000 Census. Conversely, this organization had roughly three hundred thousand affiliates in the interwar years when the US population of Italian ancestry did not exceed five million (Venturini 1984-1985, 448). In addition, according to insider Dominic R. Massaro (2006, 33), the official national historian of the Order, there are only 75,000 regular dues-paying members and the number of lodges of the association has shrunk nationwide from more than 2,700 in the 1970s to about seven hundred today.

Language maintenance is another criterion for evaluating the survival of ethnic consciousness because it is a medium through which ancestral values and culture are transmitted. Actually, as Nancy C. Carnevale (2006, 471) has suggested, "language is critical to the creation of individual and group subjectivity" among national minorities. Italian is perhaps the third or fourth most widely taught language in the United States today. Yet there were roughly sixty-four thousand students of Italian in US high schools in 2000 and about fifty thousand at college and university level in 1998. These aggregate data do not offer an ancestry breakdown. However, even if all these students were from Italian backgrounds, they would still constitute an almost negligible minority within the total US population of Italian origin. Indeed, 95 percent of those of Italian ancestry born between 1976 and 1985 speak only English (Alba, Nee 2003, 74). Therefore, Italian Americans have hardly experienced the resurfacing of a native language that is part of the attempt by third and later immigrant generations to reconstruct their own ethnic identity (Fishman 1989; Veltman 1983).

Moreover, Italian-American communities themselves are on the verge of demise. The disappearance of the "Little Italies" throughout the United States was reported almost at the same time the 2000 Census figures were released (Getlin 2002; Glatzer 2003; Krase 2004). Traditional Italian-American neighborhoods no longer exist as such. On the one hand, most residents of Italian ancestry have moved to the suburbs, advancing during the post-war decades from blue-collar jobs and working-class communities to white-collar occupations and upper-level residential districts, following a pattern of dispersal that was typical for many other European immigrant minorities as well (Torrieri 1990; Alba, Logan, Crowder 1997). Movement to the suburbs, however, has also taken on momentum in the wake of the influx of black dwellers into inner-city wards; Italian Americans—along with other white ethnic groups of European extractions—refused to share their neighborhoods and public schools with colored people (Michney 2006; Ramirez 2007, 345-346). Paul Pisiciano, who moved from the Bronx to Manhattan after becoming an architect, has recalled that "we went to college. Our whole neighborhood became professionals. . . . Everybody started to get a piece of the rock. Everybody wanted have a house away from the niggers. Now guys were talking about niggers: I gotta move out or my kids. . ." (quoted in Terkel 1984, 142). On the other hand, Newark, New Jersey, on the east coast, St. Louis, Missouri, in the south, San Diego, California on the west coast (Immerso 1997; Mormino 1986, 240; Fiore 1999, 97-100), and several "Little Italies" wound up destroyed within the implementation of urban renewal projects. Only few have remained, among these "Federal Hill" in Providence and South Philadelphia in Philadelphia (Lynch 1978; Dubin 1996).

Many of the surviving "Little Italies," however, such as Boston's North End and the Bella Vista section of South Philadelphia, underwent gentrification—namely, physical renovation to increase real estate values—and lost in part their ethnic connotations with the arrival of new upper-middle-class homeowners and the subsequent displacement of native residents who could not afford the significant growth in rents and cost of living (Lang 1982, 17-19; Kilburn 2005). If some inner-city blocks still retain some Italian flavor and characteristics, such features are mostly artificial; former ethnic "ghettos" are being preserved less as neighborhoods for their inhabitants than as tourist attractions for visitors (Conforti 1996). To quote sociologist Jerome Krase (1999, 163-165), such areas continue primarily as "Pompeian-like ruins" or "Ethnic Disneylands" and "Theme Parks" in a metropolitan milieu that endeavors to capitalize on urban consumers' growing interest in ethnic food, shopping, and emotions.

A significant weakening of Italian Americans' commitment to their ancestral land, added to the collapse of the "Little Italies," highlights the decline in the relevance of ethnic identity among Italian Americans. Before the mid 1990s, immigrants and their offspring often mobilized en masse to support the interests of their native country. Regardless of how successful their efforts were, many Italian Americans lobbied Congress and the White House concerning a number of issues that were intended to benefit their fatherland: the extension of Italy's sovereignty to the Croatian city of Fiume at the end of World War I, the renegotiation of Italy's war debt to the United States in the mid 1920s, the tabling of the Pittman-McReynolds Bill that would have granted President Franklin D. Roosevelt the power to enforce US economic sanctions against the Mussolini regime after the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the preservation of US neutrality in World War II until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, a lenient peace treaty with Italy notwithstanding her defeat against the Allies, and the inclusion of their ancestral country among the beneficiaries of the Marshall Plan in the postwar years (Duff 1967; Migone 1980; Luconi 2000). By 1976, the turn-of-the-20th-century immigrant generation had almost completely passed away. Yet, its children and grandchildren were still active on behalf of their motherland and petitioned congressmen and the federal government to appropriate emergency relief funds to help Italy cope with the earthquake which struck the Friuli region that year. In particular, US Representative Frank Annunzio (1976) from Illinois[4]—the son of immigrants from Calabria—spearheaded his fellow ethnics' lobbying efforts with the administration of President Gerald R. Ford.

Conversely, in the late 1990s, fewer and fewer Italian Americans responded to Italy's call for support from people of Italian extraction in the United States. In 1997, for example, fewer than 50,000 Italian Americans nationwide signed a petition urging the Clinton administration not to deny Italy a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in a short-lived reform proposal for the expansion of this body (Tirabassi 1998, 52-53).[5]

The rise in intermarriages is another component of assimilation. Endogamy prevailed in "Little Italies" in the interwar years even in multiethnic New York City (Rainhorn 2005, 56-60). Conversely, the exogamy ratio ranged between two thirds and three quarters in the 1980s, according to different estimates, and has further increased in subsequent years. As a result, roughly three quarters of the Italian Americans who had come of age by the turn of the twenty-first century were of mixed ethnic heritage as opposed to about one quarter entering adulthood before World War II. However, with a number of exceptions, exogamy has hardly crossed the racial divide; people of Italian ancestry tend to have white spouses instead of marrying blacks or Asian Americans (Alba 1996, 179).

The entry of many Italian Americans into the US mainstream by the end of the twentieth century accounts for the decline in ethnic attachment on their part. Economic statistics from the 2000 Census point to the consolidation of Italian Americans' position within the establishment and help account for the decline in their sense of ethnic specificity. According to such data, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the educational achievements of Italian Americans were higher than those of the total US population, as were their income and occupational status. For instance, 28.9 percent of Italian Americans held at least a bachelor's degree as opposed to 24.4 percent of all Americans. Likewise, 38.3 percent of employed Italian Americans held managerial and professional jobs, while only 33.6 percent of all employed Americans were included in these categories. Finally, the median annual income of the Italian-American households was $51,246 with respect to $41,994 of all families in the country (Egelman 2006).[6]

In conclusion, in all key decisions in politics, education, residence, and marriage, many Italian Americans have come to think of themselves and to behave as white Europeans. Conversely, their sense of Italianness has been confined to leisure-time activities such as vacationing in their ancestral country, wearing Italian-style clothes, and eating Italian food. As sociologist Herbert

Gans (1979) already suggested in the late 1970s, this approach reveals not only a symbolic meaning of ethnicity. It also offers additional evidence for both the demise of a distinct Italian ethnicity and the assimilation of Italian Americans into mainstream America. Actually, Italian fashion is popular with the US upper middle-class, too. In addition, Italian cuisine has not only acquired a syncretic taste (Gabaccia 1998; Nissirio 2002, 47-52) but has also become so trendy in the United States that nowadays spaghetti with meatballs, pizza and lasagna taste just as American as they do Italian (Black 2002).

Notes

[1] For selected review essays about "whiteness" studies, see Arnesen 2001 and Kolchin 2002.

[2] Actually, at least thirty-four people of Italian descent fell victims to lynchings between the mid 1880s and the early 1910s (Salvetti 2003). Members of other minorities sharing Italian Americans' "in-between" racial status also faced such a plight. For instance, Leo Frank—a Jewish factory manager in Atlanta, who had been convicted of murdering a young white woman—was lynched in 1915 as soon as the governor of Georgia commuted his death sentence (see Melnick 2000).

[3] For a brief survey of the history of the Order Sons of Italy in America, see Guglielmo, Andreozzi 2004.

[4] For Annunzio's family background, see Molotsky 2001.

[5] For an outline of Italy's proposal, see Ministero degli Affari Esteri 1998. For its political impact on Congress, see US House of Representatives 1998.

[6] For a case study of Italian Americans in New York City, see Egelman 2002.

Works Cited

Alba, Richard. *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1985.

Alba, Richard D. "Italian Americans: A Century of Ethnic Change." In *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in America*, eds. Silvia Pedraza and Rubén G. Rumbaut, 172-181. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996.

____. With John R. Logan and Kyle Crowder. "White Ethnic Neighborhoods and Assimilation: The Greater New York Region, 1980-1990." *Social Forces* 75, 1997: 883-912.

____. with Victor Nee. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Annotico, Richard. "Italian Americans and the 2000 Census." *H-ItAm*, June 18, 2002. http://www.h-net.msu.edu/itam (June 20, 2002).

Annunzio, Frank. *Letter to Charles Leppert, Jr., June 30*, 1976. Gerald R. Ford Papers, White House Congressional Mail Files, box 29, folder 2. Gerald R. Ford Library, Ann Arbor, MI.

Arnesen, Eric. "Whiteness and the Historians' Imagination." *International Labor and Working Class History* 60 (2001): 3-32.

Barrett, James R., and David R. Roediger. "Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16 (1997): 3-44.

Black, Rachel Eden. Review of *Una famiglia che mangia insieme: Cibo ed etnicità nella comunità italoamericana di New York, 1920-1940*, by Simone Cinotto. *H-Italy:* H-Net Reviews. 2002. http://www.hnet.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=58581058564728 (September 27, 2002).

Brodkin, Karen. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998.

Bugiardini, Sergio. "L'associazionismo negli Usa." In *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana: Arrivi*, eds. Piero Bevilacqua, Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina, 551-577. Rome: Donzelli, 2002.

Carnevale, Nancy C. "Immigration and Language." In *A Companion to American Immigration*, ed. Reed Ueda, 471-491. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.

Chubb, Judith, and Vannicelli, Maurizio. "Italy: A Web of Scandals in a Flawed Democracy." In *The Politics of Scandal: Power and Process in Liberal Democracies*, eds. Andrei S. Makovits and Mark Silverstein, 122-150. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988.

Conforti, Joseph M. "Ghettos as Tourism Attractions." *Annals of Tourism Research* 23 (1996): 830-842.

Dubin, Murray. *South Philadelphia: Mummers, Memories, and the Melrose Diner*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

Duff, John B. "The Italians." In *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies*, ed. Joseph P. O'Grady, 111-139. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1967.

Egelman, William. "Italian Americans in New York City, 1980-2000: A Demographic Summary." *Italian American Review* 9 (2002): 1-21.

——. "Italian Americans, 1990-2000: A Demographic Analysis of National Data." *Italian Americana* 24 (2006): 9-19.

Fiore, Teresa. "Reconfiguring Urban Space as Thirdspace: The Case of Little Italy, San Diego (California)." In *Adjusting Sites: New Essays in Italian American Studies*, eds. William Boelhower and Rocco Pallone, 89-110. Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum, 1999.

Fishman, Joshua, ed. *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1989.

Gabaccia, Donna R. *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Gallup, George, Jr. *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 2001*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002.

Gambino, Richard. "Are Italian Americans in 'The Twilight' of Ethnicity or a New Dawn?" In *Industry, Technology, Labor, and the Italian-American Communities*, eds. Mario Aste *et al.*, 161-174 Staten Island, NY: American Italian Historical Association, 1997.

Gans, Herbert J. "Symbolic Ethnicity." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2 (1979): 1-20.

Getlin, Josh. "NYC's Little Italy Lacks 1 Ingredient: Italians." *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2002: A16.

Glatzer, Randi. "Ciao, Bella Vista." *Philadelphia Magazine* 94, no. 5 (May 2003): 51-59.

Guglielmo, Jennifer M., and Andreozzi, John. "The Order Sons of Italy in America: Historical Summary." In *Guide to the Records of the Order Sons of Italy in America*, eds. Jennifer M. Guglielmo and John Andreozzi, xix-xxx. Minneapolis: Immigration History Research Center, 2004.

——. With Salvatore Salerno, eds. *Are Italians White? How Race Is Made in America*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Guglielmo, Thomas A. *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Hollinger, David A., *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Ignatiev, Noel. *How the Irish Became White*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Immerso, Michael. *Newark's Little Italy: The Vanished First Ward*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Jacobson, Matthew Freye. *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Juliani, Richard N. "A Usable Past: Analysis and Application." *Italian Americana* 26 (2008): 5-20.

Kilburn, Will. "The Sound of Silence." *Boston Globe,* January 23, 2005. http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2005/01/23/the_sound_of_silence/ (August 27, 2007).

Kolchin, Peter. "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America." *Journal of American History* 89 (2002): 154-173.

Krase, Jerome. "New York City's Little Italies Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow." In *The Italians of New York: Five Centuries of Struggles and Achievement*, ed. Philip V. Cannistraro, 155-166. New York: New York Historical Society, 1999.

____. "Italian American Urban Landscapes: Images of Social and Cultural Capital." *Italian Americana* 22 (2004): 17-44.

Lang, Michael. *Gentrification Amid Urban Decline: Strategies for America's Older Cities*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1982.

Luconi, Stefano. "Anticommunism, Americanization, and Ethnic Identity: Italian Americans and the 1948 Parliamentary Elections in Italy." *Historian* 62 (2000): 285-302.

Lynch, Robert P. *Federal Hill Case Study: The Story of How People Saved Their Neighborhood*. Warren, RI: New England Neighborhood Revitalization Center, 1978.

Martellone, Anna Maria. "Generazioni e identità." In *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, eds. Bevilacqua, De Clementi, and Franzina, 2002, 739-752.

Massaro, Dominic R. “The Background, Founding, Evolution and Social Relevance of the Order Sons of Italy in America.” *Italian Americana* 24 (2006): 20-34.

Melnick, Jeffrey. *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000.

Michney, Todd M. “Race, Violence, and Urban Territoriality: Cleveland’s Little Italy and the 1966 Hough Uprising.” *Journal of Urban History* 32 (2006): 404-428.

Migone, Gian Giacomo. *Gli Stati Uniti e il fascismo: Alle origini dell’egemonia americana in Italia*. Milan: Feltrinelli 1980.

Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Servizio Stampa e Informazione. *La riforma del Consiglio di Sicurezza: La posizione italiana*. Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1998.

Molotsky, Irvin. “Frank Annunzio, 86, Longtime Chicago Democratic Congressman.” *New York Times*, April 17, 2001. http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9901E5D61E31F934A25757C0A9679C8B63 (April 21, 2001).

Mormino, Gary R. *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian Americans in St. Louis, 1882-1982*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Nissirio, Patrizio. *Dettagli americani: Il paese dietro la bandiera*. Florence: Liberal Libri, 2002.

Order Sons of Italy in America, “History and Organizational Structure.” 2002. www.osia.org/public/about/history.htm (September 27, 2005).

Orsi, Robert. “The Religious Boundaries of an Inbetween People: Street *Feste* and the Problem of the Dark-Skinned Other in Italian Harlem, 1920-1990.” *American Quarterly* 44 (1992): 313-347.

Rainhorn, Judith. *Paris, New York: Des migrants italiens, années 1880- années 1930*. Paris: CNRS, 2005.

Ramirez, Bruno. “Decline, Death, and Revival of ‘Little Italies’: The Canadian and US Experiences Compared.” *Studi Emigrazione* 44 (2007): 337-354.

Richards, David A. J. *Italian American: The Racializing of an Ethnic Identity*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Roediger, David R. *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

____. *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. New York: Basic Books, 2005.

Salvetti, Patrizia. *Corda e sapone: Storie di linciaggi degli italiani negli Stati Uniti*. Rome: Donzelli, 2003.

Terkel, Studs. *“The Good War:” An Oral History of World War II*. New York: Pantheon, 1984.

Tirabassi, Maddalena. “Interview with Joseph Scelsa.” *Altreitalie* 17 (1998): 52-55.

Torrieri, Nancy K. "The Geography of Ethnicity: The Residential Dispersal of Italians in Baltimore." In *Italian Americans in Transition*, eds. Joseph Scelsa, Salvatore J. LaGumina, and Lydio F. Tomasi, 49-64. Staten Island, NY: American Italian Historical Association, 1990.

US Bureau of the Census. "Profile of Selected Social Characteristics: 2000." 2002. www.factfinder.census.gov (June 20, 2002).

US House of Representatives, 105th Congress, 1st Session. *H.R. 333 Expressing the Sense of Congress that the United States Should Support Italy's Inclusion as a Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council If There Is To Be an Expansion of This Important International Body*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1997.

Vecoli, Rudolph J. "Are Italian Americans Just White Folks?" *Italian Americana* 13 (1995): 149-161.

____. "Negli Stati Uniti." In *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, eds. Bevilacqua, De Clementi, and Franzina, 2002, 55-88.

____. *Italian Americans and Race: To Be or Not To Be White*. In *'Merica*, eds. Aldo Bove and Giuseppe Massara, 94-109. Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum, 2006.

Veltman, Calvin. *Language Shift in the United States*. Berlin, NY: Mouton, 1983.

Venturini, Nadia. "Prominenti at War: The Order Sons of Italy in America." *RSA: Rivista di Studi Anglo-Americani* 3 (1984-1985): 441-470.

Franco Minganti

Black Holes and Dark Sides: Notes on American Comics from Art Spiegelman to Art Spiegelman (via Tom Tomorrow)

1. At first glance, the subtitle of these notes—"American comics from Art Spiegelman to Art Spiegelman (via Tom Tomorrow)"—might lead one to expect a linear, somewhat chronological development from *RAW Magazine* and its *Maus* (two of Spiegelman's "historic" masterpieces: his praised editorial work and his most acclaimed *œvre*) to *In the Shadow of No Towers* (Spiegelman's breathtaking, if dark mullings over 9/11), with maybe a brief transit through Tom Tomorrow's strip/column *This Modern World*. The child may be father to the man; if so, as if in a *mise-en-abyme* that suggests a circular, spiral-like development, I will now unwind the reel backwards, opening on Spiegelman's personal and political 9/11 and moving in reverse while still touching, however briefly, on Tom Tomorrow's body of work. The (partial) rationale of American comics that I am trying to capture here would not find a suitable systemic trim in the limited space of this essay, so the jottings that follow aim at capturing the sense, if not the sensibility, behind it (with the help of the literality of many a protagonist).

2. *In the Shadow of No Towers* is considered by some "a perfect summation of the art history of comics and what it is capable of expressing about contemporary American culture" (Carlin 2005, 168). It is "so dense with information and allusions that it is a self-conscious antidote to the escapist entertainment that newspaper comics (and most pop culture in America) have become" (Carlin 2005, 168). Spiegelman's "democracy of shock" (McElroy 2004) urges Americans to visit the place in their souls that turned the World Trade Center's Twin Towers into the great symbolic vacuum of our urban unconscious, a space where the contradictions of Bush's wars implode along with Art's personal chaos. He must bear witness with a damn Coleridgian albatross—in fact, an idiosyncratic American bald eagle wearing a red, white and blue stovepipe top hat—hanging about his neck while he feels he must "compulsively retell the calamities" (Spiegelman, qtd. in McElroy 2004).

3. "After all, disaster is my muse!" explains Spiegelman (Spiegelman, 2004b). And yet his decision to employ his art as his instrument for intervention—not only his art, but its setting: comics culture, American comics culture (even if some of the classics he loves and quotes are immigrants from Old Europe)—that is to say, his decision to delve into the art's form and not into the exasperation of either content or mood, is what Spiegelman calls upon to articulate his invective and his personal descent into the hell of 9/11 and the months that followed.

4. "The pivotal image from my 9/11 morning—one that didn't get photographed or videotaped into public memory but still remains burned onto the inside of my eyelids several years later—was the image of the looming north tower's glowing bones just before it vaporized. I repeatedly tried to paint this with humiliating results but eventually came close to capturing the vision of disintegration digitally on my computer. I managed to place some sequences of my most vivid memories around that central image but never got to draw others" (Spiegelman 2004b).

5. "The feelings of dislocation reflected in the *No Towers* pages arose in part from the lack of outcry against the outrages while they were being committed" (Spiegelman 2004b). In fact, it is the very circumlocution *around* 9/11, the revolving around an overt vacuum, that turns out to be the book's center. Spiegelman is not interested in the event *per se*, as much as he is in the consequences *around*. All this, notwithstanding the fact that the thematic *fil rouge*, the image that moves (both movement and commotion)—that literally drags the reader's eye up and down the page, or that orients and directs at least some trajectories of the reading act—remains the icon of the event in Spiegelman's plates. It is modulated with anti-realistic intentions: red-hot skeletons cross-hatched as if in a haze of smoke, maybe flames, significantly never fully portrayed through the pre-crash (or pre-implosion) photographic memory, which seems to be, quite fittingly, the very sign of the symbolic vacuum I was hinting at.[1]

6. *Nemo propheta in patria*: while Spiegelman flirted with Europe, and Europe with him—"as the series got rolling, I found my own 'coalition of the willing' to publish along with *Die Zeit*. Most of the distinguished newspapers and magazines that found a way to accommodate the large format, quirky content, and erratic schedule were in the 'old Europe'—France, Italy, the Netherlands, England—where my political views hardly seemed extreme"

(Spiegelman, 2004b)—in America his reception was decidedly less enthusiastic. "Outside the left-leaning alternative press, mainstream publications that actively solicited work from me (including the *New York Review of Books* and the *New York Times* as well as the *New Yorker*) fled when I offered these pages or excerpts from the series. Only the weekly *Forward,* a small-circulation English-language vestige of the once-proud daily Yiddish broadsheet, enlisted and ran them all prominently. I pointed out to the *Forward*'s editor that my pages, unlike my *Maus* pages that they'd once serialized, wouldn't have much specifically Jewish content. Offering me the Right of Return, he shrugged and said, 'It's okay—you're Jewish'" (Spiegelman, 2004b).

7. Both American comic strips and comic books were as deeply affected by 9/11 as Spiegelman's work was—with the exception of editorial cartoons, which maintained their political dimension. Some strips—like *Slowpoke*, *Waylay*, *The Boondocks*, *The K-Chronicles*, *Too Much Coffee Man*, and *Sylvia* among the most relevant[2]—started including political elements that would not have appeared in the strips' narrative concepts before 9/11, which often twisted or even disrupted the strips' temper. Like the US, they would never be the same. And the same was true for comic books. 9/11 triggered a number of special volumes, with unusual formats—like *The Bush Junta, Empire*, *To Afghanistan and Back*, including the very *In the Shadow of No Towers* (see Rall 2002, White, Grock 2003, Blechman 2004)—that stated, quite simple, that an event like that could not be contained, could not be formatted into the *Heimlich*, the what's-familiar. Hybridity proliferated: comics provided ever more terrain for uncensored informing, essaying, digressing, and commenting in between the drawings, as well as a testing ground for the potential of websites, forums, chats, and blogs.

8. After a decade of graphic evolution handicapped by poorly developed content, post-9/11 comics were ready and willing to assume their role of visual metabolizers of the American reality. That is why *necessity* and *urgency* of expression seem to seep through the best artists' work; that is also why the postmodern quality of metafiction flourished, once again supplying the vital lymph of the characters of early American comics heroes.

9. We can witness Spiegelman's full immersion in the affective dimension ("Right after 9/11/01, while waiting for some other terrorist shoe to drop, many found comfort in poetry. Others searched for solace in old newspaper comics") or, better, his pilgrimage to "two blocks away from Ground Zero"…

in a time warp: a regression to a century earlier, with the Hearst VS Pulitzer, *New York Journal* VS *New York World* challenges that provided the imprint for modern American comics. As he writes in the smart "Comic Supplement" section of *In the Shadow of No Towers*, "the first decade of comics was the medium's Year Zero, that moment of open-ended possibility and giddy disorientation that inevitably gave way to the constraints that came as the form defined itself." It is precisely that full immersion in the rascalhood of those kids—Lyonel Feininger's *Kinder Kids*, Rudolph Dirks's *Katzenjammer Kids*, Harold Knerr's *The Shenanigan Kids*, then Little Nemo's Slumberland or Krazy Kat's surreal world (with Ignatz who, after September 11, "started looking a lot like Osama Bin Laden" to Spiegelman)—that coaxes Art's soul from his New Yorker's paranoia. Interestingly, it is the colorful window full of early and classic comics characters that opens onto the black, dark cover—a window of light over the abyss—that illuminates the gloom. It looks like a glimpse of that "nihilistic vaudeville" that characterized the juvenile, anti-institutional energy fiercely stigmatized by the 1950s' reactionary sociologists, and which Spiegelman ironically defines an anarchist scheme. That lunacy—indeed, that state of grace—can really save one's life. "By combining the past and present, Spiegelman demonstrates how comics have survived and grown to become one of the preeminent ways to express what it was like to live in America over the past 100 years" (Carlin 2005, 168).

10. The in-and-out, unsteady celebration of comicsdom in and by American culture seems to focus on losers and loners: in his "Preface" to the 2004 comics issue of *McSweeney*—a most interesting experiment on the contemporary American literary scene—edited by celebrated cartoon artist Chris Ware, Ira Glass writes: "I thought of myself as a loser and a loner and *Peanuts* helped me take comfort in that. Maybe to my detriment. There's not a lot of art for kids that's so drenched in sadness" (Glass 2004, 7). And, after detecting in *Spiderman* the same loser feeling of *Peanuts*, he continues: "It's funny to think these melancholic figures are such national icons. It makes me feel like I have something in common with my countrymen. Apparently we're a nation of losers. And yet comic book artists often seem to think of themselves as marginal figures" (Glass 2004, 7).

11. And yet the virtual—at times actual—jeremiad enacted by comic artists can be overturned: "precisely because they are not at the center of our culture—because they are not movies or TV—comic artists can pretty much do whatever they want" (Glass 2004, 7).

12. There is not much time—or need, perhaps—to refer to the stacks of critical assessments of contemporary cartoon artists willing to rhetorically rescue comicsdom from the peripheries of culture and from its structural-historic childishness. "Cartooning has always been popularly characterized, somewhat dismissively (although not entirely inaccurately), as the irrepressible urge to create silly little drawings" (Moore 2006, ix): thus Anne Elizabeth Moore opens her "Preface" to *The Best American Comics 2006* volume; while in the introduction to his book dedicated to Jackson, Spiegelman, and Pekar, Joseph Witek talks about a medium that "has historically been considered solely the domain of subliterate adolescent fantasies and of the crassest commercial exploitation of rote generic formulas" (Witek 1989, 5). "Comics are not just for kids anymore"—one might read "in a review of some gallery show titled 'Zap! Bang! Pow!'," writes Chris Ware in his introduction to *McSweeney* #13—and yet "the associations of childhood and puerility are still hard to shake; comics are the only art form that many 'normal' people still arrive at expecting a specific emotional reaction (laughter) or a specific content (superheroes)" (Ware 2004, 11).

13. In fact, it has been decades since the comics have been consolidating their position among "high" expressive and artistic forms. Insiders and cultural critics alike have been continuously battered by unsteady waves of reception; in his introduction to the catalogue of *Misfit Lit* (1991), a pioneer exhibition of contemporary comic art edited by Gary Groth, Jim Thompson writes that comics "have been snuck into museums and art galleries before, but usually under the protective cloak of their more respectable cousins, Pop Art and Commercial Illustration—and then only because of their 'inspirational' role, not as an acknowledgment of any intrinsic merit on their part" (Thompson 1991, 3). And Rob Rodi cannot refrain from entitling his introductory essay to the same publication "Why Comics Are Art, and Why You Never Thought So Before." The comics' contribution to the formation of the American psyche (and identity) has been fully acknowledged, and yet it is interesting that the explosive effects of comics are often based on the ambiguity that entrusts drawings to the world of kids. (I have one specific example in mind, Ronald J. Regé, Jr.'s "An Interview Transcription between Benjamin Ben-Eliezer and Arin Ahmed Conducted in Israel—June 9, 2002," a mini-album of sorts included as a separate body in *McSweeney* #13, that turns excerpts from the interrogation of a failed Palestinian suicidal kamikaze by Israeli police into a touching piece of storytelling.)

14. In *Masters of American Comics*—a recent, wonderful exhibition (cum catalogue)—curator John Carlin reconstructs, as the exhibition's subtitle

reads, "an art history of 20th-century American comic strips and books." His accurate text is praised by cultural commentators and critics who "adopt" their cartoonists of choice—like Stanley Crouch's "Blues for Krazy Kat," or J. Hoberman's "Harvey Kurtzman's Hysterical Materialism"—and cartoonists who write about their fellow artists (Jules Feiffer on E.C. Segar's *Popeye*, Françoise Mouly on Robert Crumb, Matt Groening on Gary Panter). With more recent artists, it is the leaders of the latest wave of young writers who take center stage, like Jonathan Safran Foer writing on Art Spiegelman or Dave Eggers on Chris Ware. All are open acts of affective empowerment. Not only is there a community of comic artists who express great solidarity across "the business," a brotherhood that lives in a limbo of websites, zines & journals erasing all barriers between comics genres, but now the new generation of writers and novelists—who likely grew up with post-1980s' alternative comics—is ready to acknowledge those artists as fellow storytellers and even heroes in a pantheon of affective homages that sees no boundaries.

15. Historicizing—micro-historicizing, that is, due to the short time span under examination—seems to be a necessary impulse. Harvey Pekar—himself an historic icon on the alternative comics scene, but in our case in point commenting as guest editor of *The Best American Comics 2006* anthology, the first of the Houghton Mifflin *Best American* Series, published since 1915, devoted solely to comics—does a good job in his "Introduction," offering a one-page-and-a-half resumé of the history of what he calls "modern comics." In a sketchy, somewhat extreme, synthesis:

1890s: *Yellow Kid*, *Little Nemo*, Lyonel Feininger, newspaper comics in all their genres; then further developments up to *Superman* and his superheroic progeny.

1954: a crusade against violence and sexuality in comics led to their near annihilation, until fresher air blew in Harvey Kurtzman, EC Comics, and the birth of *Mad Magazine*.

1962: enter Robert Crumb, from Cleveland; influenced by *Mad*, he started satirizing real life. Writes Pekar, "Wow! It occurred to me that if material like this [Crumb's early works, like *Big Yum Yum Book*] could appear in comics, there was no limit to what you could do with them. They could be like novels and films" (Pekar 2006, xvi). The underground was born: "people like Crumb, Frank Stack, Gilbert Shelton began producing 'underground' comic book stories. A lot of them focused on sex, drugs, and the new counterculture; there was much uncharted territory still to cover, but at least there were no superheroes" (Pekar 2006, xvii). Countercultural, alternative comics were in deep crisis by the end of the Vietnam War, then flourished again in the 1980s, only to slump again financially a few years later. (In the meantime, from the

1960s to date, superhero comics have remained extremely popular, absurdly so according to Pekar, who is an advocate for realism in mainstream comics and claims that they ignore the medium's best storytelling potential.)

16. It is quite clear that Art Spiegelman's *RAW Magazine*'s editorial parable appropriately tells the whole story. One can take a look at the publication dates of the first, oversize format series of eight issues (also, one should notice that the "wise" subtitles were carefully chosen, with a smart grip on cultural trends and current debates):

RAW 1 (July 1980) The Graphix Magazine of Postponed Suicides
RAW 2 (December 1980) The Graphix Magazine for Damned Intellectuals
RAW 3 (July 1981) The Graphix Magazine That Lost Its Faith in Nihilism
RAW 4 (March 1982) The Graphix Magazine for Your Bomb Shelter's Coffee Table
RAW 5 (March 1983) The Graphix Magazine of Abstract Depressionism
RAW 6 (May 1984) The Graphix Magazine That Overestimates the Taste of the American Public
RAW 7 (May 1985) The Torn Again Graphix Magazine
RAW 8 (September 1986) The Graphix Aspirin for War Fever

Three years were wasted before Spiegelman managed to publish a smaller format edition with a major international publisher like Penguin:

RAW Vol. 2 No. 1 (1989) Open Wounds from the Cutting Edge of Commix
RAW Vol. 2 No. 2 (1990) Required Reading for the Post-Literate
RAW Vol. 2 No. 3 (1991) High Culture for Lowbrows

17. Not only do comicdoms need historicizing, comics criticism does too. In introducing his 1989 *Comic Books As History: The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar*, Joseph Witek claimed that

> a critical analysis of the comic-book form [was] especially necessary [then], when a growing number of contemporary American comic books [were] being written *as* literature aimed at a general readership of adults and concerned, not with the traditionally escapist themes of comics, but with issues such as the clash of cultures in American history, the burdens of guilt and suffering passed on within families, and the trials and small triumphs of the daily workaday world. (Witek 1989, 3)

A year later, in the introduction to his 1990 *Comics as Culture*, Thomas Inge wrote that "along with jazz, the comic strip as we know it perhaps represents America's major indigenous contribution to world culture" (Inge 1990, xi).

18. After all, narration—the impulse and need to tell stories—is a primary function of comics: "they are meant to be *read*, as opposed to traditional narrative art meant to be viewed and interpreted" (Inge 1990, xix). Will Eisner would say that comics are *movies on paper;* Art Spiegelman thinks they are *writing with pictures;* Ivan Brunetti would point back to the "humble doodle," and to the very act of doodling—the "brooding of the hand" according to Saul Steinberg—as the basic function of cartooning (Brunetti 2006, 7). Culture, or, better, art, that moves out of *necessity*, of urgency, and transforms an artist's ethics into aesthetics, is what has driven Spiegelman, ever since his work with *RAW Magazine* and *Maus*—and even earlier: since his debut anthology *Breakdowns* (1978). After all, it is significant that *McSweeney* revisits, within the confines of the literary review, the paths, authors, themes, and sensibilities of *RAW*, indeed dedicating the whole project not personally to Art Spiegelman, but to "Spiegelman & Mouly"—Françoise being Art's wife and *RAW*'s co-editor, the one who materially supported the project and shared its early hardships with Art.[3] In fact, Mouly & Spiegelman made *RAW* a meticulously designed and printed oversize magazine of graphic art. According to John Carlin, it was "one of the finest anthologies of comic art ever published. It was distinguished by its witty, self-aware explorations of the comics format, both in its reprints of European and Japanese comics and in its publication of eccentric and visionary American comics by Gary Panter, Charles Burns, Sue Coe, Kaz, Mark Beyer, and many others" (Carlin 2005, 130). *RAW*'s "huge impact" (Sabin 1996, 178) has been widely acknowledged and its accumulation of comics strata is as close to perfection as it is to the "avant pop" syndrome: Spiegelman and his brainchild manage to make "the comic medium an expression of avant-garde tendencies without undermining its basic integrity and fundamental parodistic character" (Carlin 2005, 130). They definitely concurred in the establishment of a history of the medium, and agreed as well that comics deserved to be taken, and read, seriously: complex, sophisticated comics demand and satisfy multiple readings; each new reading serves up something new, as Spiegelman often concedes. With *Maus* he perfected Crumb's first-person psychological realism consisting of a density of lines that fill the image by making "line drawings to serve the information he conveys in layout and design and not as spontaneous emotional gestures [which] allows him to present multiple layers of information that make his work more conceptual than expressive" (Carlin 2005, 131). Like the comic artist at work—as in stereotypical representations: panicking in front of the white page, throwing crumpled lumps of paper into the waste basket, or fixating some unfinished work—life and the negotiation of identity are an infinite act of construction/deconstruction, and comics (both drawing and reading comics) might be too—like Spiegelman's *Maus* and *In the Shadow of No Towers:* a human soothing, healing, rewarding activity.

19. After *RAW* and its roster of outrageous artists (among them Gary Panter, Sue Coe, Mark Beyer, Charles Burns, Kaz, Jerry Moriarty, Ben Katchor, Drew and Josh Alan Friedman . . . and the magazine's European stars are not even named here), the 1990s consolidated the fame of a number of upcoming artists whose dedicated activity—solid storytelling, any way you look at it, even in the case of strips, *vignettes* and/or editorial cartoons—has since solidified into the body of work that has paved the way for the so called *graphic novel* and its international success. Lynda Barry, Los Bros Hernandez, Julie Doucet, Chester Brown, Howard Cruse, Aline Kominsky, Dan Clowes, Peter Bagge, Roberta Gregory, Paul Mavrides, Joe Sacco, Kim Deitch, Seth, Adrian Tomine, David Mazzucchelli, Ivan Brunetti, Chris Ware. . . et al. In various interviews in the last few years, Spiegelman has explained that he finds it bizarre that so much of what is going on today seems to have had its gestation and birth in the pages of *RAW* almost thirty years ago. True, what is still seen as avant-garde and cutting edge was appearing in *RAW then*: the comics world has moved exceedingly slowly. Indeed, at least Frank Miller and Bill Sinkiewicz (cum Alan Moore) should be brought into the picture from the more or less classic realms of superheroes, the "other" shore of comicdom. But that's another story. Were it not for a novel, intriguing trend in the critical discourse about comics, represented by essays like Greg Burgas's "The Failure of *Gødland*, the Death of the Postmodern Superhero and "Why Grant Morrison Is Partly to Blame" (Burgas 2007), and the online forum it gave way to on the website *Comics Should Be Good*: the evocation of deconstruction and postmodernism convinces us that crossover sensibilities make the otherwise distant worlds of superheroes and avant-garde comics extremely close—if not the very same turf.

20. And Dan Perkins (a.k.a. Tom Tomorrow)? His *This Modern World*, born in the early 1990s, has steadily gained momentum and depth. Originally conceived as a photocopy collage nightmare journey through consumer culture and the daily grind of work, it gradually veered off into media and politics, the caustic voice of America's guilty conscience. Through its deadpan, grim humor, the "black holes" and the "dark sides" conjured up in the title of these notes assume the most colorful aspect of "mediated" life in the United States. Like Spiegelman's more recent work, and yet apparently on a different planet, Tom Tomorrow's is pure and simple history in the making, with all its (cultural) interferences, (narcissistic) static and (political) noise.

Notes

[1] On Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers*, see Minganti, "*In the Shadow of No Towers*," forthcoming.

[2] *Slowpoke* (Jen Sorensen), *Waylay* (Carol Lay), *The Boondocks* (Aaron McGruder), *The K-Chronicles* (Keith Knight), *Too Much Coffee Man* (Shannon Wheeler), *Sylvia* (Nicole Hollander).

[3] For an accurate reconstruction, see Kartalopoulos 2005. In fact, that whole Winter 2005 issue of *Indy Magazine* is devoted to a close examination of various aspects of Spiegelman's work, from the underground, through *RAW*, to *Maus* and beyond.

Works Cited

Blechman, Nicholas, ed. *Empire: Nozone IX*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004.

Brunetti, Ivan, ed. *An Anthology of Graphic Fiction, Cartoons, & True Stories*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006.

Burgas, Greg. "The Failure of *Gødland*, the Death of the Postmodern Superhero, and Why Grant Morrison Is Partly to Blame." Forum *Comics Should Be Good* (posted on March 19, 2007). http://goodcomics.comicbookresources.com/2007/03/19/the-failure-of-gdland-the-death-of-the-postmodern-superhero-and-why-grant-morrison-is-partly-to-blame/ (October 3, 2007).

Carlin, John, Karasik, Paul, and Walker, Brian, eds. *Masters of American Comics*. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum and The Museum of Contemporary Art, in association with New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005.

Groth, Gary, and Thompson, Kim, eds. *Misfit Lit: Contemporary Comic Art*. Seattle: Fantagraphics Books, 1991.

Inge, M. Thomas. *Comics As Culture*. Jackson and London: University Press of Mississippi, 1990.

Kartalopoulos, Bill. "A *RAW* History: Parts 1 & 2." *Indy Magazine*, Winter 2005. http://www.indyworld.com.

McElroy, Joseph. "Fading Footprints. Post–9-11 Art Reels in the Past; An Architect Looks Forward." *The Village Voice*. September 7, 2004. http://www.villagevoice.com/books/0436,mcelroy,56530,10.html (October 3, 2007).

Minganti, Franco. "*In the Shadow of No Towers*: L'arte grafica di Art Spiegelman come contro-narrazione di 9/11." In *Conflitti: Strategie di rappresentazione della guerra nella cultura postmoderna*. Roma: Meltemi, forthcoming.

Pekar, Harvey, and Moore, Anne Elizabeth, eds. *The Best American Comics 2006*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Rall, Ted. *To Afghanistan and Back*. New York: NBM, 2002.

Sabin, Roger. *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels. A History of Comic Art*. London: Phaidon, 1996.

Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of No Towers*. New York: Pantheon, 2004a.

——. “The Sky Is Falling!” in *In the Shadow of No Towers*. New York: Pantheon, 2004b.

——. *“How It Came to Be.” Steven Barclay Agency/“Lectures and Readings” Series*, 2006. http://www.barclayagency.com/spiegelman_wtc.html (October 3, 2007).

Tomorrow, Tom. *The Great Big Book of Tom Tomorrow. A Treasury of Cartoons by Tom Tomorrow*. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2003.

Ware, Chris, ed. *McSweeney* 13 (“An Assorted Sampler of North American Comic Drawings, Strips, and Illustrated Stories”), 2004.

White, Mack, and Groth, Gray, eds. *The Bush Junta: 25 Cartoonists on the Mayberry Machiavelli and the Abuse of Power*. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2004.

Witek, Joseph. *Comic Books As History. The Narrative Art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1989.

Rosella Simonari

"After Great Pain, a Formal Feeling Comes": Emily Dickinson's Figure and Poetry in Martha Graham's *Letter to the World*

Introduction[1]

Emily Dickinson was one of Martha Graham's favorite poets. She often quotes her in her autobiography, for example when she speaks of memory: "I'm speaking of the divinity of memory, the fragments of a memory, and those things of great value that we forget and that the body and the mind choose to remember… Emily Dickinson's 'intuition picks up the key that memory drops'" (Graham 1991, 15); or when she talks about hope: "Emily Dickinson said, 'Hope is that thing with feathers that perches on the soul.' It can be a vulture. There are good days when you have it and bad days when you don't. It is painful to remember too much" (Graham 1991, 49). In particular one expression recurs more than once: "acts of light" (Graham 1991, 7, 170), taken from a letter Dickinson wrote to Catherine Peck in 1884 to thank her for her friendship, which she called "acts of light" (Dickinson 1998, 312-313). Graham mentions it without making any reference to Dickinson, a sign that she had made it hers. And maybe that is why in 1981 she used it as the title for one of her choreographies. However, Graham had already paid her own tribute to the New England poet through her complex 1940 piece, *Letter to the World*,[2] which was explicitly inspired by Dickinson's figure and poetry.

Letter was not the only theater adaptation based on Dickinson in that period. In the 1930s two other theatrical productions on Dickinson had been staged, *Alison's House* (1930) by Susan Glaspell, which won the Pulitzer Prize, and *Brittle Heaven* (1935) by Vincent York and Frederick Pohl, and Graham might have known about them. However, these were narrative pieces which made reference to specific biographical works on Dickinson.[3] As Jonnie Guerra states, they were "family dramas" (Guerra 1998, 389), while *Letter* is neither a biographical nor a narrative account of Dickinson's life. It rather represents an incursion into her mind, which Graham used to refer to as a person's "inner landscape" (Graham 1991, 163). For this reason she devises two Emilies, the One Who Dances, who performs the most demanding dancing role, and the One Who Speaks, who is her more sedate alter ego and who speaks lines from Dickinson's poetry and letters, lines that Graham herself selected. The other characters represent different aspects of the poet's personality and include the Ancestress, who embodies the poet's Puritan heritage and also symbolises death; the Lover, who is "her gesture toward happiness" (Graham, "Programme for *Letter to the World*," 1940), and March, her "frolicsome wit" (De Mille 1991, 242).[4] Throughout the performance the One Who Dances struggles against her puritanical heritage to overcome her own tensions as a woman poet. The denial of a place in the world forces her to choose the road of poetry for self-affirmation and freedom.

Letter to the World is almost one hour long and consists of five sections, each devoted to "the timeless things of nature and of the heart" (Graham, "Programme for *Letter to the World*," 1940). In this sense, Graham specifies in the programme that her work "is built on the legend, and not the facts, of her life" (Graham, 1941), thus highlighting that she did not intend to credit any particular biography as source of inspiration. The title of each section is a line from Dickinson's poetry or, as in the last section, a key word from her poetics.[5] Here is a scheme of each section:

Sections	Actions
1) "Because I See New Englandly"	Introduction of the characters: the OWD, the OWS and the Lover. The Company dances a Party scene.
2) "The Postponeless Creature"	The arrival of the Ancestress who runs after the OWD and holds her in her arms. The Lover and the Company dances a procession march carrying the OWD who has been "defeated" by the Ancestress.
3) "The Little Tippler"	Comic solo of the OWD. Playful duet with March. Performances of the Fairy Queen and of the Young Girl who also dances with March.
4) "Leaf at Love Turned Back"	The OWD dances a solo with a blue veil. She dances a duet with the Lover and then is separated from him by the Ancestress.
5) Letter	The OWD performs a "white solo" of rebirth. She fights against the Ancestress and wins her (artistic) independence.

In this paper I will examine how Emily Dickinson is portrayed in this work. This piece has not been performed very often; therefore in my analysis I interviewed dancers who performed the piece in the 1940s, 1970s and 1980s, and consulted various documents: a video reconstruction from the early 1970s, a written scenario by Terese Capucilli, one of Graham's main dancers and former co-director of the Martha Graham Dance Company, reviews, analyses and photographic records like Barbara Morgan's photographs.[6] *Letter* was an important work for Graham and it marks, along with a couple of other dances, her transition from concert to theater dance and a fundamental change in her dance technique.[7] It is also important because it represents an unusual critical corpus on Dickinson in a period when criticism on her was still in its embryonic stage. Dickinson's criticism began to develop fully after 1955, when the *Complete Poems* were published in unabridged form. Until then there had been many studies, but they were mainly journalistic and biographical. She was seen initially as an odd and curious figure, then as an Imagist and mystic poet, and not until the 1930s as a great poet. In the 1930s a few biographical works were published, but they focused mainly on her supposed mysterious lover, thus contributing to reinforcing the image of Dickinson as a heartbroken spinster.[8] Graham read the abridged poems, but her work provides an interpretation which stands out and is still very powerful today. I will talk about the piece following two pathways which are essentially intertwined: the characters and their relation to the spoken lines, and the structure and use of time.

The Characters and the Spoken Lines

One of the most original inventions of this choreography is Graham's choice to split the main character in two, the One Who Dances and the One Who Speaks. They embody Dickinson's maturity and are characterized by the deep bond between them. They are like sisters, as is clear from the first lines uttered during the piece: "I'm nobody / Who are you? / Are you nobody too? / Then there's a pair of us." These lines are taken from poem 288[9] and present the double characterization of the protagonist. They also illustrate the characters' relationship with each other. The two women never adopt a confrontational stance; they are friends, and the One Who Speaks usually comforts the One Who Dances and helps her through the most difficult moments of the piece. The lines also recall an ironic meditation on the question of identity, employing a kind of mirror metaphor. The text opens with an affirmation, "I'm nobody," which continues with a question asked of oneself or of someone else. This implies a dialogue, an interaction which can be seen either as an introspection into the poet's "inner landscape," or as an address to another person. The two dancers mirror each other in some way. They are dressed alike in period costume and have similar hair styles—similar but not identical. In their different tasks, they complement each other.

From this perspective, the One Who Speaks represents the outward Dickinson, the dutiful daughter her family and friends knew, while the One Who Dances represents her inner self, the poet who wrote most of her work in secrecy. However, their identities are not so different and separated as some critics have opined. For example, according to Russell Freedman the One Who Speaks "represents the Emily known to the world as a polite and proper spinster" (Freedman 1998, 89), and he is partly right because her movements are measured and balanced. But she is also a lot more. She integrates the personality of the One Who Dances and is in no way her opposite. Rather than presenting the dutiful daughter/hidden poet dichotomy, Graham stages Dickinson's poetic voice, the One Who Speaks, and her creative process, the One Who Dances. The latter is the protagonist of the story and performs the most complex dances. Almost continuously onstage and expressing the widest range of emotions, she is the barometer of the piece. She is lively and open to life, and in her introductory solo she jumps, walks across the stage and turns around it. In the love duets with the Lover her dancing is more slow-paced and tender. In "The Little Tippler" section she moves like a puppet, mechanically and comically.

In the last section the One Who Dances performs a "seated solo" (Capucilli 1999, 7) on the bench which is part of the set. She dances some movements of pain, opening her legs in a frontal split and bending her torso in contractions. Then she gets up and moves with every two lines uttered by the One Who Speaks: "After great pain, / A formal feeling comes. / The nerves sit ceremonious / Like tombs / The feet mechanical / Go round a wooden way. / This is the hour of lead" (poem 321). These lines are crucial to understanding the emotional journey of the One Who Dances. They represent the shift from the moment of death to that of rebirth. After the Ancestress separates her from the Lover, she falls into a desperate state. The One Who Dances performs movements of deep suffering, with contractions and a fall; she then places her hands on the bench. Poem 321 marks her rebirth where "happiness must be found in the intensity of her work" (Graham, "Programme for *Letter to the World*," 1940).

The other characters perform simpler dance phrases: each has a signature movement and a particular line that creates the appropriate atmosphere for his or her arrival. The Lover's movements are vertical and his posture resembles that of a flamenco dancer. He in fact performs some flamenco footwork on more than one occasion.[10] His entrance is preceded by the lines "Life is a spell so exquisite / That everything conspires to break it", taken from letter

389 that Dickinson sent to her cousins Louise and Frances Norcross in 1873 (Dickinson 1998, 216). Graham probably chose this expression because to her the Lover embodied a potential lover as well as a deep bond with social life. It is perhaps no coincidence that she chose an extract from a letter instead of a line from a poem to present this character: "the letter has feelings (it is happy, shy, 'coquette'), it has desires (would like to have eyes), sensations (it is sleepy)—it replaces the sender's body, it is the figure that stands for the choice of the written word and of the distance in spite of the orality and meeting of bodies" (Zaccaria 1995, 87).[11] The letter implies an openness towards the other, towards the world, that is not intrinsic in poetry.

The Ancestress is a very powerful character. She is the enduring force of tradition, beautiful and terrifying at the same time. To create her Graham drew inspiration from her great-grandmother who tried to "make proper young ladies out of" (Graham 1991, 24) herself and her two sisters. To prepare for the role, Jane Dudley, the first Ancestress, stated:

> I started looking at early American portraits of women, of matriarchs. I mainly looked at the early American artists. I kept one portrait, and I would look at it before I would perform. . . . I felt that her role was not to let Martha grow up and have love and sex with Erick. (Dudley 1996, 58)

The Ancestress's movements are not difficult to perform, according to Armgad von Baerdeleben, who danced the role in the 1970s' reconstruction, and they are mainly characterized by a "stark kind of walking" (von Baerdeleben 2007). However, the difficulty in performing this role resides in the interpretation and intensity of movement. She has to have that "granitic" (Stodelle 1984, 116) quality that through a simple gesture or a walk conveys both fear and beauty. Apart from her imposing walk, one of the Ancestress's signature gestures is performed when she enters the scene. She makes her dramatic entrance from backstage centre. The curtains open and she appears in her black long dress, raises one arm and then the other, and after that places her arms in second position so that, with the vertical line of her body and the horizontal line of her arms, she represents a cross. In this sense the lines uttered by the One Who Speaks to introduce her are exemplary of her association with death: "It's coming, the Postponeless Creature… / It gains the block / And now it gains the door… / and carries one out to God" (poem 390).

March's movements are aerial and characterized by many jumps. They were particularly suitable for the first dancer who interpreted the role, Merce Cunningham, whose elevation was exceptional. The lines chosen to introduce him are taken from poem 1320, which is a long poem directly referring to the month of March: "Dear March, come in… / How glad I am! / I looked for you before / Put down your hat. You must have walked / How out of breath you are!" While the lines introducing the Lover deal with the general and conceptual notion of life, these lines have to do with more practical and action-based questions. The month of March is treated as an expected and much anticipated guest whom the persona, in particular, is looking forward to seeing. He is invited to come in, take off his hat and make himself comfortable. The persona is directly addressing March in a colloquial manner as if conversing with a friend. They play together until the arrival of the Ancestress, who restores order. March embodies Dickinson's irony and childish wit. He is airy and not as virile and strong as the Lover. As with the other characters, he is key to the development of the dance and its structure.

Structure and Use of Time

In *Letter to the World* there is neither beginning nor end. The title itself underlines the openness of the piece and Graham's wish to communicate her own struggle through the figure of Emily Dickinson. Rather than following a linear structure, the piece is the representation of a cycle where love (for life), death and rebirth alternate.[12] The One Who Dances tastes life and desire through her solo pieces and her duets with the Lover; she dies a symbolic death when the Ancestress separates them and finds a kind of resurrection in the strength of her art. This cycle reflects her dance technique too, where the processes of contraction and release constantly alternate. Movement, for Graham, originated in the torso, which is why her classes usually began on the floor with breathing exercises:

> My technique is based on breathing. I have based everything that I have done on the pulsation of life, which is to me, the pulsation of breath. Every time you breathe life in or expel it, it is a release or a contraction. . . . You are born with these two movements and you keep both until you die. But you begin to use them consciously so that they are beneficial to the dance dramatically. (Graham 1991, 46)

The Graham technique relied on the perception of one's own body in movement. It was not a question of studying positions of the feet or the arms as in classical dance, but rather of following the dynamics created by the ongoing contraction-and-release process. Her technique must therefore be seen in direct connection with her introspective and dramatic approach to dancing, which began to develop fully at the end of the 1930s with pieces like *Letter*.

Letter to the World is characterized by an episodic structure which, as Agnes De Mille has noted, recalls that of morality plays (De Mille 1991, 242). In 1940, while working on *Letter*, she was also creating *El Penitente*, a kind of "primitive morality play" (Graham 1940) structured around three dancers, the figures of Christ, Mary and the Penitent. This was a piece inspired by the New Mexico sect of the Penitents, that Graham had come to know during her frequent trips to New Mexico. Thematically *El Penitente* is very different from *Letter*, but structurally it bears similarities to it. In the programme note Graham talks about the source of inspiration for this piece: "the Penitents are a sect that believe in purification from sin through severe penance. . . . The three figures enter, assume their characters and perform as a group of players acting in a Mystery Play" (Graham 1940). Thus it is clear that Graham knew about English morality plays and, in the case of *El Penitente* and *Letter*, she used them in her own way. In morality plays the characters are personifications of the vices and virtues of mankind. In particular, in the most famous example from the 15th century, *Everyman*, there are characters like Fellowship who represents friendship, or Cousin and Kindred, who embody family. The plot is constructed around them and their interaction with the protagonist who, as his name indicates, embodies the common man.

In *Letter* there is no real plot, but the characters carry out the action through what they stand for. Each section of the choreography is centred on a character and on his or her relation to other characters. In the first section, for example, the One Who Dances performs a solo piece and then dances with the One Who Speaks until the Lover comes and they interact with each other. The second section is dedicated to the Ancestress, the third one to March and other characters, and so on. At the same time, each character embodies an aspect of the poet's poetry, such as desire, wit, religion, love and irony. When the One Who Dances performs the "Blue Veil" solo, the One Who Speaks utters poem number 162: "My river / Runs to thee, Blue Sea. / Wilt Welcome me? / My river waits reply / Oh Sea look graciously. / I'll bring thee brooks / from spotted nooks / say sea / take me." She is both Dickinson's creative self and the sexual desire that characterizes this poem. The choice of the blue veil is connected with the reference to the sea in the poem, a reference which also recalls the liquids within a woman's body, such as those of the menstrual cycle.

What Graham was tackling in *Letter* was a way to portray consciousness, an issue which was quite in vogue at the time. That is why the work is character- rather than plot-driven. Modernist writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf had been experimenting with words what Graham was trying to do with movement. In Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) we find a similar fluid structure, with six characters expressing their "inner landscape," as Graham would call it, through a series of soliloquies.[13] As with *Letter*, there is neither comment nor interpretation of what the message apart from a series of interludes which contribute to the creation of the subtle atmosphere of the novel: "sharp stripes of shadow lay on the grass, and the dew dancing on the tips of the flowers and leaves made the garden like a mosaic of single sparks not yet formed into one whole" (Woolf 2006, 20). *Letter* also recalls the ballet

Bacchanal (1939), choreographed by Leonide Massine with libretto, set and costumes by Salvador Dalí. *Bacchanal* was a one act ballet inspired by Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*, and it staged the hallucinations of the protagonist, Ludwig II of Bavaria. These hallucinations were represented by other characters who interacted with the protagonist in different ways. Graham may have known of this work, as it premiered in New York in 1939. However, as Christian Sauer has noted, *Bacchanal* was built on an approach to dance that was drawing to an end, with Dalí's costumes almost impossible to wear and dance in, and Massine's choreography representing an established approach to ballet, while Graham's work symbolized the future towards which dance was moving (Sauer 2007).

This brings us to another fundamental element in the piece, the use of time. According to Don McDonagh "time was broken sequentially, so that the 'Now' and the 'Then' became present in a new combination that inhabited the same space" (McDonagh 1973, 149). In her autobiography Graham affirmed that "you only find the past from yourself. From what you're experiencing now, what enters your life at the present moment" (Graham 1991, 11). Time for her was never an objective concept, but a subjective one. *Letter* is a journey into Dickinson's "inner landscape," and time does not follow a realist development. Closely connected with the cyclical process of the work, Graham's use of time rather recalls the modernists' stream-of-consciousness technique, with its oscillations and association of ideas. For example, the arrival of the Ancestress is associated with death, performed by the One Who Dances during the procession march. March is the character who activates a series of associations connected with childhood memories. The spoken lines are a springboard for these recollections to take place, introducing them in a surreal manner through Dickinson's elliptical style. Time is constructed following Henri Bergson's notion of duration, which was a major influence for modernist writers and artists:

> Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious state from its former states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. . . . [it] forms both the past and present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (Bergson 1919, 100)

Time is not organized in chronological order with a logical succession of events. In Romantic ballet, time usually reflected a realist approach. Albrecht first falls in love with Giselle, then the hunter, Hilarion, reveals Albrecht's princely identity to her, and after that Giselle dies. These are the main events occurring in the first act of *Giselle*. Similarly, in *Swan Lake*, prince Siegfrid falls in love with Odette the white swan, then promises his love to Odile the black swan disguised as Odette, and condemns his love to imprisonment under the spell of the evil magician, Rothbart. Even though these plots revolve around supernatural creatures and fairy-tale love stories, their structure and use of time is specifically realist, in that it is characterised by a beginning, a development and an end, where one event is logically and chronologically connected with the one that follows. In *Letter* the love duet takes place in the fourth section, and the poet's childish self is presented in the third: "Like a movie or a dream, the dance uses flashbacks, skipping back and forth in time" (Freedman 1998, 89). Graham is considered in fact to be the first choreographer to have introduced this technique in dance, and *Letter* is one of her best examples, anticipating by years the way she would use time in later pieces such as *Night Journey* (1947).

Inspired by the Oedipus myth, the dance story is told from Jocasta's point of view. The piece begins with Jocasta facing her destiny of death before the bed Isamu Noguchi sculptured for the piece, the bed which symbolises her horrific act. At this point she starts recalling her relationship with her son in a flashback. The choreography once again represents a journey into the character's mind. Graham called this process Jocasta's "instant of agony" (Graham 1948).

Conclusion

As Marcia Siegel has affirmed, "the words of Dickinson opened avenues of lyricism, wit, and a large range of feelings that Graham rarely explored elsewhere" (Siegel 1979, 177). Dickinson is the only poet to whom Graham explicitly dedicated a work. Hunter Johnson, the composer of the piece, states that she recognized herself in the work and life of the New England poet (Bowers 1978, 26), an aspect which seems quite paradoxical at first glance. Dickinson was a kind of recluse who spent most of her life at home and never married, while Graham was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, moved to the West Coast when she was fourteen and moved again to New York after she left Denishwan, the school where she studied. She often travelled around the States and all over the world during her numerous tours. She fell in love with several men during her lifetime and married Erick Hawkins in 1948. Dickinson wrote and kept most of her poetry in secrecy; Graham as dancer and choreographer was always overexposed to the public eye. Apparently they did not have much in common.

However, similarities between the two figures can be found on another level, where their respective poetics, their approach to life and their devotion to their work meet. Both subverted the language they expressed themselves in, Dickinson by creating her own poetic style, Graham by inventing her own dance technique. Both were very aware of what it meant to be a woman artist, and dealt with the contradictions and tensions of their roles in a unusual and empowering ways. Graham probably saw in Dickinson a kind of ancestral figure, another woman who had challenged the artistic conventions of her time to give voice to her creativity. In addition, Dickinson was American, and this was very important for Graham, as her intention was to establish an American Dance with its own peculiar style, as opposed to ballet which was seen as European and artificial in the 1920s and 1930s. “The modern American dance is characterised . . . by a simplicity of idea, an economy of means, a focus directly upon movement, which is the ‘stuff’ of the dance art, and behind and above and around all, an awareness, a direct relationship to the blood flow of the time and country that nourishes it” (Graham 1932, 7). That is why *Letter* and other works inspired by American culture like *Frontier* (1935), *American Document* (1938) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944) were created. In particular Graham was very critical towards the American Puritan tradition, and in *Letter* this emerges through the fearful figure of the Ancestress.[14] According to Graham, Dickinson’s Puritan heritage had prevented her from living a life in the world and obliged her to cultivate her art alone and hide it from her friends and family. That same heritage was fundamental to Graham’s poetics, as she constantly criticized its negative influence on American art and society.

In this paper I have analyzed the unusual way Emily Dickinson is represented in *Letter to the World*. It is a journey into her consciousness, a journey where the poet’s lines are brought to life through sound and movement. As Pearl Lang, who has danced the role of the One Who Dances, has stated, “the role is in the words, the words feed the movement” (Lang 2007). The characters and the spoken lines create the structure of the piece following a cyclical love-death-rebirth process where time is treated in a modernist sense. There are many other aspects to be considered, including a more thorough contextualization of Graham’s technique between the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s: the role of the One Who Speaks as a kind of subconscious voice within the piece; the relationship between the characters through movement and the spoken lines; the importance of costumes, music and set, which were all supervised by Graham and had to actively interact with the dancing; and also the relationship between this piece and other dances within Graham’s production.

Graham was able to give us a complex picture of what she saw as the main aspects of Emily Dickinson’s persona. She presented the poet as a desiring woman, as a playful and childish girl, as a woman who questioned her tradition and who fought for her creativity. The One Who Dances is torn between two different forces, embodied by the Ancestress and the Lover respectively, and in the end she chooses neither. She prefers to be on her own and devote her life to her art. This is a very powerful statement on Graham’s part, a statement Graham felt was applicable to herself too. The end is not final: the One Who Speaks utters the line "this is my Letter to the World" (441), and the One Who Dances walks from upstage towards the bench and sits down very slowly with her hands on her lap, her focus downward so as to indicate the intensity and introspective moment of recollection and self-awareness. According to Umberto Eco, "an open work tends . . . to promote 'acts of conscious freedom' in the interpreter, it presents him as the creative centre of an inexhaustible network of relations" (Eco 1997, 35). In this sense *Letter* is an open work, and particularly so because of the reference to the epistolary form in both the title and the last spoken line. It implies an active re-action on the audience's part, a response that Dickinson never had and that Graham perhaps tried to give her.

Notes

[1] This essay is part of a larger study I am writing on *Letter to the World*.

[2] The piece underwent several changes between 1940, when it was first performed, and 1941, when it reached its definite form. I refer to the latter version, whose technical aspects are as follows: *Letter to the World*, chor. Martha Graham, text Emily Dickinson, set Arch Lauterer, music Hunter Johnson, costumes Edythe Gilfond, feat. Martha Graham, Jean Erdman, Jane Dudley, Erick Awkins, Merce Cunningham. New York: Guild Theatre, April 7, 1941. However, I will also make reference to the programme note of the first version.

[3] Guerra emphasizes that the two pieces were quite different in their relation to their sources: Glaspell's work was somewhat critical towards Genevieve Taggard's *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson* (1930) and original in staging a play centred on what happened after the poet died, while York and Pohl's piece did not question their source, Josephine Pollitt's *Emily Dickinson: The Human Background of Her Poetry* (1930).

[4] Due to lack of space I will not deal with the other characters in the piece, i.e. the Fairy Queen, the Young Girl, Two Children and five other dancers.

[5] On the importance of letters in Dickinson's poetics see Salska 1998.

[6] The material is quite vast. Apart from Capucilli's scenario, the conversation with the dancers and the vision of the 1973 video reconstruction, Barbara Morgan's photographs and Marcia Siegel's analysis were particularly useful. I would like to thank Terese Capucilli for her kindness and help, Pearl Lang, Armgard von Bardeleben, and Janet Eilber.

[7] For an overview on Graham's technique see Horosko 2002.

[8] For an overview on Dickinson's reception see Lubbers 1968 and Messmer 1998.

[9] The numbering of Dickinson's poems follows the Johnson edition of Dickinson's *Complete Poems* (1955). However, the quoted lines are those Graham used in her piece, and they are taken from Capucilli's written scenario; their layout corresponds, in most cases, to the abridged version in use before publication of the above-mentioned edition.

[10] A few years earlier, in 1937, Graham had created a solo piece inspired by the *cante jondo*, one of the core concepts of flamenco, *Deep Song*. On Graham and flamenco see Simonari 2007.

[11] Translations from Italian are mine.

[12] Other pieces using this structure are *Primitive Mysteries* (1931) and *Acts of Light* (1981). I first mentioned this cyclical structure in Simonari 2006.

[13] I would like to thank Marina Warner for mentioning this aspect to me.

[14] The relationship between Graham and Puritanism is quite crucial to an understanding of her work. My research is at present centred on this question. See also my unpublished thesis, Simonari 1999.

Works Cited

Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Trans. F.L. Pogson. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1919.

Bowers, Theresa. "Interview with Hunter Johnson." Typescript, Oral History Archive, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Recorded in Raleigh, North Carolina, 27th December, 1978. 47 pp.

Capucilli, Terese. "*Letter to the World*: Poetry Used, Characters, Outline of Action." Fax sent to the author on February 25th, 1999. 8 pp.

De Mille, Agnes. *Martha: The Life and Work of Martha Graham*, New York: Random House, 1991.

Dickinson, Emily. *Selected Letters*. 1894. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998.

____. *The Complete Poems*. 1955. Ed. Thomas H. Johnson. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1961.

Dudley, Jane. "Jane Dudley." In *Goddess: Martha Graham's Dancers Remember*, ed. Robert Tracy, 50-62. New York: Limelight Editions, 1996.

Eco, Umberto. *Opera aperta: Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee,* 1962. Reprint Milano: Bompiani, 1997.

Freedman, Russell. *Martha Graham: A Dancer's Life*. New York: Clarion Books, 1998.

Graham, Martha. "The Dance in America." *Trend*. March, April, May 1932: 5-7.

____. "Programme for *El Penitente*." Bennington: Bennington College Theatre, August 11, 1940.

____. "Programme for *Letter to the World*." Bennington: Bennington College Theatre, August 11, 1940.

____. "Programme for *Letter to the World*." Bennington: Bennington College Theatre, 10th August, 1941.

____. "Programme for *Night Journey*." New York: Maxine Elliott's Theatre, 27th February 1948.

____. *Blood Memory*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1991.

Guerra, Jonnie. "Dickinson Adaptations in the Arts and the Theater." In *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, eds. Gudrun Grabher, Roland Hagenbüchle and Cristanne Miller, 385-407. Amherst: Massachusetts University Press, 1998.

Horosko, Marion. *Martha Graham: The Evolution of her Dance Theory and Training, 1926-1991*. Gainesville: Florida University Press, 2002.

Lubbers, Klaus. *Emily Dickinson: The Critical Revolution*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1968.

McDonagh, Don. *Martha Graham*. New York: Preager, 1973.

Messmer, Marietta. "Dickinson's Critical Reception." In *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, eds. Grabher, Hagenbüchle and Miller, 299-322, 1998.

Morgan, Barbara. *Martha Graham: Sixteen Dances in Photographs*. 1941. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Morgan & Morgan, 1980.

Pollitt, Josephine. *Emily Dickinson: The Human Background of Her Poetry*. New York: Harper and Row, 1930.

Salska, Agnieszka. "Dickinson's Letters." *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, eds. Grabher, Hagenbüchle and Miller, 163-180, 1998.

Siegel, B. Marcia. *The Shape of Change: Images of American Dance*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Simonari, Rosella. "Martha Graham, 'atti di luce' con Emily Dickinson." *Danza & Danza* 195 (December 2006): 18.

____. *Martha Graham,* In the American Grain*: Rapporto fra danza e letteratura*, unpublished thesis. Macerata: Università degli Studi di Macerata, 1999.

Stodelle, Ernestine. *Deep Song: The Dance Story of Martha Graham*. New York: Schirmer, 1984.

Taggard, Genevieve. *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson*. New York: Knopf, 1930.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Waves*. 1931. London: Penguin, 2006.

Zaccaria, Paola. *A lettere scarlatte: Poesia come stregoneria*. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1995.

Oral Documents

Lang, Pearl. "Conversation with the Author." New York: Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, June 12, 2007.

Sauer, Christian. "Paranoia Visits the Ballet: Salvador Dalí's Surrealist Interpretation of Wagner's *Bacchanal*." *Painting the Stage: Examining the Interrelationship of Painting and the Performing Arts*, Postgraduate Conference, School of Art History, University of St Andrews, Fife, Scotland, September 6 and 7, 2007.

____. "Conversation with the Author." (St. Andrews: September 7, 2007).

Simonari, Rosella. "Danzare il *cante jondo*: Ipotesi di contaminazione fra Martha Graham e il flamenco." Paper presented at *Corpi Danzanti: Culture, Tradizioni, Identità*, Study days in memory of Giorgio Di Lecce, AIRDanza (Italian Association for Dance Research), Comune di Martignano (Lecce), Arakne Mediterranea, Palazzo Palmieri, Martignano (Lecce), September 14 and 16, 2007 (forthcoming publication).

von Bardeleben, Armgard. "Conversation with the Author." New York: June 13, 2007.

Choreography

Acts of Light. Chor. Martha Graham, music Carl Nielsen, costumes Halston. Feat. the Martha Graham Dance Company. New York: City Center, November 26, 1981.

American Documen. Chor. Martha Graham. Texts *Declaration of Independence*, *Song of Songs*, Jonathan Edwards. Set Arch Laureter, music Ray Green, costumes Edyth Gilfond. Feat. Martha Graham, Erick Hawkins and the Group. Bennington: Vermont State Armory, August 6, 1938.

Appalachian Spring. Chor. Martha Graham. Set Isamu Noguchi, music Aaron Copland, costumes Edythe Gilfond. Feat. Martha Graham and the Company. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, October 30, 1944.

Bacchanal. Chor. Leonide Massine, set and costumes Salvador Dalí, music Richard Wagner. Feat. the Ballets Russes de Montecarlo. New York: Metropolitan Theatre, 1939.

Frontier. Chor. Martha Graham, set Isamu Noguchi, music Louis Horst, costumes Martha Graham. Feat. Martha Graham [initially presented as part of *Perspectives*]. New York: Guild Theatre, April 28, 1935.

Giselle. Chor. Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot, set and costumes Ciceri, music Adolphe Adam. Feat. Carlotta Grisi. Paris: Opéra, June 28, 1941.

Letter to the World. Chor. Martha Graham, text Emily Dickinson, set Arch Lauterer, music Hunter Johnson, costumes Edythe Gilfond. Feat. Martha Graham, Jean Erdman, Jane Dudley, Erick Awkins, Merce Cunningham. New York: Guild Theatre, April 7, 1941.

Night Journey. Chor. Martha Graham, set Isamu Noguchi, music William Schuman, costumes Martha Graham. Feat. Martha Graham and the Company. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge High and Latin School, May 3, 1947.

Primitive Mysteries. Chor. Martha Graham, music Louis Horst, costumes Martha Graham, Feat. Martha Graham and the Group. New York: Craig Theatre, February 2, 1931.

Swan Lake. Chor. Marius Petipa, and Lev Ivanov, set and costumes Mikhail Bocharov and Heinrich Levogt, music Piotr Illitch Tchaikovsky. Feat. Pierina Legnani. St. Petersburg: Mariinskij Theatre, January 27, 1895.

Videography

Letter to the World. Black and white. Dir. ?, chor. Martha Graham, set Arch Laureter, music Hunter Johnson, costumes after designs by Edythe Gilfond. Feat. Pearl Lang, Jean Erdman, Armgard von Bardeleben, William Carter, David Hatch Walker. New York: New York Public Library, Jerome Robbins Film Archive, Compton-Ardolino Films, Inc., with the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, December 5, 1973.

Where Angels Dare: American View(s) of Post September 11. Scenarios in Literature and Other Media

Coordinators: Stefano Asperti, Mario Corona

Paolo Simonetti

“There’s an Empty Space Where America Used to Be”: Art and Terrorism in Thomas Pynchon’s *Against the Day* (2006) and Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007)

> It troubles me when people ask if it’s too early
> to make art pertaining to September 11.
> No one asked, in the moments after the attacks,
> if it was too early for Tom Brokaw to report it.
> Do we trust Tom Brokaw more than we trust, say, Philip Roth . . .
> Journalists traffic in biography. Artists traffic in empathy.
> We need both.
> (Jonathan Safran Foer)
>
> Fiction is slow. Fiction doesn’t happen the next week.
> (Paul Auster)

According to some critics, after 9/11 we have definitely entered the “age of nonfiction” (see Junod 2007).[1] In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, journalism and documentary reports seemed able to cope with reality better than fiction. Yet, despite the widespread opinion that it might take a very long time for the attacks to find appropriate fictional expression, American novelists have quickly turned the post-9/11 novel into a new subgenre. A number of writers different in age and background, such as Jay McInerney and Jonathan Safran Foer, John Updike and Ken Kalfus, Philip Beard and Jess Walter, have tackled the events of 9/11. Seldom, however, have these works achieved superior artistic value, except for Thomas Pynchon’s *Against the Day* (2006) and Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man* (2007). Both novels focus, each in its own way, on the paranoia unleashed by terroristic attacks: while events in *Falling Man* take place in the days, months and years following 9/11, beginning and closing with the fall of the towers, *Against the Day* is ostensibly set at the turn of the twentieth century, and deals with the rise of capitalism and the anarchistic attempts to counter it. It is a fact, however, that Pynchon works, as always, with contemporary material. The parallel between twentieth-century anarchism and present terrorism is unmistakable.[2]

Pynchon and DeLillo reshape the character of the terrorist as an ambivalent, therefore infinitely adaptable, trope of the postmodernist discourse. The fictional terrorist stands out as "author" of a plot in competition with the author's plot; this eventually entails whether and how literature can cope with events so devastating as to defy any representation. There are some traumatizing events—Jean-Francois Lyotard mentions Auschwitz, but we can add the attacks of 9/11 as well—whose frightful complexities defy reduction to conventional storylines and narrative structures. According to Hayden White, the atrocities of Nazism and the concentration camps required precisely the high modernism style to be historically and fictionally represented.[3] In a similar way, postmodernist fiction, characterized in the Fifties and Sixties by strong metafictional inclinations, defied the consolation of good form and offered fragmented plots and a schizophrenic language to represent a post-traumatic consciousness. In deconstructing any simplistic opposition between terrorist and writer, America and Islam, religious fundamentalism and late capitalism,[4] Pynchon's and DeLillo's works testify to the new directions taken by postmodernist fiction in the face of the multifaceted texture of contemporary life. In the end, I will argue that on the "Ground Zero" of narrative, in the empty space left by the fall of the towers, postmodernist writers creatively cope with destruction and grief, not just by reporting the event sensationally or emotionally as the mass media does, but by providing the mind with a new heterogeneous space for reflection.

Terrorism seems to be constitutive of the postmodern condition, and its pervasiveness increases the sense of paranoia that permeates everyday life. No wonder that it has played an important part in every novel written by DeLillo, an author ever concerned with contemporary issues. Since September 12, the literary world has been eagerly expecting DeLillo's 9/11 novel, though he had already dealt many times with the theme. In *Players* (1977) he had explored the issue of urban terrorism and even represented the World Trade Center as an ambivalent symbol of Western consciousness.[5] In *Mao II* (1991) he had created a link between the figure of the terrorist and that of the writer, the latter no longer able "to alter the inner life of the culture" (DeLillo, 1992, 41):

> For some time now, I've had the feeling that novelists and terrorists are playing a zero-sum game. . . . What terrorists gain, novelists lose. The degree to which they influence mass consciousness is the extent of our decline as shapers of sensibility and thought. The danger they represent equals our own failure to be dangerous. (DeLillo 1992, 156-157)

A decade before the actual attacks, DeLillo prefigures the present shift to nonfiction as a reaction to terrorism, and foretells the rival plots between writers and terrorists on the one hand, and fiction and journalism on the other. As the reclusive novelist Bill Gray in *Mao II* argues, "news of disaster is the only narrative people need. The darker the news, the grander the narrative"

(DeLillo 1992, 42). Later his assistant, quoting Bill, remarks that "the news . . . is where we find emotional experience not available elsewhere. We don't need the novel" (DeLillo 1992, 157).[6]

Yet in an article published shortly after the destruction of the towers DeLillo insists on the writer's duty to weave a counternarrative, especially as a challenge to the binary plot proposed by the Bush government: "The sense of disarticulation we hear in the term 'Us and Them' has never been so striking, at either end. . . . The Bush administration was feeling a nostalgia for the Cold War. This is over now. Many things are over. The narrative ends in the rubble and it is left to us to create the counternarrative" (DeLillo 2001). According to Jean Baudrillard, the spirit of terrorism "is no shock of civilizations, of religions, and it goes much beyond Islam and America, on which one attempts to focus the conflict to give the illusion of a visible conflict and of an attainable solution (through force)" (Baudrillard 2001). Islam is only one crystallization of an antagonism that for Baudrillard is producing an "asymmetrical terror," something that cannot be circumscribed because it lies at the very heart of the nation fighting it. But while the philosopher sees the singularity of the attack as analogous to a work of art, DeLillo, as a writer, argues that "precisely in its singularity the event lies outside symbolic meaning . . . rather it leaves a gaping hole in representation, and our sense of the event's meaning comes belatedly, through the process of articulation" (Wilcox 2006, 100). Thus, terrorism is a self-conscious symbolic act that must be correctly interpreted and endowed with meaning to reach its goal, though one of its key aspects is its utter unpredictability. This is why DeLillo refuses to give a clear-cut interpretation of terrorism, representing it as a meaningless or random act that cannot be reduced to any logical debate, so that it becomes impossible for any detective—or simple bystander—to unravel the plot and find the culprit.[7]

"There is something empty in the sky," writes DeLillo. "The writer tries to give memory, tenderness and meaning to all that howling space" (DeLillo 2001). *Falling Man* marks DeLillo's attempt to fill what a character in the novel calls the "empty space where America used to be" (DeLillo 2007, 193). The novel begins in the void left by the fall of the towers, but soon it is clear that the terroristic attacks are not its main focus; DeLillo prefers to concentrate on the psychological radiation of the attacks through the life of a New York family, Keith, Lianne and their son Justin, in the months and years following the disaster. The narrator makes it clear from the very first line that something utterly changes when people feel a metaphysical void creeping alongside the physical one: "It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night" (DeLillo 2007, 3). Art can no longer give the comfort and relief only nonfiction seems to provide, as Lianne argues: "'People read poems. People I know, they read poetry to ease the shock and pain, give them a kind of space, something beautiful in language,' she said, 'to bring comfort or composure. I don't read poems. I read newspapers. I put my head in the pages and get angry and crazy'" (DeLillo 2007, 42). Though "she read everything they wrote about the attacks" (DeLillo 2007, 67), she hardly reads any fiction, preferring to "read newspaper profiles of the dead," because "not to read them, every one, was an offense, a violation of responsibility and trust," but also because "she had to, out of some need she did not try to interpret" (DeLillo 2007, 106). She needs to fill her own empty space with newspapers and television reports, for information and, most of all, for comfort. At the same time Martin, a former leftist activist who currently works as an art dealer, chooses to analyze every detail to give meaning to the event: "'There's another approach, which is to study the matter. Stand apart and think about the elements,' he said. 'Coldly, clearly if you're able to. Do not let it tear you down. See it, measure it'" (DeLillo 2007, 42). It seems only news can give people the insight they need to overcome disaster.

The very existence of a 9/11 art is continuously at stake in the novel. The "Falling Man" is a performance artist who appears here and there throughout the city, hanging upside down from buildings, mimicking the iconic photograph of a man falling from one of the towers. Is he a symbol of recovery or merely an exploiter of the city's grief? The novel reports a "panel discussion at the New School. Falling Man as Heartless Exhibitionist or Brave New Chronicler of the Age of Terror" (DeLillo 2007, 220). At one point Lianne receives a suggestion that could possibly be directed to every contemporary author who comes to grips with 9/11: "You don't want them to feel there's an urgency to write everything, say everything before it's too late. You want them to look forward to this, not feel pressed or threatened. The writing is sweet music up to a point. Then other things will take over" (DeLillo 2007, 60). Thus DeLillo uses a last glimmer of postmodernist wit to question in a metafictional way the *raison d'être* of his own novel. It took twenty-five years for him to recreate in a novel, *Libra* (1988), the events that led to the Kennedy assassination. Now, after 9/11, he asks himself, through Lianne: "under the circumstances, how could I even bring up the subject?" He takes the risk of writing "a book that's so enormously immersed, going back on it, leading up to it. And a book that's so demanding, so incredibly tedious" (DeLillo 2007, 138). He does not want to write "a book detailing a series of interlocking global forces that appeared to converge at an explosive point in time and space that might be said to represent the locus of Boston, New York and Washington on a late summer morning early in the twenty-first century" (DeLillo 2007, 139). Times have changed, and DeLillo feels he cannot write another conspiracy novel. Far from being the "big-canvas swirl of sects, secrets, technological choreographies" (Birkerts 2007) everyone has been expecting, *Falling Man* focuses on the private dimension of grief, reducing the text to shreds and rubble. The narrative, like the lives of traumatized people, is irreparably fragmented; scenes from a post-9/11 existence appear and disappear without an evident order or continuity; chronology is shattered, and the characters' thoughts and discourses return again and again to the day of the attacks. Keith "finds himself drifting into spells of reflection, thinking not in clear units, hard and linked, but only absorbing what comes, drawing things out of time and memory and into some dim space that bears his collected experience" (DeLillo 2007, 67). The description well reflects the way readers experience DeLillo's novel, always trying to fill in the empty spaces between the chapters.

Thomas Pynchon follows a slightly different perspective. He seems to share Lyotard's idea that "We have to write a history that will testify to the unrepresentable horror without representing it. . . . History, like literature, becomes the site of the recognition that there is something that cannot be said" (Readings 1991, 62). In *Against the Day* Pynchon makes much use of textual and historical allusions to post-9/11 America, though apparently the novel is not overly connected with the present. If, as Amy J. Elias argues, "allusion is the presenting of the unpresentable without presentation . . ., reference that defers reference" (Elias 2001, 60), then *Against the Day* is one of the most convincing contributions to post-9/11 fiction published to date.[8] Pynchon is not new to the subject of terrorism. His works generally present war and violence as linked with the paranoia provoked by obscure and omniscient agents of surveillance and power, which consciously conspire to annihilate the individual's agency. *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), significantly, ends with a group of unaware people, waiting helplessly inside a theater for a rocket to fall on them, singing a song about "the Light that hath brought the Towers low" (Pynchon 1973, 760). The origins of the English word "terrorism," as it was first used during the French Revolution, place it as the opposite of enlightenment and reason, and the very title of Pynchon's most recent novel strengthens the idea that his book is concerned with such an issue. But the action is set in a time when terrorists were proud Americans committed to murdering plutocrats, and the narrator sides with these anarchist-heroes,[9] who loath capitalists and show a sort of fundamentalist faith in their political mission: "Lord knew that owners and mine managers deserved to be blown up . . . . If you are not devoting every breath of every day waking and sleeping to destroying those who slaughter the innocent as easy as signing a check, then how innocent are you willing to call yourself?" (Pynchon 2006, 85, 87).

Another strong link with the present is the rhetoric of war and national patriotism used as a pretext to destroy anarchism as well as terrorism. Terrorist violence was originally directed against a symbolic center of power.

Now, in the age of late capitalism when power is globally scattered and there is no longer such a recognizable center, it acquires a more pervasive perspective. According to Pynchon's anachronistic narrator, the rhetoric of a centered nation under attack fatally led to the outburst of the First World War, also waged to destroy the Anarchistic threat:

> Today even the dimmest of capitalists can see that the centralized nation-state, so promising an idea a generation ago, has lost all credibility with the population. Anarchism now is the idea that has seized hearts everywhere, some form of it will come to envelop every centrally governed society—unless government has already become irrelevant . . . . A general European war, with every striking worker a traitor, flags threatened, the sacred soils of homelands defiled, would be just the ticket to wipe Anarchism off the political map. (Pynchon 2006, 938)

This kind of rhetoric dreadfully resembles Bush's proclamation of war against Iraq and the appeals to the nation that followed.

One of the novel's most remarkable scenes concerns the sudden destruction of a city strikingly similar to Manhattan by a mysterious, revengeful being whose power has been awakened by the disrespect of people, and who remains unnamed. One passage in particular recalls the New York paranoia after the attacks:

> This city, even on the best of days, had always been known for its background rumble of anxiety. . . . The city more and more vertical, the population growing in density, all hostages to just such an incursion…. Who outside the city would have imagined them as victims taken by surprise—who, for that matter, inside it? Though many in the aftermath did profit briefly by assuming just that affecting pose. . . . Fire and blood were about to roll like fate upon the complacent multitudes. Just as the peak of the evening rush-hour, electric power failed everywhere throughout the city, and as the gas mains began to ignite and the thousand local winds, distinct at every street-corner, to confound prediction, cobblestones erupted skyward, to descend blocks away in seldom observed yet beautiful patterns. . . . Later, fire alarms would go unanswered and the firemen on the front lines find themselves too soon without reinforcements, or the hope of any.[10] (Pynchon 2006, 151-152)

In the skies of the annihilated city, "authorities had begun to project a three-dimensional image in full color, not exactly of Christ but with the same beard, robes, ability to emit light"; this strange figure, eerily resembling Bin Laden, might become useful to the authorities: "should the worst happen, they could deny all-out Christian allegiance and so make much easier whatever turnings of heart might become necessary in striking a deal with the invader" (Pynchon 2006, 153). Similarly, in Falling Man, the little child Justin creates his own private counternarrative, searching the sky with his friends in order to prevent a mysterious enemy with an American name, Bill Lawton, from destroying the already crushed towers: "He was hearing Bill Lawton. They were saying Bin Laden. Lianne considered this. It seemed to her, at first, that some important meaning might be located in the soundings of the boy's small error" (DeLillo 2007, 74). There is an insurmountable difficulty in distinguishing the enemy from the ally, in tracking the actual culprits, when names and roles become so easily confused.

In both novels religious fundamentalism is too weak a gauge for telling the terrorists from the victims. As Lianne in Falling Man acknowledges, "God's name [is] on the tongue of killers and victims both" (DeLillo 2007, 134). In Against the Day, anarchists meet in a building that resembles a church, are addressed by "the traveling Anarchist preacher the Reverend Moss Gatlin" (Pynchon 2006, 49), and chant hymns and choral selections of anti-Capitalist anthems. The detective charged with finding them has some difficulty in recognizing anarchists; despite the current stereotype, they look like ordinary American people:

> There was a kind of general assumption around the shop that laboring men and women were all more or less evil, surely misguided, and not quite American, maybe not quite human. But here was this hall full of Americans, no question, even the foreign-born . . . American in their prayers anyway, and maybe a few haven't shaved for a while, but it was hard to see how any fit the bearded, wild-eyed, bomb-rolling Red description too close, in fact give them a good night's sleep and a square meal or two, and even a veteran detective'd have a hard time telling the difference from regular Americans. (Pynchon 2006, 50)

How to tell the good from the bad guys, then? People who physically place bombs and provoke violence are indeed guilty, but, as the narrator of *Against the Day* argues, in some way recalling the conspiracy theories recently grown around 9/11 responsibilities, "some of these explosions, the more deadly of them, in fact, were really set off to begin with not by Anarchists but by the owners themselves" (Pynchon 2006, 84-85). Moreover, far from being a prerogative of the victims and an outcome of terrorism, paranoia is a cause of terrorism itself.[11] In describing the terrorists' training, the narrator of *Falling Man* makes it clear that they live in a constant state of suspicion, not much different from the paranoid suspicion of government felt by many American citizens:

> They were probably being watched, phones tapped, signals intercepted. They preferred anyway to talk in person. They knew that all signals traveling in the air are vulnerable to interception. The state has microwave sites. The state has ground stations and floating satellites, Internet exchange points. There is a photo reconnaissance that takes a picture of a dung beetle from one hundred kilometers up. (DeLillo 2007, 81)

Pynchon traces the birth of the counterterrorism system back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In *Against the Day* we learn that owners in Colorado "hired what they called 'detectives,' who started keeping dossiers on persons of interest. The practice quickly became commonplace . . . and sooner than anybody would've thought, it became routine and all but invisible"

(Pynchon 2006, 92). That's the moment when the government begins to get paranoid regarding anarchists: "maybe those anarchistic bastards were hiding their records. He might be conspiring *in secret*. Midnight oaths, invisible ink" (Pynchon 2006, 92). At the same time, the anarchists become paranoid too. One of them is aware that "there is a master list . . . in Washington, DC, of everybody they think is up to no good, maintained by the US Secret Service" (Pynchon 2006, 94).

After World War II, many novels have presented American leftists as potential terrorists. Since the end of the Cold War and the sudden demise of post-Gorbachev communism as the main enemy, the focus of political persecution has shifted from leftists as terrorists to a new figure with precise traits, such as Middle Eastern ethnicity or religious fanaticism. Nonetheless, terrorists have frequently claimed leftist political ideologies in contemporary fiction, as is the case of the anarchic Webb in *Against the Day* or the art dealer Martin in *Falling Man*, whose European origins and shadowy past as a member of a collective in the late Sixties make him a fascinating and problematic borderline figure.

The experience of invasion is constitutive of America's foundation and its literature. The myth of the conquest of the frontier has always been an incentive to challenge national boundaries, but with the backlash of the mobile frontier the situation has changed, as Alessandro Portelli reminds us: "Se l'America non aveva confini che la contenessero, adesso rischia di non avere confini che la proteggano" (Portelli 2003, 178-179). Considering "the change in nature of the frontier that has taken place in our globalized world," Salman Rushdie regards terrorism as "the most appalling consequence of the permeable frontier" (Rushdie 2002, 426). He identifies "the migrant, the man without frontiers" as "the archetypal figure of our age" (Rushdie 2002, 415), concluding that "the terrorists of September 11, and the planners of that day's events, behaved like perverted, but in another way brilliantly transgressive, performance artists: hideously innovative, shockingly successful" (Rushdie 2002, 436). Rushdie's comments emphasize how the figure of the terrorist, far from being a flat, entirely negative character, is an ambivalent and multilayered icon in contemporary American fiction. In crossing literal and metaphorical borders, he has become the symbol of postmodern transgression and marginality, associated with archetypal figures like the tourist, the trickster, or the cyborg.[12]

Pynchon's and DeLillo's works exceed such theoretical definitions. So far, postmodernist writers, much like linguistic terrorists themselves, have aimed at destroying language and conventional forms, robbing the reader of the comfort of any transcendental authorial figure who might make sense of the random violence of language and reality. Now, especially after 9/11, postmodernist fiction is undeniably tending towards new and unpredictable forms of realism. In their latest novels, Pynchon and DeLillo aim at restoring a creative heterogeneity against the one-way rhetoric of the terrorists and the one-way rhetoric of the government. In adopting multiple narrative positions and in showing the continuous swapping of roles and parties, their writings overcome the simplistic moralism implicit in the use that both the mass media and the official sources make of empty linguistic refrains like "war against evil" and "freedom against fear." Indeed, *Falling Man*'s tiny ensemble and *Against the Day*'s huge bulk are two opposite but equally successful attempts to fill the empty space left by the "terrorism of meaninglessness."

Notes

[1] Michael Gorman, president of the American Library Association, at the opening of the 2006 annual conference, talked about "the golden age of nonfiction we are currently enjoying: histories, biographies, and memoirs on our bestsellers lists. The golden age of American historical writing" (Gorman 2006).

[2] It is significant that Pynchon removed this sentence from the final version of his blurb published on the novel's inside cover: "No reference to the present day is intended or should be inferred." The sentence appeared instead on the internet blurb some weeks before the publication, as to imply that such references *are* actually intended.

[3] The famous statement by Adorno again resounds in the air, admonishing us that "writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" ("nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch"; Adorno 1955, 31).

[4] The same point is made by Johan Galtung thirteen years before 9/11: "There is no shadow of reason why Americans should be targets except for one reason: that Evil always selects its victims among the Good. Infinite Evil against infinite Good, the eternal battle in a dualistic universe, fueled by hatred and envy, and by religious/ideological fundamentalism. . . . The craziness is then also attributed to 'Muslim fanaticism'" (Galtung 1988, 29).

[5] Pammy, one of the novel's main characters, works for the "Grief Management Council," an organization whose clinics help to understand and assimilate grief. The narrator says that "it was her original view that the World Trade Center was an unlikely headquarters for an outfit such as this. But she changed her mind as time passed. Where else would you stack all this grief? . . . To Pammy the towers didn't seem permanent. They remained concepts, no less transient for all their bulk than some routine distortion of light." Later in the novel Pammy asks herself: "What then was the World Trade Center itself? Was it a condition, an occurrence, a physical event, an existing circumstance, a presence, a state, a set of invariables?" (DeLillo 1978, 15-16, 41). Her questions would receive a tragic answer twenty-four years later.

[6] If this was not enough, the dissolving shapes of the Twin Towers enshrouded by fog appear on the front cover of *Underworld* (1997), DeLillo's "cultural biography" of Cold War America. In this prophetic cover, the Towers loom ominously against the stark silhouette of a nearby little church, accentuating the gap between the two rationales of life—economy and religion—dominating Western and Eastern cultures.

[7] The terrorist cult in *The Names* (1982) kills people randomly or according to meaningless details, such as the initials of the victims' names. In *Libra* (1988), Oswald and the other plotters in pursuit of the terrorist narrative converging in Kennedy's assassination are driven by contradictory or irrational interests.

[8] Curiously, DeLillo seems to recognize it too. In *Falling Man* Lianne is asked to edit a book by a "retired aeronautical engineer. We call him the Unaflyer. He doesn't live in a remote cabin with his bomb-making chemicals and his college yearbooks but he's been working obsessively for fifteen or

sixteen years" (DeLillo 2007, 139). We know that Pynchon worked for a period in Seattle with the Boeing Corporation as "Engineering Aide" and we can reasonably presume that the gestation for *Against the Day* was extremely long. Even the character of the "Falling Man" resembles Pynchon in his reticence to talk to the media; the narrator argues in *Falling Man* that "he said nothing about it [its art] when questioned by reporters after one of his arrests. He said nothing when asked whether anyone close to him had been lost in the attacks. He had no comments to make to the media on any subject" (DeLillo 2007, 222).

[9] The representation of anarchists as heroes is strikingly similar to Susan Sontag's controversial statement about the terrorists of 9/11: "In the matter of courage (a morally neutral virtue): whatever may be said of the perpetrators of Tuesday's slaughter, they were not cowards" (Sontag 2001).

[10] Later in the novel we encounter also a collapsing tower, though it is that of San Marco's campanile instead of the World Trade Center's.

[11] Salman Rushdie identifies paranoia as the result of Islamic poverty, and in a way considers it a cause of the hatred towards America. "This paranoid Islam," he says in an essay written two months after the attacks, "which blames outsiders, 'infidels,' for all the ills of Muslim societies, and whose proposed remedy is the closing of those societies to the rival projects of modernity, is presently the fastest-growing version of Islam in the world" (Rushdie 2003, 395), but is nonetheless only a part of the whole.

[12] According to Diane Johnson, the terrorist in fiction occupies a position close to the clown or the trickster, because of his ability to defy confining categories and to switch identities. For Steffen Hantke (see Hantke 1996), he can be seen as the counterpart of the tourist, practicing mobility and exchange without genuine commitment to any stable place on the map, emotionally dissociated from every experience, and continuously shifting strategic alliances. The terrorist has also been closely related to Donna Haraway's cyborg, caught up between the imposition of a grid of control n the planet and the liquidity of partial identities and contradictory standpoints.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor. "Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft." In *Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955.

Allen, Glen Scott. "Raids on the Unconscious: Pynchon's Legacy of Paranoia and the Terrorism of Uncertainty in Don DeLillo's *Ratner's Star*." *Postmodern Culture* 4, no. 2 (January 1994). http://serials.infomotions.com/pmc/pmc-v4n2-allen-raids.txt.

Baker, Peter. "The Terrorist as Interpreter: *Mao II* in Postmodern Context." *Postmodern Culture*. 4, vol. 2 (January 1994). http://serials.infomotions.com/pmc/pmc-v4n2-baker-terrorist.txt.

Baudrillard, Jean. "L'esprit du terrorisme." *Le Monde*. November 2, 2001.

Birkerts, Sven. "The Sept. 11 Terrorist Attack and its Immediate Effects on a Manhattan Family, by the Great Chronicler of Our Collective Angst." *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 2007.

Cowart, David. "Pynchon and the Sixties." *Critique* 41, no. 1 (1999): 3-12.

DeLillo, Don. *Players*. 1977. New York: Ballantine, 1978.

_____. *Libra*. 1988. London: Penguin, 1989.

_____. *Mao II*. 1991. London: Vintage, 1992.

_____. "In the Ruins of the Future: Reflections on Terror and Loss in the Shadow of September." *Harper's Magazine* 34 (December 2001): 33-40.

_____. *Falling Man*. New York: Scribner, 2007.

Elias, Amy J. *Sublime Desire. History and Post-1960s Fiction*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Galtung, Johan. "On the Causes of Terrorism and Their Removal." *IFDA Dossier* 66 (July-August 1988): 29-42.

Gorman, Michael. "American Library Association 2006 Annual Conference." June 25, 2006. http://mg.csufresno.edu/papers/forum_2/captioned_text.pdf.

Hantke, Steffen. "'God Save Us from Bourgeois Adventure:' The Figure of the Terrorist in Contemporary American Conspiracy Fiction." *Studies in the Novel*. 28, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 219-243.

Junod, Tom. "The Man Who Invented 9/11." *Esquire* 147, no. 6 (June 2007).

Portelli, Alessandro. *America dopo: Immaginario e immaginazione dall'11 settembre alla guerra irachena*. Roma: Donzelli, 2003.

Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York: Viking, 1973.

_____. *Against the Day*. New York: Viking, 2006.

Readings, Bill. *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Rowe, John Carlos. "*Mao II* and the War on Terrorism." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 21-43.

Rushdie, Salman. "November 2001: Not About Islam?" and "Step Across This Line." In *Step Across This Line: Collected Non-Fiction, 1992-2002*. London: Vintage, 2002.

Sontag, Susan. "Talk of the Town." *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2001. http://newyorker.com/talk/content/?010924ta_talk_wtc.

Velcic, Vlatka. "Reshaping Ideologies: Leftists as Terrorists / Terrorists as Leftists in DeLillo's Novels." *Studies in the Novel* 36, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 405-418.

Watanabe, Katsuaki. "Welcome to the Imploded Future: Don DeLillo's *Mao II* Reconsidered in the Light of September 11." *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 14 (2003): 69-85.

Wilcox, Leonard. "Terrorism and Art: Don DeLillo's *Mao II* and Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism*." *Mosaic* 39, no. 2 (June 2006): 89-105.

National Ideals and International Interactions Between the United States and Italy, 1848-1948

Coordinators: Daniele Fiorentino, Marco Mariano

Daniele Fiorentino

Introduction

The history of International relations, especially since the 1960s, has concentrated mainly on the 20th century and especially on the Cold War. Actually, there are several important examples of historiography done shortly after the end of World War II that take into account foreign policy and international relations in the "formative years," i.e. as the nation states of Europe expanded over the world establishing their modern empires and the United States became an important actor in the world scenario. Just to cite two of these works on both sides of the Atlantic: Federico Chabod, *Storia della politica estera italiana* (1951) and Walter La Feber, *The New Empire* (1963). However, since these studies little has been done, although in the late 1990s a new interest in American foreign policy in the twentieth century has sprung up in the United States.

The title of the AISNA conference stimulated us to submit a proposal for a retrospective study of Italian-United States relations in order to better understand the cultural and political dynamics at work between the two countries until the advent of Fascism. The number of scholars working on this subject is growing rapidly. It is a fortunate coincidence that both in Italy and the United States since the "end of the Cold War" some researchers have tackled similar issues. For many years, in fact, the topic remained a marginal one. The important work by Howard Marraro in the 1950s on the despatches and correspondence of US. Ministers to Italian states, and by Leo Stock in the 1930s on US Consuls and Ministers to the Holy See, was followed only by an interesting debate that took the form of two seminars held in the 1960s and 1970s by some of the major Italian historians of the United States then active in Italian academia, from Giorgio Spini to Raimondo Luraghi, Tiziano Bonazzi and Anna Maria Martellone. The proceedings of these seminars were then published in book form, but there was no follow up after that.

Toward the end of the 1990s the Center of American Studies in Rome, under my directorship, took the initiative to start a series of volumes on the United States and the process of Italian unification that has now reached its third publication, while two more are in the making. A few years later Marcello Carmagnani with Marco Mariano and Duccio Sacchi began a systematic research of the State archives of Piedmont to ascertain the relevance of the papers relating to the Kingdom of Sardinia's missions to the United States The results are truly impressive, and Mariano's essay in this section is a testimony of that. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic Paola Gemme started her work on the cultural changes ensuing from the contacts between American travellers, diplomats and literati and the Italian Risorgimento. All was conjuring up to the establishment of a collaboration that over the past few years has created a regular exchange among these academics. Moreover, younger scholars, with fresh ideas and new stamina threw themselves into delving into archives and existing publications. One of them, Andrea Di Stefano, was invited to participate in this seminar bringing a different approach on the relations between the United States and the Holy See.

The result is the workshop collected here which, unfortunately, does not include two other Americanists with whom we have collaborated over the years: Matteo Sanfilippo and Marco Sioli. However, we trust this synergy will continue in the future as more information is collected and new perspectives are proposed. When the call for papers was launched, we expected some proposals from international relations specialists as well, but perhaps the approach we had taken, or our own expertise, limited the expansion of the research to more recent years. On the other hand the result, I believe, is a rather cohesive and consistent collection of essays, covering the nineteenth century: from Marco Mariano's analysis of Piedmontese views of America in the first half of the century to my own survey of George Perkins Marsh's tenure as Minister Plenipotentiary to Italy between 1861 and 1882. Within this time span fall Paola Gemme's analysis of Thomas Nast's reproductions of Garibaldi's expedition to Sicily and of the Mille, and Di Stefano's appraisal of the relations between the United States and the Papal court in the years leading to the seizure of Rome by the Kingdom of Italy.

Actually, this first collaboration of 2007 has already brought further encounters among scholars. In the past two years, all of the participants in this workshop, along with other colleagues, have continued their research, sharing results in conferences and publications. We hope that more will join this first group, giving further relevance to a topic that helps unveil the relevance of nineteenth century relations between Italy and the United States in the framework identified by AISNA, i.e. in national, trans-national and global perspectives.

Andrea Di Stefano

United States Diplomatic Relations with the Holy See, 1848-1867: An Appraisal

On August 4, 1779, John Adams wrote his reflections on American foreign relations for the benefit of John Jay, then President of the Continental Congress. In his nation-by-nation survey, Adams briefly commented on the Papal States:

> The court of Rome, attached to ancient customs, would be one of the last to acknowledge our independence if we were to solicit for it, but Congress will probably never send a minister to his Holiness, who can do them no service, upon condition of receiving a catholic legate or nuncio in return or in other words an ecclesiastical tyrant, which it is hoped the United States will be too wise ever to admit into their territories. (Wharton 1889, 286)

Events were soon to prove Adams a rather inaccurate prophet because the Holy See gave very early de facto recognition to the successfully rebellious colonies.

After the famous meeting in Paris between Archbishop Giuseppe Doria Pamphilj, nuncio at Versailles, and Benjamin Franklin, American Minister to the French Court, the Papal Government opened the ports of Civitavecchia and Ancona to the vessels of the Confederation (December 15, 1784) and four years later, the Pope elevated the Jesuit Father John Carroll—a relative of Charles Carroll, the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence—to America's first Catholic bishopric. Nine years later, on June 26, 1797, under the presidency of John Adams, Congress commissioned Giovanni Sartori, a native Roman, as first American Consul to the Papal States. In 1826 Count Ferdinando Lucchesi was commissioned as the first Papal Consul in the United States (Stock 1933; Stock 1945; Fogarty 1985; Codignola 1993, 100-125; Stock 1995, 315-343; Stock 2007, 717-756).

In 1847, fifty years after the commissioning of the first United States Consul to the Papal States, steps were taken by President James Polk to establish formal diplomatic relations between the two Governments. For some time prior to this a desire had been growing, especially in Roman circles, for such intercourse. The election of Pius IX, who had a reputation as a liberal, and his early program of reform, made the project more acceptable to the most refractory elements in the United States (Nativists and the Know-Nothing movement). President Polk, in his Third Annual Message to Congress (December 7, 1847) proposed sending an American Mission to Rome. Particularly insisting on the economical aspects of the mission, he said:

The Secretary of State has submitted an estimate to defray the expenses of opening diplomatic relations with the Papal States. The interesting political events now in progress in these States—namely the election of Pius IX—, as well as a just regard to our commercial interests, have, in my opinion, rendered such a measure highly expedient (Richardson 1896-1899, 551; Marraro 1932, 17-24).

Although Polk's remark occupied only one paragraph buried in a lengthy speech to Congress, it was a telling sign of the Polk administration's receptivity towards a quiet invitation from Pius IX to full diplomatic relations.

On March 21, 1848, the United States Senate debated an appropriations bill providing funding for Polk's proposed mission at the Papal Court. The arguments in favour of elevating the mission in Rome followed two lines of reasoning. Senator Lewis Cass, Sr., of Michigan, for instance, pleased with the support the Pope was showing for popular revolutions against corrupt government in Italy, argued in favour of sending a full Ambassador to the Papal States on the grounds that the Holy See exerts a "moral temporal power" (Nicholson 2004, 16). Cass hoped that stronger relations with the Holy See would strengthen Pius' liberal reforms and contribute to the development of a more democratic government in the Papal States. In his speech on the Senate floor, Cass proclaimed:

> The eyes of Christendom are upon its sovereign. He has given the first blow to despotism-the first impetus to freedom. Much is expected of him […] The diplomacy of Europe will find full employment at his court, and its ablest professors will be there. Our government ought to be represented there also. (Nicholson 2004, 17)

In support of Cass, Senator Edward Hannegan of Indiana voiced the need for relations because Rome served as an "emporium of the intelligence of Europe," an argument similar to American Consul Felice Cicognani's notion of a "listening post" (1831). Hannegan's understanding of the Roman legation would be echoed when diplomatic relations were called into question in 1867 and 1984 (Nicholson 2004, 17).

The second major argument in favour of formal relations emphasized the commercial benefits of expanded contacts with the Papal States, and its primary exponent was Senator John Dix of New York. Whereas other senators, even those in favour of sending a *Chargé* to Rome, had conceded the commercial insignificance of the Papal States, Dix argued that:

> Not withstanding the depressed condition of the industry of the Papal states, there is no country capable of a more rich or varied production; and if the measures of reform now in progress shall be carried out, and the social as well as the political condition of the people be elevated by abrogation of bad laws, I know no State of the same magnitude which may hope for a high prosperity. (Nicholson 2004, 17)

Surprisingly, religious objections to the establishment of relations were hardly invoked during the debate of 1848. Only a few arguing against sending a *Chargé d'Affaires* to Rome claimed such a mission would serve to strengthen the Catholic Church in the United States. Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina, for example, remarked that he could find no significant reason to send a representative to Rome. He argued that:

> Ours is a government which does not allow us to legislate for religion, and I am not willing indirectly to give countenance to a mission for religious considerations. (Nicholson 2004, 18)

Nevertheless, Senator Cass was quick to make the important distinction that the United States would be sending a representative to the Pope in his capacity as a sovereign, not in his spiritual capacity as head of the Roman Catholic Church. This distinction made by Cass in 1848 is still one of the founding principles of the US Embassy to the Holy See.

Ultimately, the 1848 Senate appropriations bill passed and that same year President Polk designated Mr. Jacob L. Martin (Secretary of the Legation at Paris) the first *Chargé d'Affaires* to the Papal Court (Hastings 1958, 24-25). Although the United States had enjoyed official consular relations with the Papal States since 1797, by this act of 1848 the U.S. formally recognized the Holy See as a full member of the community of nations.

In the initial instructions sent to Martin by Secretary of State James Buchanan and in a private letter to the new *Chargé* from Polk a careful and valid distinction was made with regard to the precise relationship of his office to the Papal Government in Rome. Both the President and the Secretary pointed out the unusual delicacy of the Mission and the need to bear in mind that there was to be no religious significance attached to his post or to his actions. His efforts were to be exclusively concerned with the promotion of friendly civil and commercial relations. He was counselled to make his position known at an opportune time so that there could be no misunderstanding (Stock 1933, 1-2). Polk noted that the Holy See was recognized as one of the States of Europe, "with which it is proper to initiate diplomatic relations, but without any reference to the fact that the Sovereign is also Head of a Church. *Queen Victoria* is also the Head of a Church." Polk concluded his letter with the suggestion that Martin intimate "in a proper manner and in the proper quarter" that, for readily understood reasons, it would be preferable that the Papal diplomatic agent to America be a layman rather than a priest.

Polk evidently expected to receive a representative from the Pontifical States (Hastings 1958, 25).

Martin arrived in Rome on August 2, 1848, but, due to the chaotic conditions within the city, he did not present his credentials until August 29. Within a month he died of the "Roman" (malarial) fever. An immediate scramble ensued for his post in Rome. One aspirant planned to set out for Rome so that he might be on the spot should the President see his way clear to giving him the appointment. Finally, after solicitations from both Lewis Cass, Sr., and his wife, Mrs. Cass, Polk appointed Lewis Cass, Jr. This decision was not accepted with universal joy; some believed that it was merely a sop to General Cass, while others resented the appointment of one so completely untrained in diplomatic affairs (Hastings 1958, 25-26).

Cass, too, was delayed in presenting his credentials, due to the unsettled conditions occasioned by Mazzini's attempt to set up a republic. In the crisis, the Pope retired to Gaeta whither most of the diplomats accredited to him followed. From his retreat the Pontiff addressed a letter to the President of the United States explaining his predicament (Hastings 1958, 26).

Cass, shortly after his arrival, was urged to present his credentials to the Mazzini Government rather than to the Papal Government. Nicholas Brown, the United States Consul at Rome, acting as *Chargé* until Cass's arrival, had publicly stated that his Government would recognize the new republic at the earliest possible moment. Cass, on instructions from Buchanan, however, refrained from giving official recognition to the revolutionary provisional Government, despite political pressures and attempts to elicit his good offices through social invitations. This action on the part of the American representative was to be remembered later when the Government of the same Pontiff refrained from recognizing the South during the entire course of the Civil War in America.

The Mazzini Government soon collapsed and the Pope returned to Rome. Cass then presented his letters of credence and was cordially received.

Meanwhile, the year 1849 marked the first time a Pope set foot on American territory. The bizarre encounter occurred just after Pius IX had fled the revolutionary fervour of Rome for the safety of Gaeta. It seems that while there, he was visiting with King Ferdinand II of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies and the queen when U.S. *Chargé* in Naples, John Rowan, paid a call at the palace. Around this time, it so happened that the *USS Constitution* was moored at the Gaeta harbour. King Ferdinand expressed a desire to visit the frigate and Rowan felt duty bound to also invite the Pope to come along.

The King and the Pope were welcomed aboard by the skipper, Captain John Gwinn. Unbeknown to either head of state, Gwinn had been given a written order not to welcome the two men on board because they were both defending their thrones against revolutionaries, and the United States wanted to maintain its strict neutrality. In fact, the *USS Constitution* was not simply a symbol of the United States; according to admiralty law, it was extraterritorial US soil.

The Pope spent three hours on board visiting with sailors, dispensing rosaries to the Catholic crewmen, and even giving a benediction. The Pope eventually got seasick, was refreshed in the Captain's quarters, and departed to a twenty-one gun salute. For his role in the incident, Captain Gwinn was court-martialed. Before the court-martial could be executed, however, Gwinn died of a cerebral haemorrhage. Pius IX returned to Rome in 1850 and lived to be the longest serving pope in history (Martin 2001, 46-49).

In 1854 the United States Mission to the Papal States was raised to the status of a Legation, with Cass as first Minister. Four years later (July, 1858) John Potter Stockton succeeded Cass as Resident Minister in Rome. Stockton, like his predecessor, inherited an uneasy political situation in Italy. The move towards unification was again gaining support among the people of Italy. Like Cass, John Stockton maintained the tradition of using his post at the Holy See to report on the volatile political situation in Italy.

The successive Ministers in Rome held office only briefly. Rufus King, a prominent Republican and the former editor of a Milwaukee newspaper (*Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette*) succeeded Stockton in April 1861. By August, however, a Brigadier-General in the Union Army was appointed to replace Mr. King before Mr. King even had time to assume his post (Stock 1933, 239). Soon, he too resigned. At the recommendation of King, who seemed to be still hovering about, Alexander Williams Randall was appointed Resident Minister. Finding his wages too low and protocol too stuffy, he also soon resigned (Stock 1933, 255). Next, Richard Milford Blatchford was appointed *Chargé d'Affaires*. He arrived in Rome on November 15, 1862, presented the letters of credence to the Pope through the good offices of Cardinal Antonelli, the Secretary of State, and then, on November 26, accompanied by his private secretary Mr. J.C. Hooker and by the American Consul Mr. Stillman, was received in audience with the Pontiff.

Blatchford addressed Pius IX as follows:

> I am happy in the honour of being presented to your Holiness as the representative of the United States of America near the Holy See and of delivering to your Holiness, as I now do, my letter of credence as such representative from the President of the United States. I am happy, too, to avail myself of this occasion to express to your Holiness, on the part of my government, the assurance of the best wishes as well of the government as of the people of the United States for the health and happiness of your Holiness, and for the safety, prosperity, and happiness of the Roman people, and to assure your Holiness that the United States constantly preserve a lively remembrance of the many generous manifestations they have received of the good will and friendship of your Holiness, and that your Holiness

> may constantly rely upon them for the practice of all the duties which grow out of the relations of the two countries as independent members of the family of nations. (United States Department of State 1863, 1152)

The Pope heard him out with interest and then—according to Blatchford—replied:

> That it gave him pleasure to acknowledge the kindly feeling manifested by the government of the United States towards himself and the liberality shown to the Catholic religion, to which is owing so much of the growth and prosperity of the United States; that the affairs of our country had always interested him greatly, and its wonderful prosperity and enterprise had given it a great importance among the nations of Europe, all of whom are affected by the change in its conditions, and suffer from the present troubles; that he had always prayed for our welfare, and continued to do so now, and especially that we might be speedily restored to peace; that he very much wished that the mediation of some of European powers might be effectual, and thus end all the misery and bloodshed. But, he said, it is evident that this mediation, to be accepted, must be tendered by a power so unimportant as to irritate neither the pride nor the sensitiveness of the American nation; some smaller country that has no interest in diminishing the power of the United States, having neither army nor navy, and whose very humbleness may make the offer of her services acceptable. (United States Department of State 1863, 1152-1153)

Here the Pope became explicit and offered his own mediation in the Civil War. He had, he said, “only a few battalions of soldier and no navy except a single corvette.” Blatchford, however, politely declined and the meeting ended (United States Department of State 1863, 1153).

After the audience with the Pontiff, the *Chargé* met Cardinal Antonelli and the conversation again turned to the Civil War.

> After some personal inquires, the cardinal . . . said: If I had the honour to be an American citizen I would do everything in my power to preserve the strength of the nation undivided. That the great European powers are very much interested in the weakness of the United States, and doubtless see, with pleasure, the enfeebling of its forces brought about by the war, and do all in their power to widen the division; that he would surrender for the moment every minor question of policy and interest for the preservation of the Union and of its political power; that the success of the present attempt at revolution would in a few years place the United States in the position of the South American republics, which it seemed to him would be a misfortune to the wide world. (United States Department of State 1863, 1153)

Blatchford did not comment, but his despatch was welcomed at the Department of State where Secretary William H. Seward noted:

> Your [Blatchford’s] despatch . . . has been submitted to the President. The speech you [Blatchford] made to his Holiness, on occasion of presenting your credentials, was in all respects just and happy. The answer of the Pope, so far as it relates to our country, was what the government and the people of this country have expected. The sentiments expressed by Cardinal Antonelli in the conference with which he honoured you were as wise and just as they were friendly in spirit towards the United States. In view of these facts, I can safely

congratulate you upon the auspices under which your mission has opened. (United States Department of State 1863, 1153)

However, no further action was taken. Only a few months later, in fact, Blatchford decided to leave his post. He resigned by October 1863 and the job, finally, returned to Rufus King, who stayed until the Mission was closed in 1867.

During the period of the American Civil War, United States-Vatican relations assumed a special importance. Diplomatic agents, commissioners, and propagandists were sent to Europe by the Confederate States to enlist sympathy for the Southern cause and to gain recognition of independent status (Hastings 1958, 26-27). If recognition could be gained from any State there was the hope that others, especially major powers, would follow. A. Dudley Mann, one of the chief Confederate agents, James T. Soutter, Bishop Patrick N. Lynch of Charleston, South Carolina, and Father John Bannon of St. Louis, at one time or another visited Rome and endeavoured to promote the Southern cause.

Bishop Lynch was expressly commissioned to plead the South's case before the Papal Court. Mann presented a letter from President Jefferson Davis to the Pope, thanking the Pontiff for his efforts to reconcile the two sections by means of his letters addressed to the Archbishops of New York and New Orleans. Pius IX's reply to this ceremonial letter occasioned a flurry of excitement in some Southern circles. He had addressed Davis as "President of the Confederate States of America," a title which some claimed gave the desired recognition to the Confederacy as an independent government and therefore entitled to be treated as such rather than as an insurgent body. Mann himself thought that the goal had been achieved, but calmer heads realized that there was no international significance attached to the form of address used by the Pope. He had merely repeated the ceremonial close of Davis's letter to him.

As counteragent, the North had enlisted the services of Archbishop John Hughes of New York, a long-time friend of Secretary of State Seward. Hughes was given an unofficial and "roving" mission, with the hope that he might use his prestige and influence in certain predominantly Catholic countries like France, Italy, Spain and Ireland. Taking advantage of the discretionary power given him, Archbishop Hughes travelled to Rome and there, in a series of interviews with the Pope, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, the Papal Secretary of State, and Cardinal Barnabò, Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the American prelate was able to contribute a great deal towards preventing any serious show of sympathy for the South (Hastings 1958, 27).

During this period another diplomatic complication arose from the visit of Maximilian and Charlotte of Austria to Rome en route to Mexico. During their stay in Rome, they requested the Papal blessing on their enterprise. This placed the Pope in a very delicate position. There was the evident possibility of offending France and Austria or the United States, no matter what he did.

The United States Minister, Rufus King, was caught in the diplomatic crosscurrents as he tried to avoid offending the Papal Government, which was under pressure to recognize the Confederacy, and at the same time sought to reflect his Government's opposition to any foreign intervention in Mexico. At his own discretion he attended the diplomatic reception in honour of Maximilian and Charlotte, but was soon directed by Secretary of State Seward to refrain from all official intercourse with Maximilian and his party (Stock 1927, 226-227; Id. 1933, xxxiii-xxxv, 292-293, 295-296).

In 1865, an American named John Surrat enlisted in the Papal army. Unknown to the Holy See, Mr. Surrat had been named with John Wilkes Booth as a conspirator in the plot to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. With no extradition treaty between the United States and the Papal States, the United States had limited legal standing with the Papal Government in its request to extradite Mr. Surrat back to the United States to face trial for his role in the assassination. The Papal Government, however, was quick to demonstrate its goodwill, and detained Surrat until he could be handed over to American authorities. Rufus King wrote to Secretary Seward that "this was done with the single purpose of showing the ready disposition of the Papal Authorities to comply with the anticipated request of the American Government" (Stock 1933, 421). This significant act of diplomatic courtesy reflected the cordial relationship that had been cultivated between the Consuls and Ministers of the United States and the Holy See, as well as the Holy See's desire to retain good relations with the post-Civil War US Government.

But despite such gestures of friendship, opposition to the Mission in Rome was mounting in the United States.

In 1867 a congeries of happenings occasioned the discontinuance of the United States Mission to the Papal States (Stock 1933, xxxviii-xxxix, 413 ff; Marraro 1948, 423-447). The enforcement of certain Roman municipal ordinances regarding Protestant worship were erroneously reported as having been directed against Americans. In reality, the groups involved were English and Scottish. Rufus King repeatedly made efforts to rectify this false impression, but without success. The recrudescence of anti-Catholic feeling in the United States and the political pressures of the Andrew Johnson administration were contributing factors in clouding the issue and forcing the withdrawal of the Mission. As a result, Congress declined to make an appropriation for the continuance of the legation in Rome. Seward, consequently, had to inform King that his mission was "still existing, but without compensation" after the thirtieth of June next (Stock 1933, 426). Despite General King's plea for reconsideration and the efforts of certain

Congressmen, no further monies were allocated for the post. King resigned his commission on January 1, 1868 (Stock 1933, 434). He pointed out to the Secretary of State the unenviable position into which the action of Congress had forced him. He was not allowed to make a formal request for the discontinuance of his mission, to formally break off diplomatic relations, but had to leave Rome with no official explanation of his actions. He felt that this was personally embarrassing as well as shoddy treatment of the Pope, who had shown many signs of friendship to the United States (Stock 1933, 435). The same thing happened in January 1950, when Myron C. Taylor, President Roosevelt's Personal Representative to Pope Pius XII was forced to resign.

The fact that the United States never formally broke off relations with the Vatican gives rise to a moot point: Would future relations entail the creation of a new diplomatic post or merely the filling of one that had been without an incumbent since King's resignation?

With the resignation of Rufus King in 1868 and the transferral of the American Consul at Rome to the Kingdom of Italy in 1870, direct contacts, for all practical purposes, between the Governments of the United States and the Vatican no longer existeed.

The question of the resumption of relations arose sporadically during the succeeding years. In 1892 the Columbian Exposition (the Chicago World's Fair) presented an occasion for oblique contact. Secretary of State John Watson Foster made arrangements, through the American representative in Rome, for the exhibition of some of the Columbus mementos from the Vatican museums. The United States also invited Pope Leo XIII to send as a personal representative to the Fair, a person of his own choosing, who might also serve as custodian of the Columbus treasures. Leo consented gladly to the shipment of the requested exhibits and also took advantage of the offer to send a representative. For this office he chose Archbishop Francesco Satolli, who had previously visited the United States as the Papal representative at the celebration of the centennial of the establishment of the American Catholic Hierarchy. At the conclusion of his mission as Papal representative at the Exposition Archbishop Satolli became the first Apostolic Delegate in the United States (Satolli 1895; Roemer 1950, 307).

The close of the Spanish-American War a few years later and the manifold delicate and difficult religious, political, and economic problems which resulted from the shift of control in the Philippines brought about the so-called Taft (William Howard Taft) Mission to Rome. The express purpose of the Taft Mission was three-fold: to arrange for the transferral of certain land titles held by Spanish Friars, to settle other problems of church-state holdings, and to persuade the Holy See to withdraw the Spanish Friars and replace them with other missionaries more acceptable to the Filipinos (Balfe 1949; Alvarez 1992, 357-369).

In 1903, on the death of Pope Leo XIII and the election to the pontificate of Pius X, ceremonial letters were sent to the President of the United States. In this instance Secretary of State John Hay worked out a procedure that was to serve as a basic precedent for future ceremonial letters, a method of reply which consisted in forwarding the response of the President or Secretary through the Apostolic Delegate as a personal and unofficial communication.

At the outbreak of the First World War, Benedict XV had made an unsuccessful appeal for peace. In August, 1917, he again addressed himself to the warring nations and, especially, to the United States, which had recently entered the conflict. His appeal, transmitted to President Woodrow Wilson through the medium of the British Government, elicited the famous reply which formed the basis for much of the President's subsequent thinking as crystallized in the Fourteen Points (Zivojinovic 1978; Latour 2000, 81-92).

In the period of dislocation during the war the Pope directly addressed the President with a request that he use his influence on behalf of the Poles and the Armenians. An even more direct exchange of information occurred when Wilson visited Benedict during the course of his European tour, the first visit of its kind by an American President (Daniels 1924, 305; Zivojinovic 1978; Latour 2000, 81-92).

Occasional ceremonial exchanges, like those occurring at the time of the election or death of a President or Pontiff, and certain expressions of sympathy, as in the case of the disastrous Mississippi floods of 1927, represent most of the intermittent contacts between the United States and the Vatican in the years after World War I.

With the signing of the Lateran Accord by the Vatican and Fascist Italy in February, 1929, and the resultant recognition by Italy of the independence of the State of Vatican City, the question of possible renewal of recognition and representation became one for popular discussion in the United States. No ostensible move was made, however, on the part of either Government towards the resumption of formal relations, though there were certain undercurrents and pressures in both States in favor of such action.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt decided to arrange for a more stable, if not permanent, contact. The result of his decision was the mission of Mr. Myron Charles Taylor, with the rank of Ambassador, to serve as the President's Personal Representative to Pope Pius XII. On February 4, 1940, Mr. Taylor was formally appointed. On May 3, 1946, he again returned to Vatican City at the request of President Harry Spencer Truman and made several other trips there before his resignation in January, 1950 (Di Nolfo 2003; Tittmann 2005).

In October, 1951, President Truman nominated General Mark Wayne Clark, Liberator of Rome and a personal acquaintance of Pius XII, as Ambassador to the State of Vatican City. As the nomination was made public shortly before the recess of Congress, however, and public and political opposition mounted, no action was taken. When Congress reconvened, General Clark, on January 13, 1952, withdrew his name as a possible choice for the proposed post (Nicholson 2004, 42-45; Franco 2005, 77).

Works Cited

Alvarez, David. "Purely a business matter: the Taft mission to the Vatican." *Diplomatic History* 16, no. 3, (1992): 357-369.

Antonelli, Sara, Fiorentino, Daniele and Monsagrati, Giuseppe. *Gli americani e la Repubblica romana del 1849*. Roma: Gangemi, 2001.

Balfe, Richard G. *The Philippine Friar Land Question and the Taft Commission to the Vatican in 1902*, Notre Dame: Indiana. 1949.

Castagneto, Pierangelo. "'…onde consolidare sempre più i legami che devono unire le due Repubbliche': The Origins of the Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the Republic of Genova." In *America and the Mediterranean*, eds. Massimo, Bacigalupo and Pierangelo Castagneto, 381-386. Torino: Otto Editore, 2003.

Codignola, Luca. "The Policy of Rome towards the English-speaking Catholics in British North America, 1750-1830." In *Creed and Culture. The Place of English-Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930*, eds. Terrence, Murphy and Gerald John, Stortz, 100-125. Montreal, Kingston, London, Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.

_____. "I rapporti del cardinale Francesco Saverio Castiglioni, papa Pio VIII, con il Nord America, 1816-30." In *La religione e il trono. Pio VIII nell'Europa del suo tempo. Convegno di Studi. Cingoli, 12-13 giugno 1993*, ed. Simonetta, Bernardi, 315-343. Roma: La Fenice Edizioni, 1995.

_____. "Roman Catholic Conservatism in a New North Atlantic World, 1760-1829." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 64, no. 4 (October 2007): 717-756.

Connelly, James F. *The Visit of Archbishop Gaetano Bedini to the United States, June 1853-February 1854*. Roma: Libreria Editrice dell'Università Gregoriana, 1960.

Daniels, Josephus. *The Life of Woodrow Wilson*. Philadelphia: Winston, 1924.

Di Nolfo, Ennio. *Vaticano e Stati Uniti, 1939-1952. Dalle carte di Myron Taylor*. Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1978; then in *Dear Pope, Vaticano e Stati Uniti. La corrispondenza segreta di Roosevelt e Truman con Papa Pacelli dalle carte di Myron Taylor*. Roma: IN-EDITA, 2003.

Feiertag, Loretta Clare. *American Public Opinion on the Diplomatic Relations between the United States and the Papal States (1847-1867)*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1933.

Fiorentino, Daniele and Sanfilippo, Matteo, eds. *Gli Stati Uniti e l'unità d'Italia*. Roma: Gangemi, 2004.

Fogarty, Gerald P. *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1878 to 1965*. Washington, DC: Michael Glazier Inc., 1985.

Franco, Massimo. *Imperi paralleli. Vaticano e Stati Uniti: due secoli di alleanza e conflitto 1788-2005*. Milano: Mondadori, 2005.

Hastings, Martin. "United States-Vatican Relations." *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 69, no. 1-2 (1958): 20-55.

Langley, Harold D. "The Tragic Career of H. G. Rogers, Pennsylvania Politician and Jacksonian Diplomat." *Pennsylvania History*, January 31, 1964, 30-61.

Latour, Francis. "Le Saint-Siège et les Etats-Unis a la recherché de la paix pendant la première guerre mondiale: la collaboration impossible." *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains* 50, no. 199 (2000): 81-92.

Marraro, Howard R. *American Opinion on the Unification of Italy, 1846-1861*. New York: Columbia, 1932.

_____."The Closing of the American Diplomatic Mission to the Vatican and Efforts to Revive It, 1868-1870." *The Catholic Historical Review* 33 (January 1948): 423-447.

Martin, Tyrone G. "The Pope's First American Visit." *Naval History* 15, no. 6 (December 2001): 46-49.

Nicholson, Jim. *The United States and the Holy See: The Long Road*. Rome: 30Days Magazine, 2004.

Richardson, James D. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1896-1899, vol. IV.

Roemer, Theodore. *The Catholic Church in the United States*. St. Louis: Herder, 1950.

Sanfilippo, Matteo. *L'affermazione del cattolicesimo nel Nord America. Elite, emigranti e chiesa cattolica negli Stati Uniti e in Canada, 1750-1920*. Viterbo: Sette Città, 2003.

Satolli, Francesco. *Loyalty To Church and State. The Mind of His Excellency Francis Cardinal Satolli*. Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1895.

Spalding, Thomas. *The Premier See. A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789-1989*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Spini, Giorgio, Anna Maria Martellone, Raimondo Luraghi, Tiziano Bonazzi, and Roberto Ruffilli, eds. *Italia e America dal Settecento all'età dell'imperialismo*. Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1976.

Stock, Leo F. "The Empress of Mexico Visits Rome." *America* 37, June 18, 1927, 226-227.

_____ ed. *United States Ministers to the Papal States: Instructions and Despatches: 1848-1868*. Washington: Catholic University Press, 1933.

_____ ed. *Consular Relations between the United States and the Papal States: Instructions and Despatches*. Washington: American Catholic Historical Association, 1945.

Tittmann, Harold, Jr. *Il Vaticano di Pio XII*. Milano: Corbaccio, 2005.

United States Department of State. *Message of the president of the United States, and accompanying documents, to the two houses of Congress, at the commencement of the first session of the thirty-eighth congress*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1863, II.

United States Department of State. *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives, during the First Session of the Thirty-ninth Congress, 1865-1866*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1865-1866, vol. III.

_____. *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives, during the Second Session of the Thirty-ninth Congress, 1866-1867*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1866-1867.

_____. *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives, During the Second Session of the Fortieth Congress, 1867-68*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1867-1868, vol. I.

_____. *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the House of Representatives, During the Third Session of the Fortieth Congress, 1868-1869*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1868-1869, vol. II.

Wharton, Francis, ed. *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1889, vol. III.

Zivojinovic, Dragoljub R. *The United States and the Vatican Policies, 1914-1918*. Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1978.

Paola Gemme

Drawing the Revolution: Thomas Nast's Sketches of Garibaldi's Conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for the *New York Illustrated News* and the *Illustrated London News*

As Giuseppe Garibaldi and his one thousand volunteers sailed from Quarto for Sicily with the hope of claiming it for the King of Savoy, the twenty-year-old Thomas Nast, who would become the most influential graphic journalist in post-bellum America, was in London for the *New York Illustrated News*, a short lived but lavishly illustrated American periodical. When news reached England that Garibaldi was preparing an expedition to liberate Southern Italy from the tyranny of the Bourbons, Nast asked for permission to prolong his European stay and cover Garibaldi's campaign. By the time he reached Genoa, the "Mille" had already left, but Nast befriended Englishman John Peard, who had fought with Garibaldi in '59, and was permitted to join the relief expedition under Giacomo Medici. He was introduced to Garibaldi in Palermo and allowed to draw his portrait later on in the campaign, witnessed the battles of Milazzo and Volturno, accompanied Peard on a reconnoitering expedition on the Italian mainland to gain information for the invading army about to cross the Strait of Messina, saw Garibaldi relinquish power to Victor Emmanuel at Teano, and, finally, attended the plebiscite in Naples which lent the aura of popular approval to the annexation of the territory of the Bourbons to the Kingdom of Italy (Paine 1967, 44-63). During his Italian stay, between June and November 1860, he sent about forty different sketches to the *New York Illustrated News* and the *Illustrated London News*, a much better established British periodical with a substantial circulation in the United States.

Nast scholars have generally seen him as a liberal—in fact, a radical republican, committed to a vision of an ideal republic in which all races participated in the administration of the state through the franchise—albeit one who later turned bitter and abandoned his early egalitarian stance (Keller 1968, 217-221, 243-247, 279-284). They point, for instance, to the sharp contrast between his "Uncle Sam's Thanksgiving Dinner" (fig.

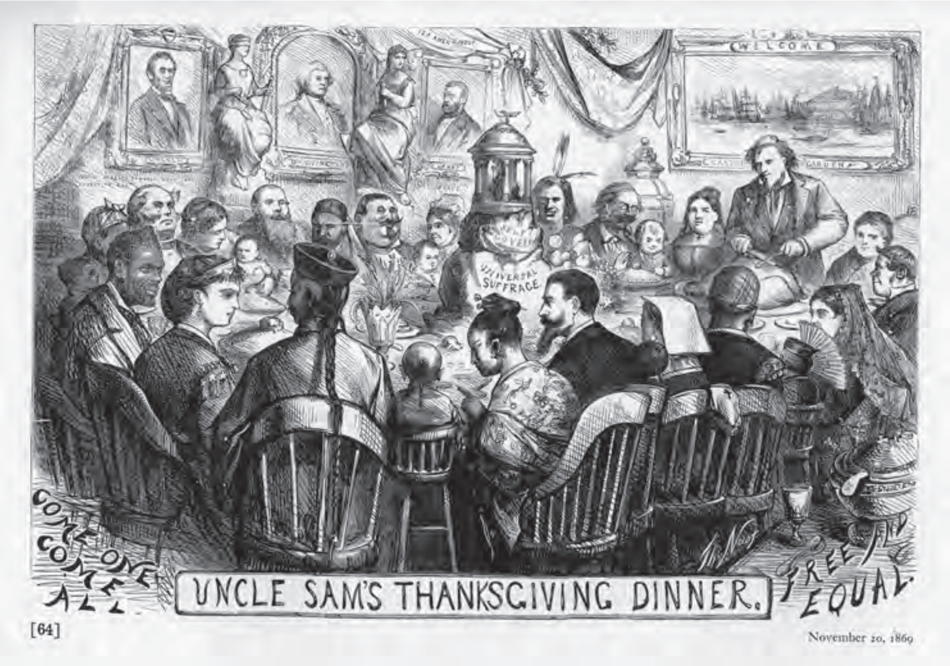
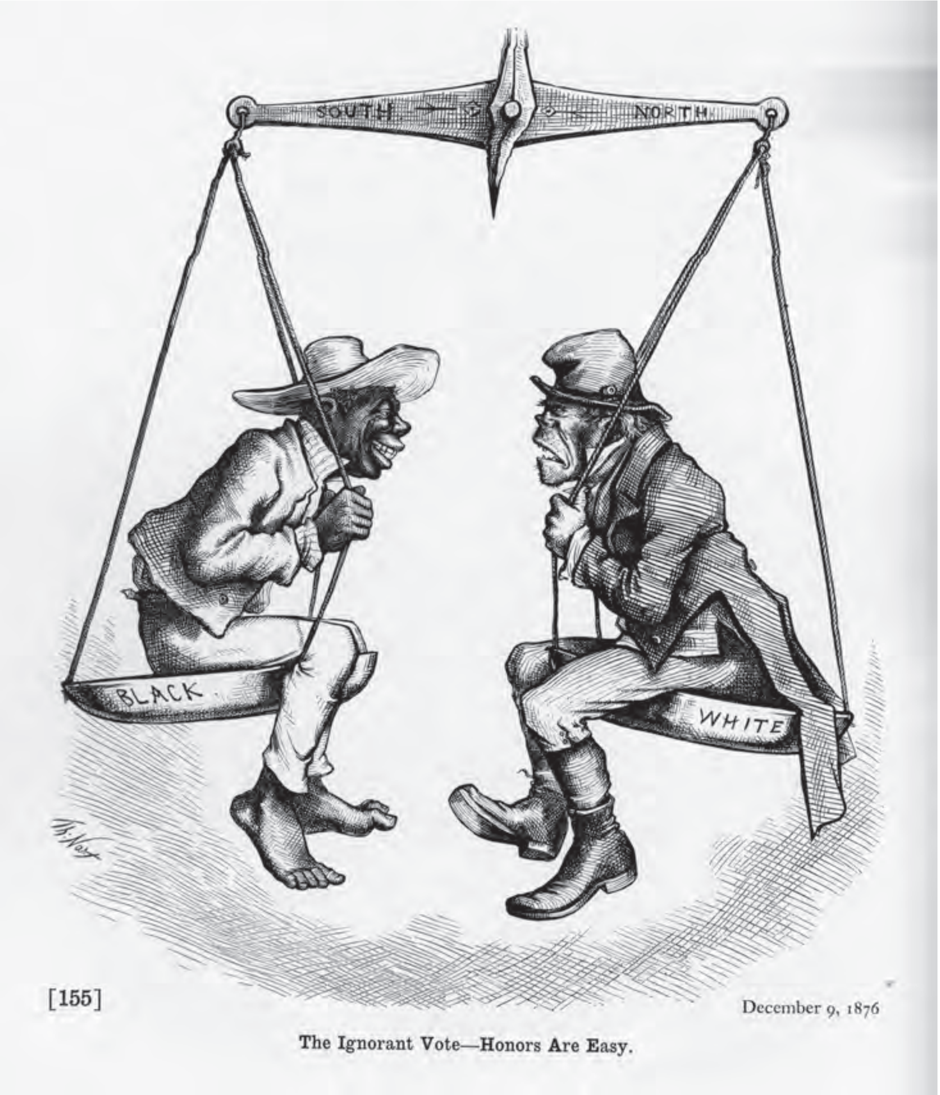


Fig. 1. “Uncle Sam’s Thanksgiving Dinner” (*Harper’s Weekly*, 1869)

1), which dates to the late sixties, and his notorious “The Ignorant Vote—Honors are Easy” (fig. 2) of about a decade later. In the first sketch, which celebrates the adoption of the XIV and XV Amendments prohibiting states from abridging the rights of any citizen to the full exercise of citizenship, individuals of different races and nationalities, identifiable by their different national clothing but not caricatured, are invited to dine at the republican table and partake of its offerings of universal suffrage and self-government. In the second sketch, published in the wake of the disputed elections of 1876, when Congress had to appoint an electoral committee to evaluate allegations of electoral fraud and resolve the stalemate between the Republican and the Democratic candidates, the Southern black Republican voter and the Northern Democratic Irish voter are both grossly caricatured to suggest their civic deficiencies and openness to manipulation by shrewd politicians. Within this interpretative framework of a movement from Reconstruction era Republican idealism to post-Reconstruction disillusionment and cynicism, Nast’s coverage of the fall of the tyrannical Bourbons and the annexation of Southern Italy to the constitutional Kingdom of Italy is seen as enthusiastic and as an early



[155]

December 9, 1876

The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy.

Fig. 2."The Ignorant Vote—Honors Are Easy" (*Harper's Weekly*, 1876)

indication of the pronounced egalitarianism of the first phase of his career. A careful examination of Nast's Italian sketches, however, reveals that, far from being an unqualified celebration, they are rife with tensions. Specifically, they oscillate between veneration for the heroic Garibaldi and identification with his project to vility of the people of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, whose

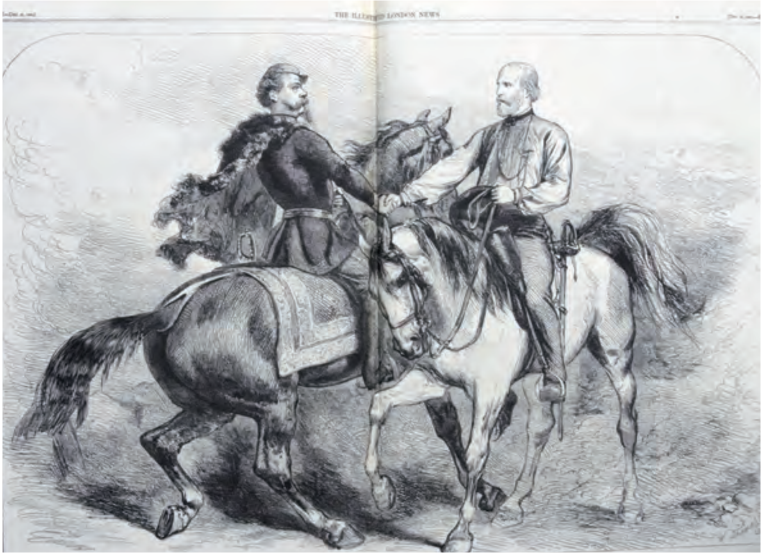

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

Fig. 3. “The Meeting of General Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel on the 26th of October, Near Teano” (*Illustrated London News*, 1860)

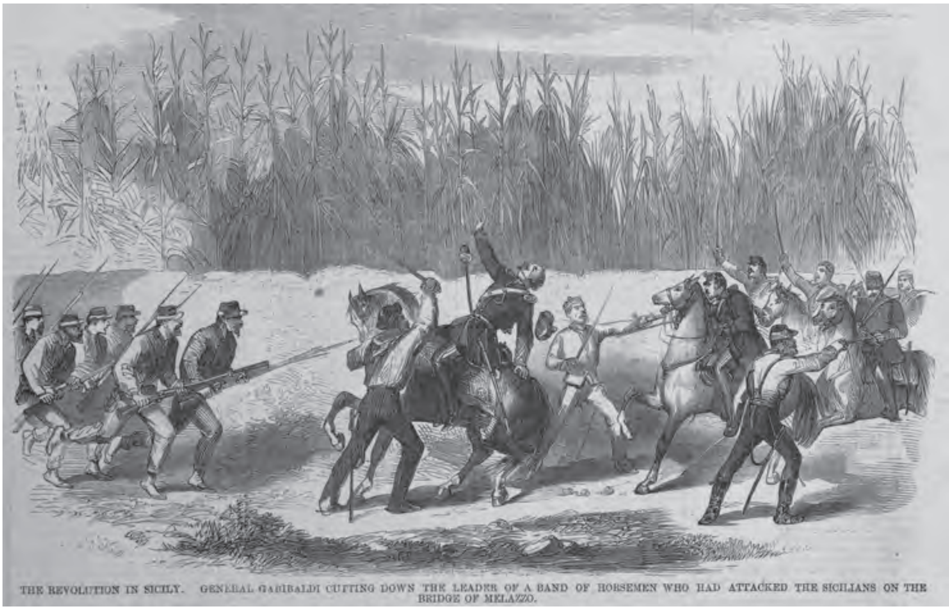

THE REVOLUTION IN SICILY. GENERAL GARIBALDI CUTTING DOWN THE LEADER OF A BAND OF HORSEMEN WHO HAD ATTACKED THE SICILIANS ON THE BRIDGE OF MELAZZO.

Fig. 4. “Garibaldi Cutting Down the Leader of a Band of Horsemen Who Had Attacked the Sicilians on the Bridge of Melazzo” (*Illustrated London News*, 1860; *New York Illustrated News*, 1860)

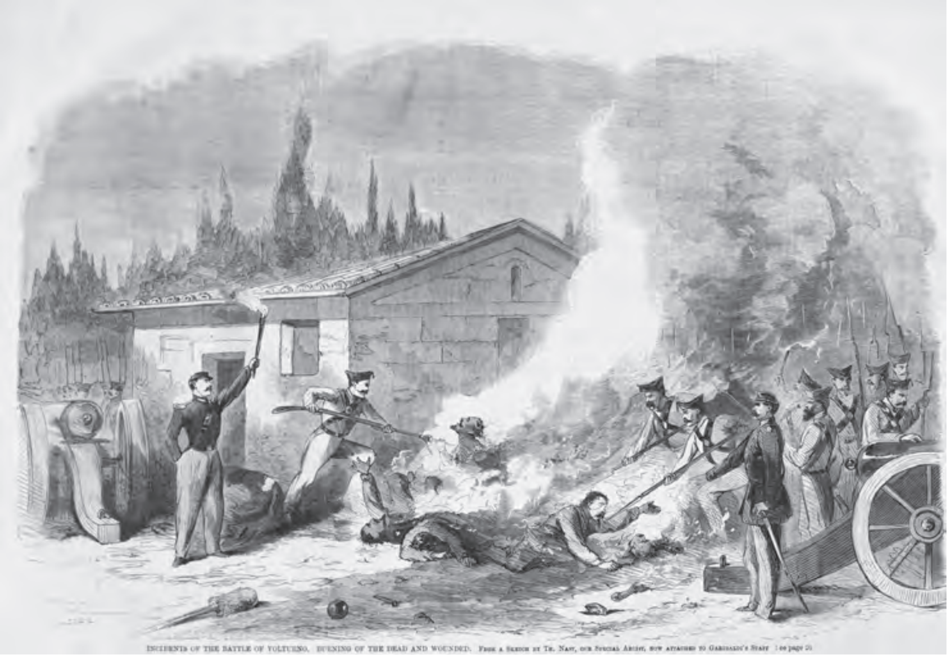

INCIDENTS OF THE BATTLE OF VOLTURNO. BURNING OF THE DEAD AND WOUNDED. From a Sketch by Th. Nast, our Special Artist, now attached to Garibaldi's Staff

Fig. 5. "Incidents of the Battle of Volturno. Burning of the Dead and Wounded" (*New York Illustrated News*, 1860)

participation in the revolution is tainted by anarchic overtones and whose ability to participate through the franchise in the conduct of the new state is cast into doubt.

Undeniably, Nast shared with the vast majority of his British and American readers their admiration for Garibaldi and their dislike of the Bourbons. The cult of Garibaldi in the English speaking world was rooted in several concepts, the most important being that he had placed the welfare of his country above his political beliefs and pragmatically converted to a pro-monarchical stance when the fall of the Roman Republic of 1849 made it apparent that republicanism faced too many obstacles to prevail at the time. Garibaldi's shift in political allegiance reflected a similar change in American public opinion, which ceased at mid-century to support Mazzini and sided instead with the nation-building project of the royal house of Savoy (Monsagrati 2004, 17-44). The Bourbons, on the other hand, were renowned for their despotic and incompetent rule. Ferdinand II, who had quelled the revolution of 1848 by massacring his subjects, was commonly referred to in the Anglophone press by the derogatory nickname of "King

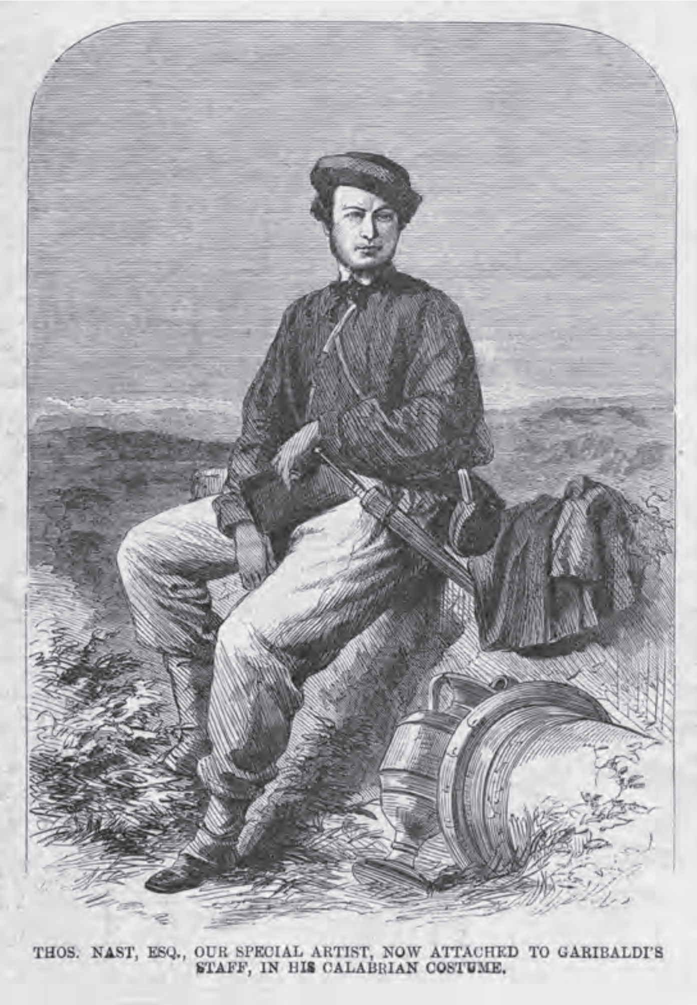

THOS. NAST, ESQ., OUR SPECIAL ARTIST, NOW ATTACHED TO GARIBALDI'S STAFF, IN HIS CALABRIAN COSTUME.

Fig. 6. “Thos. Nast, Esq., Our Special Artist, Now Attached to Garibaldi’s Staff, in His Calabrian Costume” (*New York Illustrated News*, 1860)

Bomba.” Similarly, the *New York Illustrated News* called his son and successor Francis II, “the idiot king of Naples” (“Sicilian Insurrection,” 114). Nast reflected these cultural attitudes by portraying Garibaldi as self-sacrificing patriot/hero and the royalist troops against whom he fought as alternatively cowardly and barbarous. Thus, we have his celebratory rendition of the “Meeting of General Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel at

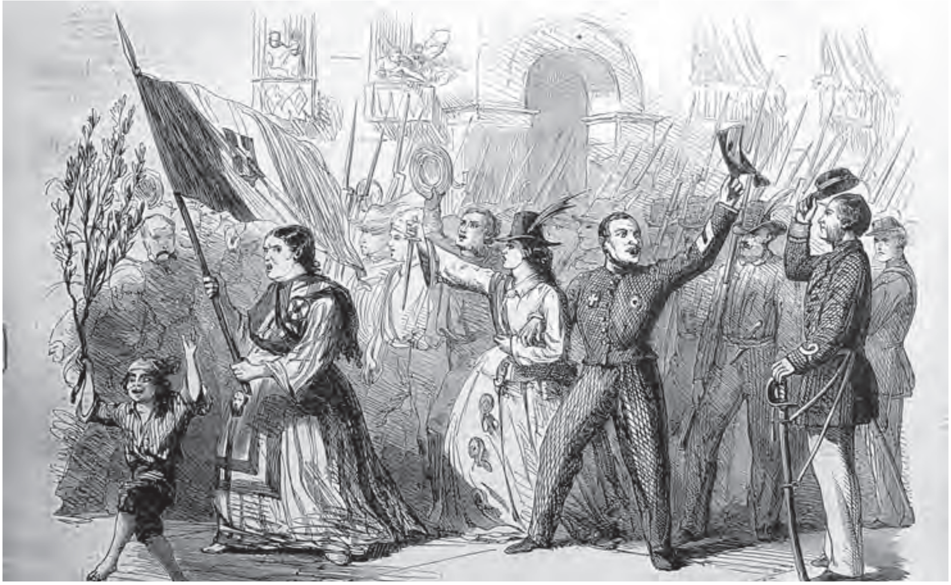


Fig. 7. "Street Scene in Naples the Day after the Arrival of Garibaldi" (*Illustrated London News*, 1860)

Teano" (fig. 3), where Garibaldi famously saluted the King of Sardinia as King of Italy and thereby relinquished to him the territories he had wrested from the Bourbons, or his depiction of one of Garibaldi's many feats of courage during the campaign at the battle of Milazzo. In this particular sketch, "Garibaldi Cutting Down the Leader of a Band of Horseman" (fig. 4), Nast captures a notorious episode in which Garibaldi, who had lost his horse and his gun, intercepted the retreating enemy cavalry and killed the commander with his sword alone (Ridley 2001, 468). Unlike the portrayal of Garibaldi, the sketches devoted to the Royalist troops are unambiguously condemning. In a scene drawn for both his London and New York outlets, for instance, Nast showed the Neapolitan soldiers engaged in finishing off with their bayonets the wounded Garibaldini, an action that defied accepted rules of warfare, or, even more shocking, throwing the wounded onto the same pyre where the bodies of the dead were being burned (fig. 5). In the commentary on the engraving, the *Illustrated London News* called the incident a "deed of abominable cruelty" committed by soldiers who would then refuse to fight the enemy and "throw themselves down on their knees when on the point of being taken, and beg for their lives" ("Incidents" 380). Finally, Nast manifested his adhesion to Garibaldi's project of national liberation and unification most clearly by dressing up as one of the volunteers. His self-portrait features him donning a red shirt, a knife, and a hat intended to resemble Garibaldi's (fig. 6).

Other sketches, however, suggest the limits of Nast's identification with Garibaldi's enterprise, especially as it extended beyond the original group of volunteers and involved the inhabitants of the conquered regions. His representation of the rejoicing of the people of Naples on the day of Garibaldi's entrance into the city, for instance, features troubling images of sexual misconduct, one of the classic tropes of anti-revolutionary propaganda (fig. 7). The young woman at the center of the sketch walks arm-in-arm with one of Garibaldi's volunteers. But she is guilty of more than a public display of sexual intimacy. Her feathered, military-looking hat and the dagger she rather threateningly holds are a form of cross-dressing, a usurpation of masculine attire and attitudes in complete opposition to the code regulating female behavior in the ante-bellum era. She has, moreover, covered her gown with patriot ribbons, transforming her dress into a declaration of her political stance. The same is true of the older woman ahead of her, whose apron, normally an article of clothing worn within the house and for the performance of household duties, is now embroidered with Garibaldi's countenance and thus serves a public rather than a domestic function. The banner of the House of Savoy that she carries, not unlike the olive branch held by the child who leads the procession, are symbols of order and peace ironically waving over a society turned upside down, where women have moved from the private world of domesticity to the public world of war and politics. The comments of the *Illustrated London News* on the sketch confirm this reading of the image as a condemnation of the revolution. The British periodical features a letter by a correspondent, which, the editors maintain, "describes just such a scene" as depicted by Nast. The letter reads: "Toledo [the main street in Naples] was thronged with an insane multitude, a prey to a Bacchanalian fury which I should be sorry if I was able to describe." But he does describe it, and in the following terms: "throng of carriages, throng of men, throng of women—the men brandishing naked swords, or waving flags or hats; the women bareheaded, disheveled, with disordered garments, cheering, embracing and kissing, as they passed each other, like so many victims of a rabid drunkenness." The article further censures the "mingling and blending of classes and sexes" ("Street Scene," 296) that occurred during the celebrations in honor of Garibaldi. While sexual license and the crossing of sexual boundaries are most prominent in Nast's sketch, the blending of classes condemned by the *Illustrated London News* is also intimated in the contrast between the young couple at the center of the sketch, who could be middle-class, and the older woman and youth at the left, who, bare-headed and bare-footed respectively, are connoted as members of the popular classes.

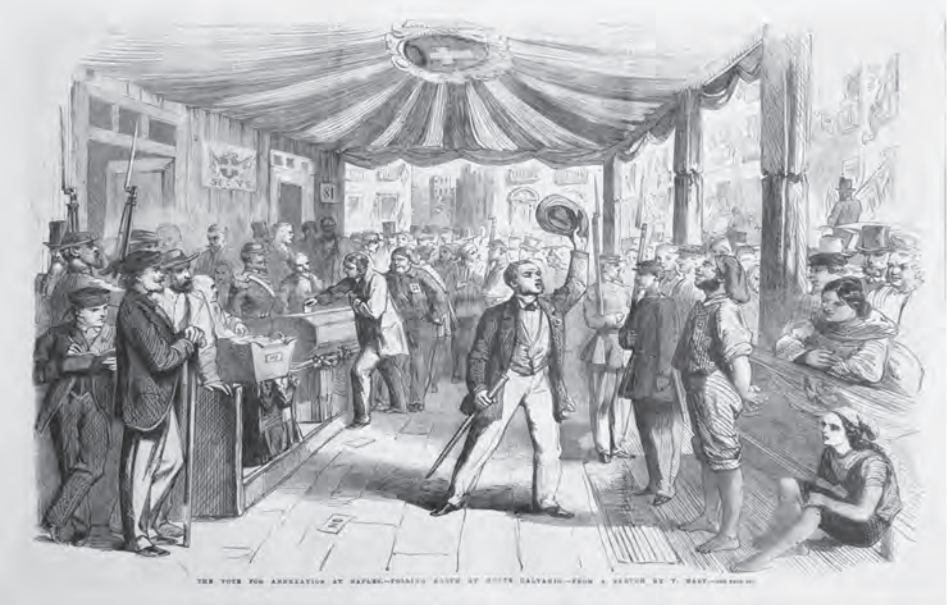


Fig. 8. "The Vote for Annexation at Naples. Polling Booth at Monte Calvario" (*Illustrated London News*, 1860)

The issue of class relations features more prominently in another of Nast's Neapolitan sketches depicting one of the polling booths where the plebiscite for annexation to the Kingdom of Italy was held (fig. 8). The scene is crowded, but the most prominent figures are the two men at center right, who clearly belong to opposite ends of the social spectrum. Gentleman and proletarian, who presumably have just voted in favor of annexation, are looking at each and acknowledging each other's presence, but do so differently. While the former takes his hat off, the latter keeps his cap on and returns the other's salute with a smile that seems more defiant than congratulatory. On a smaller scale, the tension of the encounter across class boundaries in the voting booth echoes much more violent clashes elsewhere. In fact, Garibaldi's expedition was accompanied by the eruption of class warfare throughout the liberated territories and especially in the Sicilian countryside. There, Garibaldi's early decree promising an equitable division of the land among the propertyless incited hopes for a social revolution that led on several occasions to illegal appropriations, the destruction of municipal buildings and their property registers and, in the renowned Bronte incident, to several murders (Mack Smith 1971, 190-222). In Naples, afflicted by urban rather than agrarian poverty, Garibaldi granted unemployment relief, fixed the maximum price of common goods, and provided work for the unemployed at the city's arsenal, all measures which gained him the support of the poor but concerned the affluent (Ridley 2001, 490-491). When the proletarians in Naples voted "yes" to annexation, therefore, they were making a social rather than a political choice. As the *Illustrated London News* put it in an article on the voting at Naples, "many, though probably they did not understand the political question, were fully sensible that the change was to bring them relief from misery, and persecution, and poverty" ("Voting," 408). The barefoot man of Nast's sketch must have hoped for change too. And, indeed, that he should be asked to vote, that his opinion should carry the same weight as that of the neatly dressed gentleman saluting him, must have seemed to him the beginning of a new order. Hence, the arrogance of his gaze. How did Nast evaluate the social aspirations of the southern lower classes, aspirations that he must have known had already erupted in episodes of violence? His depiction of the contemptuous popular voter suggests a negative assessment. Of all the characters in the sketch, including other members of his class like the youth seated at extreme right, he is the only one whose features are exaggerated. While the caricature does not reach the level of the grotesque, that he should be singled out for it implies an authorial condemnation of his behavior.

The sketch would have suggested more than latent class conflict to a contemporary British or American audience. Specifically, the setting of the plebiscite would have appeared irregular and likely to predetermine the results of the elections. As the *Illustrated London News* described it and Nast illustrated it, the voting booth included two wooden boxes from which one would pick a "yes" or "no" ticket and then deposit it in a central urn, all in full view of the crowd outside. Moreover, the *London News* explained, election officers occasionally asked voters what their choice would be as they entered the booth and handed them tickets accordingly, which made the vote audible as well as visible. The British periodical concluded that the proceedings were characterized by an "apparent scrupulousness in obtaining the real and voluntary votes of the people" ("Voting," 408), in other words, by the semblance of correctness rather than its reality. Indeed, Admiral George Mundy, commander of the British fleet at Palermo, observed that it would have taken a brave man to vote against annexation (Ridley 2001, 505). Nast would have been aware of the pressure placed on voters in the plebiscite because in the United States, while voters handed a ticket to an election official in public, the ticket itself could be clipped out of a party newspaper and filled out privately as well as picked up outside the voting booth (Benson 2004, 9-17). Although electioneering did go on at the polls and voters could be swayed, intimidation was not built into the system as it was in the Italian

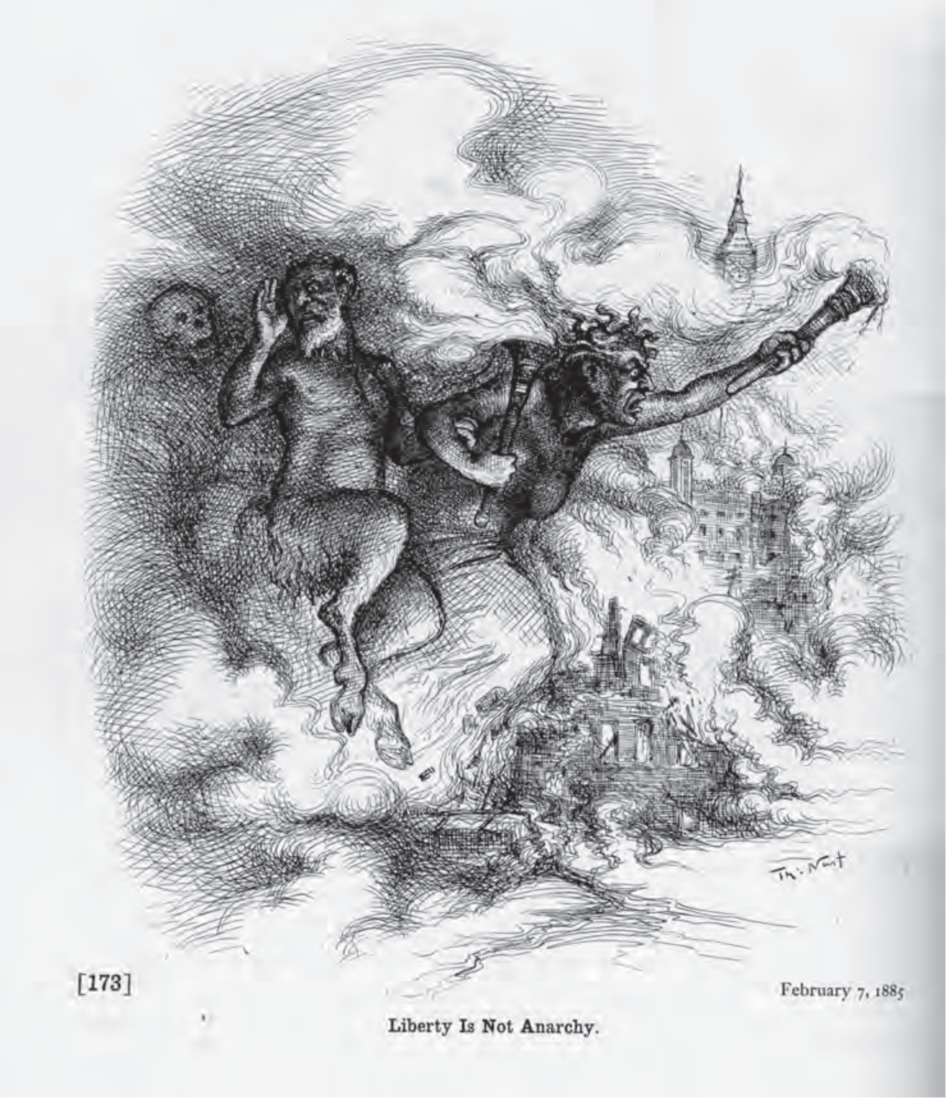


Fig. 9. "Liberty Is Not Anarchy" (*Harper's Weekly*, 7 Feb. 1885)

plebiscite. Nast, who had developed a friendship with Garibaldi's Colonel John Peard, may also have known that the plebiscite was the brainchild of the Piedmontese prime minister, Camillo di Cavour, while Garibaldi and the more liberal members of his cabinet favored a Constituent Assembly that

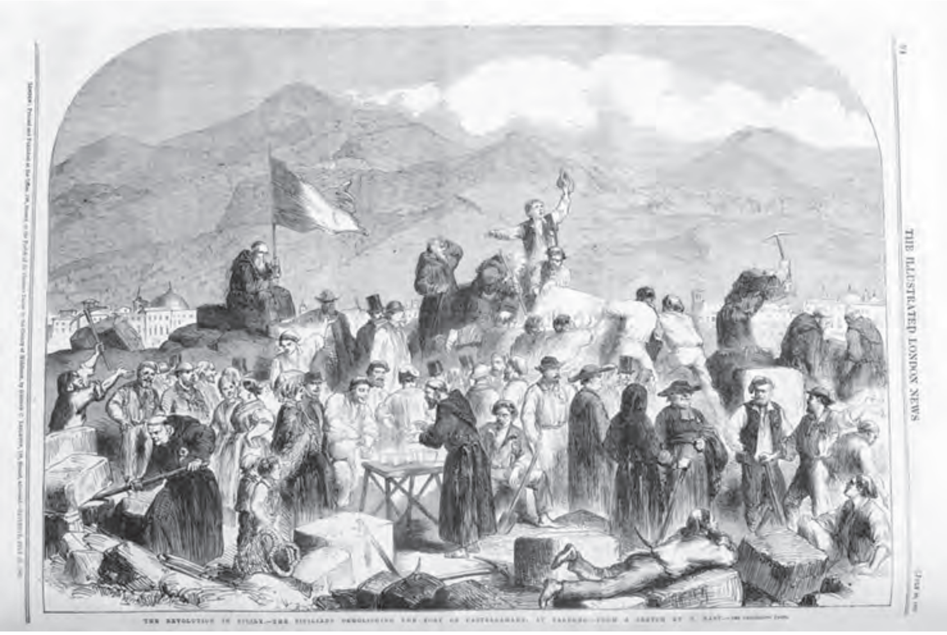


Fig. 10. "The Sicilians Demolishing the Fort of Castellamare at Palermo" (*Illustrated London News*, 1860; *New York Illustrated News*, 1860)

would evaluate the options of federalism and independence for southern Italy as well as annexation to Sardinia. A plebiscite with only two options and the "no" construed as a vote in favor of the return of the Bourbons was certain to grant a majority for annexation. Whether one stresses the obvious intimidation of the public setting or the subtler false choice offered to voters, the plebiscite undoubtedly manipulated public opinion. Hence the men in caps that throng around the voting urn to cast their "sì" are early versions of the gullible "ignorant voters" that Nast would caricature at the end of Reconstruction. Indeed, they would be disillusioned in their expectations for social change. A mere three weeks after the article on the plebiscite, the *Illustrated London News* reported that disturbances had erupted in Naples after the departure of Garibaldi and the abrogation of his liberal measures, and that the protesting "Lazzaroni . . . were dispersed by the Piedmontese troops" ("Italy," 480). And like the issue of the manipulation of easily duped, inexperienced voters, the intimation of class warfare and anarchy present if not blatant in Nast's sketches of the popular rejoicing for Garibaldi's entry in Naples and the plebiscite for annexation to the Kingdom of Italy was to loom

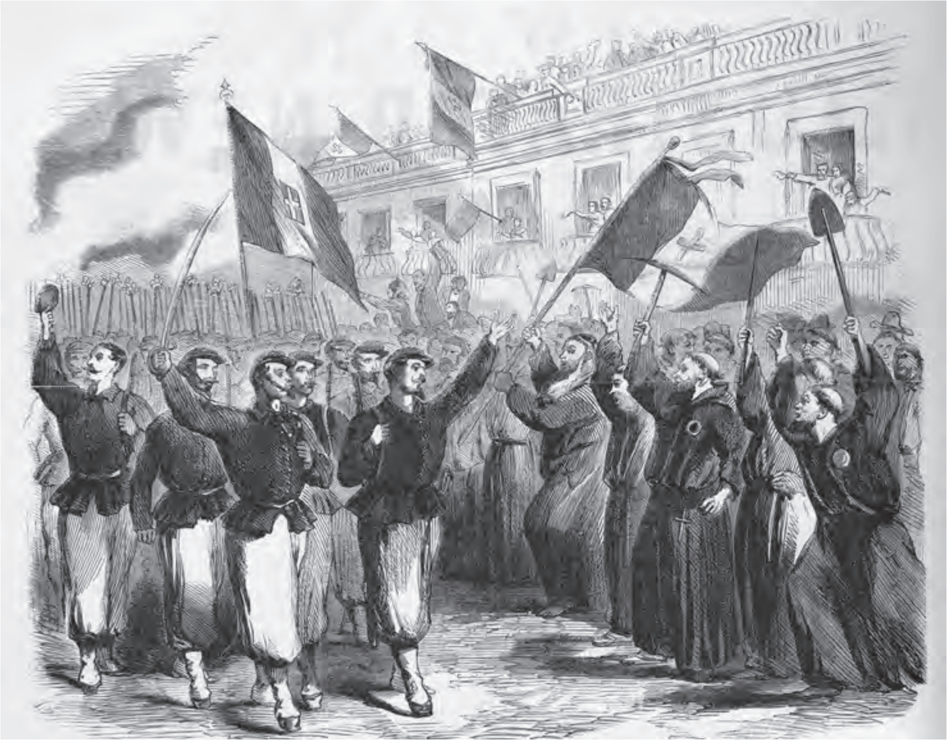


Fig. 11. "Monks Who Have Joined the Revolutionary Party in Sicily" (*New York Illustrated News*, 4 Aug. 1860)

large in his commentary on the American scene of the 1870s and 1880s, when he would look with distress at class polarization and at expressions of social unrest prompted by severe economic depression (fig. 9).

Even when, unlike the two Neapolitan sketches we have just examined, Nast's representation of the revolution in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies appears unconditionally positive, it is nonetheless complicated by his preoccupation with the growing Catholic presence in the American republic. Specifically, Nast noticed and insistently recorded the presence of members of the clergy among Garibaldi's supporters as well as Garibaldi's own participation in Catholic rituals. Thus, for instance, his depiction of the destruction of Fort Castellamare, from which the Bourbons had bombed Palermo to quell the popular insurrection in favor of Garibaldi, features eleven clerical figures, most of them actively engaged in the destruction of this symbol of royalist cruelty (fig. 10). The same monks who had engaged in

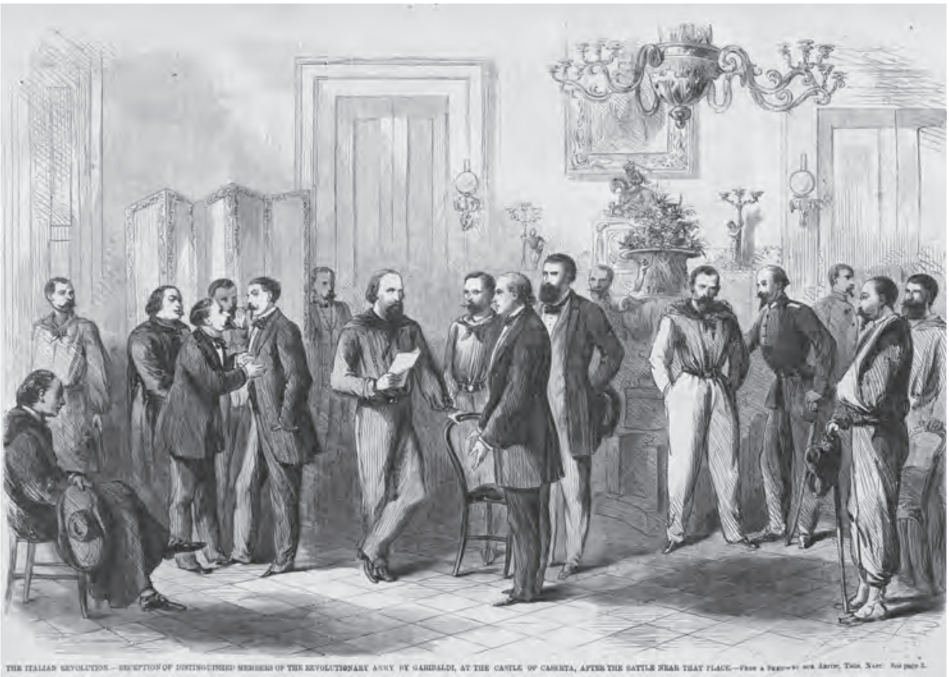

THE ITALIAN REVOLUTION.—RECEPTION OF DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY BY GARIBALDI, AT THE CASTLE OF CASERTA, AFTER THE BATTLE NEAR THAT PLACE.

Fig. 12. “Reception of Distinguished Members of the Revolutionary Army by Garibaldi at the Castle of Caserta” (*New York Illustrated News*, 1860)

the demolition of the fort are then captured as they enthusiastically welcome the volunteers commanded by Medici, the group Nast had joined (fig. 11). For another, different example, two clergymen are visible on the left among the revolutionary leaders assembled at Caserta (fig. 12). The presence of the Catholic Church on the side of the revolutionists, recorded in these and at least four other sketches, would have surprised Nast’s audience both in Britain and the United States. That Garibaldi would attend church functions like the one in honor of the Virgin of Piedigrotta in Nast’s sketch of the same title would have been just as startling (fig. 13). As historians of Anglo-American views on the Risorgimento well know, the process of nation formation in Italy was seen as antithetical to the interests of the Catholic church because it entailed the conquest of the Papal States and the end of the pope’s temporal power, and the support it received in England and the United States from Protestant quarters was linked precisely to this perception of its anti-Catholic valence (Sanfilippo 1994, 185-195; 2000, 159-187). Indeed, after a brief liberal interlude at the beginning of the papacy of Pius IX, the church

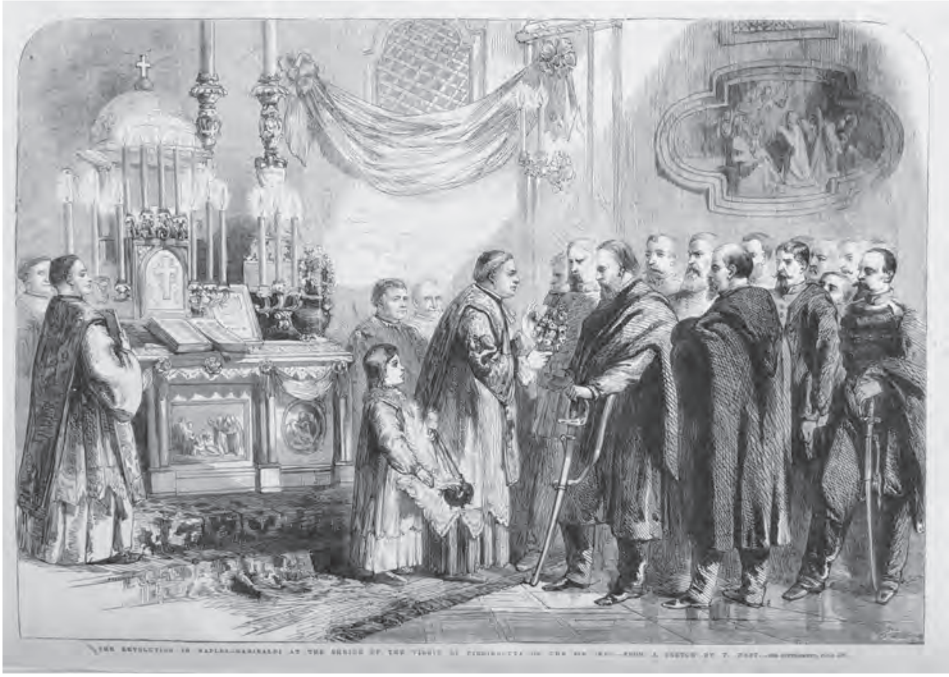


Fig. 13. "Garibaldi at the Shrine of the Virgin of Piedigrotta" (*Illustrated London News*, 1860; *New York Illustrated News*, 1860)

consistently opposed the national project; on their part, revolutionaries like Garibaldi, though respectful of the religious sentiment of the people, were generally themselves deists and anti-clerical. The one notable exception to this pattern of reciprocal antagonism were the events witnessed by Nast in 1860, namely, the southern clergy's championing of Garibaldi's project and Garibaldi's own astute decision to indulge the church in order to gain the support of the Sicilian peasantry, without whom his enterprise could not succeed (Trevelyan 1912, 144, 241-242, 268-269). In fact, the Sicilian clergy resented the Bourbons because it chafed under the control of a dynasty that resided in Naples and considered Sicily a province. The southern clergy as a whole, moreover, objected to the Bourbons' policy of relying on the wealth of the church to face financial crises ranging from earthquakes to defaults in military pay, which in 1860 led to permitting royal troops to sack churches and monasteries in insurgent Palermo (Messina 1986, 85; Guasco 1997, 72-73). Garibaldi, aware that most members of the southern church were, in his words, "enemies to modern ideas of progress, but above all enemies to the

Bourbons" (Trevelyan 1912, 242), attended religious ceremonies throughout his expedition, much to the chagrin of several of his closest associates.

Several essays in the *New York Illustrated News* offer a very different, Protestant interpretation of this unexpected convergence of interests between Catholic Church and revolution. In an article provokingly entitled "Garibaldi Acting as Pope at Palermo," the New York periodical read the revolutionary leader's presence at mass in Palermo's cathedral not as an attempt to harness a popular, influential church to the his cause, but rather as an illustration of the loss of power suffered by an institution now reduced to honoring the Pope's arch-enemy. According to the anonymous author, the archbishop and about seventy-five other clergymen waited for Garibaldi at the entrance of the cathedral and then solemnly escorted him to the royal throne that he would occupy as dictator of the conquered territories. "It must have been very amusing for the General," the writer concludes, "to see so many high dignitaries of the church prostrated before him, and especially when the master of ceremonies told him to keep his hat on" ("Garibaldi Acting as Pope in Palermo," 267). Indeed, the impression left by this description is that of a church paying homage to a victorious enemy. In a later article on the celebration of similar ceremonies in Naples, moreover, the *New York Illustrated News* noted that father Alessandro Gavazzi, a well-known religious dissident who had toured the United States and Canada in 1853-54, conducted the religious rituals there. That Gavazzi, "an excommunicated monk" who had "not confined himself to exposing the Papal temporal rule, but the Papal faith," should be "the chosen religious leader of this revolution" indicated, according to the New York periodical, "not only revolt against the king of Naples but the faith of the Italians" ("Italian Crisis," 338). In reality, the monk who celebrated mass in Naples was not Gavazzi but a much tamer Fra Pantaleo, a Franciscan who had joined Garibaldi in Sicily (Ridley 2001, 446, 448, 485). Yet the misidentification is significant because it reveals the intention to bring the church's sanction of Garibaldi's expedition, which was political and not religious, within an anti-Catholic reading of the Risorgimento. Stated another way, while Southern clergymen supported Garibaldi because they opposed the Bourbons, the *New York Illustrated News* turned them into opponents of the temporal power of the popes, an interpretation that would have pleased readers concerned with the Catholic Church's exponential growth in the United States. It's an interpretation I am inclined to believe Nast also shared given his own anti-Catholicism, which would culminate a few years later in possibly the most influential anti-Catholic illustration of the post-bellum era (fig. 14).

It is now time to draw conclusions from this excursion into Nast's coverage of Garibaldi's expedition to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. As we have seen,

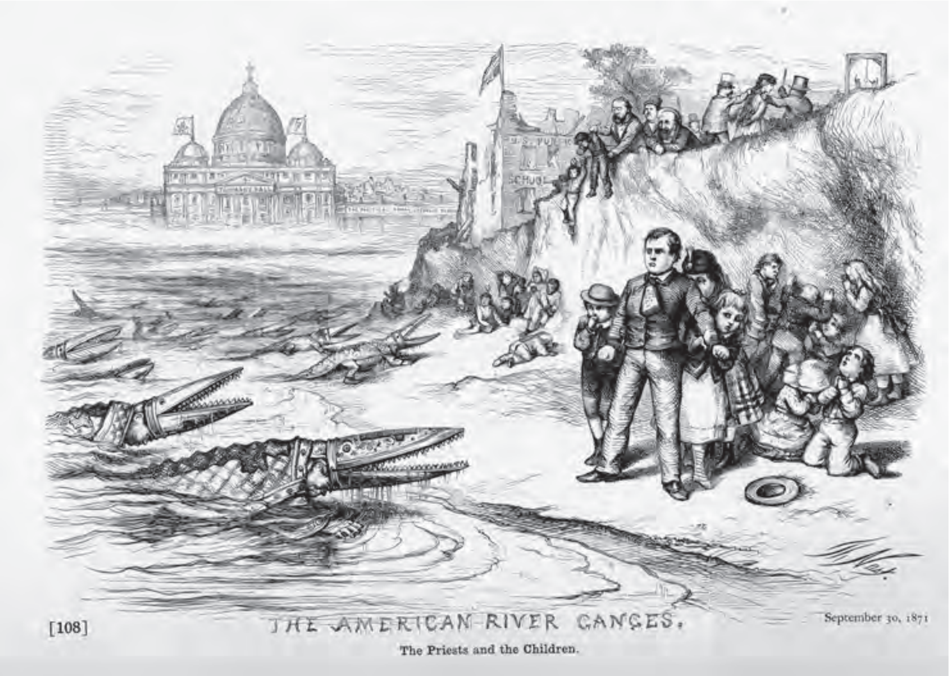

[108]
THE AMERICAN RIVER GANGES.
The Priests and the Children.
September 30, 1871

Fig. 14. "The American River Ganges" (*Harper's Weekly*, 1871)

the sketches alternate between a celebration of Garibaldi and identification with his project and a condemnation of the inhabitants of the liberated territories, whom Nast describes as alternatively unruly, threatening, and gullible. This in turns leads to a reconsideration of Nast's early politics, which were already characterized by suspicion towards the popular classes that would dominate his later work. For scholars interested mainly in the American response to the Italian political scene, however, the analysis confirms once more that perceptions of the Italian revolutions were colored by domestic concerns, which in Nast's case ranged from the extension of the franchise beyond the boundaries of whiteness to the growth of the immigrant Catholic Church.

Works Cited

Benson, Richard Franklin. *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

"Garibaldi Acting as Pope at Palermo." *New York Illustrated News,* September 1, 1860, 267.

Guasco, Maurilio. *Storia del clero in Italia dall'Ottocento a oggi*. Bari: Laterza, 1997.

"Incidents of the Battle on the Volturno." *Illustrated London News*, October 20, 1860, 380.

"Italian Crisis." *New York Illustrated News*, October 6, 1860, 338.

"Italy. The Two Sicilies." *Illustrated London News*, November 24, 480.

Keller, Morton. *The Art and Politics of Thomas Nast*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Messina, Antonino. *Il clero calabrese nel Risorgimento italiano*. Reggio Calabria: Laruffa, 1986.

Monsagrati, Giuseppe. "Gli intellettuali americani e il processo di unificazione italiana." In *Gli Stati Uniti e l'unità d'Italia*, eds. Daniele Fiorentino and Matteo Sanfilippo, 17-44. Roma: Gangemi, 2004.

Paine, Albert Bigalow. *Thomas Nast: His Period and His Pictures.* 1904. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967.

Ridley, Jasper. *Garibaldi.* 1974. London: Phoenix, 2001.

Sanfilippo, Matteo. "La questione romana negli scritti dei viaggiatori nordamericani, 1848-1870." *Il Veltro* 38 (1994): 185-195.

_____. "Tra antipapismo e cattolicesimo: gli echi della repubblica Romana e i viaggi in Nord America di Gaetano Bedini e Alessandro Gavazzi (1853-1854)." In *Gli Americani e la Repubblica Romana del 1849*, eds. Sara Antonelli, Daniele Fiorentino and Giuseppe Monsagrati, 159-187. Roma: Gangemi, 2000.

"The Sicilian Insurrection." *New York Illustrated News*, June 30, 1860, 114.

Smith, Denis Mack. *Victor Emanuel, Cavour, and the Risorgimento*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

"Street Scene in Naples." *Illustrated London News*, September 29, 1860, 296.Trevelyan, George Macauley. *Garibaldi and the Thousand*. London: Longman, 1912.

"The Voting at Naples." *Illustrated London News*, November 3, 1860, 408.

Marco Mariano

Mid-19th Century Italian Views of America: The Case of Piedmont, 1815-1861

This paper presents results of a study conducted on the consular and diplomatic network of the Kingdom of Sardinia in North America.[1] These archival sources have received scant attention from historians. We have many important studies on the diplomatic history of the Risorgimento, on the relations between Piedmont and the major European powers (Romeo 1963; Nada, 1980), and on the international—including American—reception of Italian unification. However, historical studies have by and large ignored the fact that the Kingdom of Sardinia, arguably like many small European states in the nineteenth century, was embedded in a network of political, commercial, and cultural relations which extended not only throughout continental Europe and across the Mediterranean, but also through the Americas and across the Atlantic.

This material sheds light on several aspects of the domestic and international dimensions of nineteenth century Italian history. At the domestic level, it provides a new perspective on the issue of the "continuity" between the Kingdom of Sardinia and Italy, which is part of the larger issue of the persistence of elites in the Risorgimento. In fact, the consular and diplomatic network in North America provided the backbone of the Italian consular and diplomatic service after 1861. For example Giuseppe Bertinatti, the last Chargé d'Affaires of the Kingdom of Sardinia, was also the first Chargé of the Kingdom of Italy in the United States (his tenure in Washington, DC, lasted from 1855 to 1867).

On the international and transnational level, the correspondence between the Piedmontese consuls and diplomats and the Foreign Ministry offers a detailed picture of the scale of exchanges and the variety of players involved in the transatlantic circulation of people, goods, and ideas across the Atlantic in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Finally, this material provides an abundant and vivid repository of images of American society and culture, as well as of American domestic politics and foreign policy. In fact, one of the tasks, if not the major task, of these consuls and diplomats was, precisely, to monitor the "American experiment," and they did so in by different means and from different perspectives from the reactionary late 1810s to the liberal 1850s. It is this aspect that I will discuss here, with the usual caveat that these views of America may offer at least as many insights about the observers as about America itself.

We begin with an 1838 quote by the Piedmontese Minister of Foreign Affairs and notorious reactionary Count Solaro dalla Margarita. The year 1838 was crucial: a bilateral Treaty of Commerce and Friendship had just been signed and, as a consequence, the relations between the two nations advanced from the consular to the diplomatic level. In his instructions to Avogadro di Collobiano, the first Piedmontese Chargé d'Affaires ever sent to the United States, Solaro della Margarita wrote:

> Nos relations avec l'Amérique septentrionale paraitraient au premier coup d'oeil ne devoir être que des relations purement commerciales, vue la distance qui nous separe, mais les distances se rapprocahent aujourd'hui par la multiplication des voies de communication et les rapports sans nombre qui se sont etablis entre l'ancien et le nouveau monde ont créé entre eux un telle complication d'intérêt que toute commotion politique qui se prepare où qui surgit dans l'un des deux continents doit avoir, necessairement un grand retentissement dans l'autre. Les traités de commerce cachent souvent des vues politiques. (Consolati nazionali: Solaro della Margarita to Avogadro di Collobiano, July 12, 1838, b. 9)

It is useful to stress two points here with regard to this quote. The first concerns Atlantic interdependence. The quote is an example of how very clear it was to Piedmontese diplomats and foreign-policy makers that what happened across the Atlantic was relevant to a small and relatively marginal state like Piedmont, which, at the geopolitical level belonged to the Concert of Europe, and therefore had some stake in the changing relations between the Old World and the New World. At the economic level, with the acquisition of the port of Genoa, Piedmont was involved in the Atlantic commercial routes, connecting the Mediterranean and the Americas. In the instructions to, and especially in the dispatches from the Sardinian representatives in North America, the vision of the New World as fundamentally different from the Old is often complemented by the vision of the United States as part of an "Atlantic system" made up of trade, migrations, and circulation of ideas. It was part of a trans-continental region where kingdoms and republics, ports and goods, merchants and workers, exiles and books were part of a whole; actions on one side of the Atlantic often triggered ractions on the other.

It is not surprising, indeed it makes perfect sense, that a legitimist like Solaro was so sensitive to the impact of events on the American continent. In the mental map of Solaro and of the statesmen of the Concert of Europe created by the Congress of Vienna, the United States was relevant both as a threat—a hotbed of republican, subversive ideas—and as a successful experiment, characterized by a booming economy—the effects of the Jacskonian "market revolution"—which fuelled expansionist ambitions over the continent and eventually in the whole hemisphere

The second point is connected to Solaro's observations and concerns: the ways in which American policy regarding Sardinia was an outgrowth of the Restoration. In fact, in 1815 Turin had decided to establish consulates in the U.S., and it was clear from the outset that this network had a political as well as a commercial dimension. In Europe, the Holy Alliance was determined to stop potential republican epidemics from the Americas; events in Latin America, with the collapse of the Spanish Empire and the wave of independentism that followed, only made the spectre of republicanism more frightening. At the same time, the prospect of the end of the Spanish empire in Latin America whetted the appetites of European traders eager to fill the vacuum and reap huge profits from the transition in the Atlantic economy. On the other hand, from the US viewpoint the same events in South America reinforced deep rooted fears of political interference by, and economic dependency from, European powers. The "Western question" was therefore a crucial element in international politics and economy in the first half of the nineteenth century (Blaufarb 2007); in fact, it was so pervasive that not even a second-rank European state like Piedmont could afford to ignore it.

Piedmontese visions of America are better understood when they are put in this larger framework. In 1819 the first Piedmontese general consul in Philadelphia, Gaspare Deabbate, was instructed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs San Marzano to work on commercial reciprocity with the U.S. and, at the same time, to monitor carefully the attitude of the U.S. toward Latin America:

> Gli occhi dei politici sono quasi tutti rivolti verso le Colonie Spagnole e le contese che la dividono dalla loro Metropoli. Per le grandi e frequenti relazioni tra i negozianti degli Stati Uniti colle Colonie insorgenti è facile accorgersi che la causa di queste non è loro indifferente. Benché la mozione fatta da M. Clay oratore della Camera dei rappresentanti, acciocché i governi delle nuove repubbliche venissero riconosciuti, sia stata rigettata, perché accettandola si sarebbe dato un troppo grave scandalo all'Europa, pure si sa che dei commissari degli Stati uniti sono stati inviati per spiare quale sia il loro stato reale, e si sa che in sostanza ad esse si accordano quasi tutti i vantaggi di un'alleanza positiva. (Consolati nazionali: San Marzano to Deabbate, October 10, 1819, b. 2)

What we have here is an early indication of recurrent motives in the exchanges between Turin and its representatives in North America. First, the focus on inter-American developments, which were part and parcel of the "Atlantic system": Latin America was crucial in the competition between the

U.S. and the European powers both in terms of markets and resources and in terms of ideology and politics.

Second, the focus on international trade and its political implications: trade as a vehicle for the expansion of American influence. Again from the instructions of San Marzano to Deabbate:

> non solo alle cose d'America sono rivolte le mire degli Stati Uniti. Seguendo le tracce della Madre Patria essi tentano di formare nei punti più importanti per il commercio e per il dominio dei mari alcuni Stabilimenti capaci a giovare a simile intento.

Dispatches from the general consul in Philadelphia in the early 1820s reflected these concerns. In fact, they covered Latin American and inter-American affairs much more extensively than they did domestic US affairs.

Finally, the systemic view of an Atlantic world coexisted with the competitive view of New World vs. Old World as parts of a zero-sum game in which European crisis generated American growth. Consul Deabbate wrote in 1820:

> Agli sconvolgimenti dell'Europa gli Stati Uniti di America devono il sorprendente grado di prosperità a cui si videro giunti nel 1815; ed alla pace generale dell'Europa attribuiscono il rapido decadimento a cui trovansi assoggettati da 4 o 5 anni a questa parte. Non è adunque difficile lo inferire qual sia il loro modo di vedere sul terribile vulcano delle rivoluzioni europee. Non credo che essi desiderino ai popoli transatlantici afflizioni onde sulle medesime riedificare la loro prosperità: ma per contro si può tener per certo che essi non considerano virtù e saggezza, ma bensi stupidità e pazzia il non prenderle in ben venuta considerazione. (Consolati nazionali: Deabbate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 5, 1820, b. 1)

In essence, America was seen in both systemic terms as part of an Atlantic whole and in oppositional terms: what is good for America is not good for Europe, and viceversa.

In the following decades, the Piedmontese image of, and attitude towards, the United States evolved as a consequence of domestic developments, first and foremost Charles Albert's cautious transition to liberalism since the mid-1830s. However, it must be stressed that, at a time when information about the United States was scant at best, Sardinian diplomats and consuls in the United States were able to provide not only a massive flow of data, but also an original—at times unorthodox—view of American politics and society. Decision-making in Turin relied not only on European sources, but also on first-hand information made available by Piedmontese consuls and diplomats overseas.

Consuls have been remarkably neglected by scholars of nineteenth century international history. The "Cinderella Service" was a blend of officials and merchants, national "subjects" and foreigners, bourgeois and aristocrats (Platt 1971). The first Sardinian consul in New Orleans from 1822 to 1830—Monsieur DuBourg—was a French merchant born in Haiti, whose family had fled the island after the revolution of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Unlike diplomats, they were often involved in economic and social relations with local elites and acted as transnational brokers in connection with the interests of the country they served, the demands of the immigrant communities from that country, and their own self-interest and respectability.

Finally, consuls played a critical role as a transatlantic *trait d'union* at a time when the United States was fully integrated in the world economy but was not admitted into the legitimist and Euro-centric concert of nations by the Congress of Vienna. In the 1820s and 1830s relations between European powers and the American republics were usually conducted at the consular/commercial level through the signing of treaties of "friendship commerce and navigation" which enabled the former to maintain their anti-republican posture and the latter to conform to their "ideology of trade" (Carmagnani 2003).

What these rather peculiar observers produced was a somewhat syncretic perspective on the United States, in which the original reactionary, anti-republican impulse gradually merged with an ambivalence about American politics and society typical of European liberalism *à la* Tocqueville and, finally, with a genuine admiration for the achievements of American economy and technology.

On the one hand, these observers regularly dismissed republican institutions as a chaotic, dysfunctional experiment marred by the "tyranny of the majority" and the inevitable corruption of party politics and unable to restrain the rampant materialism and individualism associated with the American character and the spoils system—that typical degenerative disease of democracy.

Luigi Mossi, a lawyer from Turin who had moved to New York in the 1830s and became consul and later Charge d'Affaires in the United States, commented that the presidential election of 1844 was a demonstration of the harm done by "universal suffrage":

> L'immeritata elevazione dell'oscuro signor Polk alla magistratura suprema, e l'antipatia popolare verso del signor Clay chiarissimo per talenti e per eminenti servizi resi ad ingrata repubblica dimostrano vieppiù la falsità della cotanto vantata infallibilità del suffragio universale, e prova . . . che le maggiorità popolari hanno né intelligenza né moti propri e che esse non sono che un instromento cieco nelle mani di pochi uomini ambiziosi, li quali poi elevati al potere devono mostrarsi compiacenti servi, e cedere ogni qualvolta si ha motivo di dover urtare colle passioni e cogli interessi apparenti di una sfrenata moltitudine. (Consolati nazionali: Mossi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 26, 1844, b. 1)

Similar comments on American democracy were frequent in consular reports and echoed Tocqueville's indictment of the tyranny of the majority, which the author of *Democracy in America* related to the widespread American notion that "there is more intelligence and wisdom in a number of men united than in a single individual, and that the number of legislators is more important than their quality" (Tocqueville, 1990: 255).[2]

On the other hand, diplomats and consuls, as they observed the rise of American trade across the Atlantic and influence in the Americas, were perfectly positioned to observe the American empire in the making. Especially in the late 1840s and early 1850s, with the acceleration of American expansion in the South West and in the Pacific, they were impressed by, and struggling to come to terms with, the thriving economic and technological progress in the U.S.. In essence their reaction is reminiscent of the admiring astonishment of Lincoln Steffens travelling in the Soviet Union in 1919: “I have seen the future, and it works.”

How such a political system—unleashing the selfish instincts of individuals, unable to rule by force, and eventually paving the way to anarchy—could possibly lead to such a triumph of progress was indeed a troubling question for them. In the words of Chargé d’Affaires Avogadro di Collobiano in 1839:

> Il faut convenir qu’il n’est pas facile d’expliquer comment avec un tel gouvernement, si peu doué d’efficacité, ce pays ait pu ainsi direction, sans guide atteindre ces merveilleux degrés de perfection dans les principales branches de l’industrie et de la spéculation, et s’ouvrir un avenir qui étonne l’esprit et éblouit la pensée. (Lettere Ministri: Avogadro di Collobiano to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 10, 1839, b. 1)

This dilemma was even more troubling in the light of the territorial and commercial expansion of the United States We have several prescient reports of the impact of this expansion on inter-American relations and consequently on transatlantic relations.

In 1849 American plans to build railroads and canals across Central America to facilitate access to the Pacific regions led the Piedmontese consul in New York, Luigi Mossi, to celebrate the universal benefits of the American commitment to free trade, as opposed to Britain’s pursuit of its “exclusive interests” (Consolati nazionali: Mossi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 20, 1849, b. 1). But one year later, in a long report on California, Mossi again dealt with the global impact of US continental expansion and projection in the Pacific, which he understood in terms of the old antagonistic framework: the rise of the New World implied the decline of the Old:

> Vapori metteranno tra breve tempo il porto di San Francisco in comunicazione regolare colla Cina, e sotto colore di un semplice deposito per carbone, a ogni costo si vorrà mettere piede sulle coste del sud del Giappone, soli venticinque giorni dalla California, e soli cinque giorni dalla Cina distante. Una volta padroni di un punto nel Giappone, ed una volta aperte le comunicazioni tra il Pacifico e l’Atlantico sia per mezzo d’un cammino di ferro a traverso degli Stati Uniti, che dei canali sulli due Istmi di Panama e Nicaragua, l’impulso sarà irresistibile, e lo spirito intraprendente di questa razza la farà celermente camminare alla preponderanza definitiva della marina americana nel Pacifico, e sarà allora verificata la profezia di Humboldt che l’attività del commercio sarebbe progressivamente e fra non molto passata dal Levante all’Occidente, profezia profonda, mirabile e di cui nulla può più impedirne il compimento. (Consolati nazionali: Mossi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 13, 1850, b. 1)

To summarize, America owed its triumph—again Mossi writing in 1849—to its extraordinary natural resources, to nature and geography, rather than to its deeply flawed political institutions (Consolati nazionali: Mossi to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18/6/1849, b. 1).

Notes

[1] This is part a of a larger project coordinated by Marcello Carmagnani on "Piedmont and the Americas" based on documentary sources available at the Turin branch of the Archivio di Stato as well as at the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome (A preliminary result of this work, which I am conducting with Latin Americanist Duccio Sacchi, has been published in *Annali della Fondazione Einaudi*, XL, (2006).

[2] Piedmontese chargé d'affaires Giuseppe Bertinatti was personally acquainted with Tocqueville and his work.

Works Cited

Blaufarb, Rafe. "The Western Question. The Geopolitics of Latin American Independence." *American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 742-763.

Carmagnani, Marcello. *L'altro occidente*. Torino: Einaudi, 2003.

Consolati nazionali in generale. Archivio di Stato di Torino. Boxes 1-9.

Lettere Ministri. Archivio di Stato di Torino. Box 1.

Nada, Narciso. *Dallo Stato assoluto allo Stato costituzionale. Storia del Regno di Carlo Alberto dal 1831 al 1848*. Torino: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano. 1980.

Platt, D. C. *The Cinderella Service. British Consuls Since 1825*. London: Longman, 1971.

Romeo, Rosario. *Dal Piemonte sabaudo all'Italia liberale*. Torino: Einaudi, 1963.

Toqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America. Vol. 1*. Reprint 1835. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Daniele Fiorentino

International Design: US-Italian Relations During George Perkins Marsh's Tenure in Italy, 1861-1882

The tenure of the first US Ambassador to Italy between 1861 and 1882 is of major relevance in US-Italian relations, not only for the length of George Perkins Marsh's stay in office (the longest serving ambassador in US history), but especially for his high interest in Italian history and culture and for the times in which he served. He was appointed shortly after Victor Emmanuel II became the first king of Italy and the beginning of the American Civil War. Marsh, a man of science and letters, became a major actor in the exchanges between his country and the newly constituted kingdom of Italy also thanks to his ability as a man of learning, rather than a diplomat, in a time of crisis. Much of his diplomatic success, in fact, was due to the personal relationships he managed to establish with some of the major Italian political figures of the day, and especially with Bettino Ricasoli, who remained a very good friend throughout his life. Thanks to his political connections and to the period of the Civil War and Reconstruction, Marsh managed to keep his post until his death. He died the same year as Garibaldi and shortly after the death of Victor Emmanuel and Pius IX. Not only for biographical reasons, however, he was very much a man of his times. Like William Seward, the first Secretary of State under whom he served, Marsh has been considered a representative of the "old diplomacy" paradigm of American foreign policy (Campbell 1976, 23-24). Yet in different ways, both actually interpreted a new approach that ultimately moved US foreign policy from a cautious and neutral stand to more aggressive and international involvement. In Seward's case, this took the concrete forms of the acquisition of Alaska or the stronghold on Hawaii, plus a farsightedness in establishing an American hold on the continent and in the Pacific Ocean (Taylor 1996, 174-184); for Marsh, it was often the direct and personal involvement of a politically sensitive man of science in foreign affairs (Lowenthal 2000).

Marsh's service in Italy as representative of the United States can be divided into two halves: the first decade, that can be labelled "The Risorgimento Years," ranging from his appointment to the court of Savoy in 1861 to the seizure of

Rome in 1870, and the second decade, "The International Design,"(1870-1882, the year of his death), during which Marsh laid down the general framework of diplomatic relations between Italy and the United States that remained in place until World War I. Such periodization may be said to reflect the course of US history and the switch from Reconstruction and Seward's "liberal expansionism" to the Gilded Age and commercial internationalism (Iryie 1977, 18-21, 53-54).

While in the first years of his office Marsh was busy on both fronts, the Civil War and the completion of Italian unification, in the years following the transfer of the Italian capital to Rome, Marsh concentrated on consolidating relations between the two nations. Both were in fact entering the international scenario and aspiring to become two world powers. Although he had worked at improving relations between the two countries from the very beginning of his office, in the latter decade Marsh laboured with his Italian counterparts at designing or implementing treaties of reciprocity in the two major fields of interaction between the two countries: commerce, and extradition and naturalization (the latter a complex matter that unfortunately extended well beyond the 20 long years of Marsh's tenure). In line with Seward's approach, Marsh initially turned his attention to commercial relations. He managed to promote a postal agreement shortly after arriving in Italy, the first ever signed between the United States and an Italian state on such a subject (Trauth 1957, 82). In the summer of 1863, however, Marsh was forced to concentrate on the touchy subject of Civil War alliances. Fortunately for him, Italy had been the first European country to recognize the claims of the Union and to side with Lincoln and the north. However, the ambivalent position of the Catholic Church and of major European powers kept him busy.

Marsh's long residence in Italy as Chargé d'Affaires and then Minister Plenipotentiary, enabled him to witness the achievement of Italian unification with the conquest of Venice and Rome, and to transfer the American legation first to Florence and then to the Eternal City. Given his anti-Catholic attitude, he counted this latter a major success. As he wrote to Secretary of State William Seward shortly after his arrival, it was high time for Italy to dispose of the backward and obscurantist presence of the Church. Italy to Marsh was the new country of progress where "true" Republican values could finally be implemented to make the nation competitive with other emerging powers in Europe. His republican ideals and hopes for the future of Italy surfaced especially in his private messages:

> The Church ought not to be identified with government but divorced from it. Absolute religious liberty and religious equality, without regard to creeds, ought to coexist in all free governments, and religion ought never to be clothed with any authority to enforce its dogmas or its precepts. (Despatches: Marsh to Seward, September 3, 1861, r. 11)

The separation of church and state and religious freedom were to Marsh the strong foundations of a free and democratic country capable of self-rule. The American ideals were as universal to Marsh as they had been to the founders of the nation.

Commenting on Bettino Ricasoli's statements as to the importance of establishing the capital in Rome, the Chargé stressed the importance of doing away with the temporal power of the Popes and of making Italy a liberal and "self-governing" modern nation free of external influences, especially Catholic ones (Despatches: Marsh to Seward, September 3, 1861, r. 11). His frequent notes and despatches of the summer and fall of 1861 often mention the anachronism of the temporal power in rather harsh comments on the figure of Pius IX. Marsh was convinced of the centrality of international solidarity among people who believed in free and independent governments, and had stressed this conviction in a famous speech he gave in Burlington, his native city, at the end of the 1850s, entitled "Italian Independence." Marsh had underlined the relevance of international mutual support among liberal countries. In his final remarks, much along the lines of liberal American thought, he stated:

> One duty at least is a plain one to express, by every form of public utterance, individual and national abhorrence of such governmental crimes as have stung the people of Italy to madness. In the present state of reciprocal national influence, the word of a great and free people is a more powerful engine than an army of a million gathered under the banners of a despot. (Marsh, n.d.)

As other Americans who witnessed or participated in the unification of Italy, Marsh transferred US liberal and democratic values to the country hosting him, with one major difference: he was the official representative of the United States.[1] However, he had no intention of making the unification of Italy or the conquest of Rome a religious issue. Once again, he tried to take an impartial liberal perspective:

> The Italian Question is, in no sense a religious question. It is as little prompted or controlled by religious considerations as was our own revolutionary movement. It is not a struggle between discordant sects or denominations, not a warfare between Catholicism and Protestantism, but purely and simply a question of self-government. (Marsh, n.d.)

Actually, in much of his attitude toward the political perspectives of the country and the Roman question, Marsh was in perfect tune with many of the Italian politicians then in charge, and especially with his personal friend Baron Bettino Ricasoli. The latter made the inclusion of Rome into the nation a central point of his political agenda (Despatches: Marsh to Seward, October 28, 1861, r. 11).

As mentioned earlier, however, the central question for Marsh in his first year at Turin was the Civil War. Actually the unification of Italy and the tragedy sweeping the United States in those years intertwined. Many of the Garibaldini, the fighters in Garibaldi's voluntary army that had conquered the South, pressed the American Chargé, through letters and personal visits, with requests to join the Union army in a fight they considered their own. They regarded the fight for liberty and democracy as an ideal continuation of their struggle to unify Italy (Despatches: Marsh to Seward, October 6, 1862. r. 11; *L'unificazione italiana*, 1971: Giovanni Battista Cattabeni to Marsh, October 23, 1862, Marsh to Seward, October 25, November 4, November 28. Seward to Marsh, November 5, November 18, 1862,). Moreover, Marsh was confronted with a major diplomatic issue, an incident in a way, that involved the hero of the Risorgimento. In the Spring of 1862, Giuseppe Garibaldi was offered a command in the Union army by an American diplomat stationed in Vienna (Despatches: Marsh to Seward, September 1, 1862, r. 11; Gay 1937, 233-249, 241: Trauth 1957, 22-23). The procedure was unusual and very soon the Department of State asked Marsh to take the initiative and meet the general, who was then in retirement on the island of Caprera following the failed attempt to take Rome starting from the Calabria mountains of Aspromonte. The possible recruitment of Garibaldi was viewed favorably by Seward and Marsh, although members of the Union High Command perceived it as a possible setback. Although Garibaldi had been offered the rank of brigadier general leading a battalion, a foreigner in charge of the Union Army might be construed as an admission of ineptitude on the part of the American generals *(*Marsh 1971, Garibaldi to Marsh, October 5, 1862, 163).

In the fall of 1862, Marsh, with the support of the State Department, worked on the issue and studied the possibility of giving Garibaldi command of four battalions of Italian volunteers. To the relief of many American politicians and army officers, the Italian general, however, turned down the offer with the official explanation that the unstable Italian political and military situation still required his presence in the country. In the meantime, the difficulties of the North had been overcome, especially following the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st 1863, which afforded the Union a different moral and political standing in the international arena. By 1864, the Chargé in Turin could again devote his attention to the commercial and diplomatic aspects of his office. But the international political context did not allow for any break. Soon, Marsh was to be deluded by the September convention between Italy and France, whereby the French army agreed to withdraw from Rome in exchange for a commitment on the part of the Italian kingdom to renounce any claim on the city of the Pope and to establish its capital permanently in Florence. Prime Minister Urbano Rattazzi, responsible for the agreement, did not meet Marsh's sympathy. Moreover, he considered King Victor Emmanuel incapable of managing the complex political situation.

In his personal correspondence he often expressed these opinions After the September Convention, Rattazzi considered forfeit any hope for Italy to actually effect profound change and positive progress. Wavering, duplicity and hesitation characterized the government's actions and did not help the liberal cause of Italy (Lowenthal 2000, 327). The agreement with Napoleon III, another of the European sovereigns whom Marsh disliked, meant from the Chargé's point of view that the completion of the unification was postponed indefinitely. With it the hopes of those who still believed in a possible agreement with the Church also vanished. With the Syllabus that same year, Pius IX finally unveiled his true self. Remarking on that ominous year, Marsh made an interesting comparison between the situation in the United States and the one in Italy. As General William Tecumseh Sherman was marching to the sea, the Pope was cancelling any possibility of compromise:

> Happily for the interests of Italian liberty, the recent encyclical letter of Pope Pius IX is likely to frustrate the various schemes of conciliation which have been dreamed of as effectually as the madness of our own southern pro-slavery politicians has dispelled the vision of a new compromise between the spirit of slavery and the spirit of freedom in our own commonwealth. (Despatches: Marsh to Seward, January 16, 1865, r. 12)

There were indeed similarities between the two countries, and Marsh seemed to be aware of them. The Roman question had created some fissures within American society between Catholics and Protestants. The split followed the lines of sectionalism as many Protestant churches lined up with the abolitionist movement. The behavior of Catholics was often ambiguous, while the Church of Rome itself remained ambivalent in its attitude regarding the fight between North and South. Meanwhile, both governments had to deal with an agrarian south that did not fit the parameters set by a dominant industrialized north. In the end, Italy and the United States, although in different ways and with much more pain and destruction for the latter, conquered the South to force it into a process of development that never succeeded entirely. Economic plans for development in Italy and Reconstruction in the United States started patterns of political and economic transformation that never managed to bridge the gap between the two halves of the countries (Doyle 2002, 85-89). Moreover, by the late 1870s, as the reformist government of Agostino De Pretis came to power and Reconstruction officially ended, the two nations began staking claims for new international roles for themselves that the Imperial powers of old resisted. It would be twenty years before either actually achieved some measure of success in reaching any goals.

By 1865, Marsh had new emergencies to deal with. At the end of 1864, the Italian government informed the Chargé d'affaires that Italy would take back the naval base of La Spezia which had been given to the United States Navy in 1848 as maritime post in the Mediterranean. In February of the following year, Marsh was informed of the death of his son with whom he had a difficult and stormy relationship, while in the spring he had to move his residence to the new capital in Florence (Correspondence, February 1865, c. 4, folder 62, 1861-1873). In addition, the sudden tragic news of Lincoln's assassination further complicated the life of the American minister. Besides the diplomatic work required in such situations, the American legations to Italy were involved in the chase to capture one of the presumed conspirators. John Surrat had managed to escape arrest and had enrolled in the Zouave army of the Pope (Stock 1933: King to Seward, April 23; May 11; June 19th; July 14, 1866. Despatches: Marsh to Seward, November 16, December 10, 1866, r. 12). Marsh had to postpone once again his hope for a leave of absence from his post, for rumors of impending war were once again spreading across Italy. Very soon the third war of independence would break out and Marsh's work would, of course, intensify. There wasn't even time to celebrate the Union Army's victory in the Civil War.

Shortly after moving the legation to Florence in the summer of 1865, Marsh was forced to turn his attention to the important political developments in Italy. The Parliamentary election of that year in fact brought a profound change, with a 43 percent increase in newly elected representatives. This could have signalled entirely new policies and major changes at the international level as well. Marsh was very impressed by the King's speech at the opening ceremony for the new House: Italy would interrupt any negotiations with the Church after the failure of the approaches made to the Vatican and the failed agreements with Napoleon III. Moreover, Victor Emmanuel announced what Marsh had always favored: the suppression of religious corporations and a clear separation between church and state. Italy appeared to be on the path towards fulfilling Marsh's wishes for a modern and liberal state that, although not republican, could prove a reliable and strong ally of the United States (Romanelli 1979, 88-100). With the acquisition of Venice in 1866, despite Italy's military failures, the completion of the unification of the country seemed at hand. Rome represented a big question mark, but it was clear to the American minister that the Church did not stand much chance of keeping its temporal power, which he had labelled as anachronistic.

After taking his much longed for leave, Marsh concentrated on his work for a commercial treaty that was finally signed in 1871. Seward's idea had been realized. Italy, which had been an important during the war, and had maintained excellent relations with the Union government, was to become a major ally from a commercial standpoint as well. The United States was thus laying the foundations for a stable and strong relationship that could endure over the years, and Marsh's role was key to this. In the meantime, Italy and the United States signed an extradition treaty that solved what had been one of the most vexing problems during the Risorgimento and the Civil War. The March 1868 treaty contained special provisions concerning convicts accused of murder. Although the issue had been at stake for a long time, it is likely that the Surrat affair accelerated negotiations between the two governments. The case had more direct consequences in relations between the United States and the Papal State, in part because of the indecisive attitude of the American representatives in Rome at the time. Chargé Rufus King did not seem to be abreast of the worsening relationship between Italy and Rome, while in the Mentana incident, Consul Edwin Cushman embarrassed his own government by abandoning his post to participate in the expedition to Monterotondo against Garibaldi (Stock 1945: Cushman to Seward, Nov. 15, 1867*)*. That same year, in its attempt to reduce the national budget because of the Reconstruction effort and the difficult times the country was experiencing, Congress decided, among other things, to close the United States legation in Rome (Stock 1933: King to Seward, March 25-May 22, 1868; Gay 1937, 188).

The election of the hero of the Civil War, Ulysses S. Grant, in November 1868 brought major changes within the public administration after four years of rule by the much discussed Democratic successor of Lincoln, Andrew Johnson. But Marsh managed to keep his post despite the fact that he had already been in office for eight full years. It is true that in part he owed his confirmation to his nephew George Edmunds, who had just been elected to the House and had close connections with the new administration. By then, however, Marsh's reputation was strong enough and the situation in Italy confused enough that he still seemed the best choice for the Department of State (Correspondence: Edmunds to Grant, March 10, 1869, Edmunds to Fish, January 29, 1869, Edmunds to Marsh, March 29, 1869, c. 5, folders 42-44, 1866-1878). During the following year Marsh updated the Department of State regularly as to the situation in Rome, but when events accelerated he was in France. The turmoil in Italy convinced Marsh to leave Paris in haste and return to Florence. He realized that the coming upheaval in France could also bring change in Italy. Once in Florence, he wrote several reports concentrating on the fate of Rome and on relations between Italy and France. Marsh was convinced that until an aggressive and imperialist government was seated in Paris, Italy could not actually experience full independence. He linked the future of Italy to that of France and hoped for a republican turn in both countries (Despatches: Marsh to Dept. of State, August 26, 1870, r. 14).

By the beginning of September, Marsh's despatches were written almost daily as the Minister informed his government that the occupation of Rome was likely after the fall of Napoleon. Although uncertain as to the future of the relations between the Church and Italy, he confirmed that the initiative taken by the government in amassing troops could have but one outcome, and that was the final conquest of Rome and its designation as the capital of the kingdom. To Marsh this gave new strength to the monarchy despite his reiterated comments on the difficulties the kingdom was undergoing. The opposition seemed to lose stamina vis-à-vis the determined attitude of the government and the king on the issue of Rome (Despatches: Marsh to Fish, September 8, 9, 10, 1870, r. 14). On September 21, 1870, Marsh could finally write: "The Italian troops entered Rome yesterday, after a short resistance and are now in full possession of the entire Roman territory" (Despatches: Marsh to Fish, September 21, 1870, r. 14). He was still doubtful about the actual intentions of the Italian government on Rome, but felt sure that from the beginning it had acted "in obedience to popular dictation and the pressure from Piedmont" (Despatches: Marsh to Fish, September 21, 1870, r. 14). Yet in October Marsh still had doubts as to the possible consequences of the seizure of Rome and asked Secretary Fish to permit the American Navy in the Mediterranean to keep some ships along the coasts of central Italy in case of need (Marraro 1941, 61). Possibly, he was thinking of the need to facilitate the sudden escape of several combatants in the Risorgimento, which had been supported in the past by American diplomats and Navy officers, as had happened after the fall of the Roman Republic in 1849. He went even further, expressing the wish that Italy could once and for all solve the issue of the presence of the Catholic Church in the country by abrogating its status as state religion, an absurdity from a liberal, republican point of view (Marraro 1941, 61).

The policy launched by Grant and Secretary of State Hamilton Fish continued, to an extent, the one implemented by Seward. Attention to world affairs grew and the new government looked even harder at the possibility of expanding its commerce worldwide. Italy was no exception and finally, in 1871, signed a new commercial treaty even as another major issue that saw the two countries somehow connected had raised its head. This was the lengthy and delicate question of the Alabama Claims. As the United States and England reached the brink of war, and the European balance of power was upset by the French-Prussian war, Italy tried to play a new role at the international level. The declared purpose of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Visconti Venosta was to make the nation, now with its capital in Rome, not only a balancing factor, but an innovative player in international politics (Baldelli 1976, 254). The Treaty of Washington of 1871 provided a peaceful solution to the friction between the United States and England on Civil War claims: two commissions were set up to work on the cases and find a definitive solution. Count Federico Sclopis and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States Luigi Corti were appointed as Chairs, thus giving Italy an important role and a new reputation at the international level (Campbell 1978; Baldelli 1976, 259). Marsh was consulted by his government on the appointment of an Italian arbiter, but despite his acquaintance with the Italian intelligentsia over his ten year tenure, he doubted the diplomatic abilities of public servants or of noblemen turned diplomats. In his first report to the Department of State on this matter, he actually mentioned only the names of politicians he had met personally (Ricasoli, Pasolini and Minghetti). Only later was he able to provide detailed positive information on Count Sclopis. Italian senator Corti was already well known to the State Department.

Marsh had an extensive knowledge of the country, both because he loved travelling and because the Italian capital had changed. Turin was probably the city he liked best; it was more European in attitude and nearer the Alps, where he could take excursions and collect rock samples. Actually, his environmental studies were boosted by his having lived in Italy for many years and witnessed an environment often either virtually untouched by human beings or undergoing major changes, as in the case of the drying up of Lake Fucino. Marsh became close friends with Count Alessandro Torlonia, whose interest in hydraulic engineering he followed with great interest.

Once the capital was transferred to Rome, Marsh made the move but not with much enthusiasm—although he thought this was the natural outcome of the political changes that had occurred in Italy before and during his tenure. After all, the eternal city had been taken from the Pope and the Catholic Church had ceased to rule over a territory, elements he viewed as necessities before Italy could shed its backward ways and become a modern country capable of balancing its natural beauties, environmental engineering, and its artistic heritage (Despatches: Marsh to Fish July, 3, 1870, r. 14). The 1870s were a decade of change; Marsh concentrated on the preparation of a new treaty of extradition and the issue of immigration grew increasingly relevant in consular and diplomatic affairs. It is interesting to note how, in diplomatic correspondence, the issues pertaining to Italian unification or the Civil War and Reconstruction slowly gave way to more urgent problems such as the strategic location of a US naval base in the Mediterranean or the question of returning emigrants whom the Italian army began to draft (Diplomatic Instructions, October 26, 1876-July 25, 1877, r. 102). Of course, the Minister always kept the Department informed about political changes in Italy. His reports were informative and sometimes gave a very in-depth account of events unfolding in the country.

This was the case with the elections of 1876, when the major change brought about by the appointment of Agostino De Pretis in March gave way in the November elections to a defeat of the old right that had ruled with Minghetti. The account of the results and of the political climate in Italy was summarized by Marsh himself who underlined that the outcome had been brought about by a “spontaneous expression of popular dissatisfaction with the policy of the late administration especially in financial matters.”(Despatches: Marsh to the Department of State, November 16, 1876, r. 17). Marsh’s despatches introduced a new approach to the reporting of political affairs from Italy. Whereas the Minister often made comments that were politically tensed and evidenced his hostility toward the more conservative forces (especially the Catholic ones), he generally tried to first provide a synopsis of the major events before commenting on them, thus separating his opinions from official accounts. However, there were some exceptions when it came to the institution of the Church and to the Pope himself. Somehow, and especially with Pius IX, the Minister’s true feelings emerged from his despatches. Although he commented quite favourably on the election of Leo XIII in 1878, reporting that actually the attention of the foreign press to politics in the Vatican was very high, he was firm in his belief in the declining power of the Roman religious institution. To an extent this was true in those years, but Marsh’s wishful thinking seems to have prevailed. To give a better sense of Marsh’s approach both to the Catholic Church and to the reality of Italian politics vis-à-vis Catholicism, it is worth reporting here, verbatim, his communication to Secretary William Evarts on the death of Piux IX:

> Pope Pius IX died last evening at half past six o’clock, at the age of 85 years 8 months and 25 days, and the thirty second year of his Pontificate, to which office he was elected June 16th 1846.
>
> Thus far the death of the Pope has produced no popular or other public excitement, partly, no doubt, because the event had been expected, but much more because of the very general impression that, whatever the feelings of individuals towards the Papacy may be, the institution has lost its regal position, and the Roman See and the life or death of its incumbent have, strictly speaking, non longer any direct political significance. The moral influence of the Papacy, however, is as formidable as ever, and it can and thus powerfully affect political action [sic], but its power is exerted not by the chair of St. Peter, but by organizations which surround and control it, to such an extent as to render the personal will or character of the Pope a matter of little importance.
>
> Attempts will be made to bring about a reconciliation between the tiara and the crown of Italy, but King Humbert will, I trust, be found as firm in his adhesion to the principle of the supremacy of the civil government as his father showed himself, and there is nothing to encourage the expectation that the successor of Pius IX will be permitted to propose or accept any *modus vivendi* compatible with the civil liberties of the Italian people, or with the rights of private conscience and opinion. (Despatches: Marsh to Evarts, February 2, 1878, r. 18)

In the meantime, George Perkins Marsh had become an institution himself. At age 77, he was confirmed once more in his post of Minister to the Kingdom of Italy after the contested elections of 1876. These brought to power a representative of the vested interests of the industrial and financial north-east, Rutherford Hayes, despite the popular vote having gone to his opponent, New York Democrat Samuel Tilden. The post-Civil War climate was changing for good and Marsh seemed to be a vestige of the "old order." Yet his attention to political matters and his knowledge of Italy kept him in his post until his death. He was also able to survive another presidential election and the assassination of President James Garfield, which kept him rather busy in 1881.

Overall, Marsh paid a great service during his twenty-one years in office, not only to his country but to Italy as well. His acquaintance with some of the major political figures of the day and with the protagonists of the Risorgimento made him an important observer of Italian matters. Ricasoli conversed with him on agricultural themes and hunting; Minghetti conferred with him on financial issues, and Garibaldi and other fighters for Italian unification could discuss the disappointments ensuing from the reality of Italian politics. Moreover, they found in the Minister, and especially in his wife, support during the last fight in Aspromonte and at Mentana. Caroline Marsh was one of the organizers, with Jesse White Mario, of the "Comitato per il soccorso ai feriti del 1867," an association formed for the most part by British and American women who provided shelter and financial backing to the Garibaldini wounded or simply disoriented after Mentana. It was for Marsh a sad chore to communicate the death of Garibaldi in 1882. He took the opportunity to underline once again the genius and merits of the Italian hero, maintaining that one of the Italian hero's greatest moments occurred when, after being elected to Parliament in 1876, he abided by the laws of Italy, promising not to take up arms for any reason ever again. Overemphasizing Garibaldi's role somewhat as well as his political stance in old age, Marsh claimed that with Garibaldi's oath to the kingdom, Italy was not only "*free* but *safe*." And he continued: "Many times, however, both before and since that eventful day, the zealous patriotism and ardent philanthropy of Garibaldi have led him, not only in his private, but also in his public utterances, to manifest a natural impatience with the government that old abuses were so slowly done away with, and that the moral and physical conditions of the poorer class was not more rapidly improved" (Despatches: Marsh to Frelinghuysen, June 4, 1882, r. 20). A month later, during a leave intended to restore his strength, Marsh died at his Tuscan residence in Vallombrosa.

He left an important legacy in the relations between Italy and the United States. Shortly after his death the two countries, pressed by the increasing emigration of Italians to the other side of the Atlantic, and by the deepening international crises of colonialism, signed a naturalization treaty. This would prove relevant in the following years when Italian immigrants claimed protection from the United States when they were unduly drafted by the Italian army while visiting relatives in their old towns of provenance. The agreement was to be revised several times, especially when the war effort in 1915 led military authorities to abuse their powers over young Italian émigrés. Moreover, until his very final days at the legation in Rome, Marsh remained on top of Italian, and for that matter, European affairs. In early January 1882, he sent several reports to the Department of State, evaluating the position of Italy in the international scenario as the country advanced its claims for control over parts of North Africa, namely Tunisia. He feared terrible consequences from the confrontations taking place in the old continent and followed attentively the process that took Italy into the Triple Alliance, in his view a major turning point in Italian foreign policy—a potential threat to the stability of the continent.

Notes

[1] Actually Marsh had good predecessors who did not remain entirely neutral during the Risorgimento. See for example the attitudes of Lewis Cass Jr. and Nicholas Brown during the Roman Republic of 1849 (Fiorentino 2000).

Works Cited

Celozzi Baldelli, Pia Grazia. "La diplomazia italiana e gli "Alabama Claims" (1871-1873)." In *Italia e America dal Settecento all'età dell'imperialismo*, eds. Giorgio Spini et al., 251-278. Venezia: Marsilio, 1976.

Campbell, Charles S. *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations: 1865-1900*. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Chabod, Federico. *Storia della politica estera italiana dal 1870 al 1896*. Bari: Laterza, 1997.

Despatches from US Ministers to the Italian States 1832-1906, RG 84, Microfilm M90, rolls 11-20. National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, MD.

Diplomatic Instructions of the Dept. of State 1836-1906, Italy, RG 59, M 77, Rolls 101-102.

Doyle, Don H. *Nations Divided. America, Italy and the Southern Question*. Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2002.

Gay, Harry Nelson. *Scritti sul Risorgimento*. Edited by T. Silani. Roma: La Rassegna Italiana, 1937.

Iryie, Akira. *From Nationalism to Internationalism: US Foreign Policy to 1914*. London: Routledge, 1977.

Lowenthal, David. *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2000.

Marraro, Howard R. ed. *L'unificazione italiana vista dai diplomatici statunitensi: Vol. IV (1861-1866)*. Roma: Istituto per la storia del Risorgimento italiano, 1971.

_____. "Unpublished Documents on Italy's Occupation of Rome." *The Journal of Modern History* 13, no. 1 (1941): 48-64.

Marsh, George Perkins. *Correspondence. George Perkins Marsh Papers, 1833-1882*. Cartons 1-8. George Perkins Marsh Collection. Special Collections. The University of Vermont.

_____. "Italian Independence," Museo Centrale del Risorgimento, Roma, Manuscript, 723/31. (n.d.)

Mori, Renato. *La questione romana*: *1861-1865*. Firenze: Le Monnier, 1963.

Romanelli, Raffaele. *L'Italia liberale (1861-1900)*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1979.

Stock, Leo F., ed. *Consular Relations Between the United States and the Papal States: Instructions and Despatches*. Washington, DC: American Catholic Historical Association, 1945.

_____. *United States Ministers to the Papal States: Instructions and Despatches 1848-1868*. Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1933.

Taylor, John M. *William Henry Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand*, Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 1996.

Trauth, Mary. *Italo-American Diplomatic Relations, 1861-1882: The Mission of George Perkins Marsh*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1957.

eum > lingue letterature culture moderne

A.I.S.N.A.
Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani
Proceedings of the XIX Biennial International Conference
USA:
Identities, Cultures, and Politics in National,
Transnational and Global Perspectives

Edited by: Marina Camboni, Valerio Massimo De Angelis,
Daniele Fiorentino, Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh

eum edizioni università di macerata

ISBN 978-88-6056-230-2

9 788860 562302

€ 25,00